

## Nine-Banded Armadillo

*Dasypus novemcinctus*

### Anatomy

Dressed in a suit of armor, the head, body, legs and tail of the nine-banded armadillo are protected by bony plates. Armadillos spend most of their time in burrows under the ground. Accordingly, their sense of smell far out-powers their vision and hearing. About the size of a cat, these creatures have elongated, pointed noses and long, sticky tongues used for catching insects. Their short, strong legs have sharp claws that come in handy when digging burrows.



### Habitat

Found from South and Central America to Oklahoma, the armadillo tends to live in forests near swampy areas. These adaptive creatures can live anywhere that is warm and has plenty of food. They prefer rainforests, temperate forests, savannas and grasslands where the soil is good for digging burrows. Armadillos can hold their breath for six minutes. When crossing a body of water armadillos can either inflate their stomachs and intestines with air and float across, or sink down to the bottom and use their claws to walk across.

### Diet

Armadillos' favorite foods are insects. Their special tongue allows them to consume up to 40,000 ants in one meal! They also enjoy feeding on small animals, bird eggs, roots, fruits and even rotting animal flesh (called "carrion").



### Threats

When startled, armadillos can jump three to four feet in the air. Even with their suit of armor, bears, coyotes, wild cats, foxes and dogs feed on armadillos. But cars continue to pose the biggest threat, and many are killed crossing the road each year. Loss of habitat is forcing increasing interactions between people and armadillos, further threatening the survival of these curious-looking creatures.

### Sources:

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- Wonderclub: <http://www.wonderclub.com/Wildlife/mammals/armadillo.html>
- The Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/armadillo.html>