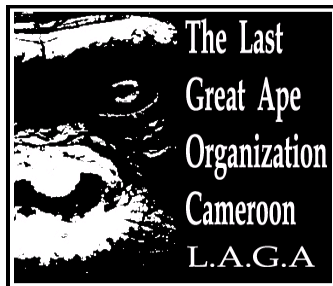


# THE LAST GREAT APE ORGANIZATION, CAMEROON LAGA

ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY–DECEMBER 2023



## Executive Summary

Many achievements were recorded in LAGA's collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) despite several challenges posed during the period January to December 2023. These achievements were obtained in the fields of investigation, arrest, prosecution, media exposure, government relations and international activities. Focus was on the fight against the illegal wildlife trade; principally trafficking in pangolin scales and primates. The EAGLE network's Central Coordination Unit (CCU) continued to provide vital technical and organisation support that facilitated several operations resulting in the of arrests 13 traffickers

13 traffickers were arrested and 75% stayed behind bars from the day of arrest. Accordingly, 9 new cases were brought to the courts. 20 traffickers were found guilty and 5 given prison sentences and ordered to pay fines and damages. The 15 others found guilty were either ordered to pay fines and damages and or handed suspended prison sentences. In total, the courts ordered the payment of damages totalling 105,889,000 FCFA (about \$211,778) to MINFOF. Media exposure was at a rate of 4 media pieces per week.

The EAGLE network achieved some good results as 90 traffickers were arrested across 6 countries. In order to provide a deterrent effect across the Network, 1,262 media pieces were published in national media across the network countries.

The work of LAGA was supported by AVAAZ, Global Conservation, The Dutch Gorilla Foundation, Prowildlife, Wildcat Foundation, Marchig Trust, Lion Recovery Fund, Pangolin Crisis Fund, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF),

**LAST GREAT APE ORGANISATION, CAMEROON (LAGA)**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
January – December 2023

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Investigations**

- A total of 106 investigation missions (of varying lengths) were carried out in 6 regions.

### **Operations**

- Operations were carried out in 3 regions arresting 13 traffickers resulting in 13 court cases.
- The rate of imprisonment of arrested offender stood at 75%.
- 271kg of pangolins scales from all three species in the country, were seized:

### **Legal**

- 13 new cases were brought to court. The cases began during the period have not yet reached the judgement stage but trials are ongoing.
- 20 traffickers were found guilty and handed all or at least one of the following; prison sentences, fines and damages. Damages amounted to some 105,889,000 FCFA (about \$211,778). to be paid to MINFOF.
- 11 court judgements were passed during the 6-month period.

### **Media**

- A total of 197 media pieces were produced in national media (radio, written press and internet) achieved at a rate of four every week.

### **Management**

- The Second Semester Report of 2023 was made available online.
- An external auditing team completed a full audit of the organisation.
- Focus was on maintaining high standards in every department and on improving recruitment for investigators.

### **External Relations and Policy**

- Several meetings were held with MINFOF officials, the diplomatic community, national and international NGOs to discuss issues on collaboration, governance, wildlife law enforcement among others.

### **Strategic Highlights**

- The operational focus over this period was pangolin scales and primate trafficking.
- The strategic focus was ensuring investigations and operations were smoothly carried out despite challenges of diverse that emerged early on at the start of the year.
- Recruitment was a prime focus and a new round of recruitment targeting investigators with specific skills and competences was carried out
- The CCU evaluated and provided strategic assistance to management, operational and organisational functioning.

### **EAGLE Activities**

- A total of 90 traffickers were arrested across 6 countries of the network during the year.

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### **Also available:**

1. Annual Financial Statement 2022
2. First and Second Semester Reports 2023
3. Media archive – Excel database linked to recorded media pieces
4. Photo archive for media use

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## **NARRATIVE REPORT**

This report covers the period January to December 2023 and focuses on progress in the activities of each department notably investigations, operations, legal, media and management, strategic overview of and the impact of operations on wildlife crime in Cameroon, relations with the Cameroonian government, non-governmental bodies, collaboration with international partners and non-enforcement initiatives that LAGA undertook.

### **1. Investigations**

LAGA's investigation unit carried out 106 investigation missions in 6 regions of the country during the year. Activities were slowed down at the beginning of the year due to several challenges that were gradually resolved. This accounts for the very low number of investigations carried out as compared to the past years. Therefore, the number of operations carried out equally witnessed a significant drop. Some old strategies were revisited and adapted to suit present circumstances. Some old investigations were also revisited. Focus was nevertheless on several big and complex investigations which take a lot of time to lead to the operation stage. The focus was on running important investigation missions with high quality targets and building synergy with other government partners in fostering effective investigations.

The recruitment was intensified with a couple of candidates interviewed and more efforts to enlarge the recruitment base were made This is aimed at recruiting investigators from some trafficking hotbeds and some with special skills.

The head of the department and his deputy were all part of the operation team during all operations carried out during the first period of the year and this greatly boosted the operation capacity of the whole team.

The country continues to face a challenging security situation in some parts and investigations were not carried out in these regions. Plans have been put in place to fully cover these areas once the situation improves.



**Figure 1: Number of Investigations Missions per Month**

## **2. Operations**

LAGA and the Government of Cameroon carried out operations in 6 regions against 13 individuals resulting in 13 court cases at a rate of one every 28 days. Several difficulties including challengers encountered at the start of the year account for the significant drop in the number of operations carried out compared to the previous years. Measures shall be taken to increase the number of arrests next year. Pangolin scales trafficking was the prime focus during this period and 9 of the traffickers arrested were found with pangolin scales. 4 others were arrested with primates including a chimpanzee, a drill and a mandrill.

