



Reward for info on pangolin poachers

13 October 2017 | Crime

Namibian environmental non-profit organisations together with the environment ministry are offering a cash reward for any tip-offs that could lead to the arrest of pangolin poachers and traffickers or could prevent illegal pangolin killings or captures.

Pangolins are believed to be the most trafficked mammals in the world and in recent months, the illegal trade has taken hold in Namibia, leading to concerns that the Namibian population of Cape pangolin, or scaly anteater, could become extinct.

Illegal pangolin trafficking is so common that all eight species of these little-known creatures are categorised as threatened under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red Data listing.

The enormous demand for pangolin scales is driven by the insatiable appetite for traditional medicines in Asia, especially in China, where the scales are used to make a number of potions or ornaments. The meat is also a highly valued commodity.

Numerous studies have found that the scales have no medicinal properties and the threat posed by the Asian myth is causing huge environmental damage and is threatening the survival of the species.

The recently launched tip-line is part of a landmark outreach initiative spearheaded by the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE) in partnership with several other organisations, including the environment ministry, and Namibia's communal conservancies and their NGO support organisations.

The outreach initiative is aimed at not only preventing pangolin poaching or arresting poachers, traffickers and syndicate heads, but also at educating Namibians about the "precarious status of these animals and to ask everyone to help put a stop to the illegal trade".

Christopher Brown of the NCE told Namibian Sun that over the past years the incidents of live and dead pangolins confiscated in Namibia were typically in the range of about five to ten animals per year.

These numbers have risen considerably since then.

"Over the past three months, this has risen sharply to 23 pangolins. This could be the tip of the iceberg. We do not fully understand how the illegal trade pressures are working, but it would appear that there is both solicited illegal purchase through established networks and speculative collection and killing in the hopes of a sale."

Brown warned that most Namibians are not aware of the legal consequences of being found guilty of catching, killing and trading in pangolins and their parts, and the outreach initiative is also aimed at warning poachers and traffickers, "including foreign nationals, that they will be severely dealt with if caught."

The NCE has emphasised that Namibians have to become the "eyes and the ears" of poaching activities on the ground and to alert authorities immediately.

The growing pressure on these animals requires a "collective national effort to tackle the problem of incentivised illegal trade of pangolins to Asia".



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets-for-info-on-pangolin-poachers2017-10-130.jpg>)

EXTINCTION: A live pangolin confiscated last year by the Otavi police. PHOTO: NAMPA

A cash reward is offered for information leading to the arrest of people catching, killing and trading in pangolins and for information leading to the seizure of pangolins or pangolin parts and products.

Brown explained that for an arrest with evidence, including live animals, skins, scales the basic reward is over N\$1 000.

If the information leads to further arrests, for example of traders, traffickers, syndicate members, the reward will be considerably larger.

If the informant is prepared to make a voluntary official statement and to appear as a witness then the reward is again considerably increased.

The numbers to call or SMS are: 081 413 2214 or 081 423 2231, day or night.

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence.

JANA-MARI SMITH