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Immediate Release

Hong Kong Pangolin Awareness Campaign Launched Amid Survey Showing Majority of Residents Misinformed about Pangolin Trade

#ProtectOurPangolins campaign led by Humane Society International, Green Sense and Hong Kong for Pangolins

Hong Kong – (15 August 2015)

To raise public awareness about the plight of pangolins in Hong Kong, Humane Society International is launching its #ProtectOurPangolins awareness campaign today. Based on seizure data, Hong Kong is a major transit point for pangolin smuggling from Southeast Asia and Africa– with three tonnes of scales seized last year, and more than two tonnes seized already this year. A recent and ongoing investigation by HSI has revealed that pangolin scales are sold illegally in traditional Chinese medicine shops here, and a public opinion survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong found that:

Knowledge gaps and misinformation regarding pangolins is high

- Of those surveyed, 85 percent think that pangolin scales have medicinal value.
- The top two reasons for eating pangolin meat cited by those surveyed were that it is good for your health (39 percent) and that it has medicinal value (11 percent).
- While 93 percent of those surveyed had heard of pangolins, only 8 percent knew that there are pangolins living in the wild in Hong Kong.

People consume pangolin scales for a broad spectrum of ailments

- Of the respondents that said that they consume pangolin scales, the reasons for doing so are diverse, including treatment of rheumatism, soreness, itchiness, cancer, eczema, diabetes and impotence.

There is significant confusion over the legal status of pangolin consumption

- A significant 27 percent of those surveyed do not know if it is legal to consume pangolin meat, or think it is legal (it is illegal).
- Nearly half of those surveyed were confused about the legality of pangolin scale consumption: 33 percent did not know if it is illegal, while 16 percent believe it is legal.

*Results were obtained by random telephone survey of over 1,000 Hong Kong residents aged 18 or over, with the data rim-weighted according to gender-age distribution figures of the 2014 Hong Kong population from the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department.

Pangolins are the most commonly trafficked wild mammal in the world, with at least one million individuals traded over the past decade, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature Pangolin Specialist Group. Sought after in Asia for both its meat and scales, and producing just one offspring a year, the extinction threat to this enigmatic species is clear. Despite this, pangolins receive relatively little attention in the public spotlight compared to iconic megafauna facing similar poaching threats, such as elephants or

rhinos.

Iris Ho, Program Manager, Wildlife, HSI, said: “Pangolin scales are made of keratin, the same substance as fingernails and hair. If one would not eat his or her finger nails to cure an illness, why resort to pangolin scales? Like the pink dolphins that are native to Hong Kong’s waters and receive broad support, pangolins are native to Hong Kong and provide its government and the public a unique opportunity to strengthen Hong Kong’s biodiversity and the enforcement of wildlife trafficking. Without awareness and public pressure, the current, unsustainable levels of pangolin trade will cause the species to be wiped from the planet before most people even knew it existed.”

“Hong Kong is a very law-abiding and responsible society, and I know that our people will want to step up in the name of this creature, especially since it is one of our native species,” says Jan Lai Ming-chuen, president of Green Sense.

There are eight pangolin species: four in Asia, four in Africa. Of the four Asian pangolin species, two are listed as critically endangered (the highest level) by the IUCN – the Chinese Pangolin (found in Hong Kong and China) and the Sunda Pangolin (found in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, among others).

All eight pangolin species are listed on Appendix II of The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which established a zero annual export quota for Asian pangolins. This discrepancy between the Asian and African pangolins creates a loophole enabling the vast amount of illegal smuggling of pangolin scales and meat that we experience today.

The groups urge people to sign a petition launched today to have all eight pangolin species upgraded to an Appendix I classification at the next CITES meeting of the Conference of Parties in Johannesburg next year. Please sign, spread the word and help #ProtectOurPangolins

Petition:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Zhang_Jianlong_State_Forestry_Administration_China_Protect_the_pangolin_upgrade_all_8_species_to_CITES_Appendix_I/?euDRrb

Full HKU market survey: www.scribd.com/doc/274722859/Hong-Kong-Pangolin-Survey-2015-HKU-HSI

High res images available on request. Please credit to Alex Hofford.

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About Humane Society International:

Humane Society International is one of the only international animal protection organisations in the world

working to protect all animals — including animals in laboratories, farm animals, companion animals, and wildlife — and its record of achievement demonstrates its dedication and effectiveness. HSI: Celebrating Animals, Confronting Cruelty.

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About Green Sense:

Green Sense aims to highlight environmentally harmful practices in society through research and monitoring. It enhances the environmental consciousness of the general public in Hong Kong through education and publicity, in order to ultimately achieve a more eco-conscious society, for the sake of future generations.

www.greensense.org.hk

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Hong Kong for Pangolins:

A coalition of passionate organisations and individuals that aim to inform, educate and mobilise Hong Kong's society about the exploitation of pangolins, and lobby for greater protection of these charming and charismatic creatures.

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