

The Last Great Ape Organization – LA GA

January 2011 Report



Highlights

- Biggest apes operation in Africa carried out by AALF Gabon with 5 traffickers arrested with 13 ape heads and 32 ape hands among other contraband wildlife.
- A Chinese ivory dealer arrested at the airport in Brazzaville by PALF Congo, with large quantities of ivory as he was preparing to board a flight to Beijing.
- 2 operations carried out arresting 3 wildlife dealers in Cameroon - Littoral and South with a primate and 7 sea turtle shells.

General

This month was marked by very good operations by AALF - Gabon and PALF - The Republic of Congo in the replication of LAGA activities in the sub-region, as well as 2 operations in Cameroon.

Five people have been arrested in Gabon after being found in possession of a massive collection of animal parts, in what is believed to be the largest haul of its kind in the region for a decade. Among the parts recovered in a raid by authorities were the heads of a gorilla and 12 chimpanzees, the hands of two gorillas and 30 chimpanzees, 12 leopard skins, part of a lion skin and five elephant tails.

The grisly haul represents the slaughter of a small population of great apes and proves that the illegal trade in primates is still thriving. All five dealers, four Nigerians and a woman from Benin, who are currently behind bars, have confessed to dealing in ape parts for several years. This undercover operation was carried out in a in the Gabonese capital of Libreville by activists from law-enforcement agency AALF (Appui a l'Application de la Loi sur la Faune) and officials from MINEF (Ministere des Eaux et des Forets).

In another operation, a Chinese national was arrested at the Maya-Maya airport in Brazzaville - The Republic of Congo, with large quantities of ivory as he was preparing to board a flight to Beijing. The 35 year old man was attempting to smuggle to China 5 large elephant tusks, 80 ivory chopsticks, Hankos (Chinese name seals), 3 ivory carvings and many small ivory items. The forestry and wildlife (des eaux et forets) airport brigade agents, who recently declared a renewed alert mode for international ivory trafficking, noticed the unusual baggage and proceeded with the arrest of the suspected trafficker. They did so with the help of the national gendarmerie and PALF (Projet d'Appui a l'Application de la Loi sur la Faune Sauvage) - an NGO project specialized in tracking down wildlife criminals.

Behind these recent arrests are small activist groups working on a shoe string budget modeled after and set by LAGA - a wildlife law enforcement NGO pioneering the combination of undercover investigators, fight against corruption and legal follow up - to get traffickers behind bars. These operations also show that more effort should put to install more projects in other countries that still cannot be proud in a single wildlife prosecution after all these years. Big Conservation NGOs must wake up and realize that the elephants need them to stop their workshops and seminars, and get down to the business of getting traffickers prosecuted – they should leave their ties behind and go to sweat with the police in the field. But most groups don't want to “get their hands dirty” in enforcement and do their best to ignore the obvious importance of the fight against corruption - that is still the white elephant in the room”.

In Cameroon, 2 well known dealers were arrested in Ebolowa - South while trying to trade in a live mandrill. They claim to be related to a highly placed official of MINFOF and their unprocedural release after the taking of the statement of offence lays credence to this claim. The MINFOF

Delegate for the Southern Region refused to write a remand warrant for them to be locked up and presented to the State Prosecutor the following day. Also, the dealers and the MINFOF officials were observed speaking in their dialect after the arrest and during the writing of the statement of offence. This unprocedural and irregular behaviour was reported to the Minister who asked the said Delegate to fully collaborate with the LAGA team so as to present the dealers to the Prosecutor and for normal procedures to follow suit. In another operation, a regular dealer of Nigerian nationality with no official residential documents for Cameroon was arrested while trying to illegally trade in 7 sea turtle shells. He is also a fisherman and has 2 other brothers he claims help him to carry out the business.

Investigations

- **22 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **7 Regions** of Cameroon- West, South West, South, East, Littoral, North West and Center.
- Investigations led to 2 successful operations after targeting dealers in Yoyo – Edea – Littoral and Ebolowa – South leading to the arrest of 3 dealers.
- Training of Investigators on operations procedure was started this month so that they could start to actively assist and help in controlling some operations in the field.
- 1 new candidate tried in the field this month with encouraging results. Field tests will continue with more candidates as the department is experiencing a shortage in effective investigators.

Operations

2 operations were carried out this month against **3 subjects** in Cameroon.

- **21/01/11** – a regular dealer of Nigerian nationality with no official residential documents for Cameroon was arrested while trying to illegally trade in 7 sea turtle shells. He is also a fisherman and has 2 other brothers he claims help him to carry out the business.
- **27/01/11** – 2 well known dealers were arrested in Ebolowa - South while trying to trade in a live mandrill. They claim to be related to a highly placed official of MINFOF and their unprocedural release after the taking of the statement of offence lays credence to this claim. The MINFOF Delegate for the Southern Region refused to write a remand warrant for them to be locked up and presented to the State Prosecutor the following day. Also, the dealers and the MINFOF officials were observed speaking in their dialect after the arrest and during the writing of the statement of offence. This unprocedural and irregular behaviour was reported to the Minister who asked the said Delegate to fully collaborate with the LAGA team so as to present the dealers to the Prosecutor and for normal procedures to follow suit.

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **16 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 1 in Douala (Littoral), 2 in Edea (Littoral), 1 in Buea (South West), 1 in Muyuka (South West), 2 in Abong-Mbang (East), 1 in Kribi (South), 2 in Bafoussam (West), 1 in Dschang (West), 2 in Bafang (West), 1 in Bamenda (North West), and 1 in Ebolowa (South Littoral)
- There are **14 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the East Region, 9 in the South West Region, 1 in South Region, 1 in the littoral Region and 1 in Centre Region.
- **34 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **30 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: No case was sentenced this month.

