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‘FIGHTING OLIGARCHY’

Sanders in Asheville as part of tour

Jacob Biba

Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE – Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders is planning to speak in downtown Asheville on Sunday, Aug. 10.

Sanders’ campaign committee announced the event July 30 as part of the longtime Independent senator’s “Fighting Oligarchy” tour.

“Over the course of the next few weeks, I’ll be hitting the road to have real discussions across America on how we

move forward to take on the Oligarchs and corporate interests who have so much power and influence in this country,” Sanders’ campaign site says.

The event will be held in downtown Asheville at the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium at Harrah’s Cherokee Center. Doors open at 3:30 p.m. and the speaking event begins at 6 p.m., according to the announcement.

Sanders previously visited Asheville in 2019 when he was running for the Democratic nomination for president.

Sanders’ most recent stops on the



Sanders

tour were in Texas, where he shared the stage with former Congressman Be- to O’Rourke in June. He made other stops in Louisiana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Montana, where Sanders, 83, ap- peared with New York Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to rail against the economic and political power of bil- lionaire Elon Musk and Republican President Donald Trump.

“Taking on oligarchy is enormously

difficult,” Sanders said at the April 16 event in Montana. “These guys own the economy.”

Want to attend?

People interesting in attending Sand- ers’ event can RSVP online at www.act.berniesanders.com/signup/ rsvp-oligarchy-asheville.

Jacob Biba is the Helene recovery re- porter at the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA TODAY Network. Email him at jbiba@citizentimes.com.



A nine-banded armadillo uses its long nose to find bugs and grubs on the forest floor. PROVIDED BY HOLLY KAYS

Armadillos make a home in the Smokies



Word from the Smokies

Hannah Early  
Guest columnist

With their tough, leathery shells, interesting dig- ging habits, and pattern of giving birth to identical quadruplets, nine-banded armadillos ( *Dasypus novemcinctus* ) are full of quirks. These solitary creatures are skilled burrowers and surprisingly adaptable—so much so that they’ve expanded their range to include some of the highest elevations in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

There is a “funky history” to the distribution of armadillos, said Tim J. Gaudin, a University of Chattanooga Foundation professor in the Depart- ment of Biology, Geology, and Environmental Science at the University of Tennessee at Chattanoo- ga. In fact, they have been expanding through the states for a long time.

Native to South and Central America, nine- banded armadillos — named for the number of bands on their bony armor, despite the fact that the



The nine-banded armadillo is an extremely adaptable creature that prefers warm, wet climates and can live in either forests or grasslands. PROVIDED BY SMOKIES LIFE

number can range from seven to 11 — briefly ap- peared in the Southeastern states during the Ice Age before disappearing and retreating back into Central America. Around the 1850s, armadillos re- appeared in the United States with sightings in Brownsville, Texas. Eventually, they began expand- ing their range northward once more, becoming es- tablished in the Southeast between Texas and Lou- isiana.

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President imposes tariffs amid woes

New import duties set to take effect in 7 days

Joey Garrison and Savannah Kuchar  
USA TODAY

After months of delays, deals and anticipation, President Donald Trump imposed sweeping new tariffs on im- ports from around the world Aug. 1, es- calating an aggressive trade policy aimed at spurring manufacturing in the United States.

The new tariff rates will go into ef- fect in seven days.

Trump twice set earlier deadlines for new tariffs before backing down.

In April, the president and his ad- visers said they were confident of ne- gotiating deals with dozens of coun- tries. White House trade adviser Peter Navarro predicted “90 deals in 90 days.” But the haul was much lighter: U.S. negotiators made eight trade deals in 120 days before Trump or- dered the new tariffs.

In an interview with NBC the eve- ning of July 31, Trump said his aggres- sive tariff plan will rake in “hundreds of billions of dollars, and very quickly.”

Opponents have raised concerns about potential price increases from the heavy tariffs. The president dis- missed those warnings. “The only price that’s spiked is the hundreds of billions of dollars coming in,” Trump said.

Trump told NBC on July 31 it is “too late” for countries to reach an agree- ment to prevent the levies. But, he said, “It doesn’t mean that somebody doesn’t come along in four weeks and say we can make some kind of a deal.”

Not included in Trump’s order are two of the United States’ largest trad- ing partners: China and Mexico.

China faces a separate Aug. 12 deadline to reach an agreement with the United States. Trump and Chinese officials have discussed extending the 90-day pause the two sides struck in May in which both countries held off on imposing massive, triple-digit tar- iffs on imports on one another.

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# Armadillos

Continued from Page 1A

Their range began to shift again in the 1920s when humans accidentally introduced them to Florida. As populations expanded from Florida and Texas, the two groups eventually converged in Georgia during the 1980s. Since then, their range has continued to grow steadily—by 2007, they had reached middle and eastern Tennessee. Though about 20 armadillo species exist worldwide, the nine-banded armadillo is the only one found in the United States.

