

A vestigial organ is a structure that no longer serves a purpose. The textbook will say that it might have served a purpose in one of the ancestors of the organism countless years ago. Since evolution eliminates only that which is harmful or adds that which is helpful, if a structure is neither harmful nor helpful, it will remain unchanged. This becomes a vestigial structure.

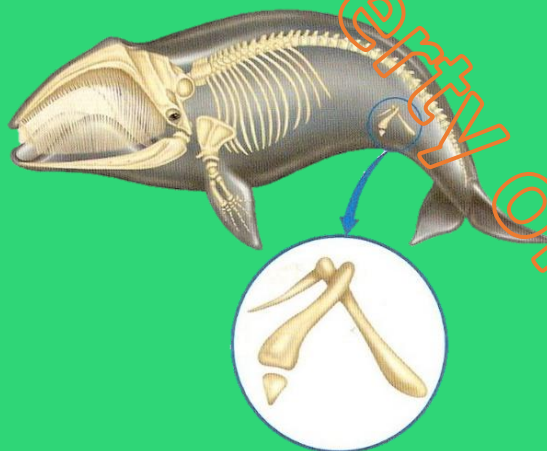


Fig. 8.1.1 The whale's bones



Fig. 8.1.2 The snake's bones

According to the textbook, it will serve little to no function because it is no longer vital.

The textbook will say that one of the most important vestigial organs are the remnants of legs in whales and snakes.

If snakes and whales once walked around, they must have had legs. If they once had legs and no longer do, they must have lost the legs.

The skeletons of both creatures (Figures 8.1.1 and 8.1.2) have shown that they have both a pelvis and very small leg bones. The only problem is that these structures were never used to walk on land.

These cannot be vestigial organs because they still serve an essential function in reproduction.

Another supposed vestigial organ is the horse chestnut (Figure 8.1.3). These are small structures on the inside of the front legs of horses.

The textbook will say that they are vestiges of toes. If this is true, this is a reshuffling of already present genetic information.



Fig. 8.1.3 A horse chestnut.

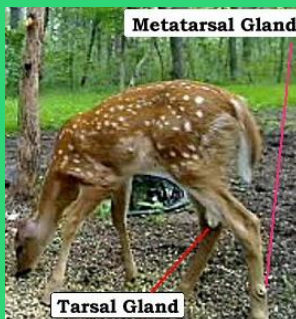


Fig. 8.1.4 Deer scent glands

Furthermore, it is possible that these are scent glands such as those found in deer (Figure 8.1.4). They can also be used to identify the horses in the same way that



Fig. 8.1.5 A human fingerprint

fingerprints (Figure 8.1.5) can identify people.

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Vestigial Organs

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