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## Suspected pangolin trafficker arrested in Gravelotte

*Hidden in the boot inside a bag, police found a pangolin estimated to be worth R150 000.*



The pangolin that was found and rescued. Image: Supplied by Saps.

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In a collaborative operation involving the Hawks' Serious Organised Crime Investigation and other enforcement agencies, police arrested a 59-year-old suspected [pangolin](#) dealer in Gravelotte, near Tzaneen, on Wednesday, 17 May 2023.

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According to police reports, the joint team received a tip-off regarding a suspect who was believed to be on the way to Hoedspruit to sell a pangolin.

“Wasting no time, the authorities swiftly acted on the information, and their attention was drawn to a suspicious vehicle spotted in Gravelotte,” said [police](#) spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Matimba Maluleke.

## Hidden in car boot

Lieutenant Colonel Maluleke explained that upon conducting a thorough search of the vehicle, the team made a significant discovery.

“Hidden in the boot inside a bag, they found a pangolin estimated to be worth R150 000. The suspect, however, was unable to produce the necessary permit required for possessing a pangolin, leading to the immediate arrest,” he said.

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He confirmed that the suspect is scheduled to appear in the Namakgale Magistrate's Court on 19 May 2023.

The suspect will face charges related to the illegal trafficking of an endangered species, specifically the pangolin.

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Pangolins are believed to be the most trafficked mammals on the black market. In December last year, six suspects in the Zeerust Magistrates' Court for keeping a pangolin in their garage in Zeerust.

## **Valuable scales**

According to police spokesperson, Colonel Adele Myburgh, the pangolin was found in the boot of the accused's vehicle during the search.

As a result, they were arrested after failing to account for the possession of the pangolin, valued at R60 000.

The men were charged for the contravention of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) 2004, (Act No. 10 of 2004).

The pangolin, an elusive and critically endangered mammal, is highly sought after in the illegal wildlife trade due to the value placed on its scales (used in Asia for their supposed medicinal properties) and meat.

The scaly-skinned, insect-eating mammals are solitary, nocturnal animals. Only found in the wild in Asia and Africa, their numbers are plunging from poaching.

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