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## Threats

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### Overexploitation

The primary threat to most pangolin species is illegal hunting and poaching for local use and illicit international trade. Recent estimates based on seizure data suggest that the equivalent of more than 895,000 pangolins were trafficked globally between 2000 and 2019 (1). This trade mainly involves pangolin scales and meat, which are primarily trafficked to East and Southeast Asia, and to a lesser extent other body parts.

### Scales for Traditional Medicines

Pangolin scales are used as an ingredient in Traditional Asian Medicine, particularly in China and Vietnam. They are believed to be a cure for ailments ranging from heart disease to cancer, and to help lactating women produce milk. Like rhino horn and human fingernails, pangolin scales are made of keratin and there is no



Figure 1. Dried pangolin scales for sale in Asia. Photo credit: Dan Challender

western scientific evidence that they are efficacious in medicine. Similarly, pangolin scales are used to treat myriad medical conditions in Traditional African Medicine, especially in West and Central Africa, which is known as 'Muti' or Juju'.

### Meat consumed locally or as a luxury product

Pangolins have been consumed as a source of protein in virtually every range country throughout human history. In Asia, this continues, but in many places local consumption has been foregone in favour of selling the animals into illicit, international trade because of the high prices pangolins can fetch. The majority of this trade is destined to China and Vietnam, as well as other countries in Southeast Asia, where pangolins are consumed as a delicacy. The high price and perceived rarity means consumers eat pangolins as a luxury product to demonstrate their wealth and reinforce social status, for example, businesspeople trying to impress clients on signing contracts. In Africa, pangolins are eaten as wild meat, especially in West and Central Africa, where local rather than international trade is predominant. Estimates suggest that at least 400,000 pangolins are hunting and consumed locally in Central Africa each year (2).

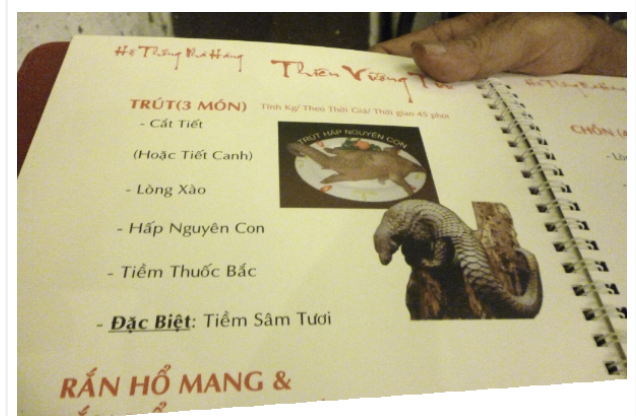


Figure 2. Pangolin meat on a restaurant menu in Vietnam.  
Photo credit: Dan Challenger

### Ongoing illegal trade despite international protection

Illicit international trade in pangolins and their parts takes place despite international protection afforded to the species. Pangolins have a long history in CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which aims to ensure that wild species do not go extinct as a result of international trade. Each pangolin species was included in CITES Appendix II in 1995, meaning trade should be closely regulated, and in the year 2000, zero export quotas for wild-caught specimens traded for primarily commercial purposes were established for the Asian pangolins, in effect, a proxy trade ban. Due to ongoing concerns about the overexploitation of pangolin populations, each species was included in CITES Appendix I at CoP17 in 2016, establishing an international trade ban on commercial trade in wild-caught pangolins and their derivatives. Pangolins are also protected species in most of their range countries under national legislation, but illegal harvest and trade continues seemingly unabated.

### The impact of overexploitation on pangolin populations

High levels of offtake have resulted in steep declines in pangolin populations, especially the Chinese (*Manis pentadactyla*), Sunda (*M. javanica*) and Philippine pangolins (*M. culionensis*) in China and Southeast Asia in recent decades, and in some places this has resulted in the commercial extinction of the species, or the loss from some sites altogether.

Since 2008, there has been an apparent increase in the trafficking of African pangolin scales, mainly from West and Central Africa to Asian markets, which appears to be placing greater exploitative pressure on tropical African pangolin populations. Quantifying the impact of illicit, international trade and disentangling it from local use is challenging, as in Asia, in part because there is a lack of

standardized population monitoring methods for pangolins (see the Pangolin SG's groups efforts to develop means of monitoring [here](https://www.pangolinsg.org/monitoring_test-page/) ([https://www.pangolinsg.org/monitoring\\_test-page/](https://www.pangolinsg.org/monitoring_test-page/))).

Based on the best available evidence, the IUCN Red List assessments for pangolins were updated in December 2019, resulting in the species being categorised as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable, based on past, ongoing and future population declines attributed to actual or potential levels of exploitation. The respective Red List category for each species is included in the below table and more detailed information on each species can be found in the corresponding Red List assessment.

