

CONSERVATION NAMIBIA



Namibian Pangolin Working Group: collaboration for conservation success and World Pangolin Day



By Kelsey Prediger

20th February 2021

Pangolin species around the world are under severe threat due to the demand for their scales and meat, mainly by consumers in China and Vietnam. In Namibia, the Temminck's ground pangolin occurs across much of the country (excluding the extremely arid west and south) and is increasingly targeted by poachers, yet its status and ecological requirements are poorly understood.

The protection and conservation of pangolins in Namibia is thus a complex and urgent business that requires linked-up collaboration from many organisations. These range from rural communities and farmers to law enforcement agencies, informers, nature conservation officials, veterinarians, rehabilitation facilities, researchers, non-governmental conservation organisations and donors. In response, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) identified the

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the NPWVG is tasked with coordinating and driving pangolin conservation and research in Namibia.

The current priorities of the NPWG are to:

- Develop a concise National Conservation Management Plan for pangolin;
- Prepare guidelines and protocols for the handling of confiscated pangolins by first responders, getting them quickly into rehabilitation and veterinary care, and the procedures for selecting good release sites;
- Guide priority research to better understand key areas specifically related to pangolin conservation, diet, status and release;
- Raise awareness and help educate target groups about pangolins, particularly their ecological role and importance to ecosystem functioning;
- Promote international collaboration and information sharing.

Pangolins that are seized from illegal traffickers are often emaciated, dehydrated and traumatised. These animals require first aid from the time of seizure and specialised care up until their release to give them the greatest chances of survival. A key part of the NPWG's National Pangolin Conservation Management Plan establishes clear guidelines for pangolin transport, care and rehabilitation along with contact lists for veterinary clinics and other relevant organisations. These resources will be distributed regionally along with a training curriculum aimed at first-responders from MEFT and the Namibian Police Force (NAMPOL). The first training session was held in November 2020 for approximately 40 nature conservation officers covering pangolin ecology and first-response measures for seized pangolins.

The Namibian Chamber of Environment and Rooikat Trust have donated pangolin transport boxes to ensure that all regions have a safe place to hold and transfer live confiscated pangolin. Additionally, they have setup a pangolin emergency fund to support the cost of veterinary care and rehabilitation for rescued pangolin in need. A network of veterinarians will be trained in specialist pangolin care by those with hands-on experience.

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Priority research conducted by NPWG members is focused on topics that will improve the chances of survival for trafficked pangolins and assist those working on wildlife crime to understand local threats to the species. A survey of public sightings combined with suitability models created the first reliable national distribution map for pangolin. You can [contribute your sightings here](#) to assist us in this process. All responses are kept confidential and represented on a coarse scale, so that specific locations are not revealed. Combining this knowledge of pangolin distribution and known hotspots for trafficking, we can identify and select potential release sites in each region of Namibia.

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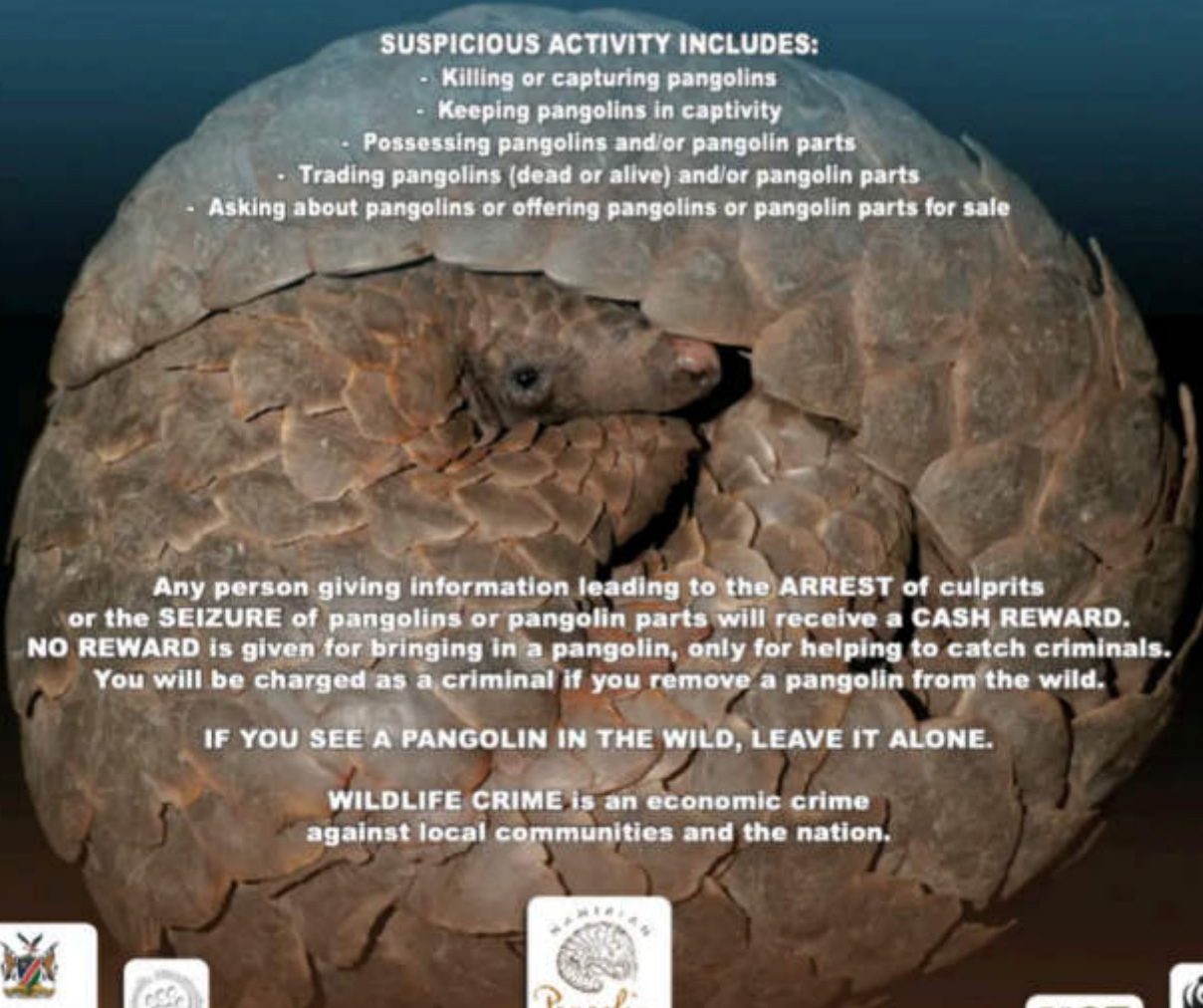
of ant and termite species out of dozens available. Their preference also varies regionally and does not appear to be based upon prey availability. This information can be used to determine origin of a seized individual and identify the best release site for them.

