

THE ROYAL
ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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From Penguins to Pandas - the conservation game

The Giant Armadillo

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SCILT Scotland's
National Centre
for Languages

育 **SCEN**
SCOTLAND CHINA EDUCATION NETWORK

The Giant Armadillo

(Priodontes maximus)

Size - The giant armadillo is the largest of the armadillos. The bony plates are divided into bands and the middle 11 to 13 bands are flexible. Length - 85-100cm; Tail - 50-55cm; Weight - 30-50kg.

Feet - They walk on the soles of their back feet but only on the tips of the claws on the front feet.

Senses - The giant armadillo has a really good sense of smell and can also hear well but they don't have very good eyesight.

Teeth - The giant armadillo has lots of teeth, up to 100 but they are all the same type of teeth. They are broad, flattened teeth for grinding and crushing. The teeth don't have any enamel (*the hard outer layer protecting teeth*) and they are shed as they get older.

Food - The giant armadillo eats mainly ants and termites. They have long sharp claws on their front feet to dig up and destroy nests. The third claw is very long and can be up to 20cm.

Habitat - The giant armadillo lives mainly in wetlands, forest, scrubland and grassland.

Babies - Previous information on giant armadillos may state that they give birth to one or two young and it takes 120 days. Through RZSS research it has been found that a female usually gives birth to only one baby and the young is born after about 150 days. The young don't have their bony plates to begin with but do have tough, leathery skin. Mum will feed the baby until they are about 6 months old. They are adults at about one year old.



© Giant Armadillo Project

The Giant Armadillo

(Priodontes maximus)

Lifestyle - Giant armadillos usually come out at night time. They spend the day in their burrows which they dig every night with their large claws. Rarely a burrow might be used for more than one night.

If they feel threatened then they rise up on their hind legs and begin to sniff around. They will strike out with their sharp claws if attacked. The jaguar is really the only animal that could attack a giant armadillo.

Burrows– Since the giant armadillo makes a new burrow every night, other animals make use of the empty burrows. Other armadillos, anteaters, rodents, foxes, peccaries, ocelots, other carnivores, hoofed animals and reptiles have been found to use the left over burrows. This is why giant armadillos are called ecosystem engineers which means that they create or change the habitat.

Research - The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland partnering with the Instituto de Pesquisas Ecologicas and other organisations work on the Giant Armadillo Project. Using camera traps in front of the burrows, a lot of information about the animal can be recorded. The work can be slow because giant armadillos are very difficult to find. One time, nine months went by without seeing a giant armadillo. However, since the project started in 2010, detailed information about the species has been found: travel patterns, life cycles and behaviours. The project has the first pictures and videos of a baby giant armadillo. You can follow Dr Arnaud Desbiez, RZSS Regional Conservation and Research Coordinator for Latin America, on his video diaries -

<http://www.rzss.org.uk/armadillodiaries>

The EWCL (*Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders*) Giant Armadillo Team and the RZSS project are helping spread the word about armadillo conservation. EWCL are providing activities and educational materials for all zoos to use.



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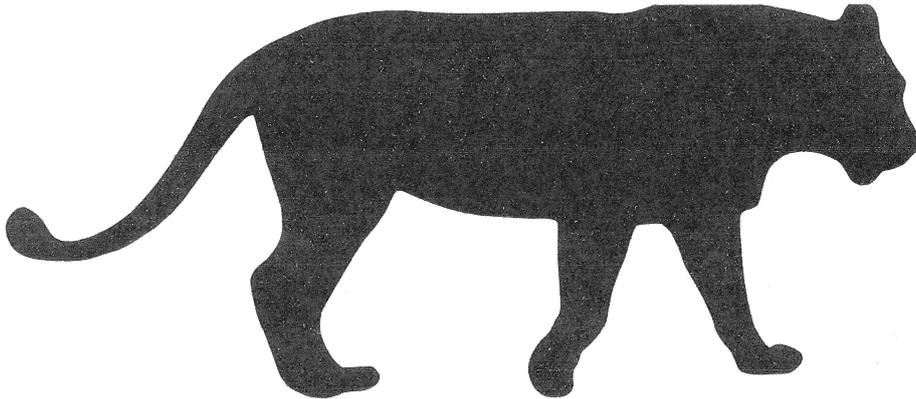
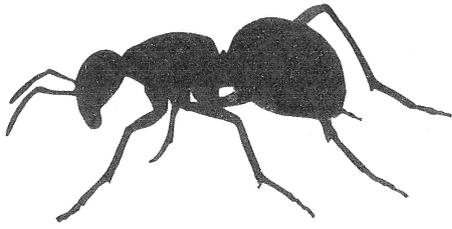
Follow -up work: activities to do **after** the outreach session.

This is a life size drawing of a giant armadillo's front claw. Measure it and write down the length.



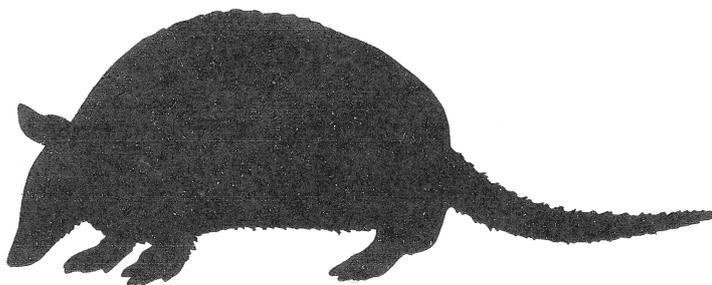
Length = _____

Follow -up work: activities to do **after** the outreach session.



Can you name the largest cat in South America?

Cut out the pictures and form a food chain.



NOTE - Some ants will eat plants, other insects and even other ants. Some ants carry leaves back to their nest, chew them, poo on them and then leave them to decay. The ants eat the fungus grown on the decaying leaves.

Follow -up work: activities to do **after** the outreach session.

This outreach is linked with learning languages. Spanish is the official language of most South American countries except Brazil where the official language is Portuguese.
The other main language discussed in the outreach session was Mandarin Chinese.

Practise writing the words for giant armadillo in Portuguese, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese:

Portuguese:

tatu gigante

Spanish:

armadillo gigante

Chinese:

大犛狨

[da qiu yu]

Please also see the following resources in this pack:

Armadillo Fact Files

The Pantanal and its wildlife

To find out more about 'From Penguins to Pandas' and 'Giants' outreach programmes, contact:
Sandie Robb, Senior Education Officer, RZSS—srobb@rzss.org.uk

Acknowledgements

Dr Arnaud Desbiez RZSS Regional Conservation and Research Coordinator for Latin America

Laura Gruber Animal Care Specialist, Disney's Animal Kingdom

Further Information and resources

Websites:

Royal Zoological Society of Scotland

<http://www.rzss.org.uk/conservation-programmes/projects/current-projects/pantanal-conservation-and-research-initiative>

Giant Armadillo Video Diaries

<http://www.rzss.org.uk/armadillodiaries>

Arkive

<http://www.arkive.org>

Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders (EWCL) - Giant Armadillo Project

<http://wildlifeleaders.org/projects/giant-armadillo/>

International Union for Conservation of Nature

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>

The IUCN/SSC Anteater, Sloth and Armadillo Specialist Group

<http://www.xenarthrans.org/>

Books:

Eisenberg, John F. & Redford, Kent H. ***Mammals of the Neotropics - Volume 3***. The University of Chicago Press, 1999

Smith, Paul. ***FAUNA Paraguay Handbook of the Mammals of Paraguay Vol 2: Xenarthra***. FAUNA Paraguay, 2009