In April, a trafficker arrested in Bertoua in the East Region with 55 kg of pangolin scales. He travelled from Diang; a locality some 41 km from Bertoua with the bag of pangolin scales strapped to his motorcycle. He was arrested when he arrived Bertoua and attempted to sell the pangolin scales. The operation came at the end of a long investigation that tracked and monitored the pangolin trafficker who is experienced in the illegal business. He activated a host of small traffickers in several villages, including Diang, Kapan, Kariol, Mbang and Molobo in the East Region, who supplied him with pangolin scales.

In May 3 traffickers were arrested in Makenene, Centre Region with 78kg of pangolin scales. They first travelled from Ndikinimeki, a nearby town, on a motorbike and arrived Makenene without the contraband. They were cautious and tried a number of tricks because they were fully aware of the illegality of the business. Two others returned to Ndikinimeki, mixed up the scales and parked it in a single bag that was transported on a motorbike. They were very knowledgeable in the illegal business and did everything they could to avoid arrest. Makenene is a popular resting spot for travellers plying the Yaounde, Bafoussam to Bamenda highway. The place is fast, intense with business littering the small town and this attracts all kinds of business including the illegal trade in wildlife species and bushmeat.

In July, 2 traffickers were arrested in Nkoteng, Centre Region with 47kg of giant pangolin scales. The scales were from the endangered giant pangolin that was poached around the Sanaga River where they collaborated to obtaining the scales. The traffickers took steps to avoid arrest and used a motorcycle to move around. They transported the pangolin scales in a bag and moved hesitantly, conscious of the risks of their illegal business

An ape trafficker was arrested, a chimpanzee rescued and 2 more primate traffickers arrested with a mandrill in August, in Ebolowa, South Region. The ape trafficker was arrested while attempting to sell the chimpanzee. The animal had been chained and caged alongside a dog in the home of the trafficker. The little female was frail and aggressive and looked like she had suffered from trauma. The trafficker talked about trying to sell the chimp to a governor. The mandrill was spotted in the street by the arresting team. The trafficker was arrested as he tried to escape and a second detained at the police station when he showed up after police requested for his presence.

In September, 3 pangolin scales traffickers were arrested in Ntui in the Centre Region during two back to back arrests. 2 traffickers were arrested as they attempted to sell a bag of pangolin scales. A third trafficker was arrested immediately after he arrived in Ntui, where the arrest took place. He transported the pangolin scales on a motorbike from a nearby locality. They are well connected, at a significantly high level, to trafficking of pangolin scales in the area. They were known to some local law enforcement officials as traffickers and had links to smaller traffickers of pangolin scales. Wildlife trafficking is rife in the area that has historically been weak in wildlife law enforcement. Before a road was tarred and a bridge built over the Sanaga River, it was very difficult to access and

wildlife trafficking was intense. The tide seems to be turning and couple of operations has been carried out in towns not too far away from the Sanaga River.

Finally, in November, a primate trafficker was arrested and young drill rescued in Yabassi, Littoral Region. The very young drill, an endangered primate, stressed and agitated, was tied with a rope in the waist. He kept the animal at his residence in a Yabassi. The trafficker, who works for the local city council, transported the cage with the drill on his bike. He was waiting for another supply of a baby primate that was killed when local poachers shot dead its mother.

**Operations Table**

<i>Number of Operations</i>	<i>Number of Traffickers</i>	<i>Contraband</i>
7	13	55kg 78kg of pangolin scales, 47kg giant pangolin scales, one chimpanzee, one mandrill, 91kg of pangolin scales, a drill

**Figure 2: Operation Table**

### **3. Legal**

A total of 13 new cases reached the court and the cases joined old cases that were scheduled, followed-up and tried in various courts. Some jail visits were organized. A court gave sentenced a trafficker to 6 months in prison. He was arrested in April with 55 kg of pangolin scales. Damages awarded to MINFOF amounted to some 105,889,000 FCFA (about \$211,778). Most of the cases initiated within this period have not yet reached the judgement stage and the rate of keeping the accused behind bars at the onset of the procedure stood at with 75%.

Very few court procedures came to the judgement stage and some very weak sentences were recorded amidst persistent challenges including the absence of lawyers for MINFOF during court procedures, the absence of MINFOF representatives who either do not have a letter of representation from the ministry or simply do not turn up in court and the administrative bottlenecks of renewing of the MoU with the ministry. In the light of these difficulties, up to 6 traffickers were acquitted by the courts and of the 10 traffickers who were found guilty by 5 court rulings only 3 were effectively given a prison sentence. This equally failed to meet the requirements of the law that stipulates a prison sentence of 1 to 3 years. We are taking the challenges seriously and working hard for remedies as our scope permits.

A total of 93 missions were carried out of the Centre Region for follow-up of new cases and the creation and strengthening of relations with judicial authorities. As a direct result of operations the missions were principally focused on the pangolin scales and primate trafficking cases.

During the period 11 court judgements were passed with 20 traffickers found guilty and 5 of them given a prison sentence, the others were either given suspended sentences or simply fined and ordered to pay damages. Very few court procedures came to the judgement stage and some very weak sentences were recorded amidst persistent challenges including the absence of lawyers for MINFOF

during court procedures, the absence of MINFOF representatives who either do not have a letter of representation from the ministry or simply do not turn up in court and the administrative bottlenecks of renewing of the MoU with the ministry

In February, the Nanga-Eboko Court of First Instance found the accused ANDINGA NANGA Christine and OVANDANA Pierre Lafleur guilty and sentenced them to one month 10 days in prison and to pay 500,000 FCFA (about \$1000) each as fine. They were arrested in Nanga-Eboko on the 15/12/2022 for the illegal possession of 120kg of pangolin scales.

