



The Amazing Armadillo: Geography of a Folk Critter

Larry L. Smith, Robin W. Doughty

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Perhaps no creature has so fired the imagination of a populace as the armadillo—that most ungainly, awkward, and timid little animal. Its detractors call it a varmint and wish it good speed from the Lone Star State and its other natural territories. But its supporters claim that it is the animal kingdom's representative of all that's truly Texan: tough, pioneering, adaptable, and generous in sharing its habitation with others. What is it that sets this quizzical little creature apart from the rest of the animal kingdom?

Larry L. Smith and Robin W. Doughty ably answer this question in *The Amazing Armadillo: Geography of a Folk Critter*. This informative book traces the spread of the nine-banded armadillo from its first notice in South Texas late in the 1840s to its current range east to Florida and north to Missouri. The authors look at the armadillo's natural history and habitat as well as the role of humans in promoting its spread, projecting that the animal is increasing in both range and number, continuing its ecological success in areas where habitat and climate are favorable.

The book also contributes to a long-standing research theme in geography—the relationship between humans and wildlife. It explores the armadillo's value to the medical community in current research in Hansen's Disease (leprosy) as well as commercial uses, and abuses, of the armadillo in recent times. Of particular note is the author's engaging look at the armadillo as a symbol of popular culture, the efforts now underway to make it a "totem animal" symbolizing the easy-going lifestyles of some Sunbelt cities, and the spread of the craze for armadilliana to other urban centers.

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