

(229)

**Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) in Yagirala Forest Reserve: Ethnozoology and Implications for Conservation**

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**Abstract**

Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) has been identified as “threatened” both internationally and locally, and included in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. In Sri Lanka, the species is protected under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance (Amended 2009). Yet, it is a native mammal species that received little scientific attention, and its autecology and conservation needs are not well understood in the local context. This case-study was conducted to understand the ethnozoology and conservation threats for pangolins in Yagirala Forest Reserve (a tropical lowland forest located in Kalutara District, south-west of Sri Lanka) and its surroundings. We interviewed 67 individuals identified as regular or opportunistic hunters of pangolins, using snowball sampling method. All interviewed hunters have considered pangolin as an opportunistic catch and no one claimed it as a species caught regularly. Among the interviewed group, all hunters have hunted pangolins for local consumption and no evidences were found linked to local/international trade, or the species being used in indigenous medicine. Semi-structured interviews with hunters further revealed that methods used to catch pangolins differ widely with ambush and hitting with hard or sharp object (76.6%), throwing sand/soil (14.9%) or using a flash light (8.5%) to cease the movement of the animal being cited as the most commonly used hunting practices. All respondents hunted pangolins in the night, except in cases where injured or entangled pangolins in barb/mesh fences have been captured during the day time. Most respondents (87.2%) admitted that pangolins are more easily encountered or captured under dry weather conditions, and before rains. Such peculiar observations by local hunters may indicate possible behavioral patterns of the species associated with local weather conditions. Cross tabulation and Chi-square tests were further employed to explore the association between respondents’ knowledge, environmental attitudes and conservation perceptions of pangolins. Based on the frequency of encounters and number of animals caught, Yagirala Forest Reserve seems to provide conducive habitats for the species. The applicability of local knowledge in developing sound ecological study methods and conservation strategies for Indian pangolin are further highlighted.

**Keywords:** Indian Pangolin, Yagirala, Sri Lanka, Hunters, Conservation threats