



Pangolin traffickers nabbed

Four pangolin traffickers have been arrested in Namibia, in cooperation with the United States embassies in Windhoek and Pretoria.

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ELLANIE SMIT

WINDHOEK

In the first cooperation between US law enforcement and the Namibian police, four suspected pangolin traffickers were recently arrested in Namibia.

According to a statement by the US embassy in Namibia, time-sensitive information was received by the Homeland Security Investigations office in Pretoria relating to the imminent illegal sale of a live pangolin.

This information was passed to the regional security officer at the US embassy in Windhoek, who shared it with the Namibian police.

“Based on the information, the Blue Rhino Task Team was able to successfully arrest four suspects,” the embassy said. One live pangolin was recovered, along with four pangolin skins and loose scales, which were all confiscated on 21 July. According to the embassy the four accused persons remain in custody pending a formal bail application on 13 August. “This investigation may lead to further arrests and is a great example of the shared cooperation between the United States and Namibia to counter illegal wildlife trafficking,” said the embassy. The live pangolin was released by Blue Rhino Task Team members in the presence of a scientific researcher in cooperation with the environment ministry.

According to statistics provided by the ministry last month, three live pangolins have been seized this year compared to 49 last year and 25 in 2018. A total of 35 pangolin skins and 612 scales have been seized this year compared to 74 skins last year and 61 skins in 2018. Furthermore, the ministry said that 53 suspects have been arrested in connection with pangolin- related cases this year, compared to 160 in 2019 and 120 in 2018.

Of the four species of pangolins that occur in Africa, only Temminck's ground pangolin is found in Namibia. Another four pangolin species occur in Asia. The status of the Namibian population is poorly known.

Pangolins are small, nocturnal mammals and are very rarely seen.

Pangolin poaching is believed to be carried out opportunistically by rural people who spend a lot of time in the bush, as well as through chance encounters on roads at night.