

# The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

## January 2017 Report



### Highlights

- **4 traffickers arrested during 2 record breaking operations.**
- **Biggest ever seizure of pangolin scales in Central Africa, 5.4 tons seized; 2 Chinese arrested.**
- **First ever seizure of zebra skins in the country, 2 traffickers arrested.**
- **A record breaking 8 court judgements passed, damages awarded totalled 137 million F CFA.**
- **LAGA members resume work after the end of year vacation.**

### General

This month was marked by record breaking arrest operations and court rulings; **4 traffickers were arrested; 2 for trafficking an impressive haul of 5.4 tons pangolin scales and 2 for trafficking in 3 zebra skins, a leopard skin and 40 ivory pieces while 8 court judgements passed.**

Two Chinese nationals were arrested with 5.4 tons of pangolin scales ready for illegal export to China. The scales were parked inside 300 boxes which were found solidly sealed inside two containers. They claimed the containers had broken machines which they were about to export. The containers were ready for shipment about one month before its seizure and export formalities were well underway. The seizure and recent other seizures of pangolin scales coming from Cameroon within a very short period, demonstrate the magnitude of the pangolin scale trafficking and the role played by some Chinese nationals in the country.

Two traffickers were arrested with 3 zebra skins, a leopard skin and several pieces of carved ivory. The zebra skins came all the way from Tanzania and the operation is the first ever arrest operation involving zebra species in the country. The traffickers worked as a team of at least three. The third member of the gang who is the supplier, furnishing the wildlife products, is still at large. One of the traffickers sells diverse art objects in front of a popular bank in Yaounde. The second trafficker is said to be a sculptor who carves ivory among other products.

A record breaking 8 court judgements were passed against 13 wildlife traffickers, convicting them to prison sentences of varying degree of severity with the maximum penalty of 3 years given to two ape traffickers. They were ordered to pay civil damages and fines totalling over 137 million CFA F (\$274,000) during the 8 judgements.

## Investigations

- **12 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in 4 **Regions** of Cameroon - Littoral, East, Centre, and South Regions.
- Good investigations in **Douala** led to an operation arresting 2 Chinese with 5.4 tons of pangolin scales.
- Good investigations in **Yaounde** resulted in the arrest of 2 traffickers with 3 skin zebra, 1 skin leopard and 40 ivory objects.

*Investigations Table*

Investigation Missions	Regions	No. of Operations	No of traffickers arrested
29	12	2	4

## Operation

**2 operations** carried out this month with MINFOF **arresting 3 traffickers**.

- **017/01/17 – Two Chinese nationals arrested in Douala, Littoral, with 5.4 tons of pangolin scales** ready for illegal export to China. The scales were parked inside two containers. They were first of all parked inside 300 boxes that were loaded into iron boxes that were welded into frames that partitioned the containers. This arrangement made it difficult to investigate the containers as it took hours for a trained welder to cut open the containers and the boxes to enable wildlife officials to have a glimpse of the content of the boxes. The iron boxes were covered with lead that hampers a clear reading of the content of the boxes when passed through the scanner. These arrangements were strong indication of the professionalism of the Chinese traffickers who earlier claimed the containers were loaded with broken machines they intended to export to China for repairs.
- **27/01/17 – 2 traffickers arrested in Yaaonde, Centre, with 3 zebra skins, a leopard skin and 40 pieces of carved ivory.** Cameroon has no wild populations of zebra and the skins came all the way from Tanzania. The operation is the first ever arrest operation involving zebra species in the country. The traffickers worked as a team of at least three. The third member of the gang who is the supplier, furnishing the wildlife products, is still at large. One of the traffickers sells diverse art objects in front of a popular bank opposite the CNPS head office in Yaounde. The second trafficker is a sculptor who carves ivory among other products. Transporting zebra skins all the way from Tanzania to Cameroon indicates a chain of traffickers with the required skills to move wildlife contraband over long distances.

### *Operations Table*

No of Operations	Regions	No of Traffickers Arrested	Contraband
2	2	4	5.4 tons pangolin scales 3 zebra skins, 1 leopard skin, 40 ivory objects

#### **Legal**

- LAGA Legal Department carried **12 missions** out of Yaounde, Centre Region: 1 in Douala (Littoral), 1 in Nkongsamba (Littoral), 1 in Mbanga (Littoral), 1 in Ebolowa (South), 1 in Akonolinga (Centre), 3 in Mfou (Centre), 1 in Dschang (West), and 1 in Bertoua (East), 1 in Batouri (East) and 1 in Lomié (East).
- There are **30 traffickers behind bars this month**: 6 in East region, 4 in Centre region, 5 in Northwest region, 4 in Southwest region, 1 in North region, 3 in West region, 4 in South region and 3 in Littoral region.
- **41 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **37 cases** were scheduled and being tried in court this month.
- **4 traffickers** were convicted this month.
- **Prosecutions**: We had 8 judgments this month.
  - **05/01/2017**: The Yaounde, Centre-Administratif Court of First Instance – Centre, found the accused **MFOPOU Felix Desire** guilty of illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of trophies of totally protected species. He was sentenced to **2 months imprisonment and to pay 2,000,000 F CFA as civil damages and 122,000 F CFA as fines**. He was arrested in Yaoundé for illegal possession and commercialization of 14 pieces sculptured ivory.
  - **12/01/2017**: The Garoua Court of First Instance – North, found the accused **ABDOU Bratal** and **ADIMIKO Baka ry** guilty of illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of trophies of totally protected species. They were sentenced to **1 month imprisonment term each and to pay 300,000 FCFA as fines and 2,000,000 FCFA as civil damages**. They were arrested in Garoua on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 for illegal possession, and commercialization of 25 pieces of ivory objects.
  - **19/01/ 2017**: The Akonolinga Court of First Instance found the accused **NDONGO Désiré** and **BIWOLE Georges Brice** guilty. **NDONGO Désiré** was sentenced to a suspended prison term of **2 years within 5 years; he was further sanctioned to pay 200,000 F CFA as fines**. **BIWOLE Georges Brice** was sentenced to **1 year imprisonment suspended for 3 years**. **They were ordered to pay the sum of 30,450 F CFA as court costs**. They were arrested in Ayos on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2016, for illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 4 gorilla skulls and 6 chimpanzee Skulls.

