

PROJECT BRIEF

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# Exploring the Effective Use of Celebrities in Wildlife Demand Reduction: Changing Perceptions of Pangolins in Vietnam



D. Challender

- Lòng Xào
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- Tiềm Thuốc Bắc
- **Đặc Biệt: Tiềm Sâm Tươi**



D. Challender

*held responsible for future generations."*  
Crawford Allen - Director of a conservation organisation

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*magnificent animals continued existence is not guaranteed."*  
Chris Packham - TV Personality

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D. Challender

**STOP WILDLIFE POACHING NOW**

*"It is shocking to think that we could lose these animals"*

C. Allen

**STOP WILDLIFE POACHING NOW**

*"Our children should not grow up with a pangolin on their plate"*

Chris Packham, G. Beinhorn, HRH The Duke of Cambridge



# Exploring the effective use of celebrities in wildlife demand reduction: changing perceptions of pangolins in Vietnam

## *In Brief*

*Celebrities are often used to influence the public to change their awareness of, attitudes or behaviour towards illegal wildlife products. However, there is limited evidence about how effective this is and there has been no evaluation of how to design such campaigns to maximise their impact.*

*This project will provide an evidence-base on how best to use celebrities to deliver messages on the illegal wildlife trade, drawing on experience in conservation and other fields. We will review the evidence for the factors affecting the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement worldwide. We will then implement a case study of pangolin consumption in Vietnam. Adopting an experimental approach, we will develop a baseline on the consumption of pangolin products in Vietnam, examine the potential role that celebrity endorsement could play in reducing demand for illegal pangolin products in the country and test a celebrity-based demand reduction campaign. We will also explore the potential effects of pangolin farming on demand and on wild populations, and quantify online illegal trade in pangolin products.*

*The results will inform Vietnamese and international policy-makers (e.g., CITES) and be transferable beyond the illegal wildlife trade into broader conservation practice.*

## *Background*

The illegal wildlife trade is a major threat to some of the world's most endangered species. Celebrity endorsement is one widely used medium for changing people's views on, and behaviour towards wildlife products, in Vietnam and elsewhere. However, the effectiveness of celebrity messaging in reducing purchases of wildlife has never been assessed.

In the last 20 years, the illegal international trade in pangolins has boomed, such that pangolins are now considered the world's most trafficked wild mammals. Vietnam has become a major destination for illegally traded wildlife products, including pangolins and their derivatives from other parts of Asia and scales from African countries. Urgent responses to address the demand for these products are required.

## *Objectives*

Overarching aims of this project:

1. Derive lessons from conservation and other sectors about the effectiveness of celebrity messaging for reducing the illegal wildlife trade;
2. Reduce the impact of international trafficking on wild pangolin populations in Asia and Africa (including trade in wild-caught and farmed pangolins);
3. Improve conservation outcomes for pangolins and other trafficked wildlife in Vietnam.



Specific objectives:

1. To understand the use of pangolin products by consumers in Vietnam, for food, medicine and other purposes, and the demographic profiles, preferences, motivations and knowledge of pangolin consumers.
2. To investigate and document the online trade in pangolin products (including the open web, dark web and private forums), focussing on Vietnam and China.
3. To develop, implement and monitor an intervention that uses celebrity endorsement to reduce consumption for pangolin products in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in order to learn how such campaigns influence consumers.
4. To examine the potential effects on the wild-caught trade in pangolins of the growing trend for farming of pangolins, in Africa and Asia.
5. Carry out outreach, dissemination and stakeholder engagement activities to support efforts to reduce the impact of the illegal trade on pangolin populations in Vietnam and elsewhere.



