IGUANODON.DINOSAURS.IM

# On the nose, or on the thumb?

*A horn that was still a prevailing theory in the 1850s, then a thumb proved in the 1870s.*

Typographic only. No photographs inside. Official wording kept unblended.

| Question | Official wording |
|---|---|
| **On the nose** | "With the Iguanodon fossils Mantell had available to him, he determined that Iguanodon had a horn." The concept "may have been based on the living iguana species Cyclura cornuta - the rhinoceros iguana." "Iguanodon's horn was still a prevailing theory when Owen consulted on the construction of the Crystal Palace dinosaur sculptures in the 1850s." |
| **On the thumb** | "It wasn't until a significant Iguanodon discovery was made in the 1870s that it was proved that the spikes were thumbs rather than horns. But there is still speculation about what they were used for." The spikes "would have been covered in keratin, whereas dinosaur fossils only show the bony core." |
| **Directory** | "It had a large thumb spike on the end of its hand, probably to fend-off predators." |
| **Discovery page** | "Thumb spikes for food preparation or defence." |
| **Belgian glance** | "A large conical spike, coming out from the wrist itself," covered by "a very sharp horny sheath," "a devastating weapon, especially during combat with predators." |
| **Masterpiece** | "Its thumb formed an enlarged spur, covered by a horny sheath, which it could use as a defensive weapon." |

## A short quiz

1. Was the horn still a prevailing theory in the 1850s?
2. When were the spikes proved to be thumbs?
3. Do official pages all describe the thumb's use in the same words?

**Answers.** Yes: it was still a prevailing theory when Owen consulted on the Crystal Palace sculptures. In the 1870s, after a significant Iguanodon discovery. No: official uses include food preparation or defence, probably to fend-off predators, a defensive weapon, and a devastating weapon, kept unblended.

Wording from the Natural History Museum's Iguanodon directory and discovery pages, and from the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences glance and masterpiece pages, re-opened 18 November 2026. iguanodon.dinosaurs.im is independent of those institutions. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.