

PROTECTING PANGOLINS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE MOST TRAFFICKED MAMMAL IN THE WORLD



Background

Pangolins are a remarkable design of nature. They're the world's only truly scaly mammal. Curling into a ball when threatened, their natural armour is strong enough to protect them from the bite of a lion. The name 'pangolin' comes from the Malay word 'penggulong', meaning 'one who rolls up'. But despite evolution's adaptations to keep this creature safe from natural predators, the pangolin's defence mechanism makes them dangerously vulnerable to poachers.

In the first half of 2019 alone, nearly 200,000 trafficked pangolins were seized by customs officials, driven by a demand for pangolin products which is threatening these unique mammals with extinction. Whether killed for their scales, which are ground into powders for traditional Chinese medicines, or served as a delicacy, consuming pangolin is seen as a sickening statement of wealth and privilege in China and other East Asian nations. With the four Asian pangolin species being hunted to near extinction, the four African species are currently being poached in record numbers to supply the East Asian demand. In the past decade, more than one million pangolins were trafficked, with 2019 data indicating that a pangolin is poached every three minutes¹.

"This week a pangolin was retrieved from a village, likely an escapee due to a hole and broken scales. Sometimes poachers tie it with wire to prevent escape until they can find a buyer. It was picked up by the Ministry of Environment Forestry and Tourism and released into Etosha National Park for its protection. We will be monitoring its progress to see how he settles in."

Kelsey Prediger, PCRf, January 2023

¹ WWF

The project

Our mission here is clear, prevent the torment and torture of the pangolin in the illegal wildlife trade – and in doing so, stop the pangolin from being driven extinction. Working with our locally based partners on the ground, Pangolin Conservation and Research Foundation (PCRF), we are taking a multipronged approach to conserve the pangolin, addressing three crucial areas.

Project outputs

1. Leading pangolin conservation-based research.

Despite the pangolin being one of the world's most trafficked mammal, little is actually known of this shy creature. This means that even when pangolins are rescued from the wildlife trade, the death rate following is extraordinarily high. This is due to a lack of knowledge in how to handle, look after and rewild the pangolin. By building data collection into each day, we aim to support our partners to develop and promote resources to guide rescuers on how to reduce the mortality rate of pangolins.



“On Christmas Eve we received a call in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy of an active pangolin from a village we had outreach in recently. They had found a pangolin foraging in the afternoon and were keeping a close eye. Our team managed to cycle there and attach a GPS and VHF to track and monitor it,” Kelsey Prediger, PCRF

2. Offering the local community opportunities through conservation.

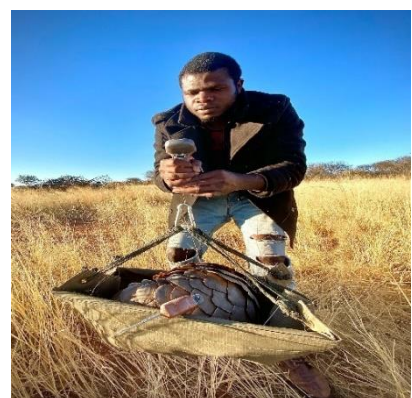
From employing local community members as Pangolin Rangers, to research focused internships and subsidised university places, this project works to place local people at the heart of pangolin conservation.

3. Raising awareness of the pangolin and its exploitation.

A desire to protect often derives directly from understanding the cause. By educating people on the wildlife trade, the project will instil a sense of guardianship as far and wide as possible. Through creating educational materials for local school children, to forming one of the first comprehensive conservation-based research databases on the species, your donation will play a critical role in fighting wildlife crime.

“In our main study area where we engage communities and employ pangolin rangers, we had a true break through. Some traditional hunters came across a pangolin while hunting and brought it back to their village to eat. This area is at the furthest extent of the conservancy where we haven't worked too much yet. The other community members informed them it was illegal to kill, and they would be rewarded with food if they reported the animal to us.

Our team was able to follow up and tag the animal with GPS and VHF trackers for protection and research.”



Outcomes

Successful funding will ensure the development and design of a new five-year strategic plan for the research, protection and rehabilitation of pangolins with our local grassroots project partners PCRF, as well as providing support for the development of their brand identity and newsletter to increase awareness and education about pangolins and their fragile existence. Funding support will enable the project to expand its capacity as well as help leverage additional funds from other donors and partner organisations. To date, most of the local staff have implemented programme work on a pro-bono basis, with small payments made to community-based pangolin rangers to support local livelihoods, and to provide

substitute community food packages to help prevent pangolins from being killed for bush meat. Funding will enable the programme to engage local staff on a sustainable salary to ensure they and their families are also supported in the delivery of this project work.

The above objectives and activities are part of a long-term vision to protect pangolins within the landscape while supporting local communities. This project plans to use Namibia as an example to expand across southern Africa with collaborations already started in Botswana, Zambia, and South Africa.

“Last weekend we made history as two trafficked pangolins regained their very own independence. Namibian Police and Ministry of Environment Forestry and Tourism staff rescued two pangolins from the illegal trade in two different regions. Thanks to our local NGO collaborations the pangolins were both fitted with the GPS/SAT transmitters to provide post-release monitoring. These are the first two individuals to be monitored both for Etosha National Park in northeast Namibia and Bwabata National Park in the northwest.”



Budget

10,000	Could go towards the development of a new community-based pangolin research centre
£5,000	Could help fund seven local community-based pangolin rangers for six months
£3,000	Could go towards the training and salary of a tracking expert for post-release monitoring and population surveys
£2,200	Could help establish a scholarship fund for local students to focus on themes in local pangolin conservation
£1,100	Could fund the design and creation of the five-year strategic plan to research, protect and rehabilitate pangolins
£750	Could help pay for educational materials for local schools, increasing awareness and understanding of pangolins
£550	Could help fund the costs of photography and filming to capture rare footage of pangolins in their natural habitat
£450	Could help fund the supply of six GPS pangolin tracking devices
£200	Could go towards providing community food packages to prevent pangolin poaching for meat and sustenance
£100	Could help pay for fuel costs travelling into the field to track and monitor pangolins
£23,350	TOTAL COSTS

Time is of the essence, the sooner we can raise funds to help ensure the research, protection and rehabilitation of pangolins, the faster we can ensure pangolins are saved from extinction.

Pelorus Foundation is a UK registered conservation charity. We act as a catalyst to a network of grassroots project partners which are developing and implementing innovative solutions to environmental protection. Through targeted donations and the sharing of our expertise, we provide crucial support to people on the front line so they can continue to carry out vital work, whilst maximising impact and reach. From fighting wildlife crime in Africa, to pioneering marine research in the Red Sea, Pelorus Foundation is driven by the immense power of community involvement. Improving local people's lives alongside environmental regeneration is at the heart of our work.