Did you know that there are 20 different species of armadillos in the world? All but one of the species live in South America, and they are quite a diverse group. Here at ZooMontana, we are lucky to be the home of Dahlia the Southern Three-Banded Armadillo. She came to the zoo to be an ambassador for her species in 2022. Her energy and cute ball-shaped body have drawn tons of admiration! They are named for the 3 bands in the center of their back and are about the size of a small cantaloupe; this armadillo species is the only one that can roll their body into a complete ball, which is their main defense against predators.



Three Banded Armadillos are mainly nocturnal insectivores, or insect-eaters, that live in the grasslands, marshes, and dry forests of Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina, and are well-adapted to this environment! They can swim, jump, dig, and run; all good ways to avoid predators as they search for food. Here are just some of their other adaptations:

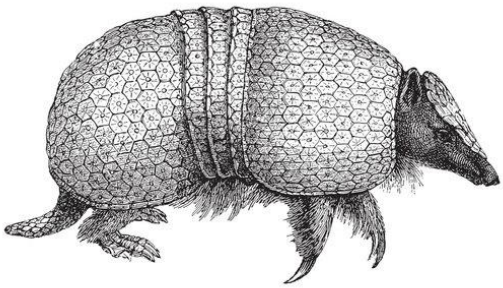
- They have armor on their head and on their tail so when they roll into a ball and pull in their arms and legs, everything is protected!
- Not only is their ability to roll into a ball useful for avoiding predators, but it is also good for keeping warm on cold nights!
- They have strong claws on their front feet that allow them to dig into ant hills or termite mounds, or even tear the bark off trees to get the grubs underneath.
- Though their eyesight is not very strong, they have big ears and an excellent sense of smell with which to find their food.

Can you tell which is the Three-Banded Armadillo and which is the Nine-Banded Armadillo? [Hint, scientists were straightforward in naming these two critters]. The Nine-Banded Armadillo, found in the southern U.S., is the only Armadillo species that lives outside of South America. The Nine-Banded Armadillo is larger than the Three-Banded, but it cannot roll into a ball. Once you've figured it out, color them in!

I am the _____-Banded Armadillo.



I am the _____-Banded Armadillo.



Are You Ready to Be an Armadillo?

Armadillos don't have great eyesight, but their hearing and sense of smell is excellent! Can you crawl on all fours like an armadillo with your eyes closed? Sniff around and listen hard as you crawl. What different information do you get from these senses? How is this different from how you typically move around? Make sure you do this in a space where you won't get hurt!

_____

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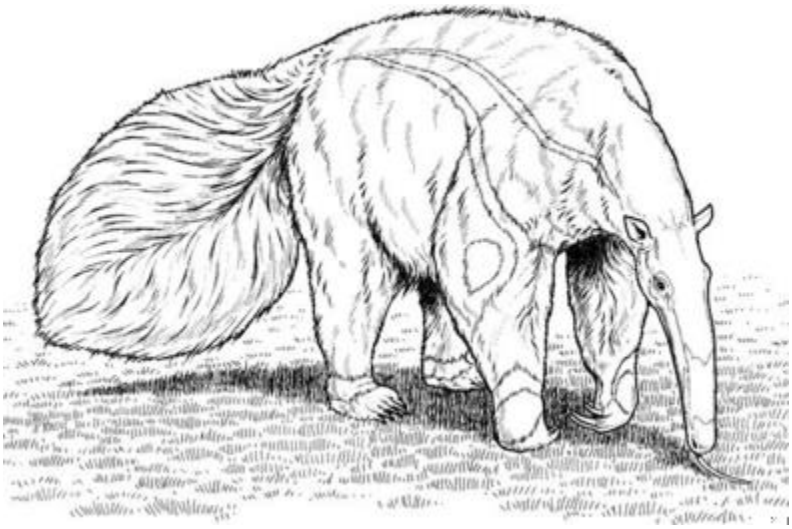
Other than the rest of the armadillos, Three Banded armadillos are most closely related to some rather different animals: the anteaters and the sloths! In fact, their Superorder name is Xenarthra, which means "strange-joint", referring to some vertebrae, or backbones, that can move differently than most other mammals and are unique to this family. Isn't it interesting to think how they look so different but are each other's closest living relatives? They also all live in South America, except for the Nine-Banded Armadillo. Color them in!



Three-Toed Sloth



Giant Armadillo



Giant Anteater

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