

= Six @-@ banded armadillo =

The six @-@ banded armadillo (*Euphractus sexcinctus*) , also known as the yellow armadillo , is an armadillo found in South America . The sole member of its genus , it was first described by Swedish zoologist Carl Linnaeus in 1758 . The six @-@ banded armadillo is typically between 40 and 50 centimeters (16 and 20 in) in head @-@ and @-@ body length , and weighs 3 @.@ 2 to 6 @.@ 5 kilograms (7 @.@ 1 to 14 @.@ 3 lb) . The carapace (hard shell on the back) is pale yellow to reddish brown , marked by scales of equal length , and scantily covered by buff to white bristle @-@ like hairs . The forefeet have five distinct toes , each with moderately developed claws .

Six @-@ banded armadillos are efficient diggers and form burrows to live in and search for prey . The armadillo is alert and primarily solitary . An omnivore , it feeds on insects , ants , carrion , and plant material . Due to their poor eyesight , armadillos rely on their sense of smell to detect prey and predators . Births take place throughout the year ; gestation is 60 to 64 days long , after which a litter of one to three is born . Weaning occurs at one month , and juveniles mature by nine months . The six @-@ banded armadillo inhabits savannas , primary and secondary forests , cerrados , shrublands , and deciduous forests . Fairly common , its range spans from Brazil and southern Suriname in the northeast through Bolivia , Paraguay , and Uruguay into northern Argentina in the southeast . The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) classifies it as least concern , and there are no major threats to its survival .

= = Taxonomy and etymology = =

The six @-@ banded armadillo is the sole member of the genus *Euphractus* and is placed in the family Chlamyphoridae . It was first described by Swedish zoologist Carl Linnaeus as *Dasypus sexcinctus* in 1758 . The genera *Chaetophractus* (hairy armadillos) and *Zaedyus* (pichi) have at times been included in *Euphractus* , though karyotypical , immunological and morphological analyses oppose this . Fossil *Euphractus* excavated in Buenos Aires (Argentina) , Lagoa Santa , Minas Gerais (Brazil) and Tarija (Bolivia) date back to the Pleistocene .

The following five subspecies are recognized :

A 2006 morphological study of the phylogeny of armadillos showed that *Chaetophractus* , *Chlamyphorus* , *Euphractus* and *Zaedyus* form a monophyletic clade . The cladogram below (based only on the extant species) is based on this study .

However , a mitochondrial DNA investigation has concluded that Chlamyphorinae (fairy armadillos) is the sister group of Tolypeutinae (giant , three @-@ banded and naked @-@ tailed armadillos) , with Euphractinae (hairy , six @-@ banded and pichi armadillos) having diverged earlier .

The six @-@ banded armadillo differs from others in the subfamily Euphractinae , which also contains the pichi and hairy armadillos , in having a narrow head and six to seven movable bands on the carapace (the hard shell on the back) . Other names for this armadillo are tatu peludo and tatu peba (in Portuguese) , and ' yellow armadillo ' .

= = Description = =

The six @-@ banded armadillo is the largest in Euphractinae , which also contains the pichi and hairy armadillos ; in fact , it is the third largest armadillo after the giant armadillo and the greater long @-@ nosed armadillo . This armadillo is typically between 40 and 50 centimeters (16 and 20 in) in head @-@ and @-@ body length , and weighs 3 @.@ 2 to 6 @.@ 5 kilograms (7 @.@ 1 to 14 @.@ 3 lb) . The carapace is pale yellow to reddish brown (though not a dark shade of brown or black) , marked by scales of equal length , and scantily covered by buff to white bristle @-@ like hairs ? unlike the hairy armadillos , that are covered by dense hairs . The shell narrows to 70 to 80 percent of its original width towards the top of the head , which is covered by plates arranged in a definite pattern . The forefeet have five distinct toes , each with moderately developed claws , of which the third is the longest .

Like the other euphractines and the pink fairy armadillo , the six @-@ banded armadillo has a

tympanic bulla ; the ears are 32 to 47 centimeters (13 to 19 in) long . There are 9 pairs of teeth on the upper jaw and 10 pairs on the lower jaw ; the teeth are large and strong and are assisted by strong muscles for chewing . A row of scutes , each 13 ? 19 centimeters (5 @. @ 1 ? 7 @. @ 5 in) wide , extends along the back of the neck . The tail , 12 ? 24 centimeters (4 @. @ 7 ? 9 @. @ 4 in) long , is covered by two to four bands of plates on the underside . Some of these plates have holes for scent gland secretions , a feature seen in no other armadillo except a few big hairy armadillos .

