

## **Pangolins: Over 1,000 poached and trafficked in India**

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### **What's in today's article?**

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### **Why in News?**

- On the eve of World Pangolin Day (Feb 18), a not-for-profit organisation – TRAFFIC, has reported that 1,203 pangolins have been found in illegal wildlife trade in India from 2018 to 2022.
- An earlier analysis of illegal pangolin trade in India by TRAFFIC in 2018 reported poaching of nearly 6,000 pangolins between 2009 and 2017.

## What is TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce)?

- Also known as the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network, TRAFFIC is a **global non-governmental organisation** monitoring the trade in wild animals and plants with focus on biodiversity and sustainable development.
- It was originally created in **1976** as a specialist group of the Species Survival Commission of the IUCN and evolved into a strategic alliance of the **WWF and the IUCN**.
- It also provides **trade information and expert analysis** to the decision-making process at **CITES** (such as through the Elephant Trade Information System) to ensure that international trade in wildlife remains at sustainable levels.

## What Exactly is an Indian Pangolin?

Image Caption: Indian Pangolin (Key Facts)

- Also called thick-tailed pangolin and scaly anteater, it is a pangolin **native to the Indian subcontinent**.
- Like other pangolins, it has large-overlapping scales (colour varies depending on the colour of the earth in its surroundings) on its body **which act as armour**.
- An insectivore, it can also **curl itself into a ball as self-defence against predators** such as the tiger.
- It is **nocturnal and found in various types of tropical forests** as well as open land, grasslands and degraded habitats, including in close proximity to villages.
- **The species can adapt well to modified habitats**, provided its ant and termite prey remains abundant.
- Indian Pangolin is widely distributed in India, **except the arid region, high Himalayas and the North-East**.
- It can be found at an elevation up to 2500 m and also occurs in **Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka**.
- Other than regulating the population of insects, the pangolin is an '**ecosystem engineer**' that builds burrows that help circulate soil organic matter, increase soil moisture and aeration, and affect plant community succession.
- It is threatened by **hunting for its meat**, traditional **medicine** and **illicit international trade**.

## What Steps are Being Taken to Protect Pangolins?

- **TRAFFIC** is mapping pangolin trade hubs, conduits, transportation, high poaching areas and drivers in relation to poaching and illegal trafficking of pangolins.
- In 2015, TRAFFIC, in partnership with WWF-India and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) launched a **social media campaign to create awareness** towards curbing illegal trade in pangolins.

- In 2020, the **Madhya Pradesh** forest department announced the first-ever successful **radio-tagging** of the Indian pangolin.
- In 2020, the **Maharashtra** forest department became the first state in India to have a **dedicated action plan for conservation of pangolins**.
- **Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra** (Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, India) – an NGO, is involved in awareness and sensitisation activities for the local community in the identified pockets.

## News Summary Regarding Pangolins and TRAFFIC's Findings

- Pangolins are among the **most trafficked wild mammals globally** and India is home to two species:
  - **The Indian Pangolin** – found across the subcontinent and **the Chinese Pangolin** – found across a larger area in south Asia.
  - **Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam** see the presence of both.
- Both species are included under India's **Schedule I** of the Wildlife Protection Act and are also in **Appendix I** of the CITES.
- The Indian Pangolin has been classified as '**Endangered**' and the Chinese Pangolin as '**Critically Endangered**' by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- The publication, titled '**India's Pangolins Buried in Illegal Wildlife Trade**', has tracked 342 total incidents during this time period and 8 incidents of online trading were also recorded.
- Up to 24 States and one UT saw seizures of pangolins and their derivatives.
  - **Odisha reported the maximum number of incidents**, with 154 pangolins in 74 seizures.
  - It was followed by **Maharashtra** with 135 pangolins in 47 seizure incidents.
- Up to 50% of seizures included live pangolins and 40% involved pangolin scales, **poached mainly for international markets in China and southeast Asia** for their scales, which are used as an ingredient in traditional medicines.
  - **Pangolin meat is also considered a delicacy** and consumed for its alleged medicinal properties.
- There is an imperative need to focus on pangolins, strengthen their protection and conservation for their future survival.
- The publication calls for **cooperation and collaboration** for protection and conservation of the species, **through DNA-based technologies and information sharing**.

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### Q1) How many species of Pangolin are found in India?

India is home to two species: The Indian Pangolin and the Chinese Pangolin. Both species are included under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act and are also in Appendix I of the CITES. The Indian Pangolin has been classified as 'Endangered' and the Chinese Pangolin as 'Critically Endangered' by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

## Q2) What innovative steps have been taken to save pangolins in India?

Pangolins are among the most trafficked wild mammals globally. In 2020, the Madhya Pradesh forest department announced the first-ever successful radio-tagging of the Indian pangolin. In 2020, the Maharashtra forest department became the first state in India to have a dedicated action plan for conservation of pangolins.

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**Source:** [Over 1,000 pangolins poached and trafficked in India between 2018 and 2022](#) | [WWF India](#)

**VIDEO:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jLu2R3kH9w>

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Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/pangolins-over-1000-poached-and-trafficked-in-india/>

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