In March, the Sangmelima Court of First Instance found the accused NDONO AFANG, EMVOUTOU, ADAMOU Issah and TCHANGOU guilty. The court ordered NDONO AFANG Albert and ADAMOU to pay 500,000 FCFA (about \$1000) jointly as fine, TCHANGOU Jules and EMVOUTOU AFANG Mardoché to pay 100,000 FCFA (about \$200) jointly as fine. They were also ordered to pay 15,000,000 FCFA (about \$30,000) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Sangmelima on the 15/03/2022 for illegal possession of 5 ivory tusks.

In April, the Centre Administratif Court of First Instance found the accused BELUCHUKWU Oduche and OKALA NDENGUE Mathieu guilty and sentenced them to pay 200,000 FCFA (about \$400) as fine and 4,855,000 FCFA (about \$9710) as damages. They were arrested in Yaounde on the 15/10/2022 for the illegal possession of 66, 2kg of pangolin scales.

In May, In the MOHAMADOU Ibrahim case, the appeal court of Littoral overturned the lower court's decision with regards to the imprisonment, damages and the seized vehicle's fate. The Littoral appeal court fined him 12 months suspended sentences during 3 years, to pay the sum of 62,000,000 FCFA (about \$124,000) as damages and also ordered the confiscation of the ivory tusks seized and the vehicle used to transport them. He was arrested in Ambam on the 21/10/2020 for the illegal possession of 626kg of ivory tusks.

In June, the Ngoumou Court of First Instance found the accused ANTSIABOT MPAM Sandrine guilty and sentenced her to pay 2,500,000 FCFA (about \$5000) as fines and 2,500,000 FCFA (about \$5000) as damages. She was arrested in Mbankomo on the 27/09/2022 for the illegal possession of a live mandrill.

The Bertoua Court of First Instance found the accused ALONA HANS Augustin guilty and sentenced him to 6 months in prison and to pay 500,000 FCFA (about \$1000) each as fines. He was also sentenced to pay 1, 833, 000 FCFA (about \$3,666) as damages. He was arrested in Bertoua on the 14/04/2023 for the illegal possession of 55kg of pangolin scales.

In July, The Dschang Court of First Instance discontinued the procedure against DJOUOTE Hubert following the death of the accused and found the accused FOSSO innocent and not guilty for lack of evidence. On the other hand, the court found the accused BOUNA Jean Valerie and MBE Jean guilty and sentenced them to pay 150,000 FCFA (about \$300) each as fine and 4,587,500 FCFA (about \$39,402) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Balessing on the 23/06/2023 for illegal possession of 3 leopard skins and a crocodile skin.

In October, The Akonolinga Court of First Instance found the accused EDIMA Martine, ANGOULA Paul, NYASUNG NUHUM MBENTE and ABADA Florence not guilty and acquitted them. They were arrested in Akonolinga on the 19/04/2022 for the illegal possession of 91,6kg of pangolin scales.

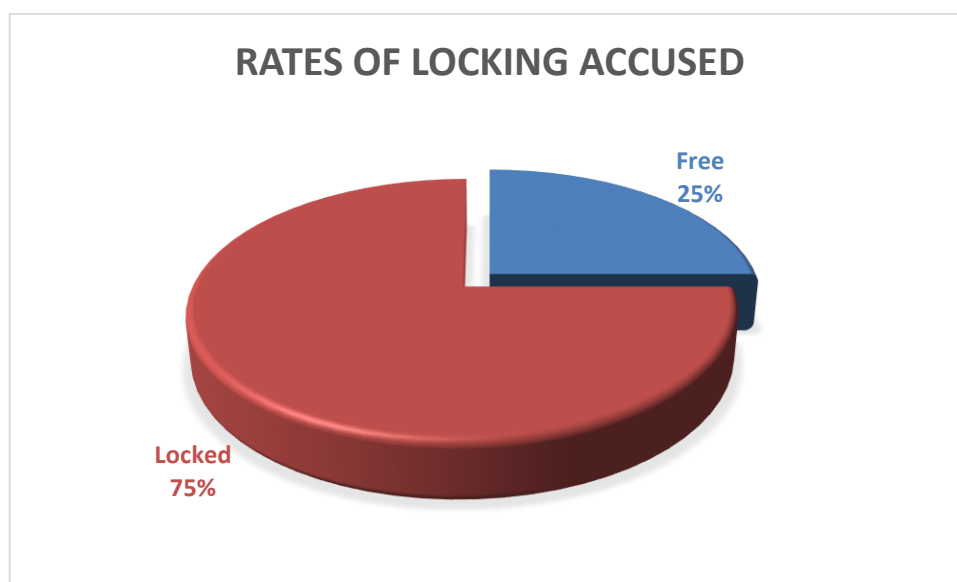
05/10/2023: The Yaounde – Centre Administratif Court of First Instance found the accused LOVET MBANWECK and MBOUOMBOUO ADAMOU and sentenced them to pay 200,000 FCFA (about

\$400) each as fine and 13,355,000 FCFA (about \$2,671) as damages. They were arrested in Yaounde on the 29/10/2022 for the illegal possession of 180kg of pangolin scales.

