

# 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?