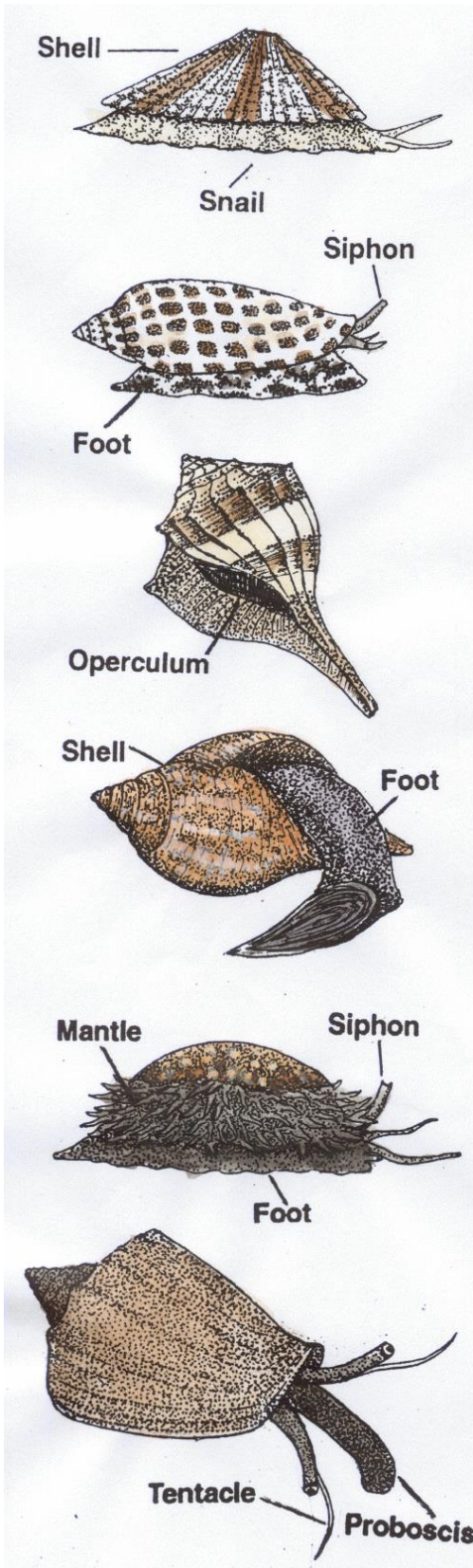




Gastropod Anatomy



THE SHELL protects the internal organs of snails. It is mainly composed of calcium carbonate, and is produced by cells in the mantle. The SHELL is nearly always one piece and is coiled or spiraled with the coil usually opening on the right-hand side.

SIPHON is the prolongation of the mantle which allows the animals to draw water into their mantle cavity and over the gill. The SIPHON is mainly used to “taste” the water and detect prey from a distance.

OPERCULUM or TRAPDOOR is the hard covering on the foot. When the snail feels threatened by a predator, it will retreat into its protective home (shell) and seal itself off with the OPERCULUM.

FOOT is the first part of the snail to emerge from the shell. The FOOT is a strong muscle and is used by the snail for traveling, digging in and out of the sand, and for grasping food.

MANTLE is a fold of thin skin that has the very important job of building the shell. The MANTLE draws chemicals from the sea water and manufactures the hard calcium carbonate. The MANTLE also adds the pattern and colors to the shell.

PROBOSCIS is a long flexible snout fully containing the mouth and radula (toothed, rasping, tonguelike strap used in feeding); this can be compared to an elephant's trunk. The PROBOSCIS reaches out when the mollusk feeds on its prey, whereas an elephant uses its trunk as a tool to move food to the mouth.

TENTACLE is a long appendage usually associated with the eyes, and is used to sense, or feel, the environment. TENTACLES may help the animal find food or a mate.