

THE PLIGHT OF PANGOLINS

An Investigation into the Illegal Trade in Southeast Asia

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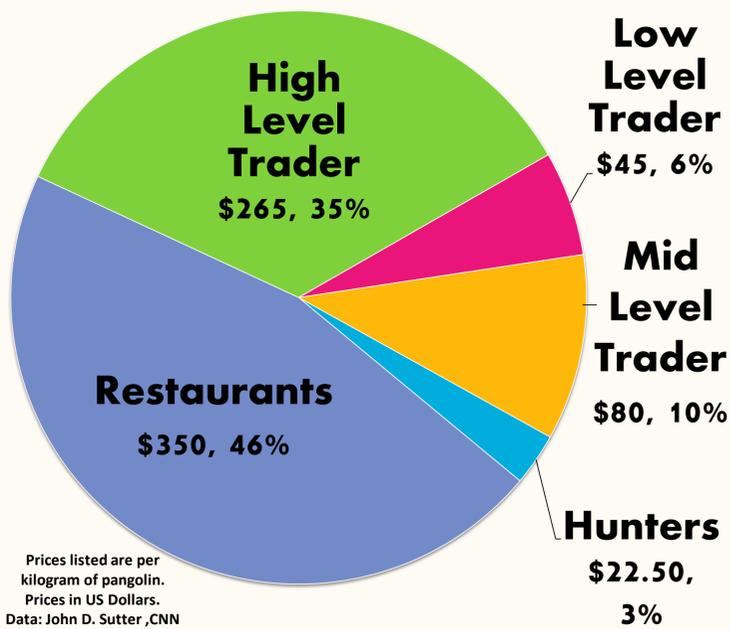
Introduction

- The black market in wildlife parts and products is the fourth largest illicit industry in the world after narcotics, counterfeiting, and human trafficking.¹
- Pangolins (*Manis spp.*) are the most illegally trafficked mammal in the world and the demand for pangolins in their range countries is growing exponentially.²
- All eight species were listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and a zero-export quota was enlisted to all four of the Asian species in 2000.
- In the past decade, more than one million pangolins were reportedly illegally caught in the wild.³
- The purpose of this study was to (a) examine the current situation in terms of the information available on pangolin biology, distribution, habitat, utilizations, threats, management, and monitoring; (b) identify any knowledge gaps; (c) examine the impact of the CITES Appendix II listing with a zero-export quota on the trade in Asian species; and (d) suggest possible ways forward for conserving these critically endangered species.



Image: Tikki Hywood Trust

Who Profits from a Pangolin?



CITES Background

- Pangolins are protected by international law through CITES.
- Despite protection under national legislation in pangolin range states and CITES, the trade in pangolins continues to be rampant, and pangolin scales continue to be heavily traded in markets for traditional Chinese medicine.⁴
- The illicit trade of African pangolins is escalating, and African pangolins do not have a zero-export quota established in CITES, meaning the commercial trade in these species is permitted, as long as a permit is issued.

Results: Trade in Southeast Asia

- Even though every country in Southeast Asia is involved in the illicit wildlife trade, Vietnam plays a chief role. In addition to being a significant consumer of wildlife, Vietnam is also a key transit country for illicit wildlife transported from Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos, either by ship from Malaysia and Indonesia or by air from Africa.
- According to Do Quang Tung, the Director of the CITES Management Authority of Vietnam, "Most of the trade occurs by boat and the pangolins are sourced from Malaysia and Indonesia. They are traded primarily for their meat and scales. As a result, pangolins are one of the most trafficked and endangered mammals in the world."
- Pangolins are trafficked by land and sea in Southeast Asia to China.
- As supplies dwindle in the region, pangolins are also being sourced from Africa.
- According to Zhang,⁵ pangolins range in approximately 1.8 million sq km in China. Zhang estimated a maximum of 50,000 Chinese pangolins in that area in 2000.
- IUCN estimated that one million pangolins were extracted over the past decade.
- Standardizing this rate,⁶ that would imply 100,000 pangolins are being extracted from the population every year.
- Assuming the same maximum densities reported from China apply to other pangolin range countries, then the rate of extraction would imply twice the entire population of pangolins from Indonesia extracted every year, or 10 times the entire population of pangolins in Malaysia every year.



Image: Education for Nature Vietnam

Conclusions & Recommendations

- My results indicate that pangolin populations in Southeast Asia are subjected to a take equivalent to twice the entire population of pangolins in Indonesia and 10 times the entire population of pangolins in Malaysia every year. This is clearly an unsustainable extraction.
- The CITES Appendix II listing with zero-export quota in 2000 was clearly not effective to curb the illegal trade in pangolins.
- The estimated extraction of one million pangolins in the last decade is truly alarming, and is likely driving pangolins to extinction.
- Hence, the only measure that can represent survival for pangolins is an Appendix I listing under CITES that is fully applied and enforced.
- To prevent the extinction of pangolins, the only hope is to install very strict regulations and law enforcement. Cooperation among range states and consumer states is essential to secure the future of these unique mammals.

References & Acknowledgments



Image: Rosalyn Morrison

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¹ Dalberg. 2012. Fighting illicit wildlife trafficking: A consultation with governments. WWF International, Gland, Switzerland.
² Zhou, Z. M., Y. Zhou, C. Newman, and D. W. Macdonald. (2014). Scaling up pangolin protection in China. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 12, 97-98.
³ Stewart, J. (2014, July 29). "Plight of the Pangolin: All Eight Species to Move Up EDGE List." Retrieved from Edge Blog: <http://www.edgeofexistence.org/edgeblog/?p=7734>.
⁴ Zhou, Z. M., H. Zhao, Z. X. Zhang, Z. H. Wang, and H. Wang. (2012). Allometry of scales in Chinese pangolins (*Manis pentadactyla*) and Malayan pangolins (*Manis javanica*) and application in judicial expertise. *Zoological Research*, 33, 271-275.
⁵ Zhang, L., Wu, S., and Bao Y. (2008). Current Status of Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* in the Wild: A Rapid Range Wide Population Assessment. *Proceedings of the Workshop on Trade and Conservation of Pangolins Native to South and Southeast Asia*, 103.
⁶ IUCN Pangolin Specialist Group. 2014. <http://www.iucn.org/217189/Eating-pangolins-to-extinction>

Pangolin Populations

