

# The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

## May 2019 Report



### Highlights

- **5 major traffickers arrested during the month with pangolins scales, lion skulls, leopard skin and ivory.**
- **Senior police constable assigned to the Bouba Ndjidda National Park arrested with 5 lion skulls and other wildlife products.**
- **4 traffickers specialized in the trafficking of pangolin scales in the West Region arrested with around 100 kg of pangolin scales.**
- **LAGA assisted Customs in the interrogation and prosecution procedure against a Ghanaian repeat offender arrested with 20 African grey parrots.**
- **The Assistant Head of the Media and External Relations travelled to the US under the States Department International Visitors Leadership Programme.**

### General

This month was marked by the arrest of **5 traffickers with pangolin scales, ivory, lion skulls, leopard skin and assistance given to Customs in the prosecution procedure against an arrested parrot trafficker.**

4 traffickers were arrested with 96.5kg of pangolin scales. The group of two women and two men were specialized in dealing in pangolin scales and their main clients came in from Yaounde and Douala. They activated a group of several smaller traffickers and bushmeat sellers in the region.

A policeman assigned to protect the Bouba Ndjidda National Park was arrested with a 5 lion skulls, a leopard skin, an ivory tusk, after he travelled more than 1000km from the park with products to the capital city. He was assigned to protecting the park but instead organized and ran the illegal trade in products obtained from the killing of animals in the park. He was central in a trafficking network from the north of the country. Crackdown on lion part traffickers is becoming even more urgent as this is just a snapshot of the illegal trade in lion parts that is decimating the last few lions in in the country.

The Customs Mobile Brigade in Kribi arrested a trafficker with 20 African grey parrots and called for LAGA to assist in the interrogation and prosecution as apart of the newly established collaboration. The parrot trafficker is a repeat offender who had earlier been arrested twice but released. He seized the opportunities provided by the releases to continue to illegally trade in parrots. He is a Ghanaian national and part of an international network of Ghanaians specialized in trafficking African Grey Parrots

The Deputy Director and the Director General of Customs installed members of the Customs-LAGA committee charged with implementing the protocol agreement.

The Assistant Head of the Media and External Relations Department travelled to the US under the International Visitors Leadership Programme.

### **Investigations**

- **17 investigation missions** of varying lengths were carried out in **6 Regions** of Cameroon including Littoral, West, South, Centre, East and North Regions.
- Reliable information from the **North Region** led to the arrest of a **trafficker in Yaounde (senior police constable)** with a leopard skin, an elephant tusk and 5 lion skulls containing 122 teeth
- Good investigation in **Tonga** led to the arrest of **4 pangolin scales traffickers** with 96.5kg of pangolin scales in Tonga.

*Investigations Table*

<b>Investigation Missions</b>	<b>Regions</b>	<b>No. of Operations</b>	<b>No of traffickers arrested</b>
17	6	2	5

### **Operation**

**Two operations** carried out this month with MINFOF **arresting 5 traffickers**.

**18/5/2019 – A senior police constable arrested in Yaounde with an ivory tusk, leopard skin and 5 lion skulls.** The policeman who was in charge of protecting the Bouba Ndjidda National Park travelled more than 1000km from the park with products hidden inside his car and arrived Ngaoundere where he boarded a commercial bus that took him to Yaounde. He was sent on duty to the protect the park but organized a poaching ring that sourced wildlife products from animals poached in the park. He used his police cover and credentials to protect traffickers in that part of the country while also ferrying wildlife products to various cities.

**23/5/2019 – 4 traffickers arrested in Tonga, West Region with 96.5 pangolin scales.** The group that was made of two women and two men, was very organized and ran a network specializing in pangolins scales and was the main part of a chain that connected pangolin scales traffickers from big cities with several local traffickers and bushmeat sellers in the area.

### *Operations Table*

No of Operations	Regions	No of Traffickers Arrested	Contraband
2	2	5	96,5kg pangolin scales, an ivory tusk, a leopard skin, 5 lion skulls

**30/5/2019** – As a part of LAGA’s newly established collaboration with customs and following the arrest by customs of a longtime Ghanaian parrot trafficker with 20 African grey parrots, LAGA assisted customs and wildlife officials with interrogation and prosecution procedures. The repeat offender has been arrested twice for the same offence and released by officials with no prison sentence. In 2015 he was arrested in the South with a consignment of African grey parrots and released. In 2017 he was arrested with an accomplice in Yaounde with over 200 parrots but was released. These two incidents explained he could feel free to continue trafficking in parrots. He is connected to an international group specialized in the illegal export of parrots from the country to Europe, Asia and other African countries. This is just a snapshot of the huge illegal trade in lion parts that is decimating the last few lions in the country, necessitating the stepping up of operations against lion parts traffickers.

### Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **7 missions** out of Yaounde-Centre Region: 2 in Douala (Littoral) and 3 in Abong-Mbang (East), 1 in Djoum (South) and 1 in Sangmelima (South).
- There are **16 traffickers behind bars this month**: 6 in East region, 2 in South region and 8 in Littoral region.
- **33 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **30 cases** were scheduled in court this month.
- **7 traffickers** were convicted this month.
- **Prosecutions**: There were three court rulings this month including:
  - LAGA Legal Department carried out **8 missions** out of Yaounde-Centre Region: 2 in Douala (Littoral) and 1 in Abong-Mbang (East), 1 in Djoum (South), 1 in Kribi (South), 1 in Sangmelima (South) and 1 in Bangangte (West) and 1 in Tonga (West).
  - There are **21 traffickers behind bars this month**: 3 in East Region, 5 in South Region, 4 in West Region, 1 in Centre Region and 8 in Littoral Region.
  - **28 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.

- **22 cases** were scheduled in court this month.
- **No trafficker** was convicted this month.
- **Prosecutions:** There were no court rulings this month.

*Legal Table*

<b>No of Missions (Out of Centre Region)</b>	<b>No of Court Judgements</b>	<b>No of Traffickers Given Prison Sentence</b>	<b>Prison term (in months)</b>	<b>No of Traffickers Sanctioned (No prison sentence)</b>	<b>No of Appeals lodged</b>	<b>No of Cases Tried in Courts</b>
7	0	0	0	0	0	22

**Media**

- **32 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio, TV and internet including; 16 written press materials (8 in French and 8 in English), 12 radio news flashes (7 in French and 5 in English), and 4 internet publications in French.
- 19 media pieces were published in French and 13 in English making a percentage of 59.3% in French and 40.6% in English.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: The Yaounde arrest of a policeman with several wildlife products, the Tonga arrest of 4 traffickers with 100kg of pangolin scales, the arrest by customs of a parrot trafficker with a consignment of African grey parrots.

*Media Table*

<b><i>No of Media Pieces</i></b>	<b><i>TV</i></b>	<b><i>Radio</i></b>	<b><i>Newspapers</i></b>	<b><i>Internet</i></b>
32	0	12	16	4

**External Relations and Policy**

- The Assistant Head of the Media and External Relations Department Anna Egbe travelled to the United States under the US International Visitor Leadership Programme and participated

in a series of events on the theme: Combatting corruption: Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Business.

- The Customs Director and the Deputy Director installed committee members of the Customs-LAGA joint committee put in place to oversee the implementation of the protocol agreement signed between the two parties.
- The Deputy Director held a meeting with a pangolin conservationist from the Tikki Hywood Cameroon office on ways of improving pangolin conservation through sensitization.
- He equally held a meeting with a filmmaker to discuss possibilities of featuring a LAGA staff in a film.
- He held another meeting with an official from the Fondation la Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS) to discuss the state of wildlife law enforcement in the area that covers three parks among three countries including Cameroon, Gabon and the Central African Republic.
- A legal adviser attended the anti-poaching committee meeting of the Littoral Region where he challenged authorities to improve on collaboration with LAGA in order to enable effective law enforcement.
- The head of department, accompanied by a volunteer, held a meeting with the state counsel in Bangangte to discuss operation procedures and a legal adviser held a meeting with the state counsel in Bonaberie – Douala and in Sangmelima to discuss legal matters pending in their courts and another legal adviser held a meeting with the state counsel in Bonanjo – Douala for the same purpose.

### **Management**

- The external audit of LAGA 2018 finances was carried out in collaboration with the management department.
- Logistical preparations were carried out for the travel of the assistant media head to the United States.
- The Deputy Director accompanied by members of the Customs – LAGA committee participated in a meeting that drew up a plan of action for the implementation of the protocol agreement with customs.

### **Activism Front**

All the activism fostering activities carried out by the LAGA family are online; this could be gotten at the LAGA website – <http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Actiwithvism/tabid/77/Default.aspx>.

### **Presentation: Illegal Immigrations**

We have witnessed over the last two decades or so, an incessant growth in illegal immigration from the continent to Europe and the presenter takes the opportunity to help us understand what is happening. He gives a historical background of the phenomenon while explaining some of the terms (immigration and emigration) associated to it. There is a lot of high risk involved in migrating and the reasons young people would take such risks must be very strong and he explains the causes that push Africans to take the perilous journey across desert and sea to Europe. He demonstrates with the aid of maps and statistics what are the routes and who are those involved. He finally tells us what are some of the possible solutions to mitigating the problem and these are socio-politico-economic solutions with the reduction of poverty

at the helm. Discussion focused on what solutions and the role of African governments in ensuring for the welfare of their citizens and elaborating policies that may mitigate the phenomenon.

### **Finance**

In preparation and would be made available soon as possible on the LAGA website [www.laga-enforcement.org](http://www.laga-enforcement.org).

### **Link of the month**

A website reporting on news in Cameroon takes up the story of the arrest of persons arrested with 100kg of pangolin scales and highlights how organized they were as a group that supplied several pangolin scales traffickers.

<https://www.camer.be/75105/11:1/cameroun-quatre-trafiquants-de-la-faune-sauvage-arretes-dans-la-localite-de-tonga-cameroon.html>

**This Month in Pictures**



*Four arrested with pangolins scales arrive the gendarmerie brigade after their arrest*



*Two men who were part of the group that specialized in trafficking pangolin scales*



*An ivory tusk, a leopard skin, lion skulls seized from a senior police constable*



*Lion skulls seized from police officer assigned to a national park to protect the animals*



*Customs seized parrots arrest a notorious parrot trafficker*