

Indonesia seizes 85 endangered pangolins

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Indonesian police have intercepted 85 endangered pangolins, most of them alive despite being stuffed into sacks by suspected smugglers, an official said Tuesday.

The animals, also known as scaly anteaters and prized mostly in China and Vietnam as food and medicine, were packed in 14 sacks when they were seized at a bus station in the city of Medan in North Sumatra province on Saturday, said Yoris Marzuki, chief detective of the local police.

"About 80 percent were still alive. We suspect that they were being smuggled abroad via Malaysia to Hong Kong or [mainland China](#)," he told AFP.

He said police had acted on a tip-off but that no arrests had been made.

"We are still investigating the case," he said, adding that police were working with the natural resources conservation agency to release the animals back to the wild.

The pangolin, which eats [termites](#) and ants, is protected under the UN's Convention on International Trade in [Endangered Species](#), and trading in it and its products is illegal.

Conservation groups say smuggling of the animal is rampant and they are frequently poached from the wild, mainly in Indonesia and Malaysia, exacerbating the threat of extinction from rapid deforestation.

They are transported through [southeast Asia](#), mostly ending up in China and Vietnam, where pangolin flesh is a delicacy and its scales -- the only [mammal](#) known to have them -- are ground into a powder for supposed medicinal purposes.

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