
BIVALVES

Also known as the pelecypods, bivalves are aquatic animals encased between two calcareous (chalk-like) shells, or valves, that are joined along a flat hinge plate by an elastic ligament. A plane of symmetry exists between the shells, making the left and right valves (or shells), in most forms, mirror images of one another. Examples of bivalves today include oysters, clams and mussels.

Bivalve evolution has been well documented, and they are often used as important time markers as they live in many environments, and preservation of their shells is likely in many different kinds of stone. They first appear in the Cambrian and are abundant in Mesozoic and Cenozoic rocks.

The shells are made of multiple calcareous layers of the mineral aragonite, the mineral that gives the lustre to mother-of-pearl. Over time, natural processes often convert the aragonite to calcite and destroy the lustre. Often moulds of the shells are left as many shells are dissolved after being encased in rock and only the void is left behind.

