

Thousands of Teeth (and One Big Appetite)

Snails have an unsettling number of teeth—anywhere from 1,000 to 14,000 of them. They're arranged in rows on a tonguelike appendage called the *radula*, and snails use them like sandpaper to grind down their food.

What they eat is significant—fungi, rotting vegetation, excrement and animal carcasses are all on their menu. And while that might not sound appetizing to us, it means that snails play an important role in decomposition and recirculation of important soil nutrients. They also pollinate!

Snails don't just live *within* their shells—their shells are part of their body. They're actually born with them, and the shells grow as they grow, protecting their internal organs from damage and providing a place to hide if things get dicey. And as part of the incredible balance of nature God designed, when snails are eaten by birds, their shells provide an important source of calcium for the birds' own eggs.

The humble snail may not be the most visually appealing creature out there, but it remains a wonder of God's creation.

Pictured: decollate snail
(*Rumina decollata*)



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