

Name: _____

The Pink Fairy Armadillo

By Lydia Lukidis

Here's a riddle for you: which animal is tiny, with a pink shell and fluffy white fur underneath? You may have a hard time guessing this one! This animal is not so common. It is also a little strange. Actually, you may have never even heard of it. It's a pink fairy armadillo!



Photo by: Mariella Superina

So what makes this little critter so unique? First of all, it has a funny name and it's the color pink. It also has a really long tail that acts like a fifth leg. A pink fairy armadillo's tail makes the animal more stable while it digs. Its shell is also special because it acts like a heater. The shell pumps blood in and out of it. That way, the animal can raise or lower its body temperature. That's pretty cool! In fact, the reason the armadillo's shell is pink is from all the blood going in and out.

Usually, an armadillo's shell is attached to its body. However, a pink fairy armadillo's shell is not fully attached to its body. Instead, the shell is connected to a membrane that runs along the spine.

The pink fairy armadillo is the smallest kind of armadillo. This armadillo's entire body is only about 5 inches long, and it weighs less than a pound. Even though it is so small, a pink fairy armadillo has gigantic claws. In fact, its claws are so big, it has trouble walking on hard surfaces like rock. These claws help the armadillo dig into the earth for food. This animal can dig very quickly. If it feels threatened, it will bury itself in the earth in just a few seconds.

As for food, the pink fairy armadillo loves to chomp on ants. That is its favorite meal. It also eats worms and other creepy crawlers. Sometimes it will even eat plants and roots.

If you want to see a pink fairy armadillo, it may not be that easy. First of all, they only live in Argentina. They prefer to live on the sandy plains or in the dry grass. Second of all, they rarely come out in public. They mostly stay hidden from view. Some scientists spend years studying them yet may have never actually seen a pink fairy armadillo in the wild! It is difficult to say whether the pink fairy armadillos are endangered because scientists don't have enough data on them. Their populations may be healthy, or they could be disappearing. We just don't know. Sometimes, pink fairy armadillos get eaten by other wild animals, so they keep out of sight much of the time.



Photo by: Guillermo Ferraris

Our world is an amazing place! There are so many special animals on the planet that we don't see every day. I bet today you learned about an animal you never knew about.

About the Author



Lydia Lukidis is a published children's author with a multi-disciplinary background that spans the fields of literature, theater, and puppetry. Lydia's picture book, *Gerbs in the House: The Dilly Dally Bedtime Routine*, is now available. Find out if Mocha will ever get his silly son to sleep!

Lukidis, Lydia. *Gerbs in the House: The Dilly Dally Bedtime Routine* ISBN: 978-0-9917402-7-7

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1. How does a pink fairy armadillo get its color?
- a. The pink color results from the armadillo's diet of pink plants, such as flowers.
 - b. The pink color comes from the blood pumping in and out of the armadillo's shell.
 - c. The pink color arises when the armadillo is threatened, angered, or scared.
 - d. The pink color comes from the armadillo's shiny body and shell reflecting sunlight.

2. In the box below, circle the object that most closely matches the pink fairy armadillo in length.

baseball bat	fork	scarf	canoe
broomstick	paperclip	ruler	chalkboard

3. According to the information you read in the article, describe **one advantage** and **one disadvantage** of a pink fairy armadillo's giant claws.

4. Put a check mark () next to each reason why it is difficult to see a pink fairy armadillo in the wild.

- Pink fairy armadillos only come out at night.
- Pink fairy armadillos hide from other animals that may eat them.
- Pink fairy armadillos are endangered.
- Pink fairy armadillos mostly stay hidden from view.

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

_____ 1. endangered

_____ 2. plains

_____ 3. stable

_____ 4. membrane

_____ 5. chomp

_____ 6. gigantic

_____ 7. critter

_____ 8. threatened

_____ 9. unique

_____ 10. riddle

a. a thin structure in a living organism that acts as a boundary or barrier

b. very large; enormous

c. set apart; different; special

d. at risk of becoming extinct

e. intimidated; scared

f. steady, balanced

g. puzzle; question to solve

h. munch or chew food

i. wide expanses of flat land

j. creature; small animal

ANSWER KEY

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1. How does a pink fairy armadillo get its color? **b.**
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3. According to the information you read in the article, describe **one advantage** and **one disadvantage** of a pink fairy armadillo's giant claws.

One advantage is the claws help the armadillo to dig very quickly.

One disadvantage is the claws make it hard for the armadillo to move around on hard surfaces.

4. Put a check mark () next to each reason why it is difficult to see a pink fairy armadillo in the wild.

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