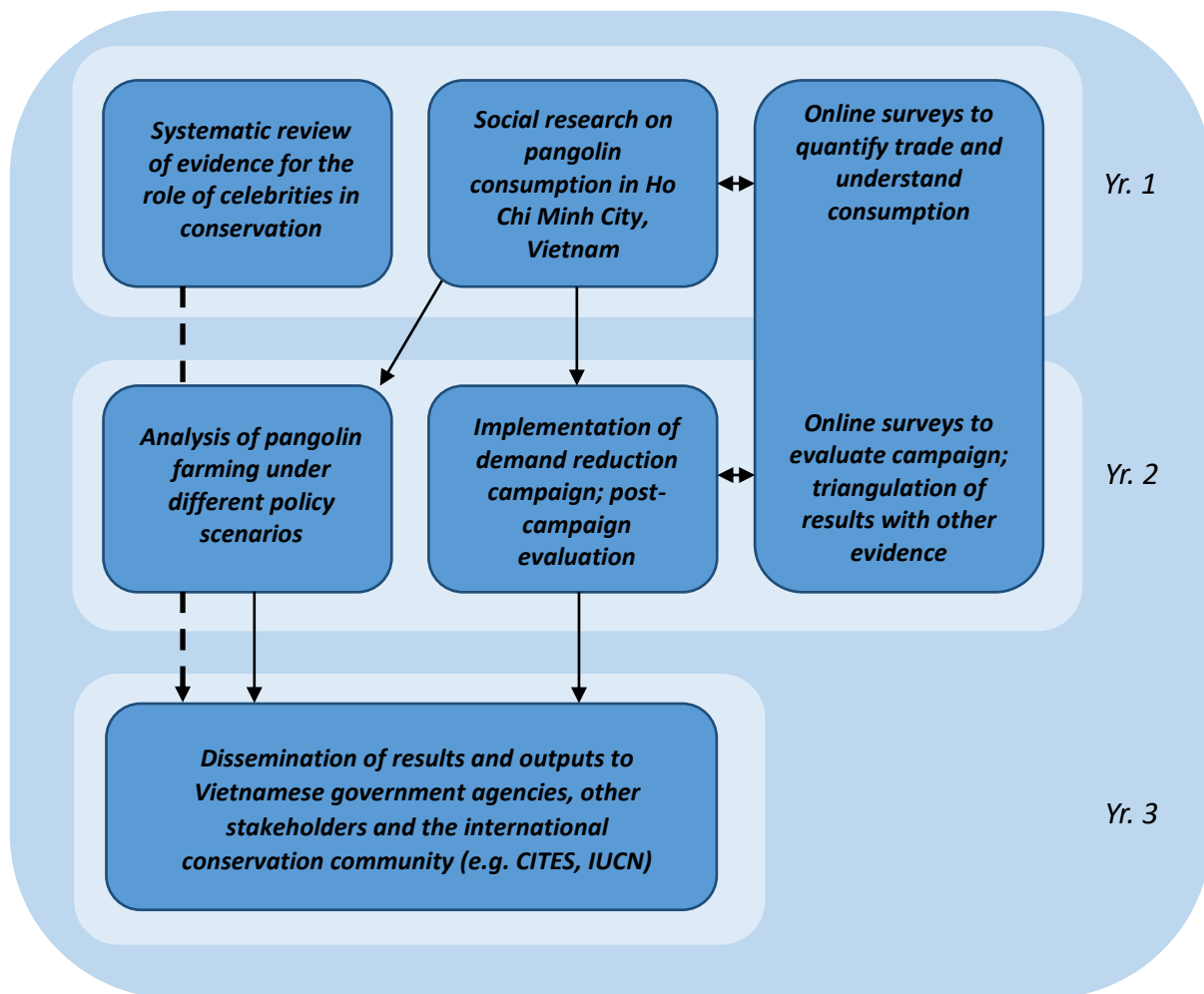
## Methods

The project will start with a systematic review of evidence from campaigns around the world, and different sectors, for the role of celebrities in conservation. We will understand motivations for pangolin consumption using in-person consumer research in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, and internet-based research (open, dark web and private forums) focussed on China and Vietnam.

This project will continue with the first large-scale empirical study of how wildlife consumers view celebrities and how their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours are influenced by celebrity endorsement, using pangolin consumption in Ho Chi Minh City as the case study. We will take an experimental approach, with the aim of understanding how people respond to different types of celebrities, different ways in which the message is put across, and how this varies by culture, market segments and wildlife product.

This research will inform a demand reduction campaign to be implemented and evaluated using novel and best-practice approaches (e.g., the BACI [Before-After-Control-Impact] approach). We also have a component which will develop economic models to explore the impact of pangolin farming on wild harvest and demand under different policy scenarios. The below diagram shows the different project activities.





### *Knowledge Generation*

This project will generate new knowledge and understanding in a number of areas:

- Understanding of the role of celebrities in conservation and related fields.
- Understanding of consumer behaviour in Vietnam concerning pangolin products including meat, scales (e.g., market dynamics, use of substitutes, complements).
- Identification of the most prevalent use of pangolin products in Vietnam (e.g. meat vs. scales) and elucidation of consumer motivations and behaviours.
- Understanding of pangolin trade on the online open web, dark web and hard to access forums (e.g., closed Facebook groups) in Vietnam as well as China (e.g., closed WeChat groups).
- Understanding of public responses to different types of celebrities, forms of messaging and variation by culture, market segment and wildlife product.
- Knowledge of the likely impact of pangolin farming on wild harvests and consumer demand under different policy scenarios (e.g., expansion of farmed supply, bans on farmed pangolin sales).



