

Protected pangolins seized from Philippine boat

April 23 2013



A conservation officer releases a rescued baby pangolin in the forest in Indonesia's North Sumatra province on July 31, 2012. Philippine authorities have seized 23 protected scaly anteaters found hidden in a cargo boat, in the second case of suspected trafficking of the species in a month, officials said.

Philippine authorities have seized 23 protected scaly anteaters found hidden in a cargo boat, in the second case of suspected trafficking of the species in a month, officials said.

The coast guard, acting on a tip, found 22 of the animals—also known as pangolins—alive and one dead, on a boat set to leave a port on the western island of Palawan on Saturday, a coast guard statement said.

The [wild animals](#), believed to have been snatched from the island, were destined for Manila, said Palawan environment official Alex Marciada.

"At least we got them (the 22 live pangolins) back and we are now trying to rehabilitate them at the rescue centre," he told AFP.

Earlier this month, a Chinese fishing vessel that ran aground in a Philippine [marine park](#) near Palawan was found to be carrying hundreds of frozen pangolins in violation of international conservation rules.

The crew were detained and charged with poaching and illegal entry, while they face further charges of trafficking in protected species, said Marciada, spokesman for the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development.

The crime is punishable by up to 20 years in prison, he said.

No arrests have been made for the latest [seizure](#) of live pangolins.

The owner of the cargo could not be traced, Marciada said, adding that the government is considering charges against the boat owner instead.

Pangolins are widely hunted in parts of Asia for their meat, skin and scales—in China they are considered a delicacy and are believed to have medicinal qualities.

In the Philippines they are found only on Palawan and officials have expressed concerns that trafficking could lead to their [extinction](#).

The Swiss-based International Union for the [Conservation of Nature](#) lists the Philippine pangolin as "near-threatened".

The Philippines prohibits their capture and transportation.

Marciada said tests conducted by government scientists showed that some of the frozen [pangolins](#) found in the Chinese fishermen's boat had come from Palawan, but others came from Malaysia or Indonesia.

All eight species of the insect-eating mammals are protected by international law.

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