

Mapinguari

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A powerful, foul-smelling forest creature drew a zoologist into Amazonian testimony. His proposed surviving ground sloth remains a hypothesis, with the most important material evidence still missing.

STATUS	Published hypothesis; specimen missing
CLASSIFICATION	STR
MATERIAL	Brazilian Amazon
DISPOSITION	PUBLIC / SOURCED STORY
CATEGORY	Strange Files
RECORD TYPE	Cryptids
STORY HISTORY	Amazonian oral accounts; David Oren’s published investigations, 1993 and 2001

THE ACCOUNT

Zoologist David Oren wrote that he first heard Mapinguari stories while working in the Brazilian Amazon. They described an immensely strong, hairy creature with a penetrating smell and a loud voice. An account he heard in 1988 persuaded him to consider an unexpected possibility: a surviving ground sloth. By 2001 he reported interviewing more than eighty claimed witnesses, including seven people who said they had killed such an animal.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

Oren published his argument in *Edentata*, openly calling it controversial. The reported killings did not deliver a preserved specimen for examination; material some hunters said they retained was later discarded. He also acknowledged a difficulty with the short tails described in the accounts, since known fossil ground sloths had substantial tails. His paper records an investigation and its hypothesis, not the discovery of a living sloth.

WHY IT STAYS WITH US

This file has a conspicuous empty place where the decisive object should be. Seven reported carcasses sound like abundance until none can be examined. Oren’s own reservations make the story more revealing: even someone drawn toward the possibility could see details that refused to fit.

WHERE THIS TELLING COMES FROM

Does the Endangered Xenarthran Fauna of Amazonia Include Remnant Ground Sloths?

Edentata / IUCN Edentate Specialist Group

<https://www.xenarthrans.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Edentata-4-1.pdf>

RETURN TO THE STORY

Mapinguari

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