Despite long-held beliefs that armadillos are strictly warm-weather animals, their expansion tells a different story. Since armadillos were first spotted in Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 2019, nine armadillo sightings have been reported in the park through iNaturalist, an app park visitors can use to document plant and wildlife observations. These sightings occurred at locations such as Cades Cove, Tremont, and Smokemont, as well as high-elevation areas like Kuwohi and Newfound Gap, where the average January day sees a low of about 22 degrees Fahrenheit. Five of these nine observations were of dead animals, mostly found along roadways.

Historically, scientists believed that armadillos favored warmer climates, making these high-elevation appearances particularly noteworthy. Their presence provides new information on just how adaptable these animals can be.

“Armadillos change their activity pattern,” Gaudin explained. “In the summer, when it’s warm, they’re out at night almost exclusively. But in the winter, they start coming out during the day when it’s warmer. They appear, as with many things, to be very adaptable and to figure out ways to deal with the cold.”

As armadillos continue expanding into areas that hadn’t anticipated them, some people see them as an invasive species. However, this perception could do more harm than good, and affect how these animals are perceived and treated.

“I think by them having the invasive label attached to them, it tends to make people just want to shoot them and not try to understand them,” Gaudin said.

Though armadillos are establishing themselves in places they had not previ-



Tim J. Gaudin, a mammalogist and professor at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, holds a golden mouse (*Ochrotomys nuttalli*) while he gives a presentation during the 2024 Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage in Gatlinburg. PROVIDED BY CHRISTOPHER G. BROWN/GEORGIA GWINNETT COLLEGE

ously existed — and might occasionally be getting inadvertent help from humans by catching rides on truck beds — classifying them as ‘invasive’ may not be entirely correct.

“Normally, when we get a new invasive or exotic species, it’s because it has been moved accidentally from its native range into a new habitat,” said Will Kuhn, director of science and research for park partner Discover Life in America, which works to document all forms of life found in the Smokies. “Armadillos are different though since they’re probably for the most part not being moved by people.”

Their presence in Great Smoky Mountains National Park does raise questions about their overall impact.

“It’s possible that as their numbers grow, they could cause rooting damage similar to the truly invasive European hogs in the park, but it’s too early to tell what kind of major effects they will have — if any — on the Smokies ecosystem,” said Kuhn.

A common concern relates to how ar-

madillos will affect other animals in the region, potentially becoming a competitor with certain mammals like spotted skunks. Their burrowing, while having the potential to improve soil health, can also damage lawns, gardens, and any other area that has moist soil. However, armadillos have remained relatively understudied throughout the years, and much remains unknown. Even basic information about how they might affect their new environments is missing from the body of research.

“The traditional way that people who study mammals study them is they set out traps and they capture them,” Gaudin said. “It turns out it’s really hard to trap armadillos because they feed on stuff in the soil. Usually, the way we get animals into traps is by using bait, but armadillos don’t really seem to go for bait because you can’t put a pile of live bugs in a trap — the bugs would run away.”

As a result, researchers are turning to motion-activated cameras placed in areas where armadillos are likely to ap-

pear. These tools allow scientists to observe them in their natural habitats and steadily expanding range — which now includes parts of the Smokies.

Their appearance in the Smokies has been documented through Discover Life in America and iNaturalist users. DLiA is best known for coordinating the Smokies All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory — a massive, ongoing collaborative project between scientists and park visitors to document every species within the park. The nine-banded armadillo is also on DLiA’s Smokies Most Wanted list, an initiative within the ATBI that invites park visitors to help submit observations of specific species for which more information is needed. Through these efforts, DLiA plays a key role in tracking the armadillo’s expansion into the region and providing valuable data to better understand these animals.

Over the past decade, the armadillo’s rate of expansion has doubled, but scientists aren’t sure why. With their adaptability and general indifference to human presence, these animals are more than capable of settling near towns and neighborhoods. As a result, more communities may soon find themselves sharing space with armadillos—and adjusting to the unexpected changes that come with them.

“I’d like to see money spent on figuring out what they’re doing, what their role in the ecosystem is,” Gaudin said. “They’re not invasive in the classic sense. We didn’t bring them in there — they brought themselves in. And we still don’t really know why they’re doing so well and are spreading much faster than they used to. There’s a lot to learn about them.”

*See an armadillo? If you’re able, snap a photo and upload it to iNaturalist to help scientists better understand these mysterious creatures. However, use caution. If startled, armadillos may jump up to three feet vertically in the air and have been known to break teeth and noses in the process. In rare cases, they may also carry leprosy. Avoid touching armadillos or approaching them too closely.*

*Hannah Early is a writing intern for the 29,000-member Smokies Life, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the scientific, historical, and interpretive activities of Great Smoky Mountains National Park by providing educational products and services such as this column. Learn more at SmokiesLife.org .*

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