

# The Last Great Ape Organization – LA GA July 2013 Report



## Highlights

- **A wildlife case sent to the Special Criminal Court in an exceptional move by the Government of Cameroon.**
- **Dealer in lion skin arrested** in Mbandjock – Center.
- **Another trafficker connected to ivory stolen from national stock arrested in Obala-Center.**
- **2 international leopard skin traffickers arrested** in Yaounde – Center with 2 leopard skins from Souanke – Republic of Congo.

## General

This month was marked by the first ever wildlife case sent to the Special Criminal Court and the arrest of 6 dealers in 4 different operations.

**In an unprecedented and exceptional move, a wildlife case for the first time has been forwarded to the Special Criminal Court by the Cameroon Government**, intensifying the fight against wildlife trafficking in the country. **The court proceedings are as a result of 4 major ivory traffickers arrested in Douala** – Littoral in June with huge quantities of raw and worked ivory including chopsticks which were destined for the international black market that has been at the center of accusations of driving the African elephant to extinction.

**Another major dealer and part of the network connected to ivory stolen from national stock arrested in Obala** - Center by the national judicial police as a follow-up of other arrests carried last month. 2 members of his network were arrested **with 18 elephant tusks and 16 worked ivory pieces, some of the tusks had been seized already during past LAGA operations**. More investigations are on-going to track the source of the stolen elephant tusks especially in MINFOF looking into complicity and corruption in that Ministry.

**A major dealer arriving from Nanga Eboko - Center arrested with a lion skin** while attempting to illegally trade in it in Mbandjock - Center. **He initially resisted arrest, fighting and wounding one of the arresting officers** and also threatened to kill the arresting team. **He claims to have gotten the skin together with a Dutch national**; investigations are still on-going to get other members of the network trafficking in lion skins. In another felid skin operation, **2 international dealers belonging to a trans-border trafficking ring plying the illegal wildlife trade between the Republic of Congo and Cameroon were arrested with 2 big fresh leopard skins** and accepted on record that they had sold 2 other skins the day before their arrest. One of them, the female **dealer attempted to bribe one of the arresting police officers with the sum of 500,000 FCFA (about \$1,000)** for her release, an act combated by the LAGA staff present. She owns a provision store in Congo which she uses as a front business to cover her illicit trade.

**2 well-known dealers** carrying out wildlife trade between the East and Center Regions **arrested with 7 big sacs of pangolin scales and live forest tortoise**. **There was crowd violence during the arrest and during the writing of the PV** with LAGA Legal assistants surrounded and intimidated at the Center Regional Delegation. This once again serves as a reminder of the danger accompanying our work and **the importance of following strict measures and procedures in the field to deal with such events in a professional manner**.

## Investigations

- **26 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **6 Regions** of Cameroon- North West, South West, South, West, Littoral and Center.
- GALF – Guinea Conakry investigators ends 1 month training in Yaounde under the regional exchange program. This is a bid for further improvement and more operations in regional enforcement.
- Good investigations led to 3 operations with 5 major wildlife dealers arrested. Products included lion and leopard skins and transboundary trafficking between Cameroon and the Republic of Congo again came to the limelight.
- The distribution of flyers in both English and French was re-launched last month continued.
- Joint investigations carried out between LAGA and AALF on an international ivory trafficker based in Gabon and selling in Cameroon.
- LAGA Investigations Department assisted PALF-Congo Investigations Department on Investigations procedures pertaining to investigators on test.

