

## PANGOLIN (Family Manidae)



**PROPOSAL:** CoP17 Prop. 8 - 12.  
Transferring pangolins from Appendix II to Appendix I of CITES at CoP 17. Five separate proposals that cover all eight species.

### IFAW RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT

#### Biology and Distribution

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Pangolins are small to medium size, scale-covered mammals found throughout parts of Asia and Africa. There are a total of eight species, four in Asia and four in Africa. All pangolin species are insectivorous, utilizing long, sticky tongues and powerful foreclaws to find and capture ants and termites. They are primarily nocturnal and solitary, sleeping in burrows or tree hollows during the daytime.

Pangolins are particularly sensitive to overexploitation because they have an extended gestation period and produce only one young at a time. Furthermore, their primary predator defense - rolling into an impenetrable ball - makes capturing the animal relatively simple.

Pangolins are highly coveted for both their meat and scales, and as a result have become the most illegally traded mammal in the world. In many Asian cultures, pangolin scales are considered a cure for a variety of ailments including skin and liver diseases. At the same time, pangolin meat is considered a delicacy and purchasing a pangolin dish is thought to confer status.

#### Protection Status

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All pangolin species have been on Appendix II of CITES since 1994. Additionally, at the Conference of Parties in 2000, the four Asian species were assigned zero-export quotas.

In addition, pangolins are protected by national laws in most range countries but lack of enforcement and light penalties have undermined these laws in many nations.

Furthermore, while Asian species cannot be legally traded in most cases due to the zero-export quota, it is nearly impossible to distinguish which species loose scales belong to without expensive genetic testing. Therefore, the current protection scheme can cause confusion for customs officials who cannot determine what species is being traded.

#### Consequences of Trade

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Pangolin populations in China and Viet Nam have been decimated by poaching, and in some areas, are considered commercially extinct. Both species with ranges in those countries are rated "Critically Endangered" on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species.



In response to dwindling numbers, smugglers now source the animals from other parts of Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent to satisfy demand in China and Viet Nam. Shipments containing tons of frozen meat and scales are regularly seized by customs authorities. The other two Asian pangolin species are rated “Endangered” by the IUCN due to this pressure.

As Asian pangolin populations continue to dwindle, demand has shifted towards African species. In the last few years, seizures of shipments containing tons of pangolin scales originating in Africa and destined for Asia have become regular occurrences. In addition, some legal trade of African pangolins continues to occur. The IUCN rated all four African pangolins species “Vulnerable” to extinction

primarily due to rising poaching pressure from Asia.

Over one million pangolins have been taken from the wild and illegally traded in the past decade. Considering that pangolins are slow growing mammals, the rate at which they are being killed is wholly unsustainable and could result in the loss of entire populations within the next generation.

#### IFAW Recommendations

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IFAW urges Parties to support any additional protections for all eight species of pangolin and therefore:

**SUPPORTS** all five proposals to transfer pangolin species from Appendix II to Appendix I of CITES.