

Know about pangolins

- Pangolins are unique toothless mammals with hard keratinous scales on their body. They belong to the family Manidae of the order Pholidota. There are eight species of pangolin on our planet: Four in Asia and four in Africa. India has two species of pangolins (*Manis crassicaudata* and *Manis pentadactyla*). Both species are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Pangolins are well known for their myrmecophagous habit, primarily feeding on ants and termites. They are nature's sustainable pest control agents, believed to consume more than 70 million insects in a year.

- Pangolins are the only group of mammals covered with scales. Scales protect the pangolins from predators but they are invariably hunted by the poachers for the same. Their scales cover the entire body from head to tip of tail -except the ventral part having a few sparse hairs. Infant pangolins have soft scales which harden gradually. Pangolin scales are composed of "Keratin" just like our fingernails and have no proven medicinal value.



- Pangolins are mostly nocturnal, i.e., active during night time. During the daytime, they rest inside their burrows. Pangolin burrows are like natural air conditioners, less affected by outside environmental conditions and maintain apparently constant temperature and humidity. Abandoned burrows shelter many other ground-dwelling animals.
- Indian Pangolins are slow breeders, with a prolonged gestation period of nine months, litter size of one offspring, inter-birth interval of 2.5 years, and a generation length of about 8 years. They can live up to 23 years.
- Habitat loss and poaching for their meat and scales to use as traditional medicine are major threats for pangolins. More than a million pangolins have been wiped out in illegal trade in the past decade. This makes them the world's most trafficked mammals. Pangolin Conservation Breeding Programme is a crucial to safeguard the world's most trafficked mammal from extinction.



Pangolin Conservation Breeding Centre Nandankanan Zoological Park, Odisha



- Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar has the world's only conservation breeding centre for endangered Indian pangolins. Pangolin Conservation Breeding Centre at Nandankanan has been operational since 2009 with financial support from the Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi. The program has achieved significant milestones, including the birth of 14 pangolins, aided by advances in the development of housing, feeding, breeding and healthcare protocols. Microchipping for Individual identification and CCTV surveillance have enabled a comprehensive study of reproductive biology. With 27 pangolins presently, ongoing research focuses on breeding F1 generation and standardize protocol for rehabilitation to nature.



- On a pilot basis, the zoo has released one Indian pangolin in Nandankanan Wildlife Sanctuary and has a plan to release a pair of Indian pangolins into nature in the near future to standardize the rehabilitation protocol after habitat assessment, and community awareness.

