

Malaysia makes record 30-tonne pangolin seizure

12 February 2019



Following a tip-off, [wildlife officials](#) in Sabah state raided a factory and a warehouse on Thursday, according to a statement from local police chief Omar Mammah.

Police arrested a 35-year-old man suspected to have been in charge of the factory as part of an illegal syndicate.

The operation is believed to have been running for the past seven years, and police believe the pangolins were bought from poachers to be distributed locally.

Pangolin body parts are highly valued in traditional medicine in countries including China and Vietnam while their meat is considered a delicacy

Malaysian authorities have made a record seizure of about 30 tonnes of pangolins and their scales worth some \$2 million in raids on major processing facilities, police and environmentalists said Tuesday.

The haul included about 1,800 boxes full of frozen pangolins stuffed inside three refrigerated containers, 572 more frozen pangolins in six freezers, 61 live pangolins in cages, and 361 kilogrammes (795 pounds) of [pangolin](#) scales, according to [police](#).

The Southeast Asian nation is battling to clamp down on rampant poaching and smuggling of pangolins, the world's most heavily trafficked mammal.

The critically endangered creatures, also known as scaly anteaters, have long been targeted as their [body parts](#) are highly valued in [traditional medicine](#) in countries including China and Vietnam while their meat is considered a delicacy.

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

Defence



- Rolls into a ball
- Easy to catch for illegal meat and medicine market



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

Eight species of pangolin worldwide

Four Asian species

- Critically endangered
 - Chinese
 - Malayan
- Endangered
 - Indian
 - Philippine

Four African species

- Vulnerable
 - African white-bellied
 - Giant ground
 - Temminck's ground
 - Long-tailed



Young travel on mother's tail
*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Source: [CITES/savepangolins.org/UCN/pangolins.org](#)

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

Traffic, a Malaysia-based group that monitors wildlife smuggling around the region, said it was the "biggest such bust Malaysia has seen to date".

"No threatened species can withstand industrial

levels of extraction such as this," Kanitha Krishnasamy, the group's Southeast Asia director, told AFP.

The seizures also shone a light on Sabah's major role in animal trafficking—the state on Borneo island has been implicated in smuggling cases involving over 40 tonnes of pangolins since August 2017, according to Traffic.

Malaysia regularly foils attempts to smuggle pangolins and their parts out of the country but usually on a far smaller scale.

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