

African Pangolin Working Group Chairman's Annual Report: March 2017 to February 2018

Highlights

It seems that each successive year has become busier for us in the fight to save Africa's pangolins – more trade, more rehabilitation, more releases, more court cases, etc. In saying that, this past financial year has probably been the most rewarding having achieved jail sentences for the first time for poaching and trading in a pangolin; the first for three years and the second for seven years. We hope this achievement serves a deterrent to would be pangolin poachers and also that it sets a precedent in South African regional magistrate courts. This past year has also shown us that it is imperative that all pangolins retrieved from the illegal trade require hospitalisation and rehabilitation. Furthermore, all released pangolins need to be tagged and monitored post release to determine distribution and survival. We have now launched this project in monitoring releases and initiating the first Pangolarium in Africa in collaboration with the Paramount Group. In addition, we have also developed a pangolin detection program with this company and five dogs have already taken to the scent of pangolins. We also achieved a world first in fitting 10 tags to white-bellied pangolins in Ghana where we will monitor their ecology and habitat use. Our new design and development of pangolin transport boxes has been a huge success thanks to the financial support of HSI-Africa. A number of these branded boxes have already been used and deployed at strategic police stations and provincial conservation authorities.

Against the highs we experienced, we have also had some lows. We lost some pangolins this past year and some in our arms. They all leave a mark on us with their unique character and personality and this just strengthens our resolve to fight the war with greater determination. We also had the resignation of one of our founding Board member and Vice Chairman of our organisation, Darren Pietersen. Without Darren's involvement as a Board member, pangolin research and his knowledge on the natural history of these mammals, our organisation would not exist. We are sincerely grateful for his huge contribution and wish him well on all his endeavours.

As we move into the next financial year, it is very likely and almost inevitable that trade in both living and dead pangolins will continue to increase. We stand ready to take on this challenge and I thank each of you, our Board members, for your individual and collective support and efforts over the last year and may we grow in pangolin conservation from strength to strength.



Ray Jansen
Chairman: African Pangolin Working Group

Presentations, Interviews, Excursions & Documentaries

1. Ray (with Nicci in support): Presentation to the Scientific Authority at the SANBI building in Pretoria on 22nd February 2017 (included here as after 2015/16 chairman's report)
2. Ray: Pangolin presentation to Pretoria Boy's High School Wildlife Society on UN World Wildlife Day, 3 March 2017
3. Ray: Pangolin presentation as keynote address to 2nd Annual NZG Student Symposium 9 March 2017
4. Nicci, Alexis & Ray attended the bail application of David Chauke (accused of being in possession of a pangolin) in Tzaneen on the 6th and 25th February 2017. He is on the run and skipped bail.
5. Ray, Nicci, Darren & Alexis visited the Paramount Group's farm, Battle Creek near Rustenburg on the 24th March 2017 to discuss the possible development of a Pangolarium on the property and the training of pangolin detection dogs. Ray returned on the 15th December for a follow-up meeting to finalize the site.
6. Darren and Rynette attended the conviction of two Zimbabwean poachers in the Kempton Park Magistrates Court on the 11th May 2017. The state prosecutor was unprepared and did not arrive to the hearing and Rynette made use of her contacts, arranged for an alternative prosecutor and the magistrate found the accused guilty. A five year suspended sentence was handed down and R10 000 fine was paid into the APWG bank account.
7. Nicci and Alexis attended PAAZA Annual Conference near JHB from 22-24 May 2017 where they manned a pangolin education display.
8. Alexis and Nicci met with the National Prosecuting Authority on the 20th June 2017, Dania Bruwer, to link the APWG with the training of prosecutors and magistrates in South Africa. A very positive outcome for further collaboration and training was achieved.
9. Ray presented training (facilitated by the EWT) to SARS Customs officials at the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town from the 19-21 June. SARS are now to start training on specific pangolin detection dogs for SARS Customs division headed up by National Commander Hugo Taljaard
10. Nicci accompanied Dr Karin Lourens on a trip to the Kalahari to collect blood from wild pangolin specimens in July, for Dr Louren's masters project.
11. Ray presented by invitation from SANParks Wild Card at the Cape Union Mart shop in the Centurion Mall on the 20th July highlighting the African trade in pangolins
12. Ray was subpoenaed to take the stand in aggravation of sentencing in the Mankweng regional court on 14 August 2017 in case 881/10/2016 against Oliver Tambo and Kenny Mandevuli for being in possession of a pangolin at the Savanna Mall on 27 Oct 2016. The accused received three year's jail term each – a land-mark sentence as no previous jail term had been handed down to a pangolin poacher.
13. Ray and Nicci interviewed and aired on M Net's Carte Blanche pangolin documentary aired on Sunday 12th November -

