

## 2 Binga folks arrested for possessing live pangolin



The pangolin is considered the most trafficked animal on the planet. — AP

### **Leonard Ncube, Victoria Falls Reporter**

TWO villagers from Binga have been arrested in Zambia after they were found in possession of a live pangolin they allegedly intended to sell in the neighbouring country.

A pangolin is an endangered protected species whose live value is \$5 000 and attracts a mandatory nine-year jail sentence in Zimbabwe.

Its possession attracts a mandatory five years in jail in neighbouring Zambia, where it is reportedly valued higher on the streets compared to Zimbabwe.

Ephrain Mugande (35) and Simple Mugande (32) both from Manjolo Village under Chief Sikalenge allegedly illegally hunted the pangolin in Chizarira National Park on the boundary of Binga and Gokwe and illegally crossed the Zambezi River to Zambia intending to sell it.

It is not clear if the two are related.

They were allegedly in the company of a Zambian Menson Sialubombwe (47) of Sinazongwe area under Chief Mweemba when they were arrested in Sinazongwe on Saturday, according to information gathered by police in Binga.

The trio has since appeared before a magistrates' court in Sinazongwe in Zambia charged with a count of entry by evasion and another of possession of a live pangolin.

The two Binga men pleaded not guilty to both charges and were remanded in custody to September 4 for start of trial while their Zambian accomplice Sialubombwe was reportedly sentenced to a mandatory five years in jail after pleading guilty to the two charges.

National police spokesperson Assistant Commissioner Paul Nyathi yesterday said he was yet to get details about the issue.

However, details of the case according to police documents are that: "On Sunday, police got a tip-off that Ephrain Mugande (35) of Manjolo Village under Chief Sikalenge and Simple Mugande (32) and a Zambian Menson Sialubombwe (47) of Sinazongwe area under Chief Mweemba had been arrested by Zambia police."

Police said the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) is reportedly making efforts to recover the pangolin and return it to Chizarira National Park.

Zimparks spokesperson Mr Tinashe Farawo yesterday said he needed to check on the progress in repatriating the endangered animal. — @ncubeleon

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