Figure 3. Poached pangolins being sold as wild meat. Photo credit: African Pangolin Working Group

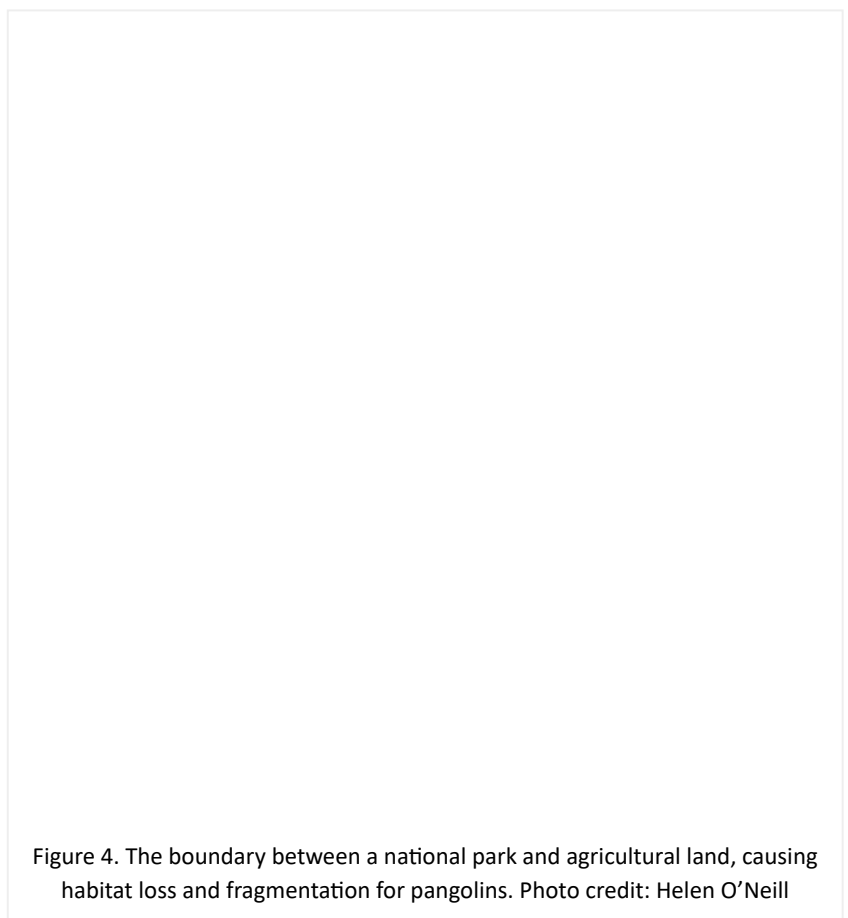
	<b>Name (Latin name)</b>	<b>IUCN Red List category</b>	<b>IUCN Red List link</b>
Asia	Chinese pangolin ( <i>Manis pentadactyla</i> )	Critically endangered	<a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12764/123585318">View here</a> ( <a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12764/123585318">https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12764/123585318</a> )
	Philippine pangolin ( <i>Manis culionensis</i> )	Critically endangered	<a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/136497/123586862">View here</a> ( <a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/136497/123586862">https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/136497/123586862</a> )
	Sunda pangolin ( <i>Manis javanica</i> )	Critically endangered	<a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12763/123584856">View here</a> ( <a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12763/123584856">https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12763/123584856</a> )
	Indian pangolin ( <i>Manis crassicaudata</i> )	Endangered	<a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12761/123583998">View here</a> ( <a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12761/123583998">https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12761/123583998</a> )

	<b>Name (Latin name)</b>	<b>IUCN Red List category</b>	<b>IUCN Red List link</b>
Africa	White-bellied pangolin ( <i>Phataginus tricuspis</i> )	Endangered	<a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12767/123586469">View here</a> ( <a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12767/123586469">https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12767/123586469</a> )
	Giant pangolin ( <i>Smutsia gigantea</i> )	Endangered	<a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12762/123584478">View here</a> ( <a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12762/123584478">https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12762/123584478</a> )
	Black-bellied pangolin ( <i>Phataginus tetradactyla</i> )	Vulnerable	<a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12766/123586126">View here</a> ( <a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12766/123586126">https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12766/123586126</a> )
	Temminck's pangolin ( <i>Smutsia temminckii</i> )	Vulnerable	<a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12765/123585768">View here</a> ( <a href="https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12765/123585768">https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12765/123585768</a> )

## Other Threats

Other threats include habitat loss and degradation, which places additional pressure on pangolin populations. It has been suggested that pangolins can adapt to modified and artificial habitats, and there is some evidence for this, for example the Sunda pangolin in Singapore, but further research is needed to determine the extent to which this is the case, how it differs between species, and how it affects reproduction.

In Southern Africa, electrocution on electric fences poses a significant threat to Temminck's pangolin. This species will coil around the lower wires of these fences which is often fatal. It is estimated that electric fences cause the mortality of 2–13% of South Africa's population of Temminck's pangolins annually (3).



