

by Guy Belleranti

In Mexico, Central America, and South America, there lives a most peculiar-looking animal with four legs, a long snout, big ears, and flexible tail. It's the tamandua!

Like its relative the giant anteater, the tamandua has long claws on its front feet, a long snout and a long worm-like tongue. Also like the giant anteater, mothers give birth to only



one young at a time. In both cases the young rides on Mom's back for several months.

The tamandua also has many differences from the giant anteater. One difference is

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anchors or supports the animal when it needs to defend itself with its front claws. The tail makes a super pillow for sleeping.

Hollow trees, abandoned burrows and other natural shelters are common daytime sleeping places for the tamandua. Then at night, out it comes using its great sense of smell to search for dinner. Insects like termites, ants, and bees are food favorites. It eats bee honey and soft fruit, too.

Sometimes the tamandua will find food in the trees. Other times it finds food while walking on the ground. Because of its long claws, a tamandua must walk on the outside edges of its feet. When it finds a termite mound or other insect colony the tamandua digs in with its claws. Then it sticks its bristly 16-inch tongue out of its pencil-wide mouth and slurps

up dinner. The tamandua has no teeth. Its stomach grinds up the food after it's swallowed.

Like the giant anteater the tamandua does not stay long at any feeding site, but moves on to another. This way it never destroys the site and can return again. Moving on also keeps the tamandua from getting bitten or stung by angry insects. Its thick coarse fur provides protection, too.



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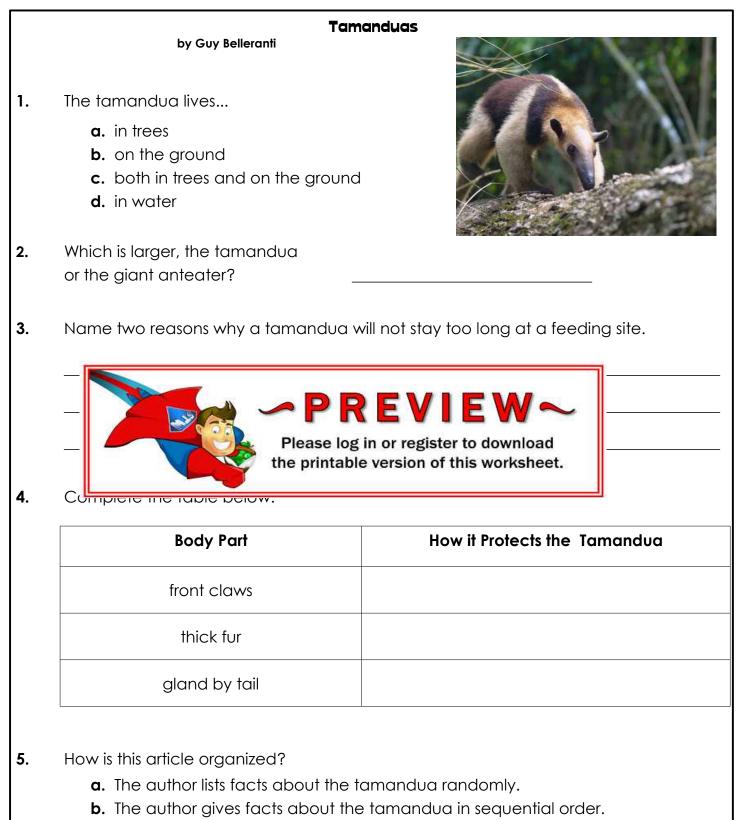
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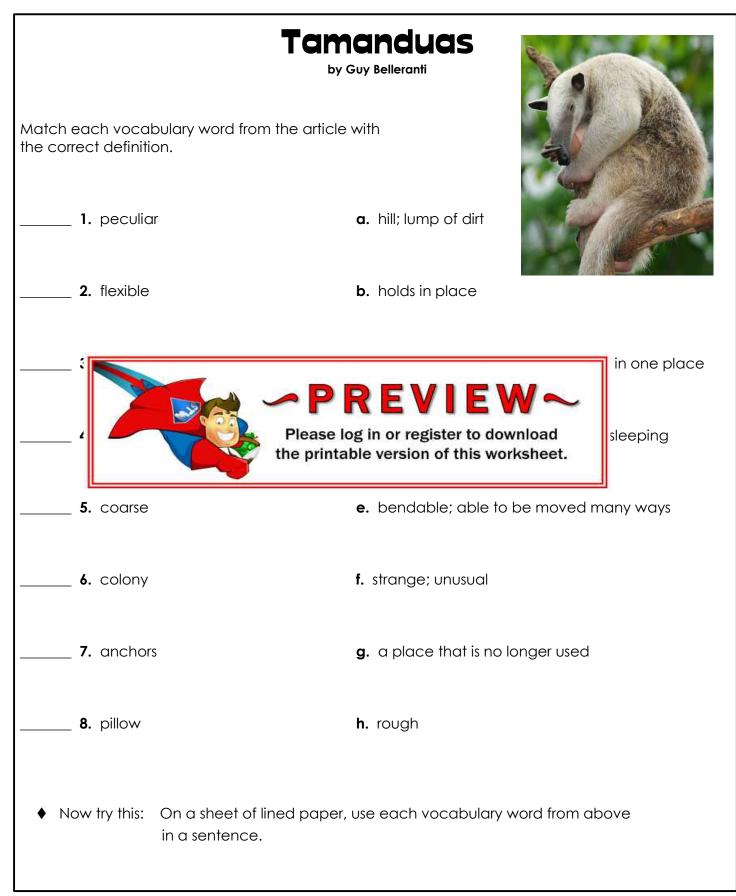
About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences working with wild animals and teaching others.

