

therefore not the target of poachers. The Rojas family suggested that a disease—perhaps an epidemic similar to the “pichi plague” that has affected *Zaedyus pichiy* in their area—could have decimated local populations of *C. truncatus* as well.

This species may also be finely susceptible to environmental stress; sudden changes in environmental temperature have been known to kill *C. truncatus* (Roig, 1971). Pink fairy armadillos have very low survival rates in captivity; many individuals have died during the transport from the point of capture to the captive facility, while others survived only a few hours to days in captive conditions. This extreme sensitivity has been attributed to stress or inappropriate environmental conditions, both by researchers (V. Roig, pers. comm.) and locals (e.g., Chani, pers. comm.). Without knowing more of this species’ autecology, it will be difficult to determine which factors determine the survival of pink fairy armadillos in captivity: light, temperature, soil quality, or absence of external factors such as soil vibrations—or something else entirely unexpected. These same factors could also negatively affect *C. truncatus* in the wild, if their natural habitat is altered by human encroachment or global changes—and may already have caused the population declines reported by so many local people.

These reports from the inhabitants of rural Mendoza sketch a worrisome portrait of *C. truncatus* in the wild. It is entirely possible that other pink fairy armadillos have been observed by different locals in recent years; distances are large in rural Mendoza, and communication is difficult at best. But it is unlikely that a large population of pink fairy armadillos would exist somewhere in Mendoza without our becoming aware of it. In five years of fieldwork on *Zaedyus pichiy*, I have visited some of the remotest corners of Mendoza Province and talked to countless locals about armadillos of every kind. My interest—call it obsession—in seeing a live pink fairy armadillo keeps me asking everyone I meet—locals, anti-poaching patrols, and rangers—about sightings of *C. truncatus*. Despite my constant questioning, and a network of volunteers who promised to contact me in case of a sighting, I still haven’t been able to see a single live individual of this rarest and oddest of armadillos. Given its exceptional rarity, and the clear declines which so many local people have reported, I wonder whether the pink fairy armadillo’s current Red List status of Near Threatened does not, in fact, dangerously underestimate the threat this species is facing—and whether a classification as Vulnerable would be more realistic. If anyone has more information on any aspect of the

distribution or population ecology of pink fairy armadillos, I would be more than interested in a dialogue.

Mariella Superina, Las Palmas 3307, Vistalba, Luján de Cuyo (5509), Prov. Mendoza, Argentina. E-mail: <mariella@superina.ch>.

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An Agonistic Encounter Between Two Giant Anteaters (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*)

On the afternoon of 2 July 2005, during a field excursion in the center of the Brazilian Pantanal (18°59’S, 56°39’W), we had the opportunity to witness and photograph the unusual presence of four giant anteaters in the same two-hectare patch of open scrub grassland. All four animals were adult-sized but of unknown sex. Two of them were foraging separately, walking in parallel some 50 m apart; throughout the encounter they ignored each other and the other two anteaters (Fig. 1a). These latter two, however, became involved in an agonistic encounter, which followed the pattern of an injury-producing fight as described by Shaw *et al.* (1987). While foraging, their paths drew near to each other; when they were approximately 10 m apart, one of them apparently detected the other by scent and walked directly towards it (Fig. 1b), producing a long, deep “harrrr” sound. Both animals began to circle one another with tails raised (Fig. 1c), and after about a minute the aggressor began striking with its forepaw at the other animal’s face (Figs. 1d and 1e). This lasted only a few seconds. When the attacked animal fled, the aggressor chased it for over 100 m with its tail raised and piloerected (Fig. 1f), and then resumed foraging nearby.

Although Shaw *et al.* (1987) frequently observed agonistic behavior among free-ranging giant anteaters in Serra da Canastra National Park in central Brazil, to our knowledge it has not been reported in field studies elsewhere.

