



KIBALE EXPLORER

The Kasiisi Project & Kibale Forest Schools Program

A Pine Cone with Legs!

As night falls on Kibale, one of its most secretive and unusual animals awakens and descends to the forest floor. Armed with large, overlapping scales, the pangolin could almost be mistaken for a large pine cone or artichoke were it not for its legs and long tail. It uses its extraordinarily long, sticky tongue to slurp ants and termites from a decaying log. Suddenly a leopard's roar echoes through the forest. The pangolin quickly curls itself into a tight ball to wait out the danger.



They're roughly the size of a large house cat and the world's only mammal covered in armor-like scales – hundreds of them! Just like your fingernails and a rhinoceros' horn, these scales are made of keratin and they cover the pangolin from the top of its head to the tip of its tail. Only its peach fuzz-covered belly is without scales. If scared, the pangolin will roll into a tight ball to protect this soft underside.

A Scaly Ant Eater, but not an Anteater

They're often called a 'scaly anteater' because of their long snout and tongue. The pangolin's tongue is so long it attaches to the end of its sternum, far into the abdomen. Your tongue, just as with most other animals, attaches to a bone inside your throat. Like anteaters, pangolins use this impossibly long tongue to lap ants and termites into their toothless mouths.

While they share a few traits with anteaters, they're actually more closely related to carnivores like bears, dogs and cats.

There's a Hitchhiker on Her Tail

Most pangolins have only a single pup, once per year. At birth, the young pangolin's scales are soft, but harden after a couple of days. When the baby is about a month old, it begins accompanying its mother as she forages, hitching a ride on her tail and holding tight with claws hooked under her scales. Over time, the pup begins to forage on its own and after a year, it will leave her for good as it sets out to find a mate.

There are eight different kinds of pangolins. Kibale National Park is home to four of them! The other four live in Asia.

AMAZING PANGOLIN FACTS



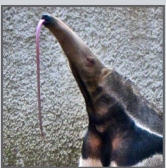
The black-bellied pangolin -- one of Uganda's four species -- is the only one with black skin. It also has **47 vertebrae in its tail**. That's more than in any other mammal!



Like skunks, pangolins can make a big stink! They emit a foul-smelling liquid to mark their territories and to deter predators. It's like a **smelly "Keep Out" sign**.



Most female pangolins have only a single baby each year. The **pangopup** rides on her tail for the first 3 months. Once walking, the pangopup remains close to mom for another 2 years.



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An orphaned pangopup

Protecting Pangolins

While pangolins have great defenses against their natural predators, they're rather easy targets for poachers. They're slow moving and when curled tightly in a ball, they're easy to scoop up and drop in a bag. Up to 200,000 African and Asian pangolins are killed every year, mostly for their scales, which are mistakenly thought to cure various ailments. Experts say they're the most trafficked, or illegally traded, mammal in the world. All eight species are in danger of extinction because of poaching. Protecting them is an international — and urgent — effort. There's plenty we can do to help that cause, wherever we are, and lots of organizations are stepping up to the plate.

Explore

Want to help protect pangolins? Art is a great tool for spreading awareness and starting conversations around endangered species. Paint, draw or sculpt a pangolin and share with your family, friends and the community. Rachel Shaw, author of the children's book *Pipisin the Pangolin*, shares [step-by-step instructions](#) to make fun pangolin-inspired crafts, including a pop-up card and a felt pangolin: <https://rachellshaw.wordpress.com/resources/crafts-2/crafts-pangolin/>.

Many professional artists are using their platforms to advocate for pangolins as well. The watercolor-illustrated book *Pangy the Pangolin* -- now free online! -- benefits Save the Pangolin Foundation!

To help jump start your artwork, we've included a pangolin coloring sheet on page 3. Share your art on Instagram #KibaleExplorerArt @thekasiisproject.

Keeping Wildlife Wild

When humans and animals get too close, it can be dangerous for both. Wild animals can carry diseases that spread to humans or their pets and livestock. Without knowing it, humans can even spread diseases from one animal to another. So whether you live near pangolins or some other fascinating animal, be a good environmental steward and give them their space. View wildlife from afar and never intentionally handle them. If you accidentally do, immediately wash your hands. Never feed animals and never buy a wild animal or its parts, or try to keep one as a pet. Animals in their natural habitats are living their best life -- and we can help them keep doing that!



Engage

Form and Function

Pangolins have specialized body parts to help them survive in their natural habitats. Match each body part to its corresponding purpose:

BODY PART	PURPOSE
Sharp, hard scales	Eat tiny insects
Long tongue	Maintain Balance
Long, curved claws	Protect from predators
Sturdy tail	Climb trees & dig burrows

Do you think pangolins could survive in other habitats? Why or why not?

SHARE!

We'd love to see your artwork!
Email photos to KibaleExplorer@gmail.com.