## Operations

**4 operations** carried out this month led to the **arrest of 6 major dealers**

- **05/07/13 – Another major dealer and part of the network connected to ivory stolen from national stock arrested in Obala - Center** by the national judicial police as a follow-up of other arrests carried last month. 2 members of his network were arrested **with 18 elephant tusks and 16 worked ivory pieces, some of the tusks had been seized already during past LAGA operations**. More investigations are on-going to track the source of the stolen elephant tusks especially in MINFOF looking into complicity and corruption in that Ministry.
- **11/07/13 – 2 well-known dealers** carrying out wildlife trade between the East and Center Regions **arrested with 7 big sacs of pangolin scales and live forest tortoise. There was crowd violence during the arrest and during the writing of the PV** with LAGA Legal assistants surrounded and intimidated at the Center Regional Delegation. This once serves as a reminder of the danger accompanying our work and **the importance of following strict measures and procedures in the field to deal with such events in a professional manner.**
- **20/07/13 – 2 more international dealers belonging to a trans-border trafficking ring plying the illegal wildlife trade between the Republic of Congo and Cameroon were arrested with 2 big fresh leopard skins** and accepted on record that they had sold 2 other skins the day before their arrest. One of them, the female **dealer attempted to bribe one of the arresting police officers with the sum of 500,000 FCFA (about \$1,000)** for her release, an act combated by the LAGA staff present. She owns a provision store in Congo which she uses as a front business to cover her illicit trade.
- **23/07/13 - A major dealer arriving from Nanga Eboko - Center arrested with a lion skin** while attempting to illegally trade in it in Mbandjock - Center. **He initially resisted arrest, fighting and wounding one of the arresting officers** and also threatened to kill the arresting team. **He claims to have gotten the skin together with a Dutch national;** investigations are still on-going to get other members of the network trafficking in lion skins.

## Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **13 missions** out of Yaounde - Centre Region:, 1 in Mamfe (South West), 3 in Djoum (South), 4 in Kribi (South), 1 in Abong-Mbang (East), 1 in Bertoua (East), 1 in Bangangté (West) and 2 Nanga-Eboko (Centre).
- There are **44 dealers behind bars during this month:** 16 in the East Region, 4 in the South West Region, 7 in Centre region, 2 in North West region, and 13 in South Region.

- **41 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **37 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions:** 1 dealer was sentenced this month.
  - 18/06/2013: The Court of First Instance of Djoum sentenced FIFFEN Hosni Mubarak to **20 days of prison** and to pay a sum of **200.000 FFCFA as damages and fine**. He was arrested in Djoum for illegal detention of 5 elephant tails.

### Media front

- **52 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, TV and written press including: 33 written press material (16 in English 17 in French), 4 radio talk shows in English, 2 TV news feature (1 in English and French each) and 13 news flashes (7 in English and 6 in French).
- **Guests include:** Executive director of ERUDEF, executive director of CAMYOSFOP and former MINFOF control brigade.
- **Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including;** Yaounde arrest of international traffickers in leopard skins, Mbandjock arrest of a lion skin trafficker, Djoum judgement of trafficker in human parts and elephant meat, special criminal court opens legal proceedings on wildlife matter and Douala succession arrest of ivory traffickers.
- 28 media pieces in English, 24 in French making a percentage of 53.9% in English and 46.1% in French.

### External Relations and Policy

- LAGA Director met with a team of UCLA researchers on protection strategies for south Cameroon
- Meeting with WWF Cameroon Conservation Director and WCS Cameroon Director concerning Wildlife Law Enforcement and governance issues.
- A meeting in the US Embassy with new head of Political Economic Section on wildlife law enforcement and governance.
- LAGA Director presents about wildlife law enforcement and activism in Peace corps.
- LAGA Director met with head of Judicial Police on intensifying wildlife law enforcement and fighting corruption and complicity.
- LAGA director met with First Secretary of the German Embassy to discuss Wildlife Law Enforcement and governance issues.

