



Aardvark

The aardvark is a medium-sized **nocturnal mammal** native to Africa; one of its most distinctive features is its long pig-like snout, useful to sniff out food. The aardvark roams over most of the southern part of the African continent, where it preys on **ants** and **termites** which it digs out of their hills using its sharp claws and powerful legs. It also resorts to its impressive **digging skills** to excavate **burrows** where to live and rear its young. The aardvark is also nicknamed '**African ant bear**' or '**Cape anteater**' (after the Cape of Good Hope); its official name 'aardvark', though, comes from **Afrikaans** (a Dutch dialect introduced to South Africa during Boer settlement in the 18th century) and means '**ground pig**' on account of its burrowing habits. However, in spite of its name, the aardvark is not closely related to the pig; rather, it is the sole extant representative of the (now otherwise extinct) mammalian order **Tubulidentata**. In consequence, the aardvark is not closely related to any other animal, not even the South American anteater, which happens to share with the aardvark some behaviors and physical features because of convergent evolution. The closest living relatives of the aardvark are the **elephant shrews** (belonging to the family of *Macroscelididae*), **tenrecs** (*Tenrecidae*) and **golden moles** (*Chrysochloridae*).



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