

Pangolins

Pangolin Facts

A pangolin is an odd-looking animal that belongs to the group of anteaters with scales. There are eight different species of pangolins. Four of them live in Asia, four in Africa. They prefer savannah woodlands, dry sandy areas and rocky slopes. Pangolins live between 12 and 20 years in captivity (depends on the species).



Appearance

- A pangolin's body is covered with hard, brown scales. The scales cover every piece of their body except their forehead, belly and the inner side of their legs.
- Pangolins have five toes on each foot. The first and last digits on the front feet are reduced. The middle three digits are well developed. They have very sharp claws, which serve as a perfect tool for digging. Their front legs are shorter than their hind legs.
- Pangolins have a prehensile tail which provides balance and holds the animal while hanging from the branches of the trees.
- Pangolins have poor eyesight, but they have an excellent sense of smell. They do not have an external ear, but they can hear well.



Diet

- Pangolins have a very long, rod-shaped and sticky tongue. Pangolins insert their tongue in the termite tunnels to collect their meal. While doing that, they keep their nostrils and ears closed to protect themselves from the angry ants.
- Pangolins can eat up to 70 million insects per night. They eat usually 90 times during the night, where each meal lasts one minute. There are just 19 species of termites and ants that pangolin likes to eat.
- Pangolins do not have teeth so they swallow sand and small stones along with insects to facilitate the grinding of their food and digestion.

Predators

- Besides humans, the main predators of pangolins are lions, tigers and leopards. Pangolins defend themselves by curling into a ball exposing its sharp scales. This also helps the pangolin to keep its sensitive body parts hidden.

Habitat

- Pangolins mainly live in Asia and Africa.
- Pangolins are nocturnal (active at night) animals and they live a solitary life. They sleep in underground burrows.

Babies

- Babies spend the first days of their lives in the den. The mother has to leave it every time she goes to search for food. If the mother senses danger, she will move her baby to another den.
- When the baby is old enough, it travels with its mother by riding on the base of her tail.

