A deep-sea snail has evolved a suite of armor made from iron sulfide – the only animal on earth that uses iron this way. The scaly-foot gastropod was discovered in 2001 and lives in the hydrothermal vent fields of the Indian Ocean.

**Properties**

- **Discovered**: 3500 BC
- **Melting point**: 1538°C
- **Density**: 7.87 g/cm³
- **Conductivity**: High
- **Malleability**: High

**Economic contribution**

- **818 Mt**: Export volume of Australian iron ore in 2016-17
- **$62.7 b**: Value of Australia’s iron ore exports in 2016-17
- **$4.6 b**: Wages to iron ore industry workers in 2016-17
- **29,706**: Iron ore industry jobs in Australia in 2016-17

**Iron ore at work**

- **Whitegoods**
- **Public transport**
- **Cities**
- **Roads & bridges**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Cars & trucks**