

Hope for pangolins as protection boosted in China

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Pangolins are said to be the world's most trafficked mammal

China has removed pangolins from its official list of traditional Chinese medicine treatments, according to reports.

The move, reported by China's Health Times newspaper, comes after China raised the animal's protected status to the highest level last week.

The scaly mammals have been pushed to the brink by illegal hunting for their scales and meat.

All eight species are threatened with extinction.

Conservation charities have welcomed the move towards greater protection. Paul Thomson of Save Pangolins said it was a breakthrough moment for pangolins.

"China's move to phase out pangolin scales from traditional medicines could be the game changer we have been waiting for," he said.

"We hope China's next move will be to enforce the regulations and work to change consumer behaviour."

And Katheryn Wise of animal welfare campaign group, World Animal Protection, said it was "great news" that China had upgraded pangolins to the highest level of protection and removed them from the Chinese Pharmacopoeia.

She called for this to be extended to all wild animals, "who, like pangolins, are poached from the wild and often placed in squalid, cramped cages, creating a lethal hotbed of disease".

Pangolins are covered with a layer of scales, which are designed to protect them against predators. The scales are highly coveted by traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, while pangolin meat has been seen as a delicacy.

China banned the consumption of live wild animals for food in the wake of the outbreak, but there are certain exemptions, such as for medicine or fur.

Pangolins are in the spotlight as they have been found to carry strains of coronaviruses similar to Covid-19. Scientists are investigating whether trafficked pangolins might have played a role in the virus moving from animals to humans, **but the evidence is unclear.**