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 size. While a giant anteater can weigh from 75 to well over 100 pounds, the tamandua weighs only as much as a cat or small dog.

Unlike the giant anteater, the tamandua doesn't just live on the ground. It also lives in the trees, and has a prehensile tail that can help it climb and grasp limbs. The tail also 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.

In addition to its claws the tamandua has a way to protect itself that even the giant anteater doesn’t have. It has a gland by its tail similar to that of a skunk. This gland creates such a stink that predators like jaguars and other cats often go the other way!

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.
1. The tamandua lives...
   a. in trees
   b. on the ground
   c. both in trees and on the ground
   d. in water

2. Which is larger, the tamandua
   or the giant anteater?

3. Name two reasons why a tamandua will not stay too long at a feeding site.
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

4. Complete the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Part</th>
<th>How it Protects the Tamandua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>front claws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thick fur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gland by tail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How is this article organized?
   a. The author lists facts about the tamandua randomly.
   b. The author gives facts about the tamandua in sequential order.
   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.
Tamanduas
by Guy Belleranti

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

1. peculiar — a. hill; lump of dirt
2. flexible — b. holds in place
3. — in one place
4. — sleeping
5. coarse — e. bendable; able to be moved many ways
6. colony — f. strange; unusual
7. anchors — g. a place that is no longer used
8. pillow — h. rough

♦ Now try this: On a sheet of lined paper, use each vocabulary word from above in a sentence.
ANSWER KEY

Tamanduas
by Guy Belleranti

1. The tamandua lives...  c
   a. in trees
   b. on the ground
   c. both in trees and on the ground
   d. in water

2. Which is larger, the tamandua or the giant anteater?  the giant anteater

3. Name two reasons why a tamandua will not stay too long at a feeding site.
   1. It doesn't destroy the site so it can return again.
   2. Moving away will prevent it from being attacked by angry insects.

4. Complete the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Part</th>
<th>How it Protects the Tamandua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>front claws</td>
<td>helps it defend itself and attack predators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thick fur</td>
<td>protects the skin from insect bits and stings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gland by tail</td>
<td>produces a stinky smell to ward off predators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How is this article organized?  c
   a. The author lists facts about the tamandua randomly.
   b. The author gives facts about the tamandua in sequential order.
   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.

Super Teacher Worksheets - www.superteacherworksheets.com
Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

f 1. peculiar  a. hill; lump of dirt  

e 2. flexible  b. holds in place  

g 3. abandoned  c. group of people or animals living in one place  

a 4. mound  d. soft pad to rest your head when sleeping  

h 5. coarse  e. bendable; able to be moved many ways  

b 6. colony  f. strange; unusual  

b 7. anchors  g. a place that is no longer used  

d 8. pillow  h. rough  

♦ Now try this: On a sheet of lined paper, use each vocabulary word from above in a sentence.