

Primary Worksheets: Pangolin



In Africa and Asia, you can find pangolins (or scaly anteaters). The skin of these creatures is covered in scales. This adaptation is unique to these mammals. Termites and ants are the main food items of the pangolins. They catch food using their tongues and they do not consume anything else.

A single pangolin can eat up to 70 million insects in a year. These animals close their ears and nostrils to keep out insects while eating. With their powerful front claws, pangolins dig up ants and termites from mounds using their long snouts and long tongues. A pangolin's tongue can be as long as its body, minus its tail, which can measure up to 28 inches!

Pangolins are solitary animals that are mostly active at night. Most live on the ground, but there are a few species that climb trees, such as the black-bellied pangolin.



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The pangolin lives in a wide variety of habitats, including rainforests and grasslands. Four species of pangolins live throughout Asia: Chinese, Sunda, Indian, and Philippine pangolins. Four other species live in Africa: the ground, the giant, the white-bellied, and the black-bellied.

As all pangolins are covered in scales made of keratin, the same substance as human fingernails, they are called "scaly anteaters." Their armour is so tough that even predators like lions cannot eat it.

Pangolins shrink in size like armadillos when threatened, resulting in them being a quarter of their normal size. By doing this, they shield their stomachs and faces that do not have protective scales. An enzyme at the base of the pangolin's spiky tail produces a stinky fluid that helps to keep predators at bay.



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The illegal trade threatens the populations of all pangolins. They are believed to be the most trafficked non-human mammal in the world. Scales from these animals are used in Chinese medicine to treat chronic diseases such as arthritis, but they do not have any proven medicinal value.

Sometimes, the scales are powdered and then turned into pills. Pangolin scales and meat are poached each year for tens of thousands of animals.

In Asia and Africa, officials, conservationists, and investigative journalists are protecting these shy, harmless mammals. Pangolin conservationists hope to stop criminals from harming these animals by exposing how poachers capture these animals.



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Answer the questions.

What is a pangolin?

What do they look like?

Where do they like to live?



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Answer the questions.

What do they eat?

How do they eat?

How do they protect themselves?

