

Lucidum Literature Review



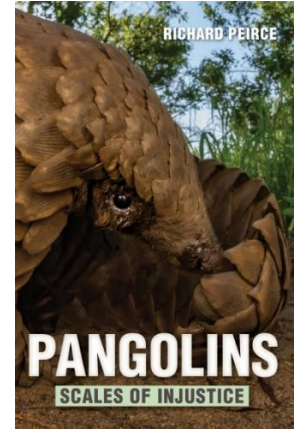
Title **Pangolins: Scales of Injustice**
Author **Richard Peirce**
Published **2021 by Struik Nature**
Review By **Peter Zonneveld (Environmental Risk Specialist, Lucidum)**
Review Date **September 2025**



Lessons For
Directors, Prescribed Officers, Executives
Governance Officers, Company Secretaries
Ethics Officers, Risk Managers, Compliance Managers
Audit Professionals
Strategy Professionals
Line Managers

Relevance
7
6
9
8
8
5

Overall Rating
7.2



Synopsis

This investigative narrative exposes the realities behind the illegal trade in pangolins, the world's most trafficked mammal. Author Richard Peirce follows the journey of a pangolin poached in Zimbabwe and trafficked into South Africa. Peirce accompanies law enforcement and conservationists on a high-stakes sting operation to rescue the animal and bring traffickers to justice. On this journey, Peirce reveals the complex network of wildlife crime syndicates, the risks pangolins face from poaching and trafficking, and the broader consequences for biodiversity and global health. The book explores the ethical dilemmas, governance challenges, and compliance struggles faced by authorities and conservation groups working tirelessly to protect these elusive creatures. This urgent and complex struggle to protect pangolins from these risks highlights the interconnectedness of conservation, law enforcement, governance, ethics, and health risks. The importance of a more in-depth understanding by the general public and policy makers of the strategies employed to combat wildlife trafficking cannot be emphasised enough: from undercover operations to rehabilitation efforts, to raising awareness of the need for global action to save pangolins from extinction. This is not only a response to the risk of extinction of one species, it is a proxy for the interventions needed to ensure the sustainable future of planet earth and all the species (including humans) that live on it. Cohesion is needed as we build a deeper understanding of the root causes and consequences of this risk, integrated response thinking, and inclusive collaboration while we pursue positive impacts on people and our planet.

Key Concept: Biosphere Integrity (biodiversity loss and species extinction) is driven by illegal wildlife trafficking; this pushes species to extinction, disrupts ecosystem function and balance, affecting genetic and functional diversity.

Quotes:
"We had both been struck by the relaxed and open attitude that the seller had when dealing in an illegal product. That the product was illegal, was widely acknowledged, but this didn't lead to any particular caution when trading in it." "This illegal dealing in wildlife products was going on right under the noses of authorities." "It is stunningly irresponsible that, with over 100 years of evidence that animals can be vectors of viruses deadly to humans, [some countries] have not listened and learnt."
"The men and women on the armed frontline of the battle to save pangolins are not only brave, they are largely unsung heroes."

Practical Tips

- Integrate wildlife crime awareness and biodiversity risk into your organisation's risk management, environmental management, and sustainability standard operating procedures, assurance frameworks, and minimum reporting standards.
- Build a culture of ethical courage, effective whistleblower protection processes, and responsible decision-making frameworks, especially in governance and procurement.
- Train leaders to act on the principles of ethical and effective leadership as espoused by the King V Code of Corporate Governance in South Africa (2025), and in high-risk or ambiguous contexts, because compliance alone is never enough.
- Encourage cross-functional and cross-sector partnerships within your sustainability strategies and promote these initiative publicly in disclosure initiatives in line with the JSE Sustainability Disclosure Guidance (2022), titled 'Leading the way for a better tomorrow'.

Think About

- Are we adequately accounting for biodiversity and wildlife crime in our risk and governance models? Is our organization blind to risks in areas like environmental degradation, illicit trade exposure, or indirect links to unsustainable sourcing?
- Are our ethics frameworks strong enough to guide action where law and regulation lag behind? Do we encourage staff and leadership to act ethically beyond mere compliance, especially in high-risk or frontier markets?
- What is our role, as leaders or professionals, in protecting the planet's most vulnerable species and ecosystems? Should we take a more active stance on biodiversity loss, endangered species protection, and environmental justice?

Contact Us

www.lucidum.africa

Christelle Marais
Executive Director
+27 (0) 82 453 7948
christelle@lucidum.africa

Peter Zonneveld
Environmental Risk Specialist
+27 (0) 65 993 4247
peter@lucidum.africa