

The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA June 2015 Report



Highlights

- **A total of 7 major traffickers** were arrested in **5 separate operations**.
- **3 major wildlife traffickers** arrested in **Yaounde and Douala** with big hauls of carved ivory.
- **2 ape traffickers** arrested in the **Centre region** trafficking ape skulls from supply zones
- **An activist from India** arrived for collaboration with the **LAGA team** and a **Senegalese investigator** arrived for a **month-long training session**.
- **LAGA's head of the investigation department** returned to **Cameroon** after a **training and arrest operation support in Senegal**.

General

This month was marked by two key operations that led to the arrest of 3 major ivory traffickers and three other operations leading to the arrest of ape skull traffickers and sea turtle shell traffickers.

A total of 7 traffickers were arrested this month during **5 separate operations** and the first was against **2 arrested with 8 sea turtle shells** and a chimp skull and 2 days later **an ape trafficker** was arrested in **Bafia** trafficking **a mandrill skull and 4 other skulls from chimp**. This was followed by the **arrest of another chimp skulls trafficker in Yaounde**.

Two major operations followed and within one week, **3 major traffickers in ivory** were arrested. The first occurred in **Douala** where **an ivory trafficker** who uses the cover of an arts dealer was **arrested** and then **2 other traffickers** using the same cover were arrested in **Yaounde**. The two formed an ivory trafficking partnership that has lasted 20 years before their arrest. Their international links are being investigated.

An Indian activist and conservationist completed a two-week-long collaboration visit and LAGA's head of the investigation department returned to the country after a **training and arrest operation support** in Senegal under EAGLE exchange programme. A Senegalese investigator travelled to Cameroon for training under the same programme.

Investigations

- **26 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **5 Regions** of Cameroon-Littoral, Centre, South, West and South West Regions.
- Good investigations led to the arrest of **2 traffickers with 8 sea turtle shells and a chimp skull in Edea, in the arrest of an ape trafficker in 5 chimpanzee skulls in Bafia and in the arrest of a second ape trafficker with 6 fresh skulls in Yaounde.**
- Excellent investigations carried out in **Douala** resulted in the arrest of **a trafficker** trying to sell **44 sculpted ivory pieces and 2 more ivory traffickers with 2 worked ivory and 27 carved pieces arrested in Yaounde.**
- A new investigator from Senegal joined the department for a month-long training period.
- A volunteer was tested and is expected to be put on trial very soon.
- The head of the department returned from Senegal after a **training and arrest operation support** in the country.

5 operations carried out this month with MINFOF **arresting 7 traffickers**

- **04/06/15 – 2 traffickers arrested with 8 turtle shells and a chimp skull in Edea, Littoral.** One of the traffickers doubles as a commercial bus driver using this position to ferry protected species. They cross the River Sanaga and over to the Douala-Edea reserve to buy the products which have been poached from the reserve which is not very far from the area where they were arrested. They are suspected of supplying larger quantities of wildlife parts including elephant parts.
- **06/06/2015 – One trafficker arrested trafficking 4 chimp skulls and one of a protected mandrill in a successful operation** carried out in **Bafia, Centre Region** with wildlife officials from the Mbam and Inoubou Divisional Delegation. Two of the chimp skulls were very fresh. The fresh skulls were from recently killed chimpanzees and he bought these just a couple of days before in Ngambe Tikar, Centre to sell the skulls for a handsome profit in Bafia. The trafficker is said to be a community leader known for sensitizing local people on the necessity to protect the environment and apparently used this to cover wildlife trafficking.
- **15/06/2015 - . One trafficker arrested in Yaounde with 6 fresh chimpanzee skulls.** He travelled from Nanga Eboko, some 166 km from the capital city with the skulls firmly sealed in a cardboard box to protect the stinking skulls to draw attention to the nature of the contraband he was transporting. He planned to sell the skulls and move on to Ntui to buy pangolin scales as he is known to deal in many different types of protected wildlife. He analysed the prices of a kg of pangolin scales in rural and urban areas, indicating the profit margins to be obtained. He supplies ammunition (bullets) to local poachers who fetch the wildlife species he requests.
- **18/06/2015 – One major ivory trafficker arrested in Douala, Littoral with 44 carved ivory pieces.** The trafficker was accompanied by a young man and they had hidden the ivory in a plastic bag. He had photos and images of the collection of ivory products he was about to sell in his phone. He uses another trade - art dealing, as a front business for selling ivory products and he admitted painting ivory tusks and other contraband as wood before selling. This is to disguise the ivory for easy smuggling through the borders. He has been in the business for a very long time.
- **24/06/2015 – 2 major ivory traffickers arrested in Yaounde, Centre with 2 worked tusks and 27 other carved ivory pieces.** They had built a formidable ivory trafficking team that had been functioning for over 20 years. They belong to an even bigger ivory trafficking ring made up suppliers and middlemen. The two are middlemen who get ivory from others and equally proceed to sell both nationally and internationally. One of them claimed he got the ivory tusks from someone who travelled from Germany. Their phone contacts show

many international links that are still being investigated. They equally use the front business of dealers in wood arts to cover their ivory trafficking

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **11 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 2 in Kribi (South), 1 in Bafia (Centre), 1 in Djoum (South), 1 in Batouri (East), 1 in Edea (Littoral), 2 in Douala (Littoral), and 3 in Buea (South West).
- There are **41 dealers behind bars during this month**: 11 in East Region, 10 in Centre region, 6 in Littoral Region, 5 in South Region, 7 in South West Region, and 2 in North West.
- **29 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **33 cases** were scheduled and being tried in court this month.
- Ekane Noah, a legal adviser moved to ZSL to become the wildlife law enforcement coordinator.

