

The world's most trafficked mammal is the pangolin. U.S. officials say it's an endangered species.

By Alexa St. John
The Associated Press

U.S. officials have proposed to protect the pangolin, a small, nocturnal mammal covered in scales, under the Endangered Species Act. The pangolin is “the most trafficked mammal in the world” in large part for its scales, used in traditional Chinese medicine, and meat, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is looking to add protections for four species of the pangolin native to Asia — including the Chinese, Indian, Sunda, and Philippine pangolin — and three species native to Africa, including the white-bellied, black-bellied, and giant pangolin. Seven species are in danger of extinction, according to the Center for Biological Diversity.

An eighth species from Africa, the Temminck's ground pangolin, is already protected by the law. Scientists also say two more species of the mammal may exist.

The protections were signed into law in 1973 with bipartisan support and are key for preserving global biodiversity and keeping iconic types of plants and animals, such as the bald eagle, from dying out. The Endangered Species Act protects more than 2,000 U.S. and foreign species.

Conservation and environmental groups say habitat loss from climate change is just one reason the act is especially critical today.

The endangerment listing, once finalized, would help strengthen trade and



import restrictions of pangolin parts in the U.S., except in the case of scientific or other conservation purposes, according to the Center.

It is illegal to trade them; the pangolin received certain commercial trade protections under the 2017 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. But tons of poached scales representing thousands of pangolins have been found by authorities around the world in recent years.

“I’m delighted the United States is doing its part to save these adorably odd creatures,” Sarah Uhlemann, international program director at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement. “Pangolins are on the razor’s edge of

extinction, and we need to completely shut down any U.S. market for their scales. There’s no good reason for anybody to ingest any part of a pangolin.”

The pangolin eats insects and rolls into a ball when threatened by predators. The Fish and Wildlife Service said pangolin populations have declined due to targeting by poachers and criminal activity, noting “proceeds from the illicit sale of pangolins and other imperiled species often fund serious crimes, including drug and arms trafficking.”

While the act requires endangered species listing regardless of their origin, the designation could also assist in prosecuting smugglers violating the protections.

PANGOLIN PROTECTION. A pangolin looks for food on private property in Johannesburg, South Africa, in this February 15, 2019 file photo. U.S. officials have proposed protecting the pangolin, a small, nocturnal mammal covered in scales, under the Endangered Species Act. Pangolins are “the most trafficked mammal in the world” in large part for their scales, used in traditional Chinese medicine, and meat, according to the World Wildlife Fund. (AP Photo/Themba Hadebe, File)

Advocates, including from the International Fund for Animal Welfare and other national and international groups, have for years petitioned to list the pangolin. In 2020, these organizations and the Fish and Wildlife Service signed an agreement to enforce listing deadlines.

Polar bears, as well as penguins — similarly not found in the U.S. — have also been in discussions for listing over the years.

The move comes despite President Donald Trump’s efforts to weaken the act, aligning with ongoing conservative criticism that it stifles economic growth. Trump’s executive order declaring an “energy emergency” in the U.S. says the act can’t stand in the way of energy development, signaling that protections could be rolled back.

The Trump administration already plans to cut habitat protections for endangered and threatened species, in an effort to redefine the long-standing meaning of what constitutes “harm.”

The Associated Press’ climate and environmental coverage receives financial support from multiple private foundations. AP is solely responsible for content.

What to know about the COVID variant that may cause “razor blade” sore throats

By Devi Shastri
AP Health Writer

The COVID-19 variant that may be driving a recent rise in cases in some parts of the world has earned a new nickname: “razor blade throat” COVID.

That’s because the variant — NB.1.8.1. or “Nimbus” — may cause painful sore throats. The symptom has been identified by doctors in the United Kingdom, India, and elsewhere, according to media outlets in those countries.

Other COVID-19 symptoms of any variant include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, or loss of taste or smell.

Experts say there isn’t major cause for concern with the Nimbus variant, but here’s what else you need to know about it.

Here’s where the variant causing “razor blade throat” is spreading

The rise in cases in late May was

primarily in eastern Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and western Pacific regions, the World Health Organization (WHO) said. The new variant had reached nearly 11% of sequenced samples reported globally in mid-May.

Airport screening in the United States detected the new variant in travellers arriving from those regions to destinations in California, Washington state, Virginia, and New York.

You aren’t likely to get sicker from this variant than others

Not so far, anyway.

WHO said some western Pacific countries had reported increases in COVID cases and hospitalizations, but there’s nothing so far to suggest that the disease associated with the new variant is more severe compared to other variants.

COVID-19 vaccines are effective against the Nimbus variant

Yes.

WHO has designated Nimbus as a



“variant under monitoring” and considers the public health risk low at the global level. Current vaccines are expected to remain effective.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced in May that COVID-19 shots

SHARP SYMPTOM. Medical workers check on patients in Jinyintan Hospital, designated for critical condition COVID-19 patients, in Wuhan, central China’s Hubei province, in this February 13, 2020 file photo. COVID-19 variant NB.1.8.1., or “Nimbus,” may be driving a rise in cases in some parts of the world that has earned it a new nickname — “razor blade throat” COVID — because the variant may cause painful sore throats. (Chinatopix Via AP, File)

are no longer recommended for healthy children and pregnant women — a move immediately questioned by public health experts.

AP Health Writer Carla Johnson contributed to this story. The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute’s Science and Educational Media Group and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for content.

Trump administration to cut 988 hotline service tailored to LGBTQ+ youth

By Devi Shastri
The Associated Press

Editor’s note: This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, the national suicide and crisis lifeline in the U.S. is available by calling or texting 988.

The 988 National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline will stop providing tailored support options to LGBTQ+ youth and young adults on July 17, according to a statement on a federal agency’s website.

The decision preempts the Trump administration’s 2026 budget proposal to cut funding for 988’s LGBTQ+ youth and young adult services, and is raising alarm bells among LGBTQ+ advocates.

Federal data shows the LGBTQ+ youth program has served nearly 1.3 million callers since it started in September 2022. The services were accessible under the “Press 3” option on the phone or by replying “PRIDE” via text.

According to the Trevor Project’s 2024

U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People, “there is a significant association between anti-LGBTQ+ victimization and disproportionately high rates of suicide risk — and that far too many young people struggle to access the mental healthcare they need.”

Key findings of the survey revealed that 39% of LGBTQ+ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year — including 46% of transgender and nonbinary young people. Further, LGBTQ+ youth of color reported higher rates than their white peers.

Another survey finding was that 50% of LGBTQ+ young people who wanted mental healthcare in the past year were not able to obtain it.

The decision was made to “no longer silo” the services and “to focus on serving all help seekers, including those previously served through the Press 3 option,” the U.S. Department of Health and Human

Continued on page 11

Took the wrong medicine?

Medicine mix-ups can make you worry.

Poison centers can help.
1-800-222-1222

POISON HeP
1-800-222-1222

OREGON POISON CENTER

POISON HeP
1-800-222-1222