

Five arrested in possession of ivory, live pangolin in Northern Uganda

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A pangolin recovered by police in an operatin with National Resource Conservation Network in 2016.

Agago, Uganda | THE INDEPENDENT | Five suspects have been arrested for illegal possession of ivory and a live Pangolin. The five were arrested in separate operations conducted on Sunday by the Uganda Wildlife Authority-UWA and the Uganda Police in Lira and Agago Districts.

Bashir Hangi, the UWA Communications Manager told Uganda Radio Network in an interview on Monday that three suspects were arrested from Agago district while attempting to sell off a live Pangolin. They were found in G&G Victoria Hotel in Kalongo Town Council where they had set up to meet their customers.

He notes that a team of UWA officials who acted on a tip-off pretended to be potential buyers of the pangolin before nabbing them with the live wild animal. The pangolin is suspected to have been poached by the suspects from Kidepo Valley National Park.

According to Hangi, two other suspects, a male, and a female were arrested in Lira city with four pieces of Ivory weighing 41.83 Kilograms.

He says the suspects were briefly detained at Kalongo Police Station and Lira Central Police Station respectively before being transferred to Jinja Road Police Station in Kampala. Hangi says they have been charged with being in possession of unlawful wildlife specimens and notes that they will be arraigned at the Utilities and Wildlife court at Buganda Road Court.

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ASP Charles Twine, the Criminal Investigations Directorate Spokesperson told URN in an interview that Pangolins are endangered wildlife species adding that it's an offence to be found in possession of it alive or with its body parts. He says police will arraign the suspects at the Utility and Wildlife court after interrogation at Jinja Road Police.

Uganda Radio Network established the rescued Pangolin has since been handed to Karuma Wildlife Reserve for release into the wild. Pangolins have been listed as critically endangered species of animals and currently facing global threats from poachers over their lucrative scales and meat used as traditional medicines in Asian markets.

Early this month, two south Sudanese nationals were also arrested from Elegu Town Council at the Uganda-South Sudan border attempting to sell live pangolins at 15 million Shillings. The suspects included Lt. Chol Malou Mayen John, a 42-year-old migration officer attached to Nimule in South Sudan, and 1st Lt Denis Arop Ochan Lotyang 38-year old. They were all charged with being in possession of the wild animals at Buganda Road Court.

The offence of illegal possession of wildlife species in Uganda carries a maximum sentence of Life imprisonment upon conviction.

