



The last pangolin

This story was illustrated by the Luang Prabang Library staff as part of a Drawingtolearn and Belmont Rotary club of Western Australia project to support the protection of the pangolin in Asia....with reference to the World Wildlife fund for Nature together with TRAFFIC, who are working in Asia and Africa to protect pangolins and other species from wildlife crime.
December 2020

<https://lctwildlife.org/>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/pangolin>



One sunny morning a lonely pangolin climbed out of his burrow hidden in the roots of a large jungle tree and began slowly walking through the forest looking for a termite mound loaded with ants for his breakfast. He walked past a little pool of water on his path and spent some time looking at himself in the water.



He saw that the sides of his face and underside of his body, was covered with overlapping brownish scales composed of cemented hairs.

His whole body was covered in these scales.

His head was short and a cone shape with nostrils for sniffing out ants and termites, and he had small thickly lidded eyes and a long toothless muzzle.

His long, long tongue looked like a worm and could extend all the way into the ant's nests when he was looking for food.

His little fat legs were covered in scales too and his five-toed feet had long sharp claws for digging into nests and mounds.

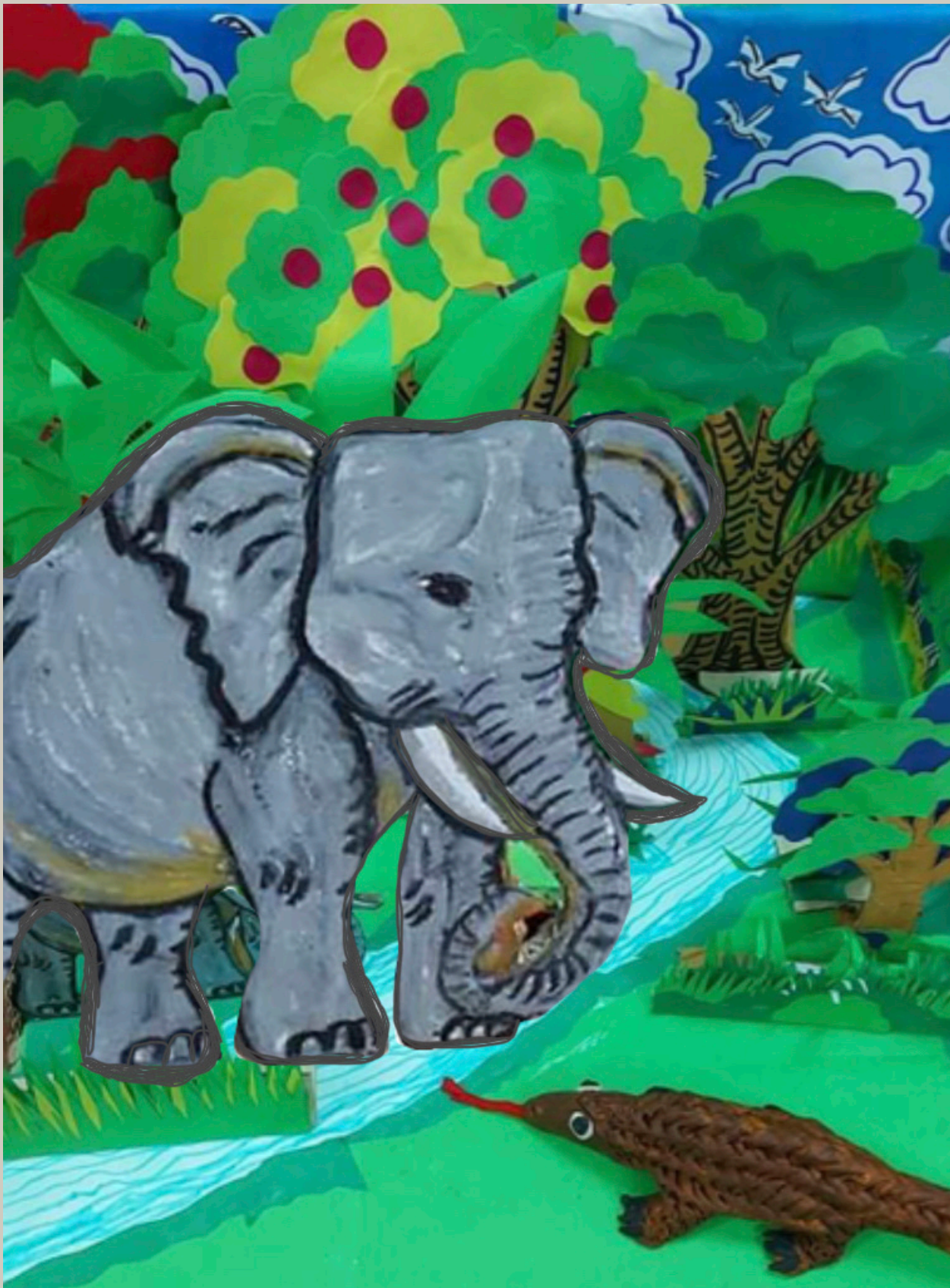
His lovely long tail trailed after him and together with his little hind legs, helped him climb and support himself in all sorts of adventures in the jungle.



