

YZC Animal of the Month, September 2011 Malayan Pangolin (*Manis javanica*)



This beautiful creature is a Malayan Pangolin, one of several species of Pangolin sometimes also known as Scaly Anteaters. These creatures are specially adapted for eating ants and termites, using their large claws to break into the nests of these insects and their very long tongue to get these morsels of food out. Despite having very similar eating habits, Pangolins are not closely related to the Anteaters of South America.

Pangolins are the only mammals to have scales. Take a look at this specimen and you can see them running all the way down its body and tail. These scales are made out of

keratin, the same stuff your hair and fingernails are made from. These scales are an armour for them, being tough and sharp at the edges. They are able to curl up into a ball, a bit like a hedgehog, for extra protection.

The Malayan Pangolin lives in the forests of South East Asia, in countries like Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. They are very good climbers, with a prehensile tail (a tail that can curl round branches a bit like an extra arm), and sleep in hollows in large trees. This species is endangered, largely thanks to the actions of man. They are threatened by a loss of their forest home and by hunting. They are a protected species, and let's hope this wonderful, quirky mammal can survive long into the future.