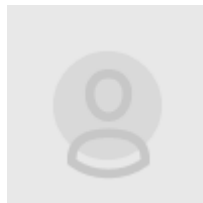


## Pangolin poacher convicted

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Zolani Kraai

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Tsabong Police Station Commander, Superintendent Christopher Tlhapi-David says the recent interception of poachers by his team in which the suspects were



later found in possession of a pangolin, signals concern for other protected species.

He said the incident is a clear crime development that poachers are nowadays targeting other protected species apart from big cats such as cheetah and lion cubs as was the case in 2013 and the following years.

The Tsabong police boss told The Monitor recently that his station recorded three cases of pangolin poaching this year, while two suspects have already been indicted.

Tlhapi-David said during their investigations, they gathered a clue from the suspects that they aimed to trade across the border in South Africa.

In a telephonic interview with this publication, the prosecutor on both matters, Tsabong Police Sub-Inspector Moagi Selogelo said only one matter has been completed, with the suspect, a Zambian national, Elisha Perseverance Banda, 36, pleading guilty to two counts. Banda, who has been in custody since his indictment in January, pleaded guilty to both counts and was convicted of the offence of unlawful possession of a government trophy contrary to Section 71(1)(d) of the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act (Cap 38:01), and entering Botswana at an ungazetted point with both counts carrying a fine of P10,000 or six months in jail for failure to pay the fine.

However, since the sentences ran concurrently, according to Selogelo, Banda has thus served his time behind bars since he failed to pay his fines. Banda's partner in crime, Mokgadinyana Othomile, 49, of Serowe and residing in Block 5, Gaborone West, faces a charge of unlawful possession of a government trophy. He pleaded not guilty thus resulting in continuation of trial, with the date set for September 25 at the Tsabong Magistrate's Court.

In another separate pending case involving pangolin poaching, investigations are ongoing before the case management date to be set for probable prosecution of the alleged suspects, according to Sub-Inspector Selogelo. Names are still withheld.