



ARCHIMEDES BRYOZOANS

Bryozoans, often called moss animals or lace animals, are invertebrate organisms that live in water. They have existed since the Ordovician Period (480 million years ago) and today live mostly in the world's oceans. A few bryozoans live in fresh water. They prefer clear water.

Bryozoans are one of the most common marine fossils. The fossils consist of the skeleton created by individual animals living together in colonies, very much like coral we find today. Each individual animal lived in a hollow portion of the skeleton. A very small animal that lived on microscopic organisms in the water once occupied each hole in this specimen. The animal caught its food with tentacles that extended from the hole.

The Mississippian Period was a time during which the greatest variety of bryozoans lived. *Archimedes* lived at that time. This spiral shaped *Archimedes* bryozoan is named after the Greek philosopher Archimedes because its shape is like that of the screw-like water pump he introduced to Europe. It was most abundant in the Mississippian Period, about 320 to 330 million years ago.