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## Wild life at their doorstep

**Pangolins normally live in dense forests but this one decided to take a walk on the mild side**

**By Wan Chang Chin**  
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IF it was looking for food, it was looking in the wrong place.



This creature eats ants, hundreds of thousands of them every day.

And it didn't find any when it went to a condominium in Ang Mo Kio.

What it found, at 2am yesterday, was a security man rubbing his eyes in surprise at what he was seeing.

Mr Mestam Komeng, 42, didn't know what to make of it. He didn't realise immediately that the 1m-long intruder was a Javan pangolin, commonly known as a scaly anteater.

The security supervisor at Horizon Gardens was on his usual rounds when he noticed the exotic animal.

He tapped his colleague's arm, and cautiously walked towards the animal. He then noticed its long nose and scaly body.

He and his colleague used a rope and caught the animal by its tail. The pangolin curled up into a ball - its defence mechanism.

That made it easier for them to pick it up and place it in a cardboard box.

Mr Mestam placed a plate of water inside the box for the animal to drink.

But feeding it wasn't easy. He said: 'How do you find ants at two in the morning?'

The pangolin is a fussy eater, eating only ants or termites. It can eat 75 million ants and termites in a year, which amounts to about 205,000 a day, according to the University of Chicago website.

He called the condominium's management right away

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and the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) arrived around 9am yesterday.

The AVA transferred the animal to the Singapore Zoo.

Dr Ken Gold, general curator for the Singapore Zoo and the Night Safari, said pangolins are not very rare here, although they are a protected species.

Javan pangolins are listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as an endangered species.

He explained that it is usually found in dense forested areas with decaying vegetation as ants and termites thrive in such places.

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### Second-time visitor to zoo

THE pangolin wasn't visiting the zoo for the first time.

It was found that a chip had been implanted in it.

This meant that the same animal had earlier been caught by the zoo and then released into the wild.

The zoo said the fully grown animal weighed 9.5kg.

Dr Ken Gold, the zoo's general curator, said: 'It's a good success story of how animals released into our national parks can survive and can live in the wild.'

He added that the zoo will find out how the pangolin managed to wander from its original habitat.

He said: 'If it's due to construction work or poachers, then we will take necessary action.'

The zoo sees two to five pangolins brought in every year.

But, according to Dr Gold, this is the first time any pangolin has been caught a second time after being released into the wild.

Under the Wild Animals and Birds Act, those guilty of illegal importation or possession of such creatures can be fined up to \$1,000 for each animal.

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