= = Ecology and behavior = =

Different studies have recorded different activity patterns for the six @-@ banded armadillo ? some consider it to be diurnal (active mainly during the day) , while others show it is nocturnal (active mainly at night) . It is an alert animal ; unlike other armadillos , it flees on sensing danger and bites if handled . Primarily solitary , six @-@ banded armadillos will congregate only to feed on carrions . A 1983 study in eastern Brazil calculated the mean home range size as 93 @. @ 3 hectares (0 @. @ 360 sq mi) . An efficient digger , this armadillo can dig U @-@ shaped burrows with a single opening , typically in dry areas ; the burrows may or may not be permanent shelters . These burrows can go deep into the ground and help in foraging . A study of burrows dug by the giant , six @-@ banded , southern naked @-@ tailed and greater naked @-@ tailed armadillos showed that all burrows were similar in the slopes of the burrow and the surrounding soil , and the direction of the entrance ; the location preferred for them and time spent in them , however , differed . Burrows could be easily differentiated by their dimensions ; burrows of six @-@ banded armadillos had a mean height of 19 centimeters (7 @. @ 5 in) and were 21 centimeters (8 @. @ 3 in) wide at the opening , and narrowed down to 10 centimeters (3 @. @ 9 in) with a height of 16 centimeters (6 @. @ 3 in) to 21 centimeters (8 @. @ 3 in) into the burrow . Generally , burrows become wide enough to allow the armadillo to turn around as the depth increases . Unlike the moles , that throw the soil to a side while digging , the six @-@ banded armadillo digs with its forefeet and throws the soil behind with its hindfeet . Armadillos defecate outside their burrows .

= = = Diet = = =

The six @-@ banded armadillo is an omnivore that feeds on carrion , small invertebrates , insects , ants , fruits (typically from bromeliads) , palm nuts and tubers . A 2004 study classified it as a " carnivore @-@ omnivore " . In a study in a Brazilian ranch , plant material was found to predominate in the diet . Captive individuals have been observed preying upon large rats . Due to their poor eyesight , armadillos rely on their sense of smell to detect prey and predators . To kill the prey , the armadillo stands on it , grabs it using its teeth and tears it into pieces . Six @-@ banded armadillos can store subcutaneous fat to support themselves at times when food is scarce ; this fat can increase the weight to 8 to 11 kilograms (18 to 24 lb) .

= = = Reproduction = = =

Breeding behaviour has been observed in captivity . Births take place throughout the year . After a gestational period of 60 to 64 days , a litter of one to three is born . Each newborn weighs 95 to 110 grams (3 @. @ 4 to 3 @. @ 9 oz) , and has a hairless and soft carapace ; it can give out soft clicks . The pregnant female builds a nest before giving birth ; if disturbed , the mother can react aggressively and shift her offspring . The eyes , closed at birth , open at 22 to 25 days . Weaning occurs at one month and the juveniles mature by nine months . One of the armadillos lived for nearly 18 years .

= = Habitat and distribution = =

The six @-@ banded armadillo inhabits savannas , primary and secondary forests , cerrados , shrublands and deciduous forests . It can adapt to a variety of habitats ; it can even occur on

agricultural lands and has been recorded at 1 @, @ 600 meters (5 @, @ 200 ft) above the sea level . A study in southeastern Brazil estimated the population density at 0 @. @ 14 individuals per hectare . The same study showed that the six @-@ banded armadillo often displaces and is displaced by the sympatric southern naked @-@ tail armadillo ; this was considered to be helpful in their coexistence . The six @-@ banded armadillo has a wide distribution in South America , from Brazil and southern Suriname in the northeast through Bolivia , Paraguay and Uruguay into northern Argentina in the southeast . Its presence in Peru is doubted .

= = Threats and conservation = =

The IUCN classifies the six @-@ banded armadillo as least concern , due to its wide distribution , good degree of tolerance and presumably large populations . Moreover , it occurs in several protected areas . Though there are no major threats to its survival , six @-@ banded armadillo populations north of the Amazon River might be declining due to few patches of savannas , human settlement and industrial expansion . Moreover , these armadillos are reportedly hunted for medicinal purposes , though their meat is believed to have an unpalatable taste ; in some areas in its range , people detest its meat due to the belief that the animal feeds on " rotting human corpses " . A 2011 study compared the of six- and nine @-@ banded armadillos in Paraíba (Brazil) ; nine @-@ banded armadillo meat tasted better according to the majority of the locals . Consumption of six @-@ banded armadillo meat was not considered safe by the locals for people with certain health problems , such as injuries and hepatitis , a taboo that had stemmed probably from concerns over the armadillo 's diet . Six @-@ banded armadillos often raid cropfields to feed on tender plants ; farmers are known to use traps aided by corn baits for these animals to curb the menace .