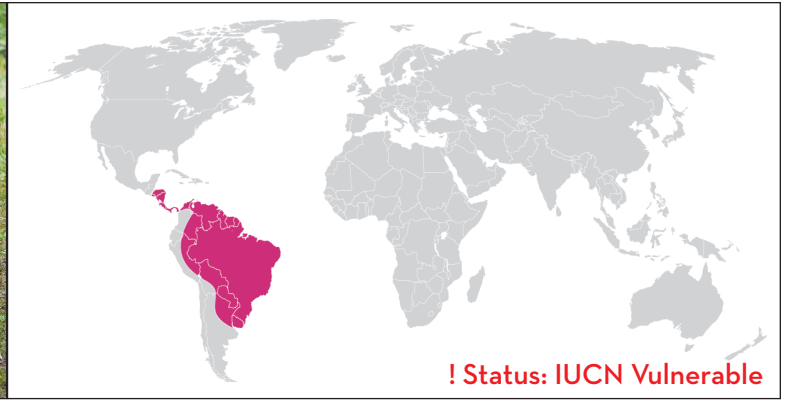


## GIANT ANTEATER

updated September 2017



! Status: IUCN Vulnerable

<b>Range</b>	Central and South America, from southern Belize and Guatemala to northern Argentina
<b>Habitat</b>	Tropical and dry forests, savannas, and grasslands
<b>Diet (wild)</b>	Termites, ants, some fruit and occasional carrion (decaying flesh of a dead animal)
<b>Diet (captivity)</b>	Mazuri insectivore diet (pellets mixed with water to make mush) and crickets; also enjoy avocados and yogurt
<b>Description/ Size</b>	Length: 40–48 inches; tail: additional 28–35 inches; weight: 60–140 pounds (in captivity, they average 90–100 pounds.) Anteaters are about the same weight of a golden retriever, but their thick and bushy tail makes them look longer. Males are heavier than females. They have multicolored brown to gray to white hair that feels like straw and grows especially long on the tail. There is a stripe of black fur that stretches from under the nose to the middle of the back. Their hairy and bushy tail is often used as a blanket or shade from the sun.
<b>Lifespan</b>	Wild: Unknown. Captivity: Average 12–14 years. The oldest known is 35 years old at the Little Rock Zoo, Ark.
<b>Reproduction</b>	In the wild, anteaters breed between March and May. They can breed at any time of the year when living in zoos. Gestation period is 190 days and young are about 5 pounds at birth. Females normally give birth to a single baby (called a pup) and twins are rare. Pups are born with a full coat of very short hair and look almost identical to the adults. Mammary glands are on the mother's front between her forelegs and pups have to move their tongue out of the way to nurse. After birth, the young immediately ride on their mother's back may continue doing so for up to a year. Pups are weaned about 9 months of age and leave their mother when full grown, at about 2 years.
<b>Behavior</b>	Anteaters are solitary animals and only come together to mate. They walk on their knuckles and the side of their paws (unlike bears or raccoons, which walk on flat feet, or cats and dogs, which walk in their toes.). Anteaters can be defensive when they feel threatened and can be dangerous due to their incredibly strong forearms and sharp claws. Since they do not have good vision or hearing, anteaters rely on their acute sense of smell to detect ant/termite mounds and then rip into them with their sharp and formidable front claws. Their tongue will dart into the mound up to 150 times per minute, and the tongue's sticky saliva and barbs pick up the ants and termites. Anteaters will typically stay at one mound for a short time and then move on to prevent wiping out their food source.
<b>Our animals</b>	1 male (Wayne). Born: March 30, 2016. Arrived at Potter Park Zoo from the San Francisco Zoo in September 2017
<b>Cool stuff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anteaters have the longest tongue in relation to its body size of any mammal. Their tongue protrudes over 1 foot from the mouth and is based in the sternum where it is split. There are barbs on the tongue for catching ants and termites.</li> <li>• Anteaters have tiny mouths with no teeth and do not chew their food. Instead, they have a very strong single-chambered stomach.</li> <li>• Anteaters can eat 30,000+ ants/termites per day.</li> <li>• Ants and termites do bite them, but their skin is stronger than most.</li> <li>• When anteaters stick out their tongue slowly, they are probably yawning.</li> <li>• Anteaters have a low metabolic rate and their body temperature is lower than other mammals.</li> <li>• Anteaters can catch human influenza.</li> <li>• In the wild, jaguars are the main predator of anteaters.</li> <li>• If stressed, anteaters may secrete a white substance from their eyes.</li> <li>• Threats in the wild: Cars, wildfire or fires started for agricultural purposes, habitat loss (logging), disease, people shooting them to protect property or due to superstitious beliefs, and hunting for food in rural areas.</li> </ul>

Phylum  
ChordataClass  
MammaliaOrder  
EdentataFamily  
MyrmecophagidaeGenus  
Myrmecophagaspecies  
*M. tridactyla*