

Giant Anteater

Myrmecophaga tridactyla



Range: Central and South America

Size: :182-217cm (60-84 in)

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Weight : 33-41 kg (73-90 lbs)

: 27-39 kg (60-86 lbs)

Tail: 65-90 cm

Habitat: Grassland forest

Estrus: 3-5 days

Estrus cycle: 51 days

Gestation : 190 days

Litter: 1

Weaning: 24 weeks

Sexual maturity: 36-48 months

Lifestyle: Terrestrial

Activity: Diurnal and Nocturnal

Social:solitary

Breeding: monogamous

Movement :sedentary

Food: ants and termites

IUCN: Least Vulnerable

Subspecies : 3

Longevity: captive: 25 yrs

Wild: n/a

Order: Pilosa Family: Megalonychidae

The Giant Anteater is a large insectivorous mammal which ranges from Belize to Argentina. It inhabits a variety of habitats with access to food the main limiting factor. The giant anteater will most commonly be found foraging on open grasslands like the llanos of Venezuela, near a forested area where it will go to sleep. It is believed that the forest provides cover both from the cold and predators. Although efficient diggers when searching for food, giant anteaters do not dig burrows to sleep in, but use abandoned burrows. If no abandoned burrows are available it will sleep on the ground using its tail to cover itself. In warmer areas or areas with high predator activity, including man, the giant anteater is nocturnal. In colder areas or areas with lower predator activity it will be active in the day.

The giant anteater feeds exclusively on ants and termites (myrmecophagous). It uses its excellent sense of smell to find its prey and then uses its powerful forelimbs and long sharp claws to dig up the nest. Giant anteaters do not have teeth but use a 60 cm long sticky tongue to capture ants and swallow them whole. In order to protect its long claws the giant anteater will walk on the wrists of its forelimbs.

Despite its large range the population of the giant anteater is considered vulnerable by the IUCN. Both habitat destruction and hunting for bushmeat are major threats.

