

Vietnam makes fresh ivory, pangolin haul from Nigeria

October 5 2018



Vietnam is fighting an uphill battle against the lucrative ivory and pangolin trade

Vietnam has seized eight tonnes of pangolin scales and elephant ivory shipped from Nigeria, police said Friday, the second such haul in a week in a country which both consumes and trafficks huge volumes of

endangered African wildlife.

The [ivory](#) and [pangolin](#) trade is banned by Vietnam, but sales continue to flourish on the [black market](#) due to demand domestically and from neighbouring China, which feeds the global \$20 billion industry.

The eight-tonne shipment was discovered Thursday at a port in the coastal city of Danang, according to the Hai Quan online newspaper, a state-run mouthpiece for Vietnam's customs office, making it "the country's biggest ever bust over the past several years."

"The batch originated from Nigeria," it said, adding that officials took several hours to tally up the ivory tusks and pangolin scales, which were listed as "scrap metal" on the container's shipping bill.

Customs officials refused to comment when reached by AFP.

Last Friday, authorities in Hanoi found almost 1,000 kilograms of pangolin scales and [elephant ivory](#) on a commercial flight arriving from Nigeria.

Information in the communist state is tightly controlled by the government, which is fighting an uphill battle against the lucrative ivory and pangolin trade.

Endangered pangolins

The world's most heavily trafficked mammal

No reliable global population estimates but drastic local declines documented

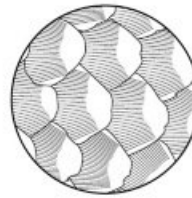


Behaviour

- Solitary, nocturnal
- Digs long burrows to hunt termites and for shelter
- Can climb trees
- Good swimmer

Diet: ants, termites

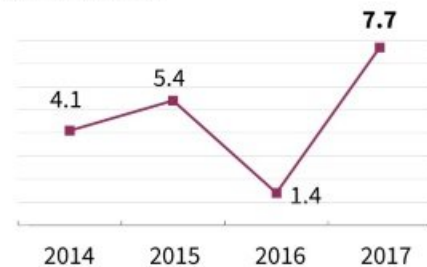
Scales



- Made from keratin, the substance that also forms human hair and nails
- Sought on the black market for supposed medicinal benefits

Seized in Hong Kong

Tonnes of scales



Trafficking

- Increasing demand for their meat and body parts is fuelling illegal hunting
- More than **1 million pangolins** believed to have been **poached** from the wild in the past decade

CITES* in September 2016 banned all international trade

*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Source: CITES/savepangolins.org/IUCN/HK AFCD © AFP

Graphic on pangolins, the world's most heavily trafficked mammals.

The timid and nocturnal pangolin, which rolls into a ball when threatened—making them defenseless against poachers—is one of the most heavily trafficked mammals.

It is sought after for its meat and the unproven medicinal properties of their scales.

While the sale of ivory is also officially outlawed in Vietnam since 1992, the trade persists in the open with shops selling tusks that shopkeepers claim pre-date the ban.

Last year 2.7 tonnes of tusks were found inside crates on the back of a

truck in central Thanh Hoa province while a similar 3.5 tons were discovered in a sea port in Ho Chi Minh City in 2016.

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