



Pangolin (*Manis javanica*)

This mammal, commonly known as Pangolin and Scaly Ant Eater, belongs to the Order Pholidota, under the Manidae family. There are seven species under its only genus, *Manis*, which is grouped into Asiatic and African (its geographical distribution and basis for distinguishing the species). *Manis javanica* is an Asiatic species found ranging from Myanmar to Borneo, *M. pentadactyla* is from China, Taiwan and Nepal, and *M. crassicaudata* (Indian pangolin) from the whole of India and Sri Lanka. *M. longicaudata*, *M. tricuspis*, *M. temminckii* and *M. gigantea* are African species.

M. javanica measures an average 103 cm (58 cm head and body and 45 cm tail) with hairs at their side head, throat, chest and belly, and "scales", mainly on the back and feet. The presence of "scales", which is normally found in reptiles, is an unusual feature for mammals like the anteater. But the "scales" of an anteater are just hair fused together and serve as the protective armour, ironically, against the bites of ants – its food. It also feeds on termites using its sticky, long and extendable tongue that is about 25 cm in adults. Because an anteater has no teeth, the insects directly enter into its stomach "uncrushed" and "mechanically ground there". As reported, the stomach could contain over 200,000 ants and pupae.

The Anteater has a small pointed head and narrow mouth with small ears and eyes protected by heavy and thick eyelids. It often walks using its hind legs, which is longer than the fore ones. Its four limbs have five clawed digits strong enough to tear and break open ant and termite mounds or nests.



A nocturnal animal, the anteater is shy and slow. When disturbed, it protects itself by curling into a tight ball like armadillos, with the scales at the surface, then rolls rapidly. Also as a defensive action, pangolins "eject well-directed jets of an ill-smelling liquid from the anal region".

M. javanica is now on Appendix 2 of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) because it is intensively exploited for its skin, meat and "scales". The skin is used for making leather boots and shoes. The meat is a delicacy among indigenous people. Lastly, the "scales" are believed to be sources of medicine for fever and skin diseases by the Chinese.

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