

The Last Great Ape Organization – LA GA

April 2015 Report



Highlights

- **Two foreign nationals arrested during back to back operations that saw arrest of four.**
- **Two arrested for trafficking in ape skulls.**
- **Two given 1-year jail term for ape skull trafficking**
- **Two Congolese jurists, a Chadian activist and a Togolese investigator in Cameroon under EAGLE exchange programme**

General

This month was marked by two operations that led to the arrest of 6 traffickers in three different locations; Yaounde, Limbe and Idenau.

6 traffickers were arrested this month during **3 separate operations** and the first was against ape skull traffickers in **Yaounde** that resulted in the arrest of **2 traffickers** for illegal possession and commercialisation of **4 gorilla skulls**. They had travelled all the way from the South to the capital with the skulls hidden inside a knack-sack.

This operation was followed two weeks later by the arrest of **4 traffickers** during back to back operations in **Limbe and Idenau** in South West, Cameroon. **10 sea turtle shells were seized from the traffickers**. A Beninese and a Nigerian were among the four traffickers arrested. The two ganged up, worked as professionals with the Beninese doing the sales upfront while the Nigerian playing the role of an undercover agent to identify and alert his gang member of any police or law enforcement activity around the vicinity of transaction.

Two traffickers were convicted and handed prison sentences of 1 year following their arrest last year for illegal possession and circulation of chimp and gorilla skulls while a third was convicted for the same offence and given a 6-month sentence.

During this month 4 activists from Chad, Togo and Congo were trained in LAGA under the EAGLE exchange programme.

Investigations

- **24 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **7 Regions** of Cameroon-Littoral, East, Centre, South, West, South West, and Adamaoua Regions.
- Good investigations in **Yaounde** led to the arrest of two trafficker for illegal possession of 4 gorilla skulls.
- Excellent investigations in **Limbe and Idenau** resulted in the arrest of 4 traffickers trying to sell sea turtle shells .

Operations

2 operations carried out this month with MINFOF arresting **6 suspects**

- **14/04/15 – 2 traffickers arrested for illegal possession and commercialisation of 4 gorillas** . One of the traffickers travelled from Ebolowa with the skulls hidden inside a Knack sack and ganged up with another in Yaounde who knew the town very well. They had bought the skulls in Mvangan, in the South Region of the country and it was discovered that one of them had been doing illegal trade in species for a while. They buy the products from poachers in the South.
- **29/05/2015 – 4 traffickers arrested for illegal possession and commercialisation of 10 sea turtle shells during two back to back operations** carried out in **Idenau** and **Limbe** in the South West region by wildlife officials from the Fako Divisional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife. Two foreign nationals; a Beninese and a Nigerian were arrested during the first operation carried out in Idenau. The Beninese used a couple a tricks close to the area of transaction to elude arresting officers as he hid the bag containing the sea turtle shells in a bush. They equally proved their professional acumen as they worked as a team, the Beninese doing the sales while the Nigerian covered his back as a undercover agent, looking out for the presence of police or wildlife law enforcement officials. The Beninese has once been a commercial boat seaman riding the waters between Nigerian and Cameroon. The other two were arrested in Limbe some 3 hours later as one of them came forward to sell the sea turtle shells. They are known to work in the port area of the town, mingling among passengers and products which may facilitate their trafficking activities.

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **17 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 1 in Nanga Eboko (Centre), 1 in Kribi (South) 2 in Djoum (South), 3 in Ambam (South), 1 in Bangangte (West), 1 in Dschang (West), 1 in Edea (Littoral), 1 in Douala (Littoral), 3 in Nkongsamba (Littoral) and 3 in Limbe (South West).
- There are **35 dealers behind bars during this month**: 10 in East Region, 4 in Centre region, 3 in Littoral Region, 8 in South Region, 3 in West Region and 7 in South West Region.
- **36 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **25 cases** scheduled and being tried in court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: We had 4 judgments this month.
 - 16/04/2015: The Ambam Court of First Instance – South, convicted **ONDJII NGUEMA PIERRE CLOVIS** and sentenced to **6 months of imprisonment** and to pay **500.000 CFA F as damages**. He was also convicted to pay **150.000 CFA F as**

finer and 35.850 CFA Frs as cost fees. He was arrested between Meyo Centre and Ma'an for illegal detention and circulation of 08 chimp and 01 gorilla skulls.