- **24/01/2017:** The Bertoua Court of Appeal found the accused **Anthony NWABU NWANNE NWOYE** guilty and sentenced him to **10 months imprisonment and to pay 107,559,000 F CFA as civil damages and 57,900 F CFA as court costs.** He was arrested in Bertoua for illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 5 bags full with pangolins scales weighing 200 kg and 12 elephants' tusks.
- **24/01/2017:** The Bertoua Court of Appeal found the accused **OLINGA BAKBOKE and TCHABO BAKOP Norbert** guilty as charged and sentenced them to **pay 42,175 F CFA each as cost costs or to serve further 6 months in default of payment of the said cost, awarded the civil party damages of 20, 900,000 F CFA .** They were arrested in Bimako for illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of chimpanzee skulls.
- **26/01/2017:** The Nkongsamba Court of First Instance found the accused **TCHOUATOU Elvis Diderot** guilty and sentenced him to **2 months of imprisonment and to pay 650,000 F CFA of civil damages and 69,550 F CFA as court costs or to serve further 6 months in default of payment of the said cost.** He was arrested in Melong on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2016 for illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of one leopard skin, a python skin, a chimpanzee skull, and 2 marine snail shells.
- **26/01/2017:** The Abong-Mbang Court of First Instance found the accused person **BOTTO KANGA and MILLAH Bernard** guilty as charged and sentenced them to **3 years of imprisonment, they were further sanctioned to jointly pay 133.366 F CFA as cost costs immediately or to serve further 6 months of additional imprisonment term. The court awarded the sum of 2,500,000 F CFA as civil damages to the MINFOF.** They were arrested in Lomié on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2015 for illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 2 chimpanzee skulls, 2 gorillas' skulls and other products.
- **26/01/2017:** The Yaounde Centre- Administrative Court of First Instance found the accused **MAKAWO Clarisse & WAKAN Robert** guilty as charged and sentenced them to **jointly pay 200,000 F CFA as fines and to pay 7,300 F CFA as court costs. The court awarded the sum of 1,000,000 F CFA as civil damages to the MINFOF.** They were arrested in Yaounde on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 for illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 2 leopard skins.

#### *Legal Table*

No of Missions (Out of Centre Region)	No of Court Judgements	No of Traffickers Given Prison Sentence	Prison term (in months - cumulative)	No of Traffickers Sanctioned (No prison sentence)	No of Appeals lodged	No of Cases Tried in Courts
12	8	7	88	6	0	41

#### Media

- **23 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio and internet including; 8 written press material (5 in English and 3 in French), 13 radio news flashes (7 in French and 6 in English) and 2 tv productions (1 in French and 1 in English).

- Interviewees: Head of Nsimaen International Airport Anti-Trafficking Unit and his Assistant, Forestry Engineer Tchasso Rachel of the Douala Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement operations including; the arrest of 3 traffickers at the Nsimalen international airport with 679 kg of pangolin scales, the Douala arrest of 2 Chinese nationals with over 5.4 tons of pangolin scales, the Yaounde arrest of 2 traffickers with zebra, leopard skins and ivory objects.
- 12 media pieces in English and 11 in French were published making a percentage of 52.2% in English and 47.8% in French.

#### *Media Table*

No of Media Pieces	TV	Radio	Newspapers	Internet
23	2	13	8	0

#### **External Relations and Policy**

- The Deputy Director held a meeting with the fellows of the Mentor PoP programme to prepare for the upcoming World Pangolin Day.
- Several meetings were held by some legal advisers with State Counsels in Mbanga and , Nkongsamba to discuss cases in their respective jurisdictions while the Head of the Department met the Senior State Counsel in Bonaberi, Douala to discuss the matter against the two Chinese arrested with 5.4 tons of pangolins scales and he equally met the Littoral Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife to discuss the same case.

#### **Management**

- Two new legal advisers started their volunteering period after undergoing an initial test period that included an oral interview.
- The staff resumed duties on January 11, 2017 coming in from an end of year vacation that started on December 21, 2017.

#### **Activism Front: Presentation - Climate Change**

The presentation walks us through the concept of climate change as it delves into the explanation of change the climate and the mechanism of green house effects is adequately explained by an investigator who was the presenter of the day. The presentation looks what are the problems, the causes and the consequences, the natural catastrophes from devastating climatic changes and the role played by some western powers in the present predicament. The refusal even of some who don't even want to acknowledge there is a problem is perplexing. Discussions focused mostly on enabling the presenter and those who are still to present to grasp the intricacies of a successful PowerPoint presentations, the Paris agreement and the denial of some of the changing climate and their effects on the ordinary man.

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>.

#### **Finance**

**In preparation and would be made available soon as possible.**

## This Month in Pictures



*Two Chinese nationals (above) wait for prosecutorial process to begin at the wildlife office in Douala following their arrest with an impressive haul of 5.4 tons of pangolin scales loaded into two containers that were about to be illegally shipped out of the country. Close to 300 boxes of scales seized(right)*



*Zebra skins (above) all the way from Tanzania seized in Yaounde. The two traffickers are at a police station shortly after their arrest (right).*