Media front

- **54 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio, TV and internet including: 27 written press material (15 in English 12 in French), 4 radio talk shows all in English, 17 news flashes 7 in English and 10 in French, 1 TV productions in French and 5 internet publication 1 in English and 4 in French.
- **Guests include:** the Secretary General of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, the Regional Director of Traffic and the Director of Garoua Wildlife School.
- **Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including;** 3 arrested over reported stolen ivory in Yaounde, 4 traffickers arrested trafficking 10 sea turtle shells in Limbe, 2 traffickers arrested trafficking sea turtle shells in Edea, 8 elephant traffickers arrested in Senegal with hundreds of elephant hair bracelets, trafficker arrested in Bafia with chimp skulls, 2 ape traffickers arrested with fresh chimp skulls, ivory trafficker arrest in Douala, and two more ivory traffickers arrested with carved ivory in Yaoundé.
- 27 media pieces in English and 27 in French making a percentage of 50% in English and 50% in French.

External Relations and Policy

- The deputy director attended an international meeting that brought together wildlife experts to assist in revamping the flailing Organisation for Wildlife Conservation in Africa known by its French acronym – OCFSA and a pangolin conservation meeting held on the sidelines of the 15th MOP of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership.
- He equally held a meeting with a TV crew that was shooting in Cameroon for an American channel and discussed aspects related to the theme of their filming which was focused on pangolin trafficking.
- The head of the legal department of LAGA took part in Douala, in a sub-regional training and experience exchange workshop on the control of wildlife trafficking. The workshop had as principal objective the re-enforcement of collaboration between different agencies and institutions in charge of fighting wildlife crimes within COMIFAC notably at the national international levels. During the workshop, he made a presentation on the theme

“Government collaboration - NGOs in wildlife law enforcement”, exposing corruption and the need for effective law enforcement in the sector.

- Meetings were held by the head of the legal department and some legal advisers in the department with state prosecutors in Edea and Douala – Littoral and Buea – South West

Management

- Preparations and arrangements for the visit and stay of Indian activist and a Senegalese investigator who is in the country under the EAGLE exchange programme were carried out.
- Working in collaboration with the investigation department, carried out a test for a new volunteer who is expected to undergo field trial. **Assisted the legal department in tests for a new legal adviser with one presently undergoing trial to replace the departed legal adviser.**

Activism Front

Biodiversity

- Indian volunteer who had a remarkable time in Cameroon with our team presents a topic that is known to everyone, biodiversity and focuses on the elements of biodiversity, specifically wildlife species, found in India and the problems connected to their protection. During the presentation, it was discovered by listeners that a section of India, the North East is an Achilles’ heel to conservation in the country because of the socio-cultural divide between this region and the rest of the country. Paradoxically, it is a region rich in wildlife but not only is bushmeat consumed in this area but little law enforcement tasks place there and its frontiers is notoriously open for cross-border trafficking. She equally presents conservation measures being taken by the authorities and her work with the turtles. A comparative analysis of wildlife conservation and wildlife law enforcement was specifically the topic of discussions during the debate session that followed and the main threat to wildlife extinction in India was identified to be population encroachment into protected areas.

Selma

- A moving and passionate movie on Martin Luther King Jr. and the fight for voting rights during the Lyndon Johnson presidency as America grappled with racial segregation. The movie depicts the difficulties the blacks had in obtaining voting rights as enshrined in the constitution and the non violent approach Martin Luther King and his team used to tackle the issue, forcing President Johnson into enacting a bill to give all American citizens voting rights. It vividly tells the story of how very bad it was to be a black or negro during those years in a racially segregated America and what untold violence could be used to stop any attempts for obtaining voting rights. Debates focused on the use of non violent protest, the legacy charismatic leaders like King left and the importance of this legacy for blacks all over the world. The perpetuation of such injustices is very well the responsibility of those who commit it as well as those who fail to act in front of such injustices as the episode in the film where whites join the march in Selma tells this story. Questions also dwelt on inequalities in the world, in our country today and the stubborn resistance of the racial divide and what lessons could we draw from the use of non violent protests.

All the education 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>.

Replication

A Senegalese investigator arrived Cameroon and started a month-long training under The EAGLE exchange programme.

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Finance

In preparation and would be made available soon as possible.

This Month in Pictures



A team of 2 major ivory traffickers with links to other major traffickers at police station after their arrest in Yaounde, they have been together for over 20 years (above), carved ivory pieces and two tusks seized from them (below)



Major ivory trafficker arrested in Douala as he stepped forward to sell 44 carved ivory pieces



Chimp skulls at police station, they were still stinking as the chimps had recently been killed, trafficker arrested in Yaounde



Arrested in the Bafia, Centre by wildlife officials working with the gendarmerie as he attempt to sell chimp and mandrill skulls

Link of this month

- Cameroon National Television – CRTV reports the arrest of a suspected wildlife trafficker for illegal possession and commercialisation of chimpanzee skulls. The trafficker was arrested with 2 fresh chimp skulls which is against the law governing the sector. A case file has been opened against the culprit! The arrest of ivory traffickers in Douala and Yaounde is also makes news over the same channel as the two operations, one in Douala and the other in Yaounde are discussed.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzJkwrRZAf8&feature=youtu.be>