He asked himself.
'What am I?
What am I called?
Who am I?
I so wish I knew!'

He wandered
slowly along the
path and
wondered about
himself.

He hadn't seen an
animal that
looked like him
for such a long,
long time.



He met an elephant lumbering through the forest on his way to the Mekong river for a swim in the mighty river water.

He called out to the great BIG elephant...
'Hey!! Hey!! Hey!!
Have you got any idea who I am?
I just can't work it out.
Do you know?'



‘I know what I look like and I know that I eat thousands and thousands of ants and that I clean up the forest floor and keep the forest healthy for all of the creatures that live here but who am I?’
‘said the pangolin

‘I haven’t seen any animal that looks like me for a long long time?

Do you know who I am???’

‘Nah’ said the elephant ‘but you sure have lots and lots of scales.
What do you do with them?’

‘I trap ants and termites in my scales .. I lift my scales up and down like magic and trap the ants to eat later.’

‘Hmmm. That’s clever! No..
No... I really have no idea what you are or who you are....’
called the elephant.... as he lumbered slowly down to the mighty river



The pangolin slowly moved further down the path.. He really was perplexed. 'What was he?? Where were others that looked just like him? What had happened to them?'



Further down the path, the pangolin met a tiger
'Do you know who I am ?'
He asked?

'Nah ' replied the tiger ' but you sure have an amazingly long tongue. My goodness me... look how long it is. What do you use that for?'

'I can use my long tongue to get right to the bottom of an ants nest and get the juiciest ants at the bottom of the mound. So delicious.' answered the pangolin.

'I haven't seen anything that looks like you for a long, long time... maybe never!' said the tiger.

'Oh dear ! That is just too sad' said the pangolin as he slowly moved further down the path.



The lonely pangolin met a deer further down the path. He asked the deer the same question that he had asked the tiger but the deer had no idea except that he did notice that the pangolin had a big nose with nostrils that he kept close to the ground to sniff and snort and smell his prey. His nose was very impressive.

‘Yes’ said the pangolin, ‘ My nose is my biggest asset. I smell what I am going to eat and then I keep eating and eating the ants, termites and insects that I smell. My eyes don’t help me much’



The pangolin met a monkey further down the path and he asked him if he knew who or what he was. The monkey was swinging from the branches of the big forest trees. He noticed that the pangolin could use his sturdy little legs and long tail to climb trees just as he did, in fact sometimes the pangolin could balance and swing in the trees too. But he was no help. He had no idea who or what the pangolin was.



