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# SOUTHERN THREE-BANDED ARMADILLO

(*Tolypetes matacus*)

**Class:** *Mammalia*

**Order:** *Cingulata*

**Family:** *Chlamyphoridae*

**Characteristics:** Length 9 -13 in, tails-2.5 in., wt. 3-3.5 lbs. A three-banded armadillo's body has various shades of yellow to brown. A hard carapace covering the body develops from skin and is composed of strong, bony plates called scutes. The tail, top of head, and outer surfaces of limbs are usually armored. The armor-plating covering the body is divided into two domed shells with three armored bands in between and is joined by flexible bands of skin allowing body to bend in middle snapping lower edges of shells together to close off completely. The plating is unique like fingerprints. An armadillo can walk on its hind legs and powerful, fused, sharp and hoof-like claws. They have poor eyesight but keen sense of smell and hearing. A long sticky, straw-like pink tongue aids in gathering insects.

**Behavior:** Armadillos are solitary other than females with offspring. They can roll completely into a ball to protect themselves from thorny vegetation and predators such as jaguars, alligators, and pumas. Not fossorial, they do not dig burrows but use abandoned burrows of anteaters if available or make dens under dense vegetation. The shell traps air which is warmed by body heat conserving heat loss. Although armored they are easy prey to human hunters.

**Reproduction:** Breeding occurs from October through January. Females can delay implantation for at least 4 months. After a gestation period of 120 days females give birth to a single blind pup the size of a golf ball which will nurse for 10 weeks. The pup's ability to close its shell and walk on the tips of their foreclaws develops quickly. Pups reach sexual maturity and become independent at 9-12 months. Juvenile mortality can be twice that of adults due to predation from coyotes, bobcat, mountain lions, some raptors, and dogs.

**Diet:** Wild: Insects (beetles, ants, and termites), plants and other small animals. Also eat fruit during wet season.

Zoo: Insectivore pellets, meal worms, and fruits and vegetables.

**Conservation:** **SSP Species.** Near Threatened due to widespread habitat loss, exploitation for food, and capture for pet trade.

**FYI:** AKA: La Plata three-banded armadillo  
Armadillo is Spanish for "little armored one."



**Range & Habitat:** Brazil, Northern Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia in grasslands, rainforest, dry forest and swamps.



**Lifespan:** around 20 years in captivity, 15 years in the wild.

**Special Adaptations:**  
Three-banded are the only armadillo that can close up into a complete ball. Claws are sharp and used for defense.

**IUCN Conservation Status:**  
Near Threatened but close to becoming Vulnerable.

