Lesson Plan: Pangolins and the Wildlife Trade

Upper primary / middle school (ages 9-12). One 60-minute lesson with an optional extension.

At a glance

- **Ages:** 9-12 (upper primary / middle school).
- **Length:** one 60-minute lesson, with an optional 30-minute extension.
- **Subject links:** science (ecosystems, adaptation), geography, citizenship and ethics.
- **You will need:** the Sunda pangolin, Chinese pangolin, and Temminck's ground pangolin profiles on endangeredspecies.humanity-project.org/species; a projector or printed profiles; paper and pencils.

Learning intentions

1. Explain what an adaptation is and why one that works against a predator can fail against people.
2. Describe what the illegal wildlife trade is and why demand drives it.
3. Use a sourced species record rather than memory or opinion to check a claim.
4. State one realistic action and explain why it helps.

Sequence

1. Hook - 5 minutes

Hold up your hand. Ask what fingernails are made of. Introduce keratin. Tell the class that one animal is armored in the same material, and that this is the reason it is in trouble.

2. Direct teaching - 12 minutes

Show the pangolin profiles. Cover: what a pangolin is (a scaled, ant-and-termite-eating mammal, not a reptile and not an anteater relative); where the three profiled species live; the defensive roll; the conservation status listed on each profile. Read the status and its verification date from the profile rather than stating a figure from memory.

3. Paired task - 15 minutes

In pairs, students complete a two-column table: *Rolling into a ball works against...* and *Rolling into a ball fails against...* They must justify each entry with something from the profile.

4. Discussion - 15 minutes

- If scales are only keratin, why would anyone pay for them?
- Who has to change their mind before trafficking stops - the hunter, the buyer, or both?
- Is it fair to ask people in one country to protect an animal that lives in another?
- What could a class in another country honestly do that would matter?

5. Commitment and close - 13 minutes

Each student writes one true fact and one action on a card. Actions should be genuinely available to them: telling someone the keratin fact, refusing products of unknown animal origin, supporting a named conservation organisation through the school, or looking after a local habitat patch. Collect the cards and read a few aloud.

Extension - 30 minutes

Open the Living Atlas. Ask why the atlas shows generalized regions for pangolins instead of exact points. This is a lesson in itself: information can help a creature or help someone hunt it.

Assessment

- **Emerging:** names the pangolin's defence and one threat.
- **Secure:** explains why the defence fails against people and cites the profile for a status or threat.
- **Extending:** distinguishes demand from supply and proposes an action matched to the actual threat.

Teacher notes and cautions

- Do not state population numbers unless you read them from the profile with its verification date; for several pangolin species no reliable global count exists.
- Keep the tone serious but hopeful. Trafficking imagery is not needed and is not appropriate for this age.
- Pango is a drawn character. Say so out loud at least once.

Pango is an illustrated character created for this project, not a wildlife photograph. Every factual statement here comes from the canonical, sourced species records on endangeredspecies.humanity-project.org/species. Free to copy and print for classroom, church, youth-group, and family use.