### Management

- GALF – Guinea Conakry Investigator ends 1 month training in Yaounde – Cameroon under the regional exchange program

### 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>. The education activity this month was on the following:

- **Topic: Africa’s Democratic Transition: Stagnating or Progressing?** - The presentation looks at the Africa’s democratic transition from the post-colonial era to the post wind of change era. It highlights the principal characteristics of the two eras while demonstrating that the post-colonial era was one of brutal dictators who had no interest in democracy and the second era making some overtures to democracy. It spells out the reasons for the sudden introduction of democratic transition in countries which were totally totalitarian. Among some of the reasons are the 1989 revolutions and the immediate causes to the Arab spring which is gradually leading to democratisation in the Maghreb. The presentation explores the principal tenets of a democracy and carries out a comparative analysis of the post-colonial

era and the post wind of change era while doing an evaluation of the present state of democracy on the continent and on this, it concludes that there is some political liberation but no genuine democracy is taking hold in African countries today with the exception of the some few sub-Saharan countries and the Maghreb where people power is calling the shots.

*By Tah Eric*

## **Replication**

During this month, LAGA worked with other replication projects in planning and coordinating missions with PALF, AALF and GALF on investigations and operations.

GALF – Guinea Conakry Investigator ended a 1 month training in Yaounde – Cameroon under the regional exchange program for further improvement and more operations in regional enforcement.

LAGA Investigations Department assisted PALF-Congo Investigations Department on Investigations and assisted in operations; collaborated with AALF-Gabon Investigators and Jurists on setting up a network of informants and joint investigations in North Gabon and South Cameroon.

## **Finance**

### **LAGA Expenditure by Budget Line for July 2013**

<b>Amount FCFA</b>			<b>Amount USD</b>
<b>2,521,013</b>	<b>Investigations</b>	27 inv, 6 Regions	\$4,992
<b>1,148,200</b>	<b>Operations</b>	4 Operations against 6 subjects	\$2,274
<b>3,236,343</b>	<b>Legal</b>	follow up 41 cases 44 locked subjects	\$6,409
<b>1,510,960</b>	<b>Media</b>	52 Media pieces	\$2,992
<b>1,597,500</b>	<b>Policy &amp; External Relations</b>	Guinea investigators exchange/Togo/Uganda/Kenya/UK/USA/Israel	\$3,163
<b>1,029,600</b>	<b>Management</b>	Coordination	\$2,039
<b>2,032,465</b>	<b>Office</b>		\$4,025
<b>13,076,081</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE JULY</b>		<b>\$25,893</b>

### **LAGA Expenditure by Donor for July 2013**

<b>Amount FCFA</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Amount USD</b>
3,061,030	FWS	\$6,061.4
1,597,500	FWS-Replication	\$3,163.4
	BornFree UK	\$0.0
1,987,303	Rufford	\$3,935.3
	IFAW	\$0.0
1,028,160	J M FNN	\$2,036.0
	ProWildlife	\$0.0
5,402,088	ARCUS Foundation	\$10,697.2
	Conde Nast Award	\$0.0
	NEU Foundation	\$0.0
<b>13,076,081</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25,893.2</b>

## This Month in Pictures



**Major lion skin dealer answering questions in front of a MINFOF official (left) following his arrest with a lion skin (right) in Mbandjock arriving from Nanga Eboko - Center. He initially resisted arrest, fighting and wounding one of the arresting officers and also threatened to kill the arresting team. He claims to have gotten the skin together with a Dutch national; investigations are still on-going to get other members of the network trafficking in lion skins.**



**2 international dealers belonging to a trans-border trafficking ring plying the illegal wildlife trade between the Republic of Congo and Cameroon arrested with 2 big fresh leopard skins. One of them, the female dealer attempted to bribe one of the arresting police officers with the sum of 500,000 FCFA (about \$1,000) for her release, an act combated by the LAGA staff present.**

## **Links of this month**

- Wildlife case referred to the Special Criminal Court – Cameroon National Television Broadcast. The case of a network of ivory traffickers arrested in June in Douala - Littoral with 18 elephant tusks and 16 worked ivory pieces has been transferred to the Special Criminal Court. The legal transfer of the case to the special criminal court is an unprecedented one, and wildlife experts say that the act only shows the intensification of the fight against wildlife trafficking in the country.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJJyjsTeU4I>