14. Ray presented training (facilitated by the EWT) to SARS Customs officials at the Natural Science Museum in Pretoria on the 21st November

15. Ray was subpoenaed and provided testimony in aggravation of sentencing at the Musina regional court on the 27th November. The sentencing was postponed to 2nd February 2018 where he attended and provided testimony in aggravation of sentencing against four pangolin poachers. Sentencing was postponed.

16. Ray was subpoenaed and provided testimony in aggravation of sentencing at the Tzaneen regional court on the 14th December. However, the defense attorney made a “no show” and the proceedings was postponed.

17. Ray undertook an interview with the Saturday Star newspaper that was subsequently published on the 16th December 2017.

18. Ray travelled to the Waterberg on the 13th December and helped facilitate the release of Ivory – a wonderful good news story. She was fitted with a temporary transmitter.

19. Ray travelled to Polokwane to collect a large female pangolin retrieved in a sting operation and to move her to a release site in the Limpopo Valley. She was fitted with a transmitter.

20. Ray provided evidence in aggravation of sentencing for a Zimbabwean pangolin poacher in January and the Tembisa magistrate court. The magistrate made a landmark sentence of seven years behind jail and he is to cover his own deportation to the value of R5000.

21. Ray provided evidence in aggravation of sentence in the Bochum (Tolwe) regional court for a pangolin poacher on the 1 February and in the Musina court on the 2nd February. Sentencing in both cases was postponed.

22. Nicci had an interview with the radio station Nova Scotia from Canada on the evening of Friday 16th February

Pangolin rehabilitation

1. A young male pangolin was retrieved from Mamelodi in August in a sting operation organised by Ray with the Cullinan Stock Theft Unit. The pangolin underwent a health check, chain of custody sampling and fitted with a microchip at the NZG. “Mamelodi” was rehabilitated and released by Nicci a week later into the eastern Lowveld.

2. A young female pangolin was retrieved in Pretoria on 27 October from two ex 32 Battalion soldiers harvested near Kuruman in the Northern Cape. “Kuru” was rehabilitated by Nicci and flown up to Tswalu on the 3rd November, fitted with a transmitter and released into the Kalahari. Unfortunately, she was predated sometime later by what we think we Honey Badgers.

3. A large male pangolin was retrieved from the back seat of a Mercedes Benze just south of Hammanskraal on the 14th November. He was very strong and rehabilitation was best as an immediate release following a short period in hospital for stabilisation.

4. A male pangolin was retrieved from a sting operation in JHB (Ivory Park) on the 6th December where two Zimbabwean nationals were arrested on the 5th December. The

pangolin was held in some or other container with water and Jik. Under Nicci's guidance, rehabilitation was successful and he was released in the Waterberg.

5. A male pangolin was retrieved in Cyrildene during a sting operation and brought through to the JHB Wildlife Veterinary Hospital on 24/1/2018. After a period of treatment and rehabilitation, he was transported by Nicci and Alexis to a safe conservation area in the Waterberg, fitted with telemetry and released on 4/2/2018.

6. On 16 January 2018, a male pangolin was confiscated in Pietermaritzburg. Dr Karin Lourens and Nicci met the Wildlife Investigation Unit official in Villiers for the handover. This was a severely compromised animal who, despite our best efforts, he died on the 22 January 2018. We have a comprehensive pathology report which confirms that he died from organ failure as a result of long-term captivity, starvation and dehydration.

7. A young pangolin was confiscated near Punda Maria gate on 13 January 2018. He was extremely compromised and stabilised by Dr Peter Rogers in Hoedspruit. Dr Karin Lourens and Nicci were flown by the Bateleurs to collect the pangolin which was intensively treated and nursed at the JHB Wildlife Veterinary Hospital until the 17 February 2018 when he died at 10am.

