

Civil War Science

Station 3

Foods of the Civil War

Invertebrates do not have backbones. All invertebrates share common traits. At the bottom of the invertebrate world are the sponges. Most invertebrates can move. Even sponges move when they are very young and very small. Once they settle down they don't move anymore. Other invertebrates like lobsters and insects move around their whole lives. Invertebrates can't make their own food. Scientists use the word heterotrophic. Heterotrophs feed off other things to get their energy.



Sponges

During the American Civil War more than 3.5 million soldiers served in the Union and Confederate armies. The soldiers ate a variety of foods and many of these foods came from invertebrates. The list below has invertebrates that soldiers ate during the war.



Lobsters



Honeybees



Crawfish

Invertebrates are all around us. Write a list of invertebrates that can be found in your environment.



earthworms

Also:

Flies

Weevils

Maggots

Supplying food was extremely important for maintaining a strong fighting force. The various food supplies, though, also represented excellent feeding and breeding sites for insects. Probably one of the best recorded problems of insects during the Civil War was found in a plain flour and water biscuit or cracker. Issued to Union soldiers, this was commonly called "hardtack."



Soldier sitting on filled with hardtack





Maggots

Weevil



Yanks referred to this kind of hardtack as "worm castles." Maggots and weevils were insects commonly found in these crackers. One soldier described the inhabitants in his hardtack, "We found 32 worms, maggots, &c in one cracker day before yesterday. We do not find much fault, however, but eat them without looking as a good way to prevent troublesome ideas" (Wiley 1992).