



INTERNATIONAL PANGOLIN DAY 15 FEBRUARY 2014

14th February 2014

Start

Every year thousands of armoured mammals called Pangolin are killed for their scales and, in some countries, for the medicinal uses of various body parts. International Pangolin Day on 15 February 2014 aims to create awareness of this shy creature and the impending extinction of this species as a result of human greed.

There are currently eight species of Pangolin in the world of which four can be found on the African continent:

- The African White-bellied Pangolin/Tree Pangolin *Phataginus tricuspis*
- Giant Pangolin *Smutsia gigantea*
- Long-tailed Pangolin/Black-bellied Pangolin *Uromanis tetradactyla*
- Ground Pangolin *Smutsia temminckii*

Very little is known about the actual conservation status of all four African species, although a number of studies are being undertaken to rectify the situation. The status for Ground Pangolin is currently under review as part of the Red List of Mammals of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland review, being undertaken by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT).

Currently the Ground Pangolin, found throughout the African continent, and South Africa's only Pangolin species, is under threat by poaching for bush meat, scale and muthi trade, and as a result of electrocution on electric fences. In April 2013 2 064 Pangolin were reported as poached by Darren Pietersen, Chairperson African Pangolin Working Group, and Lisa Hywood, CEO Tiki Hywood Trust, at the IUCN Pangolin working group meeting in 2013. Between January and April 2013, 273 Rhinos had been poached in South Africa. Based on these figures Pangolin are being poached at a rate of 3,035% faster than Rhinos¹.

The sad fact is that most South Africans have never seen a live Pangolin and probably never will. However, Pangolin play an important ecological role in controlling certain insect species such as termites. They have one of the longest tongues in the mammal kingdom. Starting at the bottom of the chest cavity this long sticky apparatus is very adept at cleaning out termite mounds. Furthermore, they also till and aerate soil with their burrowing activities.

¹ Hywood L. and Pietersen D. 2012 A Perspective on the increased Trade and Threats to Pangolin in Africa

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.



Pangolin are not easy prey for their natural predators – large carnivores – and even the strongest claws and teeth can be confounded by the armour-like scales that protect the Pangolin. When threatened they roll up in a ball and simply out-wait even the most patient predator.

The Ground Pangolin normally only gives birth to one baby after a gestation period of 139 days. The baby is usually carried on the mother's back as she trundles through the bush foraging for food. Pangolin generally do not survive well in captive situations and only a few institutions have managed to breed them successfully. The Tiki Hywood Trust in Zimbabwe and FREEME in South Africa have managed to successfully rehabilitate and release Ground Pangolin that have been rescued from poachers and illegal traders.

Log on to the Pangolin Facebook page www.facebook.com/WorldPangolinDay to read more about these fascinating creatures and what is being done world-wide to raise awareness of the plight of Pangolin, the threats that face them and what you can do to help.

Help us save our Pangolin by reporting any sightings or suspected criminal activities: www.pangolin.org.za/report-a-sighting/ or (011) 372-3600/0800 205 005 (Hotline)

End.

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