In November, The Bafia Court of First Instance found the accused ANDELA EDZIGUI Maximin Junior, EMBOM Jean and ISSEKSEK Pascal guilty. ANDELA EDZIGUI Maximin Junior was sentenced to 2 months in prison and the two others to 6 months suspended sentences during 3 years. They were also ordered to pay 100,000 FCFA (about \$200) each as fine and 1,758,500 FCFA (about \$3,517) jointly as damages

The Nkongsamba Court of First Instance found the accused NGUEKENG Gilbert Pacôme and LAPA Dieudonné Gabri guilty. The court ruled that they should pay 3,000,000 FCFA (about \$6,000) each as fines and 150.000 FCFA (about \$300) each as court fees. They were arrested in Melong on 23/2/2022 for illegal possession of a leopard skin and a civet skin.

In December, The Yabassi Court of First Instance found the accused LAMBO Ruben Fabius guilty and sentenced him to 100,000 FCFA (about \$200) as fines and 31,950 FCFA (about \$62) as court fees. He was arrested in Yabassi on the 21/11/2023 for the illegal possession of a drill.



**Figure 3: Rate of locking accused behind bars**

#### **4. Media**

A total of 197 media pieces were produced and pushed into media including numerous articles– radio, written press and the internet; achieved at a rate of about 4 media pieces every week. The failure to meet the targeted media output this year could be explained by the low number of arrest operation, few cases being processed at the court and the challenge faced by the media head to cover some activities due to a flailing health. July no media pieces were recorded due to low results from operations and court proceedings and in September the highest number was recorded.

Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including the court hearing of three traffickers arrested with 120kg of pangolin scales in Nanga; the World Pangolin Day; the Yaounde arrest of three traffickers with 386 kg of pangolin scales; the Bertoua arrest of two traffickers with 45 kg of pangolin scales and the Makenene arrest of three traffickers with 78kg of pangolin scales, the Nkoteng arrest of 2 traffickers with 47kg of giant pangolin scales, the arrest of three traffickers with a chimp and a mandrill in Ebolowa, the dismantling of an international ivory ring in Gabon, the arrest of three

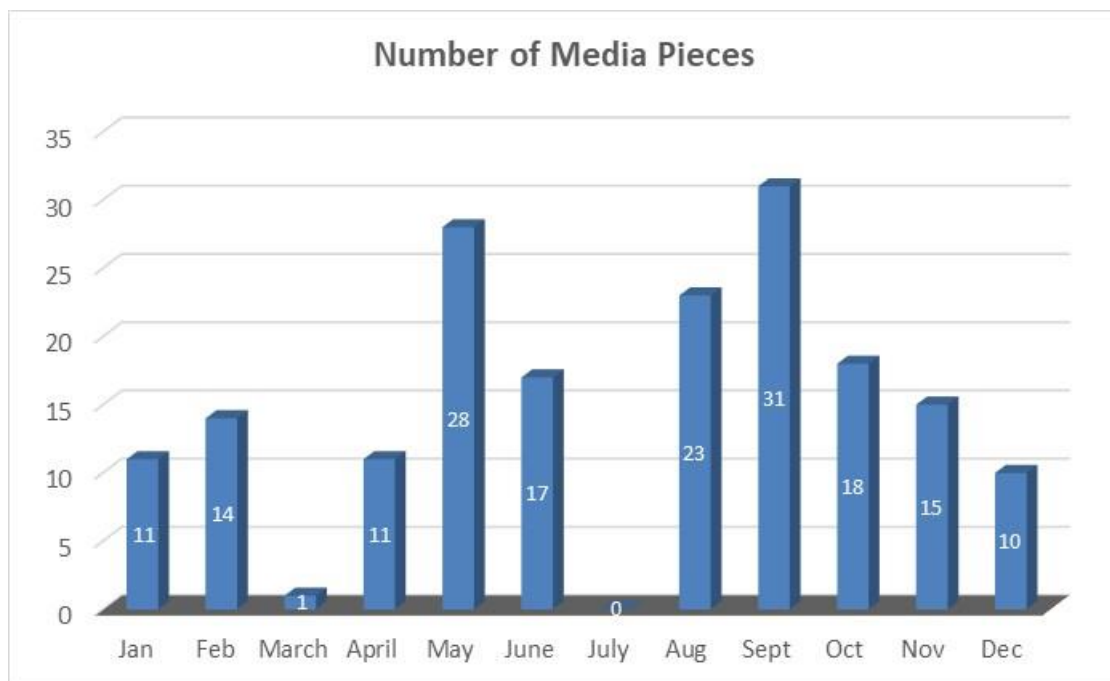


traffickers with 91kg of pangolin scales in Ntui. the court hearing of 3 traffickers arrested with 78kg of pangolin scales in Makenene and the arrest of a city council worker with a drill.