The pangolin met a sleepy owl whilst he was climbing down from the tree. He asked him the same question that he had asked the elephant, tiger and monkey... but the Owl had no idea who or what he was, except that he noticed that the pangolin's eyes were very small and wondered if perhaps he moved through the forests at night in the dark, sniffing and smelling his way through the jungle and he didn't use his eyes so much. 'That made sense', the pangolin thought. 'I must be an animal that likes the dark and cool not the bright, hot sunshine'

The pangolin was getting very, very weary and fed up with asking the jungle animals questions that they couldn't answer. None of them had seen an animal like him. He was coming out of the long grass when he met a big moon bear.



The moon bear looked at him as if he was going to eat him.
'Oops' thought the pangolin.
He immediately raised the scales on his body and curled up into a tight ball and set off a very, very bad smell.
The moon bear took one look at him and moved right on..
He had thought that the animal looked just right to eat for his next juicy meal but the smell made him decide that that was not a good idea... so the Pangolin still had no answer as to who or what he was.





The pangolin found himself a giant ants nest near a termite mound with thousands of ants running up and down the mound .

He loved eating insects as well for a treat, so he gobbled up some caterpillars and butterflies on the top of the mound. Then he stuck his snout and his long, long tongue into the mound lifted his scales to trap the extra ants and....ate and ate and ate.

Magic!!

He ate so many ants he was stuffed FULL.

BUT,

He was still feeling very sad and low.

‘I just want to know who I am.

Where are the animals that look like me?

Why don’t I see any of them?

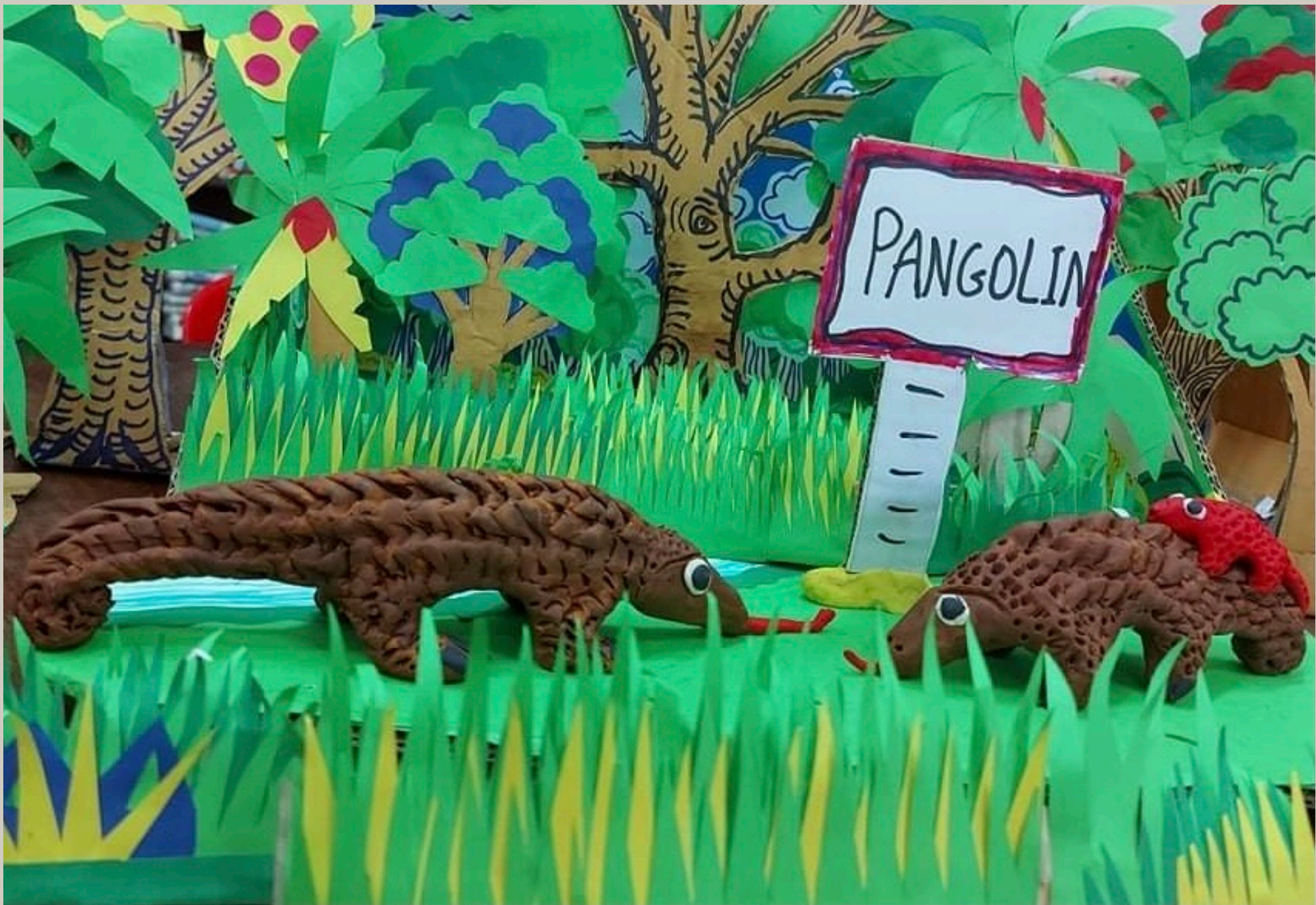
It’s just too sad’