Other important aspects of pangolin releases are the survival rate of released individuals and their impact on the resident pangolin population at the release sites. As part of this research, the first GPS/satellite tagged pangolin was released in July 2020. As of January 2021, she has remained in the same area and regularly uses a handful of burrows. Excitingly, she has been found in the near vicinity of a resident male pangolin. This release has also confirmed the hypothesis that pangolin eat different ant and termite species in different regions as she was found to be eating two species that have not previously been recorded as pangolin prey in Namibia.

To raise awareness of the pangolin's plight, informational posters have been created that highlight the importance of protecting pangolins and procedures to follow when encountering traffickers or suspicious activity. A cash reward is offered for information that leads to the arrest of pangolin traffickers or seizure of pangolin parts. These posters will be printed and distributed throughout the nation. A children's cartoon featuring a pangolin will also be printed and distributed throughout Namibia to reach a young crowd on the importance of protecting this species. NPWG members have written media releases and news articles, given radio interviews and presented to the Swakopmund Scientific Society to inform and educate the public.

World Pangolin Day is celebrated every year on the third Saturday in February, falling on the 20th of February this year. You can help by sharing this article and other information about pangolin species to generate much-needed awareness and support for pangolin conservation.

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keep them in the wild

It is **ILLEGAL** to capture, keep, transport, injure or kill a pangolin or be in possession of any pangolin parts.
PANGOLINS have the same protection under Namibian law as rhinos and elephants.

**REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY BY SMS TO THE HOTLINE:
 55555**

all information will be treated with strict confidentiality

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY INCLUDES:

- Killing or capturing pangolins
- Keeping pangolins in captivity
- Possessing pangolins and/or pangolin parts
- Trading pangolins (dead or alive) and/or pangolin parts
- Asking about pangolins or offering pangolins or pangolin parts for sale

Any person giving information leading to the **ARREST** of culprits or the **SEIZURE** of pangolins or pangolin parts will receive a **CASH REWARD**.
NO REWARD is given for bringing in a pangolin, only for helping to catch criminals.
 You will be charged as a criminal if you remove a pangolin from the wild.

IF YOU SEE A PANGOLIN IN THE WILD, LEAVE IT ALONE.

WILDLIFE CRIME is an economic crime against local communities and the nation.

Logos at the bottom: Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, NCE, WWF, and a Pangolin logo.

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The Namibian Pangolin Working Group is chaired by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), the Group includes the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE), the Namibia University of Science and Technology's Biodiversity Research Centre (NUST-BRC), Rooikat Trust, and the Namibia Animal Rehabilitation Research and Education Centre (NARREC).



Ms. Kelsey Prediger is currently a research associate and student at the NUST Biodiversity Research Centre and the Secretariat of the Namibian Pangolin Working Group. She completed her studies in zoology and conservation biology in the United States. Her passion for conservation led her to Namibia where she has spent the past four years focusing on the conservation of wildlife. Kelsey is currently pursuing her Masters of Natural Resource Management at the NUST focusing on the ecology of the Temminck's ground pangolin. She is involved with a number of projects whose goal is to learn more about the ecology of these nocturnal and elusive creatures to help provide a base of scientific knowledge from which we can better help save this species from the horrendous wildlife trafficking trade.



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