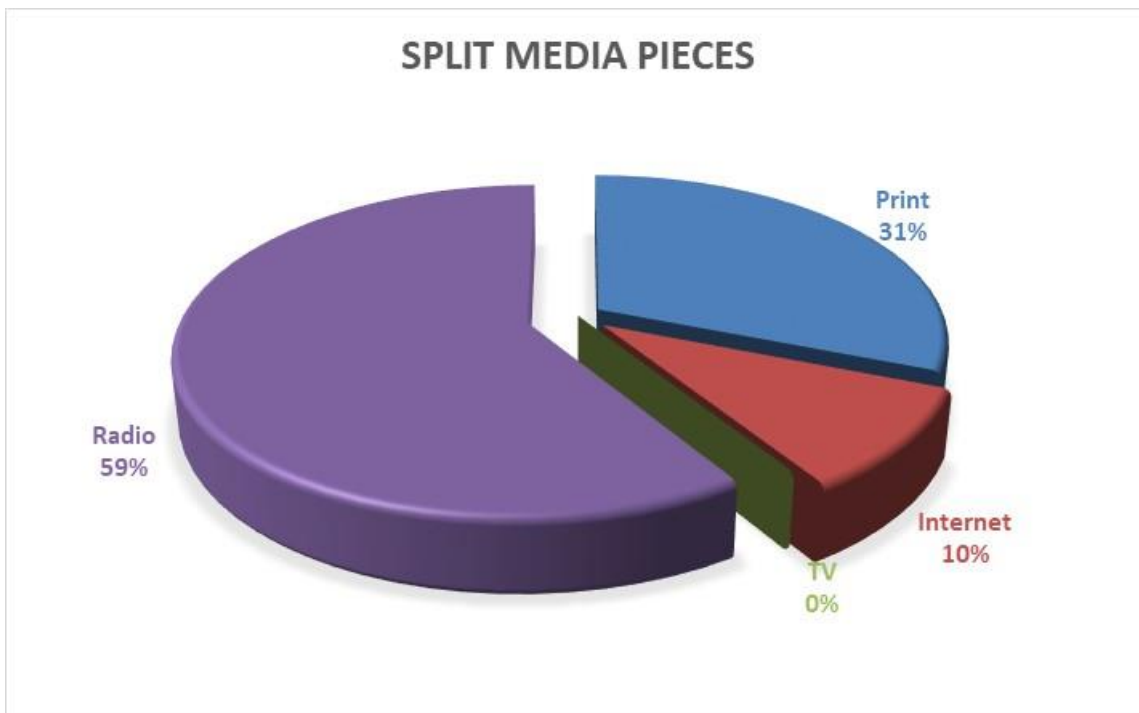
Quotes or interviews used in the various news stories and articles were from the Wildaid Central Africa Director, Ofir Drori EAGLE founder, Luc Mathot, the Director of AALF Gabon and Eric Tah, the Deputy Director of LAGA,

The distribution of Wildlife Justice Magazine continued. Wildlife Justice is a thematic journal that focuses on wildlife law enforcement and conservation issues.

No TV media pieces were published during the year and efforts are being made to correct this next year.



**Figure 4: Number of Media Pieces Produced and Published**



**Figure 5: Split in Media Pieces**

## **5. Management**

Despite difficulties in ensuring adequate resources for the organisation all the departments worked hard to improving on the results of the semester. The annual report of 2021 was uploaded online. The electronic versions are available online on the LAGA website [www.laga-enforcement.org](http://www.laga-enforcement.org). This is a result of teamwork involving all the departments in LAGA – Investigations, Legal, Media, Operations and Management.

Two other regions of the country that are seared by security problems continue to pose a challenge but plans have been put in place to quickly cover the regions once the situation on the ground improves.

The annual financial and activity reports of 2022 were successfully completed. The activity report was published online alongside the first semester report of 2023.

An audit session was carried out by Moore Stephens and management provided a professional and conducive work environment and accessibility to all necessary documents to the auditors who successfully carried out their activity.

Recruitment for the investigations department continued with one volunteer tested and released for lack of quality performances. Recruitment was also intensified in the media department and a volunteer tested and released. A legal adviser started their testing period.

A couple of thought-provoking sessions of presentations and debates for the LAGA team were organised to foster activism and leadership skills. A wide range of topics including activism were presented and debated. This initiative also aims at strengthening the capacity, unity and values of the LAGA family.

## **6. External Relations and Policy**

The Deputy Director held a meeting with 3 officials from the US Departments of Justice and Agriculture to discuss wildlife law enforcement and illegal logging in the country.

He held a meeting with Lisa Hywood, Founding Director of Tikki Hywood Foundation, who was on a visit to Cameroon. Discussions focused on possible areas of collaboration to strengthen the fight against pangolin trafficking. The Director of Tikki Hywood Foundation – Cameroon was also in attendance.

He participated at a pangolin conservation planning workshop in Accra, Ghana, that brought together stakeholders in pangolin conservation. The workshop focused on producing a West African regional action plan for pangolin conservation to be validated and adopted by the range states and other pangolin conservation stakeholders. He was part of a panel on the role of law enforcement in pangolin conservation.

He participated at meeting at the US Embassy in Yaounde that included several conservation stakeholders. The meeting focused on presenting US Embassy environment programs to the conservation community. He had a brief discussion with the Deputy Chief of Mission during the event.

He participated at a workshop organized by TRAFFIC to train frontline wildlife officials working in several parks in the country. He did a presentation on the wildlife law enforcement process.

He participated at a celebratory event to mark the crowning of the King of England, on the invitation of the British High Commissioner.

The Deputy Director and the Head of the Legal Department held a meeting with the Advocate General Yaounde on issues related to the prosecution of wildlife traffickers and the strengthening of collaboration.

They also held a meeting with the newly appointed Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife for the Centre Region to congratulate him on his appointment, discuss and lay down groundwork for a smooth collaboration and strengthen the fight against wildlife crime.

