

## GENUS DASYPUS.—LINN.

## DENTAL FORMULA.

*Incisive*  $\frac{0}{0}$  or  $\frac{2}{4}$ ; *Canine*  $\frac{0-0}{0-0}$ ; *Molars* varying in the several species from 28 to 68; these teeth cylindrical, separate, and without enamel on the inner side.

Head, long; mouth, small; tongue, partially extensible. Body, altogether covered with a shell, or plate armour. Four or five toes to the fore-feet, five toes to the hind-feet. Toes, armed with long nails for digging; mammae, two or four. Tail, rather long, round.

Stomach, simple; intestines, without cæca.

Habit, living in woods, on ants, roots, and putrid animals; rolling themselves up for protection; confined to the warmer parts of America.

Nine species belonging to this genus have been described by authors.

The genus requires a revision, and the species will no doubt, from the rage which exists at present for making new genera, be greatly subdivided.

The generic appellation is derived from *δασυν*, *dasus*, rough, and *πους*, *pous*, a foot.

## DASYPUS PEBA.—DESM.

## NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO.

## PLATE CXLVI.—MALE.

D. Dentibus primoribus laniariisque nullis, molaribus  $\frac{8-8}{8-8} = 32$ , cauda tereti, cingulis circumdata, ad apicem solum nuda, testa zonis mobilibus, auriculis longissimis.

## CHARACTERS.

*No incisive or canine teeth; Molars*  $\frac{8-8}{8-8} = 32$ .

*Tail, round, with rings nearly its whole length. Body, with mobile bands; ears, very long.*

## SYNONYMES.

DASYPUS PEBA. Desm., Mammal., p. 368.

“ SEPTEM CINCTUS, D. OCTO CINCTUS, and D. NOVEM CINCTUS. Linn.



ARMADILLO BRAZILIANUS. Briss., Regne Animal, 40.

" MEXICANUS. " " 41.

" GUYANENSIS. " " 42.

CACHICAME. Buffon, Hist. Nat., x. p. 250.

TATOU NOIR. D'Azara, Paraguay, vol. ii. p. 175.

TATU PEPA. Marc., Brazil, 231.

NINE, EIGHT, OR SEVEN BANDED ARMADILLO. Pennant's Quadrupeds, Synopsis, pp. 324, 253.

PIG-HEADED ARMADILLO. Grew, Mus, p. 19, t. i.

SIX-BANDED ARMADILLO. Shaw's General Zoology, vol. i., part 1, p. 189.

GÜRTELTHIER MIT ACHTZEHN GÜRTELN. Schreb., pp. 227, 228.

#### DESCRIPTION.

This singular production of nature, it might be said, resembles a small pig saddled with the shell of a turtle; it is about the size of a large opossum; the head is small, and greatly elongated, and the neck can be retracted so far as to entirely withdraw the head under the shell. Muzzle, narrow and pointed; mouth, large; tongue, aculeated, and can be drawn out three inches beyond the nose.

The head and nose are covered with rather small plates irregularly shaped, most of them hexagonal. There are on the back nine transverse bands in the specimen from which we describe, although the number of bands is occasionally only seven or eight. The shoulders, hams, and rump are protected by two plates, covered with large scales regularly arranged in distinct rows following the direction of the movable transverse bands, and descending lower towards the ground than the bands, forming a sort of flap over the shoulders and over the hips like the skirt of a saddle. Thus the covering of the head may be compared to a helmet, and that of the shoulders and on the hind parts to breast-plates and thigh-pieces, the whole forming an almost impenetrable coat-of-mail.

The tail is protected by numerous rings, furnished with scales of the same substance, shape, and hardness, as those on other parts of the upper surface of the body. The texture of this shell-like covering of the Armadillo appears to be something between turtle-shell or horn, and very hard sole-leather. The eyes are small, and placed far back in the head, on a line with the corner of the mouth.

Legs, short and stout; nails, strong, sharp, very slightly hooked, and not channelled beneath; there are four toes on each fore-foot, the middle ones being much the longest, and the outer, shorter, and situated far behind; there are five toes on the hind-feet, the central being longest, the first and fifth shortest, and the two others nearly of an equal length. Ears, long, narrow, and pointed, destitute of hair, and the skin on their upper



surface slightly granulated, but not protected by scales. The under surface of the body is only covered by a soft leathery skin, as also the legs; the front of each foot is protected by scales for about two inches above the toes.

