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Stop the Illegal Wildlife Trade

Stop the Illegal Wildlife Trade: Pangolin scales worth £5m seized in Cameroon on 'major trafficking route'

Endangered species believed to be the most trafficked animal in the world

Arjun Neil Alim | 5 days ago | comments



Thousands of pangolin scales disguised as foodstuffs were seized at Cameroon's border with Nigeria (*EAGLE Network*)

Four thousand kilograms of **pangolin** scales were seized by authorities in **Cameroon** on what experts are calling a "major trafficking route".

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The pangolin is believed to be the most trafficked animal in the world. It has been poached to near-extinction in Asia and there is increasing pressure on remaining populations in Africa due to demand for its scales and meat.

The Zoological Society of London lists the four Asian pangolin species – Chinese, Sunda, Philippine and Indian – as “critically endangered” or “endangered”. Two African pangolin species are listed as “vulnerable”, and the other two “endangered”

The animal is one of the potential intermediary hosts for Sars-Cov-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, according to a report from the World Health Organisation. ✕

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We are working with conservation charities Space for Giants and Freeland to protect wildlife at risk from poachers due to the conservation funding crisis caused by Covid-19. Help is desperately needed to support wildlife rangers, local communities and law enforcement personnel to prevent wildlife crime. Donate to help Stop the Illegal Wildlife Trade [HERE](#)

In April 2020, Malaysian customs seized a shipment of 6 tonnes of pangolin scales hidden within sacks of peanuts from Nigeria, destined for Vietnam.

The Eagle Network (Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement), an organisation that combats wildlife crime, assisted Cameroonian customs with the seizure. A spokesman said: “Nobody was arrested in connection with the seizure and people associated with the shipment ‘escaped’ possibly due to corruption”.

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Giants and Freeland to protect wildlife at risk due to the conservation funding crisis caused by Covid-19 and to prevent the emergence of another zoonotic pandemic.

Chris Hamley, Senior Pangolin Campaigner at the Environmental Investigations Agency (EIA), said that the seizure was on a “major trafficking route” from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic, where many pangolins are poached, up through Congo-Brazzaville and Cameroon.

The final destination is Nigeria, which has a 1600km border with Cameroon. Nigerian ports are responsible for the export of around 70 per cent of pangolins poached from Africa, according to the African Pangolin Working Group.




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The impact of COVID-19 means help is urgently needed to protect wildlife.

The Independent has joined with conservation NGOs Space for Giants and Freeland to Stop The Illegal Wildlife Trade.

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harvested from Central Africa's forests to be exported by criminal networks that use Nigeria as a wildlife trafficking safe-haven. This seizure shows that these criminal networks are exploiting the porous and largely unregulated northern border zone between Cameroon and Nigeria.”

The founder of The *Independent's* charity partner Freeland, Steve Galster, said: “This massive seizure of a highly endangered species is a dangerous indicator that wildlife traffickers are waiting out the COVID-19 scare and are prepared to test the Chinese government's policy and resolve to keep wildlife markets closed.”

Mr Hamley added: “It is essential that the Nigerian and Cameroonian authorities do more to effectively investigate and prosecute the high levels of these pangolin trafficking groups and root out the corruption that is facilitating their activities.”

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