While he was sitting quietly with his stomach full of ants and feeling very pleased with himself he heard something slowly, sniffing and snorting coming through the jungle slowly, slowly towards him....

The animal was making the same sounds as he heard himself making. The animal had his snout on the ground, was covered in scales, had a long, long tail and little short legs... He looked just like him. Whooo hooo!!! 'Hey' said the pangolin 'Who are you? What are you? I reckon we look the same as each other. What are you called?'





'I am a pangolin. PANGOLIN: I am a mammal. I feed my pangolin baby and carry it on my back after it is born. It lives with me in my burrow until it is ready to dig its own burrow and find its own food and start a family of its own. Mostly, we live by ourselves.

You don't see many of me because I am the most poached animal in this jungle. I am endangered... I am almost extinct.

That's why you haven't seen many of us....

We are disappearing... along with the jungle.

As humans cut down the trees we have no places to hide so the poachers and animals that eat us juicy pangolins can find us easily.

We are in BIG trouble'



‘Humans make money out of us. They sell our bodies at markets ... we are hunted for meat, organs skin and scales and our scales are ground up by them for traditional medicine.’

Humans think that our scales have magical properties.

This means that they are taking us out of the jungle, which is our home and where we have a very important job to do. It’s our job to keep the forest habitat balanced.

Everything in the forest is connected to everything else and we all need each other.’

‘Well, well, well’ said the Pangolin to his new friend.

‘So I am very important in this jungle?

I have a very BIG job to do?

The world needs to look after me as I am precious?

That makes sense.

I knew I was a very special animal and I knew that I hadn’t seen any animals that looked like me for so, so long.

I was very worried.

I think we need a plan. We need to stick together..

Come and I will show you my burrow where I hide.

There is room for you there.

We need to look after each other

Now that’s a good plan!! ‘

So off the two pangolins went together slowly ,sniffing and snorting back to the burrow... TEAM PANGOLIN!





I think if you go into the jungle and you sit very still and look and listen you might see them there today.... quietly keeping the jungle healthy and preserving the habitat for all of the jungle animals. I hope you can see them.



If humans continue to take the pangolins out of the forest the ants and all of the other creatures in the food chain will be out of balance. Everything in the jungle will be 'at risk'. Pangolins need humans to protect them NOT to poach them. We have a BIG responsibility. WE MUST PROTECT THE PANGOLIN. It has such an important job to do in our world. We need to be PANGOLIN defenders!!