A few scattered hairs can be observed on the under surface of the body, and here and there a single hair along the edges of the plates above; the animal may nevertheless be described as hairless. Mammæ, four.

#### COLOUR.

Entire surface of body, ochreous brownish-yellow; browner along the sides of the head and beneath the ears; feet and nails, yellowish-brown.

#### DIMENSIONS.

	Foot.	Inches.
From point of nose to root of tail, - - - - -	1	6
Tail, - - - - -		8
Height of ear, - - - - -		2
Point of nose to eye, - - - - -		2 $\frac{7}{8}$
Nose to ear, - - - - -		4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Longest nail on fore-foot, - - - - -		1
“ “ on hind-foot, - - - - -		$\frac{7}{8}$

#### HABITS.

The Armadillo is not “a fighting character,” but on the contrary is more peaceable than even the opossum, which will at times bite in a sly and treacherous manner, quite severely. Indeed nature, whilst giving to the Armadillo a covering of horn-plates or scales, which serve to protect it from many of its foes, has not supplied it, as she has other non-combating animals—the porcupine for instance—with sharp-pointed quills or spines, and its only means of aggression are its claws, which although large are better adapted for digging than aught else. The animal, however, sometimes has been known when caught by the tail, to kick rather hard with both fore and hind-legs, so that its captor was glad to let go, for it possesses great strength in the limbs. A friend of ours who formerly resided in South America had a pet Armadillo in his bed-chamber, where it generally remained quiet during the day, but in the dark hours was active and playful. One night after he had gone to bed, the Armadillo began dragging about the chairs and some boxes that were placed around the room, and continued so busily engaged at this occupation that our friend



could not sleep. He at length arose and struck a light, when to his surprise he found boxes he had supposed greatly too heavy for such an animal to stir, had been moved and placed together so as to form a sort of den or hiding-place in a corner, into which the animal retreated with great apparent satisfaction, and from whence it could only be drawn out after a hard struggle, and the receipt of some severe strokes from its claws. But in general the Armadillo does not evince any disposition to resent an attack, and in fact one of them when teased by a pet parrot, struck out with its claws only till pressed by the bird, when it drew in its head and feet, and secure in its tough shell, yielded without seeming to care much about it, to its noisy and mischievous tormentor, until the parrot left it to seek some less apathetic and more vulnerable object to worry.

But when the Armadillo has a chance of escape by digging into the ground, it is no sluggard in its movements, and progresses towards the depths of the soil with surprising rapidity. This animal however on being much alarmed rolls itself up, and does not attempt to fly, and it is chiefly when it has been digging, and is at or near the mouth of a hole, that it tries to escape; preferring generally, to be kicked, tumbled about with a stick, or be bitten at by a dog, to making an effort to run.

We have heard it asserted that when it has the advantage of being on a hill or elevated spot, the Armadillo upon the approach of danger, forms a ball-shaped mass of its body, with the tail doubled under the belly, starts down the hill and rolls to the bottom.

The principal food of this genus consists of ants of various species, which are so abundant in some portions of Central and South America as to be great pests to the inhabitants of those parts of the world. A large species of this family, however (*Dasypus giganteus*), is described by D'AZARA as feeding on the carcasses of dead animals; and it appears that in neighbourhoods where that Armadillo is found, the graves of the dead are protected by strong double boards, to prevent the animal from penetrating, and devouring the bodies. Armadillos are said to eat young birds, eggs, snakes, lizards, &c. It should perhaps here be remarked that the large Armadillo just mentioned, although covered with plates or scales like our present species (*D. peba*), and similar in form, is very different in its organization, and has indeed been characterized by F. CUVIER under the new genus *Priodontis*.

To return to our present species. The Nine-banded Armadillo is, as we were informed by Captain CHARLES H. BALDWIN, kept in Nicaragua, not only by the people of the ranchos, but by the inhabitants of some of the little towns, to free their houses from ants, which, as is said, it can follow by the smell. When searching for ants about a house, the animal puts out



the tongue and scrapes the ants into the mouth from around the posts on which the houses are raised a little above the ground, and has been known to dig down under the floors, and remain absent for three or four weeks at a time.

