

Cape pangolin poaching on the rise

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Cape Pangolin



Pini Bothoko



The illegal trade in Cape pangolin scales amongst East African nations is suspected to be the driving force behind the unlawful killing of the creatures in Botswana.

Botswana Defence Force (BDF) commander, Placid Segokgo, made this revelation during a media briefing on Friday held by the Ministry of Defence and Security at Hotel 430 in Gaborone.

Segokgo explained that Cape pangolin scales hold significant value in East African traditional medicine practices, where they are extensively employed. The animals have attracted substantial attention recently due to their prominence in international trade. Although pangolins have long played a role in traditional medicine across much of Sub-Saharan Africa, little is known about the full extent of their use, the specific body parts utilised, or the ailments these practices aim to treat.

There have been reports of widespread use of pangolin body parts by traditional medicine practitioners in Sierra Leone. "Poaching remains a global problem, but commercial poaching has decreased. We have, however, seen a new trend in which poachers now target Cape pangolin or 'Kgage' in Setswana for its scales are believed to be highly valued in East Africa where they are used for medicinal beliefs," Segokgo noted. He further disclosed that numerous Batswana have been apprehended and charged with poaching Cape pangolins, which are subsequently sold to individuals who have established a market for them in East African nations.

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"It looks like the temptation is huge. Batswana are promised a lot of money to do this poaching because even if we arrest and charge them, some continue to poach them (Cape pangolin)," Segokgo remarked. Further, he highlighted a separate emerging trend in which Batswana engage in poaching to satisfy their appetite for game meat. While the authorities have been conducting community outreach programmes to raise awareness about illegal hunting, these efforts have, regrettably, largely fallen on deaf ears.

However, Segokgo pointed out that government, through the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, has introduced the idea of rearing wild animals as a means of establishing a value chain for Batswana who have a taste for game meat. This initiative would enable individuals to legally slaughter and sell game meat through butcheries and other retail outlets, providing a legitimate means for Batswana to enjoy this delicacy. "We know that Batswana love game meat, but hunting it without hunting licences is a serious offence hence we plead with members of the public to refrain from doing so," he urged.

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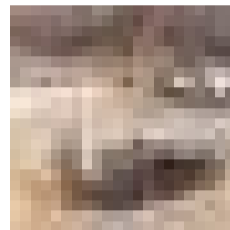
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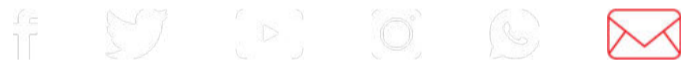
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