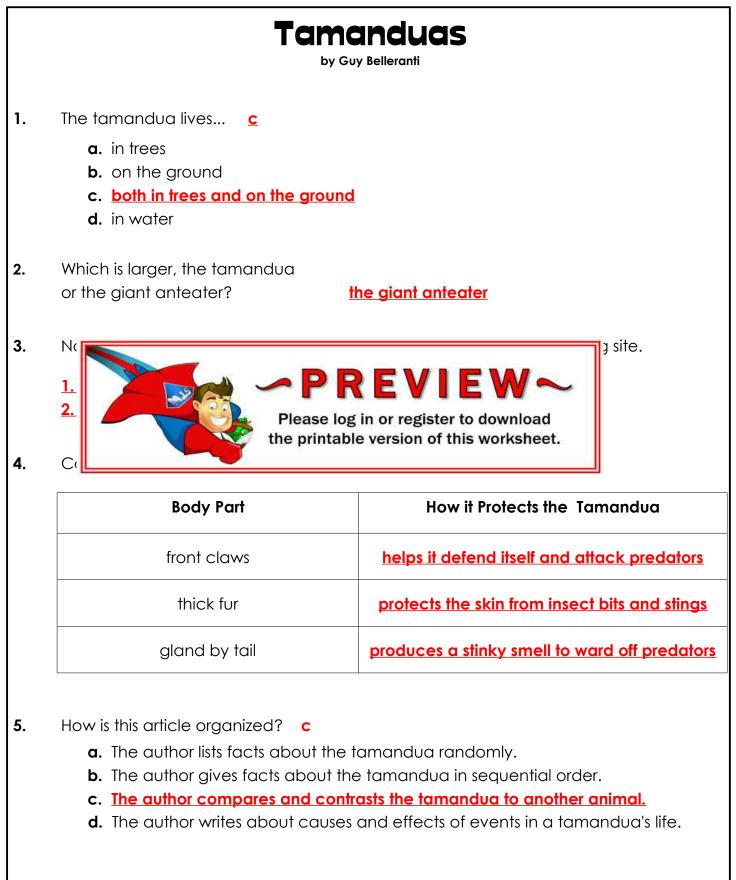
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- c. The author compares and contrasts the tamandua to another animal.
- d. The author writes about causes and effects of events in a tamandua's life.



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