

Pangolin peddling villagers arrested



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

Leonard Ncube, Victoria Falls Reporter

TWO villagers from Binga who were caught trying to sell a live pangolin in Zambia have been sentenced to a mandatory five years in jail each in the neighbouring country.

Ephraim Mugande (35) and Simple Mugande (32) both of Manjolo Village under Chief Sikalenge illegally hunted the pangolin in Chizarira National Park on the boundary of Binga and Gokwe before crossing the Zambezi River with it to Sinazongwe town in Zambia with the intention to sell it.

They were in the company of a Zambian national Menson Sialubombwe (47) of Sinazongwe area under Chief Mweemba when they were arrested in Sinazongwe last month.

Sialubombwe was sentenced to a mandatory five years in jail last month after pleading guilty.

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Ephraim and Simple had pleaded not guilty. The two were recently convicted by a magistrate after full trial and sentenced to five years each in jail.

It was not stated if the two are related.

A pangolin is an endangered species whose live value is \$5 000 and anyone caught hunting it is liable for arrest and a mandatory nine year jail sentence in Zimbabwe.

The endangered animal is reportedly valued higher on the streets in Zambia compared to Zimbabwe.

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According to court documents from the neighbouring country, Ephraim and Simple were arrested on August 22 after a tip-off.

“On 22 August police got a tip-off that Ephraim Mugande and Simple Mugande of Manjolo Village under Chief Sikalenge from the same area were in the company of Zambian Menson Sialubombwe of Sinazongwe area under Chief Mweemba selling a live pangolin. The trio were arrested by Zambia police,” read court documents.

The Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) recovered the pangolin with the help of their counterparts in Zambia and returned it to Chizarira National Park. -@ncubeleon/

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