

Malaysia torches 2.8 tonnes of African pangolin scales

December 6 2018



Malaysia is battling to clamp down on rife trafficking through its borders of the ant-eating mammals, whose scales are highly valued in traditional Chinese medicine

Malaysia on Thursday torched nearly three tonnes of seized scales of

endangered pangolins worth \$9 million in a bid to deter illegal wildlife trafficking from Africa.

The Southeast Asian nation is battling to clamp down on rife trafficking through its borders of the ant-eating mammals, whose scales are highly valued in traditional Chinese medicine.

"Such a huge seizure and torching of it is definitely a blow to smuggling syndicates," Abdul Kadir Abu Hashim, the director-general of the Wildlife and National Parks Department told AFP.

Some 3,000 pangolins would have been killed to obtain the 2.8 tonnes (2,800 kilograms) of scales, Abdul Kadir estimated.

The scales were confiscated by customs officials at Malaysia's Port Klang between May and September 2017.

The animal parts arrived in three different shipments from Ghana and Cameroon, and had false local addresses, officials said.

"Forensic examination of the scales showed that it is from the African species," said Abdul Kadir.

The scales were incinerated at a private waste disposal plant in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, south of the capital Kuala Lumpur.

Seized pangolin scales are usually meant for foreign markets including China and Vietnam, where raw pangolin scales are sold for large profits in traditional Chinese medicine.

Endangered pangolins

The world's most heavily trafficked mammal

No reliable global population estimates but drastic local declines documented

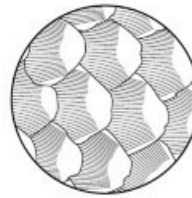


Behaviour

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

Diet: ants, termites

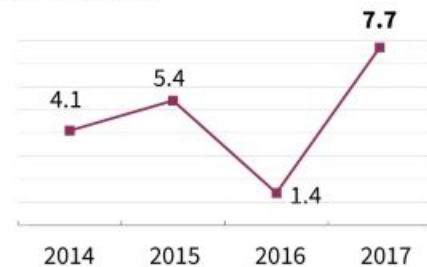
Scales



- 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](https://www.cites.org/eng/news/2016-09-20-pangolin-trade-ban) © AFP

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

Last year Malaysia torched eight tonnes of [pangolin](#) scales, Abdul Kadir said, adding that wild pangolins in Malaysia have become a rare sight due to rampant hunting and deforestation.

Pangolins are also heavily poached for their meat which is considered a delicacy while products obtained from the animal are thought to increase blood circulation and lactation.

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