

# SCIENTISTS RADIO-TAG INDIAN PANGOLIN

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Scientists have, for the first time, radio-tagged the Indian pangolin, an endangered animal, that is rarely sighted in forests here.

The Indian pangolin, which resembles an ant-eater but dons a thick scaly skin, is hunted for meat and use in traditional Chinese medicine. Researchers say tagging the animal will help understand the habits of the reclusive, nocturnal animal.

Radio-tagging involves attaching a transmitter to an animal to monitor its movements. Several wild animals — tigers, leopards and migratory birds — have been tagged over decades.

“The Special Task Force of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has been actively working to curb wildlife poaching in the State. In recent years, we have successfully busted pangolin-smuggling syndicates that involved poachers and smugglers from more than nine States,” said Rajesh Shrivastav, Chief Wildlife Warden of Madhya Pradesh.

Pangolins are among the most trafficked wildlife species in the world. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature says these toothless animals have seen a rapid reduction in population. The projected population declines range from 50% to 80 % across the genus.

Out of the eight species of pangolin, the Indian Pangolin and the Chinese Pangolin are found in India. Both these species are listed under Schedule I Part I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. “In anti-poaching operations, during which pangolin scales are recovered, those animals are already dead. Where live pangolins are involved, globally there is about 50% death rate among released pangolins. Given that several pangolins are rescued in the central Indian landscape, this new initiative by the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and the Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) is to ensure better survival rates of these released individuals in the wild, and thus have a positive impact on the population of this endangered species,” said Aditya Joshi, wildlife biologist with the WCT, who is overseeing this project.

World Pangolin Day, celebrated on the third Saturday in February, is an international attempt to raise awareness of pangolins and bring together stakeholders to help protect these unique species from extinction.

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