

Vietnam seizes 5 tonnes of pangolin scales from Nigeria

May 24 2019



Vietnam confirmed the haul and also announced a separate seizure of 8.3 tonnes of pangolin scales from 'an African country' in the northern Haiphong port

Vietnam police have seized more than five tonnes of pangolin scales stashed in a cashew shipment from Nigeria, the government said Friday.

Communist Vietnam is a hotbed for the [illegal wildlife trade](#), where [animal products](#) from elephant ivory to rhino horn and tiger bones are consumed domestically and also smuggled abroad.

Police on Thursday found 5.3 tonnes of pangolins scales hidden in a shipment from Nigeria at a port in southern Ba Ria Vung Tau province, according to Hai Quan, the official mouthpiece of Vietnam Customs.

"The scales were stuffed into 151 sacks inside a container... (and) bags of raw cashew nuts were used as a disguise in order to avoid detection from authorities," the online news website said Friday.

The government confirmed Thursday's haul and also announced a separate seizure of 8.3 tonnes of pangolin scales from "an African country" in the northern Haiphong port earlier this month.

Pangolins used to roam free in Vietnam's national parks, but they have been aggressively hunted recent decades.

Their scales, which are made up of the same material as [fingernails](#), are used in [traditional medicine](#) to treat allergies and [male impotence](#).

Pangolin meat is consumed on special occasions and can be bought for a hefty sum on the black market.

Often called scaly anteaters, pangolins curl up into a ball when they feel threatened and are the most hunted mammal on the planet.

Over one million pangolins have been plucked from Asian and African forests in the past decade, sold and consumed in Vietnam and China where burgeoning middle classes have fuelled appetites for illegal wildlife.

It is illegal to trade the animals internationally, and their status ranges from vulnerable to critically endangered depending on the species, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

Last month Singaporean authorities busted two major shipments of pangolin scales destined for Vietnam weighing nearly 26 tonnes in total.

© 2019 AFP

Citation: Vietnam seizes 5 tonnes of pangolin scales from Nigeria (2019, May 24) retrieved 13 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-05-vietnam-seizes-tonnes-pangolin-scales.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.