The Scaliest Mammal in the World

By Guy Belleranti

In Africa and Asia lives the scaliest mammal in the world. It looks like a mix between a space alien, a pinecone with legs, and a skinny-nosed, long-tailed artichoke. This mammal is the pangolin.

Sleep in tree hollows. Their tails are prehensile. This means the tail acts like an extra limb, gripping branches.

Pangolins have a great sense of smell. They can sniff out insects both on the ground and in the fruit and flowers of trees. They have no teeth. Instead, they use long sticky tongues to lick up the insects.

Because of their armor and their diet, people often call pangolins “scaly anteaters”. However, pangolins aren’t related to anteaters. They’re in their own unique family.

Pangolin mothers usually give birth to one baby. The newborn’s scales are soft, but begin hardening within days.

Like many animals, pangolins are losing their habitat to farms, roads, and other human activities. In addition, some people break the law and hunt them for their scales and meat. As a result, pangolins are one of the world’s most endangered groups of animals.
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1. Based on the information you read in the article, which statement about pangolins and anteaters is not true?
   a. Both pangolins and anteaters are mammals.

3. According to the article, a pangolin’s scales are made up of keratin. What part of the human body is also made up of keratin?

   ________________________________

4. How do pangolins find food to eat?

   ________________________________
   ________________________________

5. Based on what you read, which of the following is the biggest threat to pangolins?
   a. larger, more powerful animals
   b. harmful human activities
   c. competition with other pangolins
   d. natural disasters and extreme weather patterns
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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

5. ______ unique
6. ______ burrows
7. ______ prehensile
8. ______ termites
9. ______ endangered
10. ______ hollows

e. insects that live in mounds and eat wood
f. a hard, protective covering
g. holes or cavities inside something
h. distinct, different from anything else
i. referring to an animal’s tail, the ability to grasp or grip things
j. having to do with the earth
In the article, “The Scaliest Mammal in the World,” you learned that many people think pangolins are related to anteaters, even though they aren’t. Based on the information you learned in the article, write about three similarities between pangolins and anteaters that might make people think this way.

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Name: ____________________________________________
1. Based on the information you read in the article, which statement about pangolins and anteaters is not true?
   a. Both pangolins and anteaters are mammals.
   b. Both pangolins and anteaters are warm-blooded.
   c. Both pangolins and anteaters eat insects.
   d. Both pangolins and anteaters are related species.

2. What do the eight species of pangolins have in common?
   a. They are all found on the continent of Asia.
   b. They are all nocturnal.
   c. All eight species live on the ground.
   d. All eight species live in trees.

3. According to the article, a pangolin’s scales are made up of keratin. What part of the human body is also made up of keratin?
   __________________________________________________________________________________

4. How do pangolins find food to eat?
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

5. Based on what you read, which of the following is the biggest threat to pangolins?
   a. larger, more powerful animals
   b. harmful human activities
   c. competition with other pangolins
   d. natural disasters and extreme weather patterns

5. Based on what you read, which of the following is the biggest threat to pangolins? 
   a. larger, more powerful animals
   b. **harmful human activities**
   c. competition with other pangolins
   d. natural disasters and extreme weather patterns

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The Scaliest Mammal

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

c. a vegetable covered in scale-like bracts
d. holes or tunnels that animals dig in the ground to live in
e. insects that live in mounds and eat wood
f. a hard, protective covering
j. referring to an animal’s tail, the ability to grasp or grip things

Preview
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9. a. endangered
10. g. hollows

i. having to do with the earth