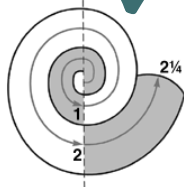


KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR: SNAILS

SHELL BASICS

How would you describe the shape of the shell? What about the texture?
Is it glossy or bumpy or hairy? How many whorls do you count?

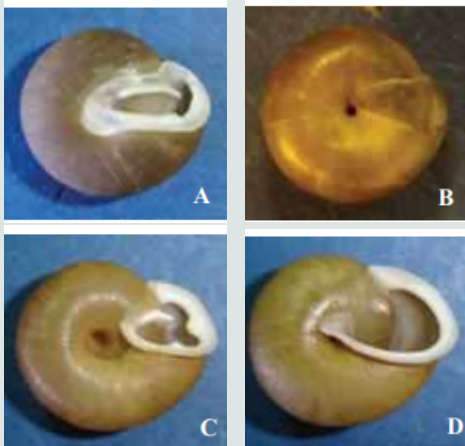
The gastropod group includes both slugs and snails. Snails keep their vital organs inside a protective shell, often made of calcium carbonate. The number of whorls and the shape of a shell can help identify the species of snail. Which of these shapes does your shell most resemble?



Clockwise from upper left:

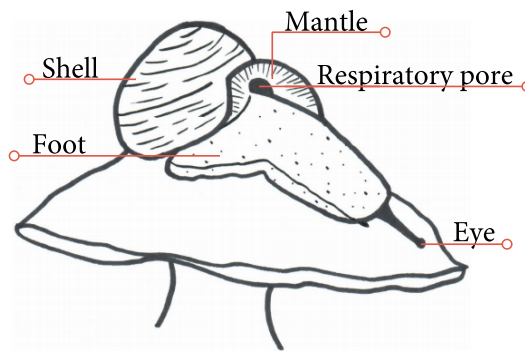


BELLY BUTTONS

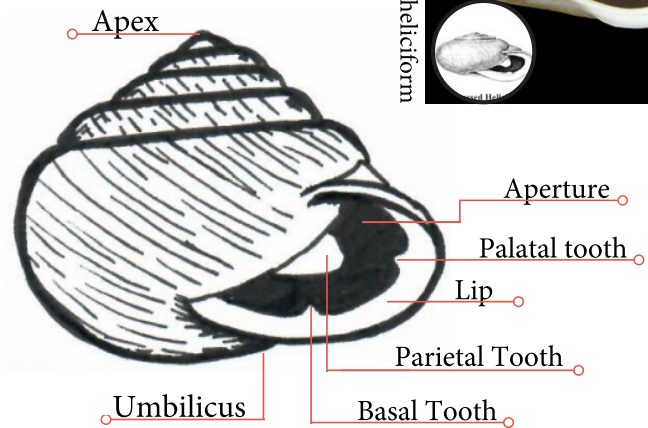


A. Closed umbilicus B. Very small umbilical opening C. Noticeable umbilical opening D. Umbilical opening partially closed by shell lip

Did you know snails have bellybuttons too? The shape of the belly button, called an umbilicus, is another clue to snail identification. Look at the "bottom" of the shell (opposite the apex). Which of these belly buttons most resembles your snail's? Can you spot any other differences between the shells shown above? Which of these characteristics does your shell share?



Shell shape: Pupa, beehive, heliciform, depressed heliciform



ECOSYSTEM

Think about where you found your snail and everything you have noticed so far about their body and environment. What do you think they might eat? What animals might eat snails? In other words, who might be their predators?

While snails are mostly herbivorous, others, like the gray-footed lancetooth (*Haplotrema concavum*), are predatory and even eat other snails! Animals that prey on snails include some salamanders, rodents, birds, and beetles. Even firefly larvae are known to eat snails! One reason so many species consume snails is for a mineral in their shells: calcium. This nutrient helps animals build bones and contract muscles. It is also the key ingredient for making eggshells, which is why some birds eat more snails in the spring.

Diet
Predators

Want to learn more? Go to handsontheland.org/environmental-monitoring/snail-monitoring.html