Pangolin trade in Africa

DATE 2017	LOCATION	SOURCE	SCALES (KG'S) 46.809 tones
9 January	Tanzania	Uganda	6000
18 January	Douala, Cameroon	Cameroon	5000
2 February	Bangkok, Thailand	Kinshasa, DRC	3000
16 February	Bangkok, Thailand	DRC	1000
20 March	Shanghai, China	Africa?	3100
16 April	Cameroon	Cameroon	118
2 May	Kuala Lumpur, Malasia	Ghana	408
4 May	Kuala Lumpur, Malasia	Ghana	304
30 May	Hong Kong customs	Nigeria	7200
13 June	Malaysia	Ghana	288
27 July	Ivory Coast	Ivory Coast	3000

2 August	Malasia	DRC	300
8 September	Kota Kinabalu, Malasia	Nigeria	5000
11 October	Cameroon	Cameroon	71
22 November	Cameroon	Cameroon	120
29 November	Yantrian Port, China	Africa?	11900
5 January 2018	Hong Kong	Nigeria	1800
25 January 2018	Ivory Coast	Ivory Coast	600

Pangolin trade in South Africa 2017

Date	location	Persons involved	pangolins	arrests	outcome
5 May	Phalaborwa	Limpopo Nature Conservation	1 male 13.2 kg	Matimba Innocent Mathebula	released Hoedspruit
7 May	Louis Trichard	Janslang Van Rooyen, Dr Freddi Harris, Blouberg Dierekliniiek	1 male pangolin	None	Released ?
8 May	Tzaneen	Louise Joubert	1 young female	3 Zimbabweans	Released San Wild
24 May	Alldays	SAPS	1	1	released into the Balule by MTPA
14 June	Rustenburg	farm worker	1	none	immediate release
26 July	Hoedspruit	Protack, SAPS	1	5	immediate release Balule
15 August	Mamelodi, Pretoria	SAPS, APWG	1	5	released into Thorneybush
25 October	Tzaneen	Louise Joubert	1	3	Released San Wild
27 October	NW Province from Kruman	SAPS	1 young female 3.2 kg (Kuru)	2	Rehabilitation & release released (tagged) Tshwalu (APWG). Predated 3 weeks later badger
7 November	Tzaneen	Louise Joubert	1	2	?

7 November	Lulekani	ProTrack	2	6	Release Balule
9 November	Acornhoek	ProTrack	1	1	Release Klaserie
14 November	Hoedspruit	ProTrack	1	0	Released Balule
14 November	Hammanskraal	SAPS	1 (large male, Mercedes)	4	rehabilitation APWG release Thabo Tholo APWG
17 November	Phalaborwa	SAPS	1	1	Release Balule
6 December	Ivory Park	SAPS	1 (young male Ivory)	2	rehabilitation & release Waterberg 13 Dec APWG (tagged)

Pangolin trade in South Africa 2018

Date	location	Persons involved	pangolins	arrests	outcome
1 Jan	Musina	Francois Meyer/APWG	1 (young female 4.5 kg) Tshipise	none – public paid +/- R8k	rehab & release on 10 Jan APWG/Francois Meyer (tagged). Predated 6 days later
2 Jan	Giyani	Hammersbach (Glen Thompson)/SAPS	1	2	immediate release Timbivati
9 Jan	Tolwe	SAPS, EMI Riaan de Jager	1 female (11 kg) Tolwe	2	rehabilitation APWG & release (tagged), Francois Meyer, Tshipees
10 Jan	Tzaneen	SAPS, EMI Riaan de Jager	1	none – tribal belief	immediate release recommended by APWG
12 Jan	Masisi	Limpopo Nature Conservation	1 (very young female +/- 1 kg)	2	immediate release at Nanweni, intervention to recall by APWG, recaptured, died 4 hrs later
16 Jan	Pietermaritzburg	SAPS W/A Wessie Wessels	1 (male 8.7 kg) Maritz	1	deceased under rehab, day 7
24 Jan	Cyrildene, JHB	SAPS W/O Strydom & vd den Berg	1 (11.9 kg male)	4	Tagged & released Waterberg
26 Jan	Kuruman	W/O Willem Lou Kimberly SAPS	1 male	?	Released Tshwalu (tagged)
12 Feb	Acornhoek	Hammersbach	2 (male & female)	4	6 kg female died, 2.3 kg male died 17/1