They participated at an event to raise the awareness of young people on the plight of the pangolin. They both did presentations on the pangolin and law enforcement against pangolin trafficking: The event that was organised by Wildaid brought together hundreds of students from some high schools in Douala, Littoral Region. It was part of activities to celebrate the 2023 World Pangolin Day

The Deputy Director participated at workshop to map out a collective understanding of the bushmeat sector as part of the process to developing a national bushmeat strategy. He did a presentation on the LAGA – Cameroon Government’s experience in wildlife law enforcement.

The Head of the Legal Department and legal advisers held several meetings with administrative, wildlife and judicial officials to strengthen collaboration and in some cases to discuss matters pending at courts handling wildlife cases.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with two TRAFFIC officials to discuss pangolin conservation and the development of the Cameroon Pangolin Working Group.

The Deputy Director participated at an event to welcome new embassy officials of the Political and Economic Section of the US Embassy in Yaounde. He held brief discussions with the US Ambassador and the Second Secretary of the Japanese Embassy in Yaounde. Discussions focused on wildlife law enforcements and the fight against wildlife crime.

Accompanied by the Heads of the Investigation Department and the Legal Department, he held a brief meeting with the Centre Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife on an operation against the pangolin scales trafficker.

The Deputy Director and the Head of the Legal Department held a meeting with the newly appointed Centre Regional Chief of Wildlife to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.

The Deputy Director and the Interim Director held discussions with two officials of the London-based Environmental Investigations Agency who were on a working visit to the country. They focused on wildlife crime and collaboration.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with three officials of the US Department of Justice to discuss challenges to environmental law enforcement in the country and to map out some areas of interests.

He held a meeting with the three officials of the French based conservation group Noe and discussions focused on collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime in South East of the country.

He held a brief discussion with the US Ambassador on strengthening collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime during an event at the US Residence. A presentation on the Sanaga Young Chimpanzee Sanctuary was done by her Director, Sheri Speede, during the event.

He, accompanied by the Heads of Investigations and Legal Departments, held a meeting with the Chief of Service in charge of wildlife crime at the Interpol National Central Bureau to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.

He participated at the event celebrating the King of England's birthday. He had brief discussions with some diplomats, the Vice President of the Senate and the Director of Customs on wildlife crime.

The Head of the Legal Department and legal advisers held several meetings with administrative, wildlife and judicial officials to strengthen collaboration and in some cases to discuss ongoing cases, build common strategies and strengthen collaboration.

## **7. LAGA and the EAGLE Network**

LAGA's new model for NGO – Government collaboration establishing wildlife law enforcement, bringing about results with an innovative approach geared at changing the existing system and triggering a paradigm shift in the way NGOs tackle wildlife crime is being realised within the EAGLE network. The model is focusing on the prosecution of major traffickers, not the small-time poacher who is motivated by the city dwelling traffickers. This involves fighting head on the major obstacle to the application of the wildlife law in Africa – Corruption. LAGA's experience and model is currently operating within the EAGLE network that group 9 countries.

The replication of the LAGA model is also geared at taking cross section lessons outside of wildlife conservation; these include the fight against corruption, fostering activism, fight against child trafficking etc.

**<http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Replication/tabid/166/Default.aspx>**

The EAGLE network is now responsible for the replication activity of the LAGA model but LAGA continued to host training sessions in the country and in this regard, LAGA hosted a super volunteer who received training and participated in numerous field activities.

## **8. Fostering Activism**

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/Activism/tabid/77/Default.aspx>

## **9. Strategic Overview of Wildlife Crime in Cameroon and Operations' Impact**

Beyond the number of operations and their effectiveness, there is an even more important factor in evaluating LAGA's work – the strategic value of the operations and its impact on the illegal wildlife trade. In this regard, LAGA is choosing diversified operations, which carry an added value to expose and map the different angles of wildlife crime in Cameroon. Consequently, the LAGA-MINFOF work sheds light on the nature of illegal wildlife trade in the sub-region. The strategic focus over this period was on pangolin scales, primates (chimps and a mandrill).

### ***9.1 Pangolin Scales***

Over 270 kg of pangolin scales were seized from 9 traffickers during the year. They represented the biggest group of traffickers arrested and demonstrates the importance of not relenting efforts targeting pangolin scales traffickers as this is an illegal trade that can involve several kinds of traffickers. Pangolin trafficking has represented the biggest group of traffickers arrested during a couple of years now and demonstrates the importance of not relenting efforts targeting the illegal trade. Unlike ivory trafficking where you find highly specialised and top level traffickers dominating and controlling the trafficking, pangolin scales can bring every kind of trafficker together. The poor trafficker with just a few kilograms being activated by the major traffickers handling hundreds of kilograms as witnessed during the year.

In April, a trafficker arrested in Bertoua in the East Region with 55 kg of pangolin scales. He travelled from Diang; a locality some 41 km from Bertoua with the bag of pangolins scales strapped to his motorcycle. He was arrested when he arrived Bertoua and attempted to sell the pangolin scales. The operation came at the end of a long investigation that tracked and monitored the pangolins trafficker who is experienced in the illegal business. He activated a host of small traffickers in several villages, including Diang, Kapan, Kariol, Mbang and Molobo in the East Region, who supplied him with pangolins scales.

In May, 3 traffickers were arrested in Makenene, Centre Region with 78kg of pangolin scales. They first travelled from Ndikinimeki, a nearby town, on a motorbike and arrived Makenene without the contraband. They were cautious and tried a number of tricks because they were fully aware of the illegality of the business. Two others returned to Ndikinimeki, mixed up the scales and parked it in a single bag that was transported on a motorbike. They were very knowledgeable in the illegal business and did everything they could to avoid arrest. Makenene is a popular resting spot for travellers plying the Yaounde, Bafoussam to Bamenda highway. The place is fast, intense with business littering the small town and this attracts all kinds of business including the illegal trade in wildlife species and bushmeat.

