

Armadillo
(*Dasyus novemcinctus*)



The word “Armadillo” is Spanish for “little armored one”. About the size of a house cat, (okay, a very large, twenty-two pound house cat) it has a bony armored shell, a long nose and tail, and a face only its mother could love. What they like to see on the menu are ants, beetles, small reptiles, amphibians and grubs which is why you will see them tenaciously digging with great ease using their long, sharp claws in and around your lawn.

Originating in South America, they took the scenic route, and made their way through Mexico to Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. They range as far east as South Carolina, north all the way to Nebraska. Needless to say, they have been very busy traveling all over, and now to a home near you!

There are twenty species of Armadillo; and the only one found in the United States is the Nine-Banded Armadillo. These guys jump straight up when startled, which is easy to do since it prefers to forage during dawn and twilight. The Armadillo species we have here in Florida does not curl up into a ball, as they have too many plates. Even though it is called the Nine-banded Armadillo, in reality they may have anywhere from six to nine bands. (The Three-banded Armadillo is the one that normally forms a ball when frightened.)



Three Banded Armadillo

They are excavators extraordinaire and like nothing more than to dig burrows near and under the same structures we like so much; you may find them under or alongside your home, concrete slabs, porches, patios and sheds. They create burrows for themselves, which are about eight inches wide and two to twenty-five feet long. Yes, twenty five feet. That is some serious digging! Except during breeding season, they are solitary creatures, so more than likely there is only one in that big hole you see under your porch.

These animals are non-native and therefore not a protected species. If you have one in your yard you can call in a specialist animal trapper to relocate the animal for you.

Medical research finds these animals very valuable in the areas of birth defects, disease, organ transplants and multiple births.

On a side note: When I was a kid, I opened the sliding glass door to the patio. It was around 11:00 PM and dark, but I wanted to let the cat in. Something brushed my ankle, and since I was sure it was the cat (what else would it be?) I did not look down, but walked to the kitchen and poured out some kitty food. In the light of the kitchen, I finally got a look, it was an Armadillo!

