



Pangolin pain

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— IN DEMAND: Pangolins are endangered

“ Court set strict four-year example

In a bid to protect pangolins, the most trafficked animal on the planet, Francistown Magistrate Court has made a stern example of a Tsokotshaa man.

Caught with a mother pangolin and its child in his home village near Nata on 19 November 2022, 33-year-old Othusitse Baile will forgo his freedom for the next four years.

The prolonged prison sentence is meant to deter others from targeting the sought-after scaly mammal.

Baile, who was found guilty of capturing a game animal, is said to have stumbled upon the pangolin at the cattlepost.

Smelling money, he wrapped the creatures in his jacket and took them with him, later hiding them at an abandoned yard in Tsokotshaa.

Having found a buyer for them in nearby Zoroga, Baile was busted by the cops before he could sell the pangolins.

- ADVERTISEMENT -

When passing sentence, Magistrate Tshepo Magetse noted there is a common belief that the keratin found in pangolin scales has medicinal uses.

“Scientific study has shown the same is contained in human fingernails and hair. After all pangolins are rare to find; if anything the Tsokotshaa community should rather opt to get in the business of collecting and selling human nails and hair, as it would be easy and quick to source such,” he said.

With pangolin poaching a growing problem in Chobe, Boteti and the Greater Francistown areas, Magistrate Magetse explained he wanted to send a strong and loud warning that this would not be accepted.

“The fact that pangolins are the most trafficked animals in the planet and are about to go extinct, it’s an aggravation on its own. As such, the courts have to reflect the same with stiff sentences,” he said.

It was unfortunate news for Baile, who, despite pleading for leniency, noting he was a first offender and also the family breadwinner, will remain behind bars until 2027.