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they collaborated to obtaining the scales. The traffickers took steps to avoid arrest and used a motorcycle to move around. They transported the pangolin scales in a bag and moved hesitantly, conscious of the risks of their illegal business

In September, 3 pangolin scales traffickers were arrested in Ntui in the Centre Region during two back to back arrests. 2 traffickers were arrested as they attempted to sell a bag of pangolin scales. A third trafficker was arrested immediately after he arrived in Ntui, where the arrest took place. He transported the pangolin scales on a motorbike from a nearby locality. They are well connected, at a significantly high level, to trafficking of pangolin scales in the area. They were known to some local law enforcement officials as traffickers and had links to smaller traffickers of pangolin scales.

## **9.2 Primates**

Rescued primates are generally malnourishment, diseased and stressed. They arrive sanctuaries in very bad state and generally require fast measures to save them from death. The country is home to the mandrill and the drill, among other important primate species. The drill is rarely seen in trafficking circles in the country but once in a while a trafficker is arrested trying to sell lone. This is an indication of how very few drills may be remaining in the wild. A council worker was arrested attempting to sell one and the animal was rescued and taken to the Limbe Wildlife Centre that has special skills to taking care of drills,

An ape trafficker was arrested, a chimpanzee rescued and 2 more primate traffickers arrested with a mandrill in August, in Ebolowa, South Region. The ape trafficker was arrested while attempting to sell the chimpanzee. The animal had been chained and caged alongside a dog in the home of the trafficker. The little female was frail and aggressive and looked like she had suffered from trauma. The trafficker talked about trying to sell the chimp to a governor. The mandrill was spotted in the street by the arresting team. The trafficker was arrested as he tried to escape and a second detained at the police station when he showed up after police requested for his presence.

In November, a primate trafficker was arrested and young drill rescued in Yabassi, Littoral Region. The very young drill, an endangered primate, stressed and agitated, was tied with a rope in the waist. He kept the animal at his residence in a Yabassi. The trafficker, who works for the local city council, transported the cage with the drill on his bike. He was waiting for another supply of a baby primate that was killed when local poachers shot dead its mother.

## **10. Corruption and Wildlife Crime**

LAGA has been an experiment field for methods of fighting corruption within a law enforcement and application process. All bribing attempts are documented into our case tracking systems. LAGA is not an observer of corruption; it was created to fight corruption, redirecting the positive pressures existing within the system, usually wasted in large conferences, to specific corruption attempts and the field realities that form corruption. These bribery attempts are vigorously fought against and vehemently condemned by LAGA. LAGA is not a watchdog group and not created as an observer, it fights directly whenever corrupt practices or bribery attempts have been observed.

This ongoing fight is directed towards issues that touch on corruption and bad governance. In May, 3 traffickers were arrested with pangolin scales and during the writing of the offence reports by the wildlife officials, they came under severe and relentless attempts of bribery to stop the prosecution and this was pushed back, paving the way for their prosecution.

When a primate trafficker was arrested and as wildlife officials were establishing the offence report at the delegation, they received calls and pressure from a mayor. He started by using traffic of influence against the MINFOF agents equally negotiating and trying to find a way to stop the matter at their level. His attempts were simply pushed back.

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**Annex I - the Semester in Pictures**



*Trafficker at the wildlife office ready for prosecution process to begin as officers weigh bag of pangolin scales*

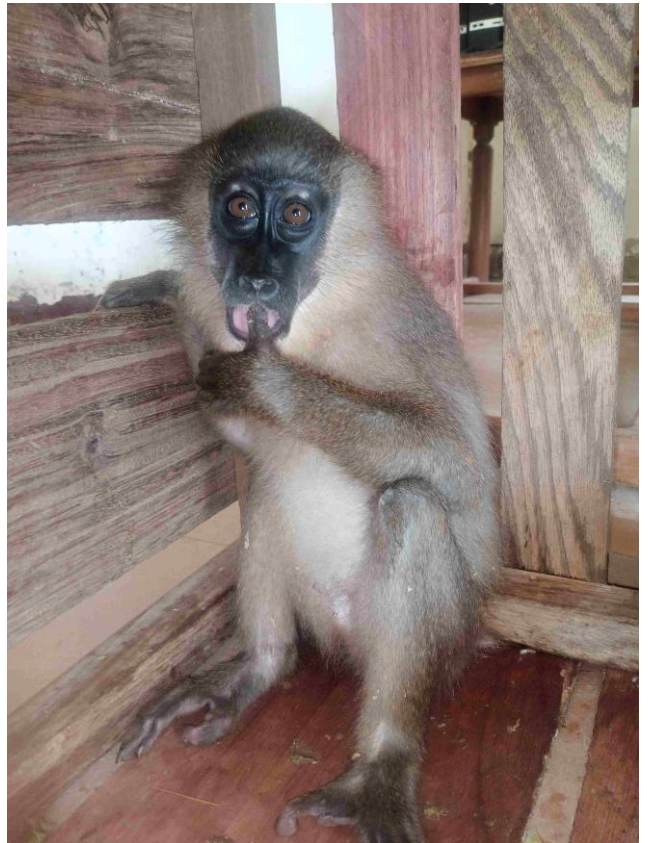
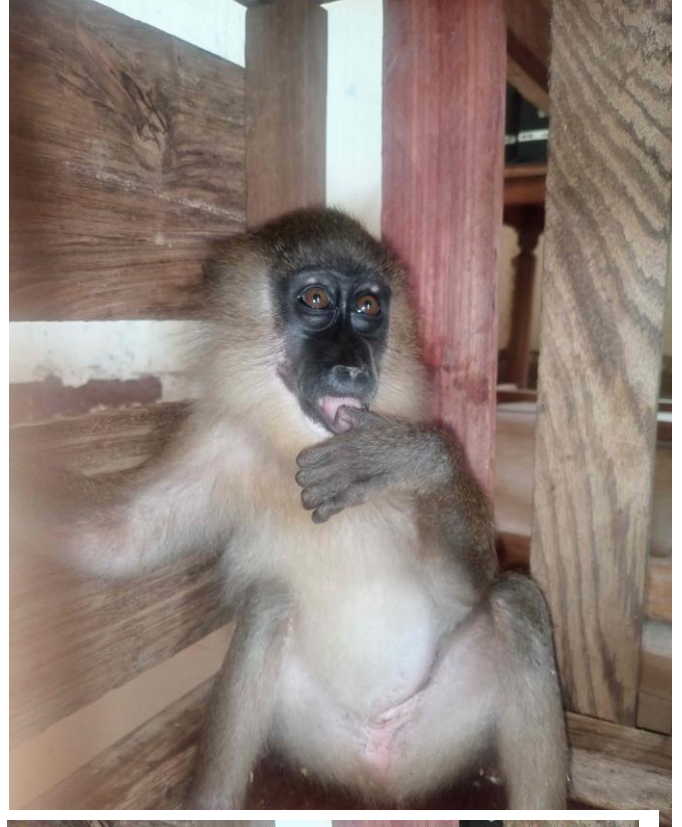


