

THE BRAZILIAN THREE-BANDED ARMADILLO *TOLYPEUTES TRICINCTUS* IN MARANHÃO

The original distribution of the recently rediscovered Brazilian three-banded armadillo *Tolypeutes tricinctus* (Santos *et al.*, 1994) is broadly described as northeastern Brazil, with the type locality designated as Pernambuco (Sanborn, 1930; Cabrera, 1957-61). This armadillo is said to be endemic of the Caatinga ecosystem, a semiarid thorny scrub formation that covers most part of the northeast region, west of Parnaíba river, into the northern part of Minas Gerais in the southeast (Fonseca *et al.*, 1994). The species range is not all clear, due to the scarcity of specimens in the world's museums (Wetzel, 1985; Silva & Oren, 1993; Santos *et al.*, 1994). In this note I describe the occurrence of *T. tricinctus* in the state of Maranhão, an area usually regarded outside the species range.

A mammal survey conducted in Mirador State Park, Mirador county (6°10'-6°42'S, 44°43'S-45°54'W), Maranhão, in 1990-91 revealed the former occurrence of *T. tricinctus* in the area (Oliveira, 1993). The Park is located between rivers Alpercatas and Itapecuru, in the south-central portion of the state, covering an area of approximately 500,000 ha. The area consists of a relatively open (predominantly) and closed savanna. There are restricted gallery forests along water streams dominated by the buriti palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*). In the county area outside Park boundaries there are extensive deciduous forests. The central part of the Park comprises a major plateau with a series of forested canyons. Average maximum and minimum temperature varies between 31-33°C and 19-21°C, respectively. Annual precipitation is approximately 1,200 mm, and is highly seasonal (Oliveira, 1993).

The record of *T. tricinctus* for Mirador did not come from a live specimen, but from a series of reports of a "tatu bola" that once lived in the area. The accuracy of the information was unquestionable due to the precise morphological and ecological descriptions of this armadillo made by several area residents, including park rangers.

The species status was considered "possibly extinct", as no current indication of its presence was available (Oliveira, in press). However, there is one slight possibility that the species could still survive in the Park. The area is considerably big, and some parts are

extremely hard to access. Besides, the survey was not extensive, and no specific effort was devoted to find *T. tricinctus*. Probabilities could increase because the species has been observed in deciduous forest elsewhere (Silva & Oren, 1993). It is relevant to mention that the deciduous forest found in "peripheral depressions" of the more elevated sectors of the Brazilian Plateau (Ab'Saber, 1981) described as the habitat for the species in Bahia (Silva & Oren, 1993) are found in Mirador. Meanwhile, if still extant, *T. tricinctus*' present and future survival in neighboring/adjacent areas outside the Park might not be good, as south Maranhão is becoming an important area for soybean cultivation. In fact, this part of the state has been described as the "golden fields" of Maranhão (Mascarenhas, 1991). *T. tricinctus*' demise in the Park area, as everywhere else, was a consequence of overhunting. Locals reported that animals were easily captured by hands and that their meat was appreciated. Silva & Oren (1993) have noted the same in the state of Bahia.

Whether or not the species is extinct in the Park it's former presence there is very interesting as it would be the first record east of Parnaíba river, and especially because it is the first record for the Cerrado (savanna) ecosystem. This finding suggests that *T. tricinctus* is not restricted to the Caatinga ecosystem, or at least was not historically. Even though this armadillo was found in deciduous forest (that could extend into the Cerrado areas), Silva & Oren (1993) considered it as an endemic of the Caatinga. They based this on the assumption that, from the floristic viewpoint, the tropical deciduous forests of central-northeastern Brazil belonged to the Caatinga Domain (Andrade-Lima, 1981). Nevertheless, in Mirador locals reported capturing *T. tricinctus* in savannas (no reference were made on the animal being found in forested areas). A preliminary botanical survey suggested that the Park has a typical Cerrado formation with no influence of the Caatinga formation. Future expeditions should be made to verify if the species is still extant in the savannas and deciduous forests of Maranhão.

Other armadillos found in Mirador State Park include: *Dasyus septemcinctus*, *D. novemcinctus*, *Euphractus sexcinctus*, *Cabassous unicinctus*, and *Priodontes maximus*. The latter is also possibly extinct, as the last record is from the mid-eighties (Oliveira, in press). *D. novemcinctus*, *E. sexcinctus* and *C. unicinctus* seen to be common, and should represent a significant part of the mammalian biomass (pers. obs.).

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SITUACION DE CONSERVACION, BIOLOGIA Y ECOLOGIA DE *CHLAMYPHORUS TRUNCATUS*

El pichi ciego pampeano *Chlamyphorus truncatus* es un edentado endémico de la región central de Argentina, y uno de los mamíferos subterráneos menos conocidos. La actual situación de conservación de la especie se encuentra en estado semicrítico. Hemos podido observar una disminución importante en las poblaciones originales y creemos que la especie se encuentra en estado

precario. Los avistajes de campo que hace 10 años eran frecuentes han disminuido considerablemente, aunque no podemos dar datos cuantitativos. En referencia a su biología estamos siguiendo estudios, con muchas dificultades, dada la alta labilidad de mantenimiento de especímenes en cautiverio. Sobre su alimentación hemos determinado que en algunos casos son casi exclusivamente consumidores de hormigas, pero en muchos otros consumen una diversidad considerable de larvas de coleópteros y otros invertebrados, aunque parecen preferir las hormigas, de acuerdo a los análisis de estómagos obtenidos. De todas maneras nuestro criterio es que se trata de una especie en serio peligro, especialmente cuando aumentan las poblaciones de predadores en la zona que ocupa y que cada vez parece constrenirse más hacia el centro oeste de la Argentina. Sus problemas de gran labilidad termoregulatoria aún son una incógnita difícil de desentrañar, debido a la casi imposibilidad de mantener animales vivos para su estudio.

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CHAETOPHRACTUS NATIONI IN THE APPENDIX II OF CITES ?

The ESG has received correspondence from Dr. Augustin Iriarte, from the Department of Renewable Natural Resources of Chile, asking for information and other subsidies for a project which aims to include *Chaetophractus nationi* in the Appendix II of the CITES Convention. This armadillo is apparently under heavy pressure, and recent surveys have detected over 500 specimens in Santiago and in other Chilean gift shops. Dr. Iriarte is preparing a proposal to that effect, to be presented in the next meeting of the parties to CITES in 1997. The ESG would therefore appreciate it if you could send pertinent information regarding *C. nationi* and other Chilean, Peruvian and Bolivian armadillos, directly to Dr. Iriarte (Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero - Av. Bulnes, 140 - Santiago, Chile - Fax # 562-699-2778).

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The Fundação Biodiversitas has moved its offices. As of 26th June 1995, their address is the following: Av. Contorno 9155, 11º andar, 30110-130 Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil. Tel: (031) 291-9673, Fax: (031)291-7658.