Worshipping the Pangolin-god - conservation by a unique village in coastal Maharashtra

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Pangolin is the friend of local farmers, playing an important role in the ecosystem by consuming more than 20000 insects per day. Pangolin species are kind of Natural pest control for humans free of cost. The species is an important element of nature playing a vital role in the ecosystem. Today it is under threat. Pangolin species are threatened in the world as well as in the Konkan region due to illicit poaching, trafficking for illegal international trade which involves huge amounts of the money. In these circumstances there is a village in Konkan region of Ratnagiri district named Dugave where since the last three years villagers have been protecting the Pangolin in the village. This year they are celebrating the Khawalotsav on the occasion of World Pangolin day on 15th February 2020. In the village of Dugave, villagers said, "Pangolin serves his service to human by consuming insect for us Pangolin is God to us our God is in Nature and we bow to pangolin and our village came forward to protect our God in our village". Villagers believe that the Pangolin is blessed and protected by their goddess Waghjai. We are not only protecting species in our village but also we pray for species protection and good health around the world. We will worship Pangolin our god and celebrate Shimga (festival like Holi) for Good luck with the Pangolin! It is the first such village in the world, where the villagers are united to protect the species and worship Pangolin as God. Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra from last 4 years instigated conservation of Indian Pangolin existing in wild across the Konkan region of Maharashtra, India with the valuable support and participation of the Forest and Police Department. A large number of community education, awareness, and research study on Indian Pangolin existing in wild are going on. Today Pangolins are trafficked and poached globally for the bush meat and scales are high demand in international market. Scales believe to be used in the traditional Asian medicine for various diseases but there is no scientific evidence of it. As a result, international gangs have participated in this illegal act. Konkan is also no exception to it, at many places the Pangolins and scales are confiscated from Konkan region. Pangolin is one of the most important animals in the ecosystem and it is very essential to conserve the existing population in wild. On the occasion of World Pangolin day villagers will be assembling at the village deity (Waghjai) temple Dugve village at 8am on 15th February 2020. All men, women, students and children will be there to worship Diety Waghjai and Pangolin. Where the replica of the Pangolin will be brought from the forest to the temple, it will be ritually worshiped. As per tradition, villagers will pray for protection, conservation of pangolin. Then the villagers will dance the palanquin on the ground, and then the palanquin will go to the villagers' houses and will be worshiped people there. The palanquin will return to the temple, and the end of the ceremony there will be distribution of Mahaprasad. There are 8 species of Pangolin in the world. 4 species are found in Africa and 4 in Asia. There are two species of pangolin, Chinese Pangolin and Indian Pangolin found in India. Except in the northeast and the Himalayas, Indian Pangolin found throughout the Indian subcontinent. Indian Pangolin found in all kinds of habitats about five feet long, the animal has no teeth, but with its sticky tongue about one foot in length eats millions of the insect annually. Pangolins curl into ball whenever there are threat the scales of the species is very strong so it has very few natural enemies in nature. The greed of the People takes them in search Pangolins burrow or nest, dig their burrows, and to kill they put species into the boiling water. According to the IUCN's Red Data Book, the Indian Pangolin is a threatened animal, and under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the Pangolin was included in Schedule I. This has given Indian Pangolin equal protection like Tiger. This unique celebration is first of its kind festival and people must visit. IUCN SSC pangolin specialist group member and the president of the Sahyadri Nisarg Mitra Mr. Bhau Katdare appeal community to witness a unique celebration on the occasion of World Pangolin Day. First published by Bytes of India Read the same in Marathi

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