

## Acorn Worms and Chordate Evolution

The long-running project has been using a species of Acorn Worm, *Saccoglossus kowalevskii*, a hemichordate, collected every summer from Waquoit Bay, to better understand the evolution of the phyla – Chordata, of which all vertebrates, including humans, are a part. According to a paper by Lowe et al., 2003 in the scientific journal, Cell, “The two closest [related] invertebrate groups, the echinoderms and hemichordates, along with the chordates, constitute the deuterostomes, which shared a common ancestor in the Precambrian metazoan evolution (Adouette, et al., 2000; Cameron, et al., 2000; Peterson and Eernisse, 2001).” Also, “Hemichordates [such as acorn worms] may hold more promise for these comparisons than do echinoderms since they have several proposed morphological affinities with chordates.”