When burrowing this species utters a slight squeak, quite faint however. They are said to dig down in a straight direction when they discover a subterranean colony of ants, without beginning at the mouth or entrance to the ant-hole. There are two favourite species of ant with the Armadillo in Nicaragua, one of which makes nests in the forks of trees in the forests. The tree ants are white, the others small and black. The Armadillos keep about the roots of the trees in order to feed upon the former, and as we have already said, dig for the latter. They also root up the ground with their pig-like snout, and do some damage to gardens. They are very persevering when in pursuit of ants, and whilst they turn up the light soil with the snout, keep the tongue busy taking in the insects.

It has been assured us that when a line of ants (which may sometimes extend some distance in the woods) are busily engaged in carrying provision to the general storehouse, they scatter in every direction at the instant the Armadillo begins to dig down towards their stronghold, evidently having some communication from head-quarters equivalent to "*sauve qui peut*."

The gait of these animals when not alarmed is like that of a tortoise, and about as fast. They have nails powerfully organized for digging, whilst their legs are only long enough to raise the body from the ground. The holes the Armadillo excavates in the earth for its own purposes, are generally dug at an angle of forty-five degrees, are winding, and from six to eight feet long.

The Armadillo is generally much darker in colour than the specimen we figured, which having been a pet, was washed and clean when we drew it. When in the woods these animals partake more or less of the colour of the soil in which they find their food, as some of the dirt sticks to their shell. Those that have been domesticated prefer sleeping above ground, but this animal when wild lives in burrows, holes in the roots of trees, or under rocks.

From our esteemed friend Capt. J. P. McCOWN, U. S. A., we have the following: "The Armadillo is to be found in the chaparals on the Rio Grande. I have seen their shells or coat-of-mail on the prairies; whether carried there by larger animals, or birds, or whether they inhabit the prairies, I cannot say. I have seen many that were kept as pets and appeared quite tame. I am inclined to the opinion that there are two species—the larger living on the low and wet lands and in the canebrakes, the smaller occupying the rocky hills and cliffs."





En Stone of W<sup>th</sup> E. Hitchcock

*Nine-banded Armadillo*

Drawn from Nature by J.W. Audubon

Lith. Printed & Col<sup>d</sup> by J.T. Bowen, Phil





This animal is said to produce three or four young at a time. Its flesh is eaten by the Spaniards and natives. It has been described to us by Americans who ate of it during the Mexican war, to be about equal to the meat of the opossum; we have heard, however, from South Americans, that it is considered quite a delicacy, being white, juicy, and tender; it is cooked by roasting it in the shell.

The South American negroes catch the Armadillo at night. When they are in the woods their dogs scent the animal and run it to its hole (if it be near enough to its retreat to reach it). It is then dug out by the blacks, although sometimes known to excavate its burrow to a considerable depth below its usual place of rest, whilst the diggers are at work after it. Two or three of these animals generally keep together, or near each other, and the negroes always expect to kill more, when they have captured one. They are said to run pretty fast when trying to reach their holes, but the manner of their gait at such times is not known to us. Their holes are often dug in the sides of steep banks or hills, and in thick and dense parts of the woods.

We have heard that in some parts of Nicaragua the Armadillos are so common that they can be purchased for a *medio*—six and a quarter cent piece.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

This animal is described as existing in Brazil in South America; it is found in Guiana and Central America, is common in Mexico, and is found in the southern portions of Texas. It is not very uncommon near the lower shores of the Rio Grande.

#### GENERAL REMARKS.

It is stated that another species of Armadillo inhabits the northern part of Mexico and penetrates also into Texas. Thus far, however, we have been unable to detect any other species than the present as having been seen within the geographical limits to which this work has been restricted.

It is now ascertained that the number of bands on the Armadillo forms no safe guide in designating the species, inasmuch as the bands vary in different individuals of the same species, and D'AZARA, moreover, has shown that there are individuals of different species which have the same number of bands.





Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Dasypus peba, Nine-Banded Armadillo [Pl. CXLVI, male]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 220–225.  
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