Land management practices potentially compound other threats. For example, pesticide use may reduce populations of ants and termites, diminishing sources of prey, but the extent of this impact on pangolin populations is not known. Further threats include roadkill, death from traps (e.g., gin traps) and traps laid for other animals.

## What is being done to protect pangolins?

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(<https://www.pangolinsg.org/resources/>), [actions plans](#)

(<https://www.pangolinsg.org/resources/action-plan/>), and [milestones](#)

(<https://www.pangolinsg.org/resources/milestones/>)

Figure 5. Ground-dwelling Temminck's pangolin found electrocuted on an electric fence. Photo credit: Darren Pietersen

pages, to see how our members are protecting pangolins around the world. Visit [our blog](#) (<https://www.pangolinsg.org/blog/>) to stay up to date with the work of our members.

(1) Challender, D.W.S., Heinrich, S., Shepherd, C.R., Katsis, L.K.D. 2020. International trade and trafficking in pangolins, 1900-2019. In: Challender, D.W.S., Nash, H.C., Waterman, C. (Eds.), *Pangolins: Science, Society and Conservation*. Academic Press, London UK, San Diego, CA, USA.

(2) Ingram, D.J., Coad, L., Abernethy, K.A., Maisels, F., Stokes, E.J., Bobo, K.S., et al., 2018. Assessing Africa-wide pangolin exploitation by scaling local data. *Conserv. Lett.* 11 (2), e12389.

(3) Pietersen, D., Jansen, R., Swart, J., Kotze, A., 2016. A conservation assessment of *Smutsia temminckii*. In: Child, M.F., Roxburgh, L., Do Linh San, E., Raimondo, D., Davies-Mostert, H.T. (Eds.), *The Red List of Mammals of South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho*. South African National Biodiversity Institute and Endangered Wildlife Trust, South Africa.



(<https://www.instagram.com/pangolinsg/>)



Pangolin-

([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTHNYd\\_rY\\_x6bvdNc5HYvOQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTHNYd_rY_x6bvdNc5HYvOQ))

Group-

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**Liberia:** (<https://www.liberianobserver.com/liberia-fda-partners-adopt-resolution-protect-gola-fda-forest>)

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**Resolution  
to Protect  
Gola  
Forest -  
Liberian  
Daily  
Observer**  
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ago

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**IWMB** (<https://www.app.com.pk/national/iwmb-successfully-rehabilitates-four-black-bear-successfully-cubs-at-wildlife-centre-rina/>)  
**rehabilitates  
four black  
bear cubs at  
Wildlife  
Centre: Rina  
- Associated  
Press of  
Pakistan**  
19 hours  
ago

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**Inside  
Cotigao** (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/things-to-do/inside-cotigao-wildlife-sanctuary-goas-well-kept-secret/as91593259.cms>)  
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Sanctuary:  
Goa's  
well-kept  
secret! -  
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**Summer  
Vacations** (<https://swirlster.ndtv.com/travel/7-panoramic-places-to-visit-in-mount-abu-in-summer-2022-for-a-vacation-like-none-other-2979932>)  
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**Focus Taiwan News Channel**

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(<https://www.pangolinsg.org/2021/06/15/psg-vice-chair-thai-van-nguyen-wins-2021-goldman-environmental-prize/>).

[Challenges ahead but a bright future for pangolins](https://www.pangolinsg.org/2021/02/19/challenges-ahead-but-a-bright-future-for-pangolins/)

(<https://www.pangolinsg.org/2021/02/19/challenges-ahead-but-a-bright-future-for-pangolins/>).

[World Pangolin Day celebrations highlight pangolin conservation in a critical year and decade for biodiversity](https://www.pangolinsg.org/2020/02/15/world-pangolin-day-celebrations-highlight-pangolin-conservation-in-a-critical-year-and-decade-for-biodiversity/) (<https://www.pangolinsg.org/2020/02/15/world-pangolin-day-celebrations-highlight-pangolin-conservation-in-a-critical-year-and-decade-for-biodiversity/>).

[Statement from Pangolin Specialist Group Chair on possible link between pangolins and coronavirus](https://www.pangolinsg.org/2020/02/10/statement-from-pangolin-specialist-group-chair-on-possible-link-between-pangolins-and-coronavirus/)

(<https://www.pangolinsg.org/2020/02/10/statement-from-pangolin-specialist-group-chair-on-possible-link-between-pangolins-and-coronavirus/>).

[Reflecting on 2019 and looking ahead to 2020](https://www.pangolinsg.org/2020/01/23/reflecting-on-2019-and-looking-ahead-to-2020/) (<https://www.pangolinsg.org/2020/01/23/reflecting-on-2019-and-looking-ahead-to-2020/>).

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