Summary of African pangolin trade

A total of 46.8 tons of pangolin scales leaving the African shores primarily for Asia and China in particular, far exceeds any previous year's interceptions. Not only is there very likely an increase in demand and subsequent poaching, I do believe authorities have become more familiar with identifying pangolin products in the market and more trade is subsequently seized. However, I do believe the majority of these scales are still retrieved as a by-product from the pangolin bush meat market but, in saying that, more and more are now actively being targeted specifically for the Asian demand for scales as a remedy in traditional medicine.

Summary of pangolin trade specific to South Africa

Last year, we experienced the highest poaching and illegal trade in pangolins in our country. The first two months of this year indicate that those figures will be surpassed in 2018. The majority of trade seems to be from Zimbabwe and these animals are all very likely pangolins originating from that country. Black market asking prices have increased from R20 000 a few years ago up to R400 000 this year.

We have also been relatively successful in our rehabilitation efforts based from the Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital in Midrand. Nicci, Penny and Dr Karin Lourens are a formidable team and can be commended on their dedication and commitment to compromised pangolins retrieved out of the illegal trade. What is concerning, however, are the large numbers of pangolins released immediately following a brief health check by a local vet in the vicinity of the operation. It is our strong opinion that all pangolins coming out of the trade are compromised and require specialist medical and rehabilitation care. Also of interest, is that two pangolins we tagged died a while later in the wild; one being predated on by a Honey Badger and the other ingesting a large wasp and being stung multiple times in the throat – eventually succumbing to anaphylactic shock. The assumption that pangolins will simply survive post trade, is hugely incorrect.

Research

Students

1. Maxwell Boakye graduated with his Doctorate on the 2nd May 2017 and left for Ghana to continue his post-doc work on the ecology of white-bellied tree pangolins in the tropical forest there.
2. Zelda du Toit is finalising the last few chapters of her PhD thesis and will finish her study this year investigating the phylogeny and phylogeography of all four African pangolin species
3. Thando Radebe is finalising the last two chapters of her master's dissertation investigating the ectoparasites associated with African pangolins and will complete this year
4. Francois Meyer will register for his MSc this year investigating the survival, distribution and habitat use of pangolins retrieved from the illegal wildlife trade
5. Dr Karin Lourens is currently gathering blood samples from wild pangolins for her MSc research project entitled "Reference intervals for haematology and serum biochemistry in free-ranging Temminck's Ground Pangolin (*Smutsia temminckii*)".

Publications

Mwale, M, Dalton, DL, **Jansen**, R, Roelofse, M, **Pietersen**, DW, Mokgokong, PS & **Kotze**, A. (2017). The forensic application of DNA barcoding for identification of illegally traded African pangolin scales. *Genome*, 10.1139/gen-2016-0144.

- du Toit, Z, du Plessis, M, Dalton, D, **Jansen**, R, Grobler, P & **Kotze**, A. (2017). Mitochondrial genomes of African pangolins and insights into evolutionary patterns and phylogeny of the family Manidae. *BMC Genomics* 18: 746
- Baiyewo, AO, Boakye, MK, **Kotze**, Dalton, D & **Jansen**, R. (in press). Ethnozoological survey of the traditional uses of Temminck's ground pangolin (*Smutsia temminckii*, Smuts 1832) within South African tribal communities. *Journal of Society & Animals*

Other research projects

1. Forensic application of DNA barcoding for African pangolin scale traceability (Monica Mwale). Ongoing
2. Home range, habitat use and population density of white-bellied tree pangolins in the tropic forests of Ghana (Maxwell Boakye). Ongoing

Community pangolin conservation and awareness

A number of talks were presented to the general public and schools over the last year as well as testimonies made in court at our cost (see page 2). Rob's very exciting project, "UKWAZI the pangolin bus" has been launched and this old Bedford truck has now been stripped and is to be refurbished as a mobile pangolin research unit/educational facility. We hope that by the end of this upcoming financial year, Rob will be mobile and reach numerous rural villages and schools with pangolin conservation awareness programs.

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