## *Outputs, Tools and Guidance*

Findings from this project will help inform how future behaviour change campaigns can effectively engage celebrities to deliver conservation messages, maximising their impact and helping ensure funding is used wisely. Major outputs include:

- Technical reports, policy briefs and information documents to be submitted to international policy forums (e.g., CITES meetings, IUCN) to inform decision-making on all topics covered in our project.
- Guidance for conservation practitioners on assessing the factors affecting the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in conservation, and for future use of celebrities in wildlife trade/trafficking campaigns.
- Online resources and a hub for accessing project outputs and linking with other actors working on similar topics, partners and others working on pangolin conservation.
- Reports and policy briefs for key Vietnamese government agencies, officials and other stakeholders, in Vietnamese. These will include proposed ways forward for demand reduction regarding illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam and recommendations based on the analyses of pangolin farming.
- Between three and six research papers in high-impact journals on the role of celebrities in conservation, the effectiveness of celebrities in demand reduction campaigns, and among others, analyses of the impact of pangolin farming.

## *Project Partners, Team Members & Roles*

This project is one component of the [Oxford Martin Programme on the Illegal Wildlife Trade](#). This programme has several interrelated projects with a focus on changing the consumption of illegal wildlife products. The overall programme brief is available [here](#). This project is implemented in collaboration with Save Vietnam's Wildlife, Sun Yat Sen University, Fauna and Flora International and the Zoological Society of London.

Oxford is the lead organisation for this project and is responsible for overall project delivery.

[Save Vietnam's Wildlife](#) will lead implementation of the project in Vietnam.

[Sun Yat-Sen University](#) will provide insights on wildlife trade and carry out online market surveys in China.

[Flora and Fauna International](#) will provide expertise on celebrities in conservation.

[Zoological Society of London](#) will provide expertise and insights from on-going work to understand demand for pangolin products in China.



Key project personnel:

**Prof E.J. Milner-Gulland** ([ej.milner-gulland@zoo.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ej.milner-gulland@zoo.ox.ac.uk)), Principal Investigator, Oxford – E.J. is responsible for overall delivery of the project.

**Dr Joss Wright** ([joss.wright@oii.ox.ac.uk](mailto:joss.wright@oii.ox.ac.uk)) – Programme Co-director, Oxford. Joss will lead research on open and dark web market places in collaboration with international partners and those based at Oxford.

**Dr Dan Challender** ([dan\\_pangolin@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dan_pangolin@hotmail.co.uk)), Postdoctoral Research Associate, Oxford – Dan is responsible for analyses of pangolin farming, consumer research in Vietnam, and interactions with international policy-makers and conservation organisations.

**Ms Alegria Olmedo** ([alegriaoc@gmail.com](mailto:alegriaoc@gmail.com)), Doctoral Candidate, Oxford – Alegria is responsible for the celebrities and consumer behaviour change component of the project.

**Dr Diogo Veríssimo** ([diogo.gasparverissimo@zoo.ox.ac.uk](mailto:diogo.gasparverissimo@zoo.ox.ac.uk)), Research Fellow, Oxford – Diogo will provide expertise on research design and impact evaluation associated with behaviour change.

**Ms Nafeesa Esmail** ([nafeesa.esmail@zoo.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nafeesa.esmail@zoo.ox.ac.uk)), Research Coordinator, Oxford – Nafeesa will provide research coordination and support, including dissemination and engagement.

**Mr Thai Van Nguyen** ([thai@savevietnamswildlife.org](mailto:thai@savevietnamswildlife.org)), Executive Director, Save Vietnam's Wildlife – Thai will be the project's in-country lead in Vietnam, in particular directing fieldwork, intervention implementation and interactions with the Vietnamese government.

**Prof Tien Ming Lee** ([tienminglee@gmail.com](mailto:tienminglee@gmail.com)) – Assistant Professor, Sun Yet Sen University. Ming will provide knowledge and expertise of online market surveys, particularly in China.

**Ms Elizabeth Duthie** ([lizzie.duthie@fauna-flora.org](mailto:lizzie.duthie@fauna-flora.org)), Communications Executive, FFI – Lizzie will provide expertise on the effectiveness of celebrities in conservation marketing.

**Ms Carly Waterman** ([carly.waterman@zsl.org](mailto:carly.waterman@zsl.org)), Pangolin Technical Specialist, ZSL – Carly will provide expertise regarding on-going work to understand and address demand for pangolins and pangolin products in China.



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**ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE**