*Traffickers pose with law enforcement shortly after the seizure of 78kg of pangolin scales at a popular bus stop town in Centre Cameroon*





*pangolin scales in July*



*Council worker arrested for illegal possession of drill in November*





*Traffickers dragged to the police station following their arrest in September attempting to sell pangolin scales*





*Chained chimp was rescued from trafficker (left) who held the animal in very deplorable conditions at his residence in August in Ebolowa South*



*Arrested in August for illegal possession of a mandrill and at the wildlife office in Ebolowa waiting for the drafting of the offences*

## Annex II- Some media links

Some online news sites carried stories on the trafficking and arrest, here are some examples:

January, Thampersmedia.net, an online news site published on the alarming rate of the disappearance of Cameroon's biodiversity. Illegal trade remains a major threat to the existence of totally protected species. Get more by clicking on the link below...

[Local Initiatives, NGOs Alarmed at Cameroon's Disappearing Biodiversity - Thampers Media](#)

In February, Stopblablacam, an online news site published a story highlighting the World Pangolin Day and the number of pangolins killed in 2022. The article equally underlined the need for celebrating the day. Get more by clicking on the link below...

<https://www.stopblablacam.com/societe/1702-10090-le-cameroun-sensibilise-le-public-pour-reduire-la-pression-sur-le-pangolin-menace-d-extinction>

In March the news site published the story of the arrest of three traffickers and the seizure of 78kg of pangolin scales at a popular place in the country known as Makenene. People stop there during their journey to rest and eat all kind of dishes including dishes with pangolin meat. Get more by clicking on the link below...

<https://www.stopblablacam.com/societe/2905-10600-especes-protegees-trois-personnes-interpellees-avec-78-kg-d-ecailles-de-pangolin-a-makenene>

In September, Cameroon fact finder, a news site, published the arrest of 3 traffickers arrested with a chimp and a mandrill. Click the link below to get the full story:

<https://cameroonfactfinder.com/a-chimp-and-mandrill-rescued-from-traffickers-find-temporal-refuge-at-the-mvog-betsi-botanical-zoological-garden/>

In October, Cameroon fact finder, published the arrest of 2 traffickers with 91kg of pangolin scales in Ntui. Click the link below to get the full story:

<https://cameroonfactfinder.com/pangolin-increased-traffick-in-cameroon-puts-the-prized-anteater-at-risk/>

In November, Douala today, a news site published an article on pangolin and the trafficking of the species in Central African countries. Click the link below to get the full story:

<https://doualatoday.com/afrique-centrale-le-traffic-de-pangolin-genere-pres-de-419-milliards-de-f-cfa-par-an/>

In December, [Alwihdainfo](#), a news site published the arrest of a city council worker with a drill in Yabassi in the littoral region. Click the link below to get the full story:

[https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-un-employe-de-mairie-arrete-en-possession-d-un-drill-a-Yabassi\\_a128415.html?fbclid=IwAR2ZkT2b6uWdAsrjQUxCsArb2o0BnXPvgXirr2OU9LI\\_IrBPLMJ5Yw8xOqE](https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-un-employe-de-mairie-arrete-en-possession-d-un-drill-a-Yabassi_a128415.html?fbclid=IwAR2ZkT2b6uWdAsrjQUxCsArb2o0BnXPvgXirr2OU9LI_IrBPLMJ5Yw8xOqE)

### List of Cases 2023

The list of cases and details of specific cases are made available on demand. Please contact [eric@laga-enforcement.org](mailto:eric@laga-enforcement.org) for further information



## Obituary

LAGA was hit by death in October with the passing away of one of its founding fathers, Julius Anutenet. The LAGA family assisted in December at a solemn ceremony organised by the police in honour of the fallen hero.

