

## THE NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO

Over the last year we have highlighted amazing wildlife that can commonly be found in Winding Cypress. Some of these, like the woodpecker, can cause damage to our homes, and some, like the iguana, are not even native to Florida. The armadillo falls into both of those categories. Nine-banded armadillos first appeared in Florida in the 1920s when they were introduced by humans. Spanish for “little armored one,” this almost prehistoric-looking mammal’s claim-to-fame is that along with humans, they are the only other free-living animal in North America known to be naturally infected with *Mycobacterium leprae*, the bacteria that causes leprosy (also known as Hansen’s Disease).



Nine-banded armadillos are insectivores. As their eyesight is notably poor, they use their keen sense of smell to locate their food. They forage for grubs, beetles, worms, and ants by digging shallow holes with their clawed feet and probing the soil with their long snouts. They are known to supplement their diets with fungi, fruits, tubers, seeds, the young of small mammals, and the eggs and young of ground-nesting species of birds, reptiles, and amphibians.

Primarily a nocturnal animal, their natural predators include bobcats, coyotes, and black bears. As a means of defense when threatened, armadillos are capable of making an impressive 3-4 foot vertical leap into the air. Nine-banded armadillos have clawed feet and no front teeth, but they do have 28–32 teeth in rows in the backs of their mouths.

Armadillos are excellent diggers and live in underground burrows up to 7 ft. deep and 20 ft. long. Just one may excavate and maintain an average of ten underground burrows within its home range (nine-banded armadillos are unlikely to travel more than half mile from where they’re born).

Several Winding Cypress homeowners have discovered recurring holes in their yards, especially around the edge of their lanai and under their A/C and/or generator pads. Filling in these holes is rarely successful, making it necessary to live-trap and relocate or humanely euthanize nuisance armadillos. If you experience armadillo activity around your home, you can Google armadillo removal in Naples FL to find a removal expert.