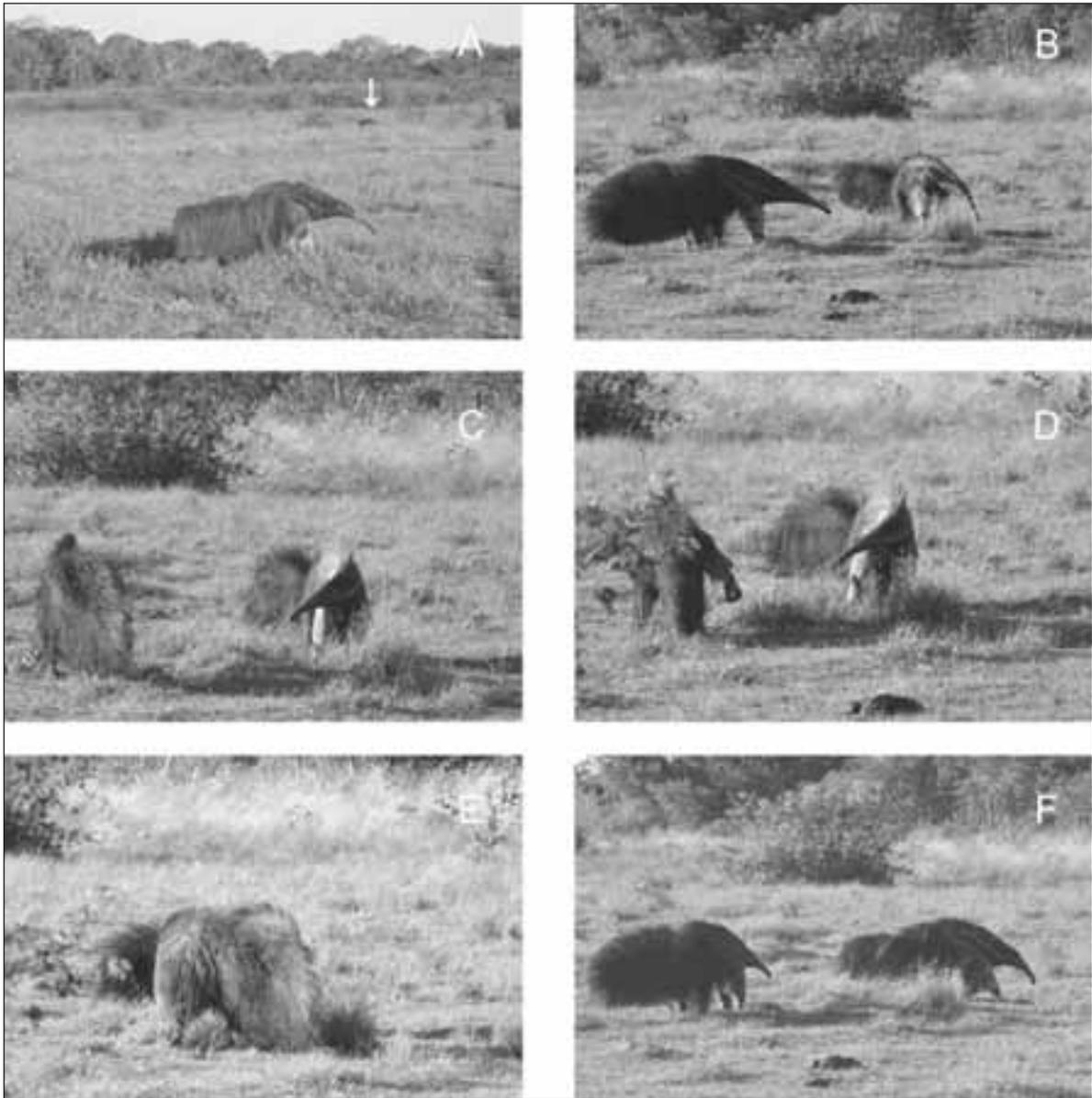


FIGURE 1. a. Two of the four giant anteaters seen foraging near each other, indicated by a white arrow. These two apparently ignored the presence of the others. 1b–1f. Sequence of the agonistic encounter (see text). Note (in Figure 1d) the raised forepaw of the aggressor.

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Fabiana L. Rocha^{1,2} and **Guilherme Mourão**^{2, 1} Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ecologia e Conservação, Dept. Ecologia, Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil and ² Embrapa Pantanal, Rua 21 de Setembro, 1880, C. P. 109, Corumbá 79320-900, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, e-mail: <gui@cpap.embrapa.br>.

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Chasing Behavior in Yellow Armadillos, *Euphractus sexcinctus*, in the Brazilian Pantanal

The behavior of the yellow armadillo, *Euphractus sexcinctus* (Linnaeus, 1758), has not been well