Peripatus

Classification :

Kingdom : Animalia

Phylum : Onychophora

Family : Peripatidae

Genus : Peripatus

For further details, Link

Characteristics :

- Peripatus is a genus of velvet worms, a group of terrestrial, invertebrate animals belonging to the class Onychophora, known for their caterpillar-like appearance and velvety skin.
- As members of the Onychophora phylum, they are primitive arthropods with features like jointed legs and tracheae, alongside non-chitinous skin and segmental nephridia (excretory organs) that resemble annelids.
- They are considered a "living fossil" and a connecting link between annelid worms and arthropods, possessing characteristics of both groups, such as a segmented, worm-like body and jointed, claw-bearing legs.
- Peripatus are nocturnal, carnivorous predators found in damp, tropical regions worldwide and are notable for their unique ability to shoot sticky fluid to immobilize prey.
- **Appearance:** They are soft-bodied, worm-like, and bilaterally symmetrical animals with a caterpillar-like form. Their skin is soft and velvety due to fine, conical papillae.
- **Habitat:** Peripatus are found in damp, terrestrial environments under rocks, logs, and fallen leaves, and they are nocturnal.
- **Movement:** They move using numerous pairs of stubby, claw-bearing legs along their body.
- **Diet:** Peripatus are carnivorous predators that feed on insects, small worms, and other invertebrates.

- **Defense:** They capture prey by shooting a jet of sticky, protein-based fluid from their oral papillae, which immobilizes the prey.
- **Biology:** They breathe air, have a unique nervous system, and a circulatory system that is open, similar to arthropods.
- **Reproduction:** Sexes are separate, and females can carry embryos at different developmental stages simultaneously.

Evolutionary Significance

- **Connecting Link:** Peripatus exhibits traits of both annelids (like segmented nephridia and a worm-like body) and arthropods (like jointed legs and an open circulatory system), making them a crucial evolutionary link between these two groups.
- **Living Fossil:** They are considered "living fossils" because they have remained relatively unchanged for millions of years, providing a glimpse into ancient life forms from when the supercontinent Gondwana existed.