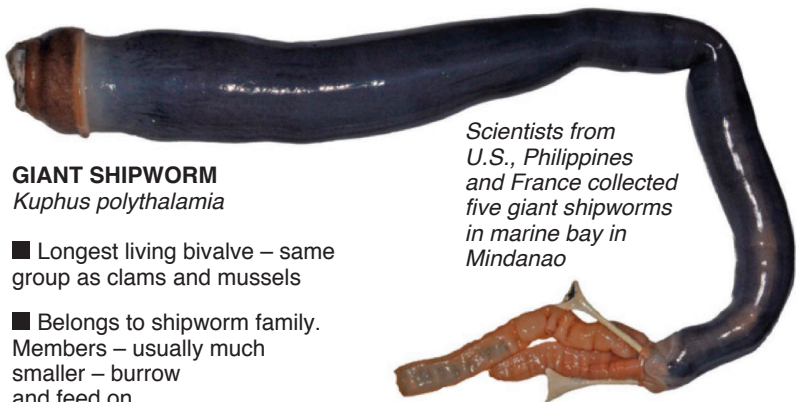


First living giant shipworm discovered

A live specimen of the rare giant shipworm has been found for the first time, in the Philippines. Though its existence has been known for centuries, no living specimen has been studied until now



GIANT SHIPWORM

Kuphus polythalamia

■ Longest living bivalve – same group as clams and mussels

■ Belongs to shipworm family. Members – usually much smaller – burrow and feed on rotting wood

Scientists from U.S., Philippines and France collected five giant shipworms in marine bay in Mindanao

Length: 1.55m

Diameter: 6cm

Average size similar to baseball bat

Shell: Shipworm lives encased in tube of calcium carbonate, submerged head-down in mud

Hard cap: Re-absorbed when shipworm grows and burrows further into mud



Siphons: Take in and expel water



Feeding: Bacteria living in gills use hydrogen sulphide in mud as energy to produce organic carbon to feed shipworm

Digestive organs: Shrunk from lack of use

Mouth

