



Nine-banded Armadillo

MAMMAL

HABITAT & DIET

Nine-banded armadillos are the only armadillos in the U.S. They live in forests and grasslands. They are omnivores and eat a wide range of food including ants, worms, grubs, and small reptiles.

FUN FACT

Armadillo mothers give birth to identical quadruplets (4 babies). The pups are born with a soft exterior and will stay with their mother until their armor has hardened.



HAVE YOU EVER WORN ARMOR?

Armadillos are funny little creatures. Their name means "little armored one". They are mammals and are classified with sloths and anteaters but they are covered with a carapace or bony exterior. Unlike the turtle's shell that is attached to its vertebrate (back bone), the armadillo's bony plates are made in their skin. They are osteoderms and their armor is similar to lizard or alligator skin.

Osteoderm: osteo = **bone** + derm = **skin**

While most animals would steer clear of a fire ant mound, armadillos are drawn to them. They will dig up the mounds to eat both ants and eggs. They also eat scorpions, spiders, and wasps. Due to their armored exterior, they are protected from the bite or sting of these creatures. Their armor also protects them from predators as it is difficult for predators to penetrate their smooth, tough exterior.

Armadillos have only lived in Tennessee for 30 years. They migrated here from the west. Some suspect that armadillos followed the spread of exotic fire ants into Tennessee. While walking in my local nature preserve, I had the privilege of watching an armadillo up close. It didn't seem to mind my presence as it was busy searching, digging and smelling for food. These delightful animals seem to live without fear.

Do you know that you can put on spiritual armor? In Ephesians 6:10–17, we are instructed dress in an array of armor. These are not physical things like a helmet, a shield, or a sword, but rather an understanding of who God is and His promises to us. By reading God's word, accepting salvation, and expressing faith in God, we ready ourselves to fend off the fiery arrows of the enemy. God has given us protective armor to keep us safe and to fill us with His peace.

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