Media front

- **20 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, TV and written press including: 5 written press materials (3 in English and 2 in French), 11 radio news flashes (7

- in English and 4 in French), 1 talk show in English and 3 TV production (2 in English and 1 in French).
- Guests include: Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, the Director of LAGA, South West Regional Delegate for Forestry and Wildlife, South West Legion Commander of the Gendarmerie and LAGA Legal Head of Department.
 - Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including; 3 dealers arrested 700 parrots in Buea, 4 countries simultaneously clamped down on wildlife traffickers in the sub region, Yoyo arrest of a Nigerian sea turtle suspect and arrest of supposed mandrill trafficker.
 - 13 media pieces in English, 07 in French making a percentage of 65% in English and 35% in French.

External Relations and Policy

- Meeting between LAGA Director and the Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Cameroon (Rural Development Section), issues discussed: wildlife law enforcement and corruption in the forest sector.
- LAGA Director had a meeting in the German Embassy to discuss on promoting democracy in Cameroon.
- LAGA participated in the national agro-pastoral show – a show that brings together every sector of the country into one large space. LAGA occupied a stand to present some aspects of its work especially the need for urgent action against the eminent extinction of endangered species in the country and the sub-region.

Management

- LAGA family resumed work after a 3 weeks Christmas holiday that started on the 17th of December 2010.
- 1 volunteer was tried out in the Investigations Department with encouraging results. He will be sent out for subsequent missions.

Activism Front

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

During this month, LAGA helped other replication projects in:

- To save the AALF case of the 5 traffickers arrested with 13 ape heads and 32 ape hands among other contraband wildlife products in Gabon. This was done by building of strategies with lawyer to put the case back to track; legal follow up and supervision of activities of the Legal Assistant and to appoint a Lawyer; draft of request for reopening of debates sent to lawyer; Press release prepared and sent to the Coordinator; discussion with Head of Legal Unit of the Gabonese Ministry of Forestry on lawyer's appointment; review and correction of case analysis; draft of civil claim (damages) sent to lawyer and regular updates to the Project Coordinator.
- Legal follow up of two cases Itona and Bobele in Ouessou for the PALF Project in Congo - Brazzaville; supervision of Legal Assistant's activities during Coordinator's absence; regular communication with State Counsel to denounce unprocedural attitude of Ouessou Commissioner in releasing Itona; to request for his strong intervention during the audience, to push for him to issue two arrest warrants against the two fugitive accused after the decision was given.
- Financial and Activity reports of January (cross checking, corrections, comments, and validation) for AALF completed.
- Website work done for PALF, RALF and AALF, page updated with text and logos

In the Replication of LAGA activities and Regional Law Enforcement, 5 traffickers were arrested with 13 ape heads and 32 ape hands among other contraband wildlife products in Gabon, and a Chinese national was arrested at the Maya-Maya airport in Brazzaville - The Republic of Congo, with large quantities of ivory as he was preparing to board a flight to Beijing.

Five people have been arrested in Gabon after being found in possession of a massive collection of animal parts, in what is believed to be the largest haul of its kind in the region for a decade. Among the parts recovered in a raid by authorities were the heads of a gorilla and 12 chimpanzees, the hands of two gorillas and 30 chimpanzees, 12 leopard skins, part of a lion skin and five elephant tails. The grisly haul represents the slaughter of a small population of great apes and proves that the illegal trade in primates is still thriving. All five dealers, four Nigerians and a woman from Benin, who are currently behind bars, have confessed to dealing in ape parts for several years. This undercover operation was carried out in a in the Gabonese capital of Libreville by activists from law-enforcement agency AALF (Appui a l'Application de la Loi sur la Faune) and officials from MINEF (Ministere des Eaux et des Forets).

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Finance

LAGA Expenditure by budget line for January 2011

Amount CFA	Budget line		Amount USD
1,595,400	Investigations	17 inv, 8 Regions	\$3,159
791,500	Operations	3 Operation against 3 subjects	\$1,567
2,940,910	Legal	follow up 34 cases 14 locked subjects	\$5,824
1,620,185	Media	20 media pieces	\$3,208
690,500	Policy & External Relations	Congo/Gabon/CAR/Belgium/UK/USA	\$1,367
978,200	Management	Coordination	\$1,937
1,602,919	Office		\$3,174
10,219,614	TOTAL EXPENDITURE JANUARY		\$20,237

LAGA Expenditure by donor for January 2011

AmountCFA	Donor	Amount USD
4,747,350	FWS	\$9,400.7
690,500	FWS-Replication	\$1,367.3
1,635,019	BornFree Foundation	\$3,237.7
196,845	Rufford Foundation	\$389.8
2,463,500	Neu Foundation	\$4,878.2
486,400	Parrot Trust	\$963.2
10,219,614	TOTAL	\$20,236.9

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



Heads of a gorilla and 12 chimpanzees, the hands of two gorillas and 30 chimpanzees, 12 leopard skins, part of a lion skin and five elephant tails among products recovered in an operation carried out by AALF and officials of MINEF - Gabon. The grisly haul represents the slaughter of a small population of great apes and proves that the illegal trade in primates is still thriving. All five dealers, four Nigerians and a woman from Benin, who are currently behind bars, have confessed to dealing in ape parts for several years.



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Links of this month

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<http://www.conservation-justice.org/wordpress/?p=398>

- 3 parrot traffickers arrested and 700 parrots seized in Buea – South West Region – Cameroon National Television News Broadcast. A big network of international traffickers in live African Grey parrots was busted in Buea – South West Region. They normally send the parrots to Nigeria through Idenau - South West Region. One of the dealers is of Nigerian nationality and corruption attempts were observed. The operation was carried out by MINFOF and gendarmerie officials.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-o_7HuQo_Q

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