

The Pink Fairy Armadillo

By David Everson

On day six of creation, God created the beasts of the earth (Genesis 1:25). Among beasts that God created is one on the extreme end of its family tree, the pink fairy armadillo, also called a “sand-swimmer” because it is said to move through soil as fast as a fish swims in water. It is an animal that deserves a better understanding of its physical features and lifestyle. Let’s look into the life and features of this “beast of the field.”

The pink fairy armadillo is the smallest member of armadillo family, only being 3.5 to 4.5 inches long and weighing about 4.2 ounces. Its life is spent in the deserts of central Argentina and can be found inhabiting sandy plains, dunes and scrubby grassland habitats. It gets its name from the pink color of the shell, which comes from underlying blood vessels that show up through the shell, giving it a pale rose or pink color. The pink fairy armadillos have small eyes, silky yellowish white fur and a flexible dorsal shell that is solely attached to its body by a thin dorsal membrane.

This animal is nocturnal and lives largely alone. It has a diet of mainly insects, worms, snails and various plant parts that it finds chiefly by the sense of smell and hearing. It’s burrowing ability comes from its two front claws, which are very strong and very tough.

Heavy storms and rainfall will force the pink fairy armadillos to come out of their burrows where they spend most of their day. The reason for this is that if the tunnels flood, their fur will get wet, and with wet fur, they cannot warm their bodies back up, especially at night. This, of course, would be fatal for this small creature.

The armadillo families are well known for the leathery shells covering the majority of their backs. The pink fairy armadillo has this characteristic also, but its shell is **much softer and more flexible**. This protective shell of the animal, as earlier mentioned, is only attached by a thin membrane along the spinal column of the animal, which means it is very loose on the body. It can curl up to protect the vulnerable soft underside, which is covered with a dense covering of white hairs. The armored shell consists of 24 bands that allow the animal to curl up in a ball, and the armor is flattened in the back portion of the animal so that it can compress dirt behind it as it is digging. This compression strategy is thought to help prevent tunnel collapses. It is also thought that the shell can help with temperature regulation. Since the underlying blood vessels are so close to the surface, the animal can control the amount of surface area exposed to the environment in order to gain or lose heat by moving blood deeper into its body or closer to the surface.

The pink fairy armadillo is really one of the very unique beasts of the field that God has created. May we always be thankful for the exceptional creatures that have been created around us.



[Editor's Note: Like so many uncommon creatures on our planet, the pink fairy armadillo defies human imagination and can only be attributable to an omnipotent Designer and Creator (Romans 1:20). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]