

The Last Great Ape Organization - LAGA

April 2009 Report



Highlights

- **International** wildlife trafficker **convicted** in Limbe – South West Region.
- **3 wildlife dealers sentenced** in Mamfe – South West Region.
- A **website** was launched **on corruption within the NGO sector**.

General

This month was marked by the prosecution of 5 wildlife dealers.

The Court of First Instance of Limbe – South West Region convicts 2 wildlife traffickers to pay damages and fine of more than \$8000 (4 Million FCFA) and that they will be retained in prison for 12 months in case of non payment of the damages and fine. They were arrested in Limbe for illegal detention of 2 giant land tortoises. One of those sentenced is a well-known wildlife **trafficker of British Nationality** with past records of conviction pertaining to wildlife trafficking in the U.S. A. He is connected to other wildlife traffickers in Cameroon, notably a parrot exporter whose parrots (720) were seized in 2007 at the Douala International Airport about to be sent out illegally. He was convicted and served jail time in the U.S. for illegal wildlife trafficking.

The Court of First Instance of Mamfe – South West Region convicted 3 wildlife dealers to pay about \$13.000 jointly as damages or 1 year imprisonment in case of none payment, as fine or 9 months of imprisonment in case of non payment and as court fees or 3 months of imprisonment in case of none payment. They were arrested in Mamfe for detaining and selling elephant products (14 tails, four tusks and a tooth).

A website **www.apt-aid.org** was launched on corruption within the NGO sector, using LAGA's experience. LAGA was an experiment field for methods of fighting corruption within law enforcement and application process. Bribing attempts are documented in 85% of our field arrest operations, and 80% of all court cases within the legal system. But LAGA is not an observer of corruption; it was created to fight corruption. The project is considered to have moved Cameroon **from the decade long zero wildlife prosecution baseline to a one per week** rate of a major wildlife dealer arrested and prosecuted, and achieved legitimacy for an NGO to fight corruption within a governmental process. In its structure LAGA also tried to address the issue of the illusion of civil society in Africa - civil society organizations are not distinct from the state or its elite, but rather serve as another tool to divert public funds for personal gain by the same elite.

Investigations

- **17 investigation missions** of varying lengths were carried out in **5 Regions** of Cameroon- West, South West, North West, Littoral and Center.
- Internet Investigations targeted 2 Internet wildlife dealers engaged in fraud in Buea – South West Region and Bamenda – North West Region. Investigations are still ongoing.
- There were few investigation missions this month because of some cash flow problems experienced by LAGA.
- The Investigation Unit is in low capacity and sending candidates to “test missions” results in low return rate of produced operations. More informers and investigators will be tried from next month.

Operations

- No operations succeeded in this month due to test missions resulting in low return rate of produced operations.

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **16 missions** out of Yaounde- Center Region: 4 in Limbe (South West), 4 in Buea (South West), 3 in Bafoussam (West), 2 in Douala (Littoral), 1 in Bamenda (North West), 1 in Ntui (Center) and 1 in Mamfe (South West).
- There are **3 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the West Region, 1 in South West Region.
- **30 cases** were followed up by the legal department this month.
- **26 cases** are scheduled and being tried in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: 5 offenders were sentenced this month.

15/04/09: The Court of First Instance of Mamfe – South West Region convicted Iza Abraham, Mbu Take Pius and Eyong Mbi Peter to pay 6.127.000fcfa jointly as damages or 1 year imprisonment in case of none payment, 200.000Fcfa each as fine or 9 months of imprisonment in case of non payment and 128.982 Fcfa as court fees or 3 months of imprisonment in case of none payment giving a total of about \$13.000. They were arrested in Mamfe for detaining and selling elephant products (14 tails, four tusks and a tooth).

27/04/09: The Court of First Instance of Limbe – South West Region convicted Paul Sullivan and Ntoutou Calvin, to pay more 3.000.000 Fcfa each as fine, 1.000.000 Fcfa both as damages and 157.264 Fcfa as court fees making a total of more than \$8000. They will be also retained in prison for 12 months in case of not payment of damages. They were arrested in Limbe for illegal detention of 2 giant land tortoises.

- **Appeal**: One appeal was registered this month in the South West Region – Limbe in the case of Paul Sullivan and Ntoutou Calvin, for illegal detention of 2 giant land tortoises.

Media front

- **16 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, and written press including: 1 written press material in English, 12 radio news flashes (8 in English, 4 in French), 3 radio talk shows in English.
- Guests include: Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, South West Regional Delegate for Forestry and Wildlife, CARPE Focal Point Manager, CCRUD Manager, The Chairman of G.C.E. Board, and LAGA Director.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including; Yaounde elephant teeth and leopard skin arrest, mandrill and elephant foot arrest in Yaounde, sentence of elephant dealers in Mamfe court and chimp arrest in Douala.
- 12 media pieces in English, 4 in French making a percentage of 75% in English and 25% in French.

External Relations and Policy

- Meeting between the LAGA Director and US Embassy in Cameroon to discuss the problem of corruption in wildlife law enforcement and in the NGO sector.
- Visit of Born Free with 2 celebrities - Lady Victoria and Sean Stone, son of the film Director Olivier Stone accompanied by journalists. They covered issues on wildlife law enforcement.

- Meeting with researcher from Max Plack Institute to discuss the following issues; evaluating the system of protected areas, criticism against the protected area system focuses on small time poachers rather than big dealers in town and the issues of corruption and measurable standard in conservation.
- Meeting with British members of parliament in London on conservation challenges in Central Africa.

Management

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Finance

In preparation, will be made available shortly.

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



2 wildlife traffickers convicted this month for illegal detention of 2 Giant African tortoises. One of them is a well-known wildlife trafficker of British Nationality with an importer in the U.S. He has past records of conviction pertaining to wildlife trafficking in the U.S.A. Has a company called Equatofauna and claims wildlife arrives from Equatorial Guinea, even falsifying flights from there. He is connected to other wildlife traffickers in Cameroon, notably a parrot exporter whose parrots (720) were seized in 2007 at the Douala International Airport about to be illegally exported.



3 offenders convicted in Mamfe – South West Region for illegally dealing in elephant products (14 tails, four tusks and a tooth).

Links of this month

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www.apt-aid.org

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