

Newly discovered worm fences with penis

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Australian scientists are set to announce the discovery of a species of flatworm which is a member of group of predators known as oyster leeches.

Emma Johnston of the University of New South Wales said the creature -- named *Imogine lateotentare* -- is one of the simplest organisms known, but its behavior is quite complex, the Sydney Morning Herald reported Friday.

Johnston and colleagues Ka-Man Lee and Michel Beal have kept the organism -- found in Sydney's Botany Bay -- in captivity in the laboratory for up to a fortnight, watching as its attacked prey.

The creatures have both male and female parts and engaged in a sexual practice somewhat like penis fencing.

To reproduce they try to stab each other with their genitals and the first to penetrate inserts sperm and then goes on to spar with another flatworm. The "loser" lays and broods the eggs.

The findings are published in the Journal of Natural History.

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