

Millipede

by [Kathleen L. Housley](#) in the [June 17, 2008](#) issue

Holy Spirit: do not descend as a dove.
Better to return as a millipede hidden
beneath decaying bark than anything
that can soar. Ponder the incarnational
worth of *Pneumodesmus Newmani*,
the oldest known form of life on land,
linking *air breathing* with the surname
of the Scottish bus driver and amateur
paleontologist who chiseled its fossil
from harbor rocks north of Stonehaven,
observing through his field lens small
openings in its exoskeleton used
for inspiration, meaning it moved its
many legs on dry ground, not seabed.
Or consider this descendent of *Pneumo*,
younger by four hundred million years,
curled for self-preservation on my palm,
a hard button of red legs whorled inward,
circled by dark armor plate, both of us
breathing air while we wait for a sign
that it is safe to resume whatever it was
we were scurrying to do prior to this
disruption of our forward flow to make
a theological point: Of what use are
metaphors of flight for things with feet?