- 16/04/2015: The Ambam Court of First Instance – South, convicted **ELLA MINKO PIERRE** to pay **1,000,000 CFA F as damages**. He was also convicted to pay **250,000 CFA Frs as fine and 35,850 CFA F as cost fees or serve 12 months imprisonment term in default of payment of the said amount**. He was arrested in Ambam with 05 chimp and 1 gorilla skulls.
 - 16/04/2015: The Edea Court of First Instance – Littoral convicted **BITCHOKA JEAN MARIE** to pay **200,000 CFA F as damages**. He was also convicted to pay **450.000 CFA F as fines and 25.000 CFA F as cost fees or serve 12 months imprisonment term in default of nonpayment of the said amount**. He was arrested Pouma for illegal possession and circulation of 01 chimp and 01 gorilla skulls.
 - 16/04/2015: The Bangangte Court of First Instance – West convicted **DIPAMBA JEAN** and **NDINTEH GEORGE** to pay **45,000 CFA F each with a 3 years suspended sentenced. They were also convicted to pay 825,000 CFA F and 540,000 CFA F respectively as damages**. Both were also convicted to pay **15,375 CFA F as cost or sever 40 days imprisonment term in default of payment of the said amount**. They were arrested in Tonga for illegal possession and commercialization of elephant bones and elephant teeth.
- **Appeal:** An appeal has been filed this month in the case of **NSANGOU OUMAROU, MOUKAM LOUIS and MONDI OUMAROU** in the Centre Court of Appeal.

Media front

- **46 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio, internet and tv production including: 17 written press material (6 in English 13 in French), 4 radio talk shows all in English, 16 news flashes 2 in English and 14 in French, 3 tv production, 1 in English and 2 in French and 4 internet publication (2 each in English and in French).
- **Guests include:** Chief of Forestry and Wildlife Control Post of Manjo and the Deputy Director of LAGA.
- **Subjects focused on the extinction problem and law enforcement activities.** After arrests of ape skulls traffickers in Ambam, Yaounde and Manjo the plight of chimps was examined and it is known to be seriously in danger of extinction in the country with the Cameroon-Nigeria chimpanzee facing serious challenges to survive. The role of effective court punishments within conservation was also discussed following the Edea court sentence of an ivory trafficker arrested last year for trafficking in ivory, the magnitude of the international illicit trade in pangolin scales and its effects on pangolin survival, the growth and replication of the LAGA model and wildlife law enforcement activity in Cameroon; discussed during radio programme “Before the Nation”, the Ambam court sentence of primate skulls traffickers arrested last year trying to sell ape skulls and the part played by illicit trade in ape parts pushing apes to extinction and the trade in sea turtle shells driving the species to extinction after the arrest of four suspected wildlife traffickers in Idenau and Limbe for attempting to sell 10 sea turtle shells
- 15 media pieces in English, 31 in French making a percentage of 32.5% in English and 67.5% in French.

External Relations and Policy

- The deputy director held a meeting with the a wildlife photographer and writer on understanding the wildlife crisis and law enforcement in Cameroon. H equally held a meeting with the new legal unit head in the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and visited the Head of the Communication unit in the same ministry to discuss issues related to the collaboration between LAGA and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife.
- Several meetings were held with state prosecutors in Nkongsamba, Djouma and Limbe on operations newly carried out.
- The head of the investigation department held a meeting with the chief of sector freight at the airport on possibility of collaboration and use of information in real time. Prior to the operations in Limbe and Idenau, a meeting was held with the delegate of Fako divisional delegation of forestry and wildlife.

Management

- Preparations and arrangements for the visit of Chadian activist and Congolese jurists under the EAGLE exchange programme were carried out as well as coordination of activities pertaining to the training programme was carried out.
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Activism Front

Strategy against the illicit trafficking of wildlife products in border areas

The presentation is at the depth of our work, that is wildlife law enforcement and Congolese jurist Kevin Tsengou examines the border areas between the Republic of Congo and Cameroon, describes the geography of the area and the illicit trafficking going on. In the presentation, ivory is stated as the commodity of choice for traffickers who move to and fro the both countries with little or no disturbance. This calls for a collaborative strategy between the two projects to be able to effectively track and prosecute these cross-border traffickers. Important challenges for effective wildlife law enforcement in the area were examined and possible solutions enumerated because the area needs urgent attention, it is necessary that these challenges must be faced and overcome.

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

The EAGLE exchange programme enabled the training of 2 jurists from the PALF – Congo, a Togolese investigator and a Chadian activist who is expected to run the replication project in Chad. Before arriving to LAGA, he was in Congo under the same exchange programme.

During this month, LAGA worked on the collection of editing of the EAGLE report, its publication on the website and distribution to stakeholders, policy makers and the general public.

Finance

In preparation and would be made available soon as possible.

This Month in Pictures



Two back to back operations carried out in two coastal towns located within 25 minutes drive from each other enabled the arrest of four wildlife traffickers. Two foreign nationals- a Beninese and a Nigerian (above) were arrested in Idenau among four traffickers arrested (top right) on the day. The other two traffickers (right) were arrested in Limbe.



Four gorilla skulls hidden in a knacksack were unveiled as ape traffickers arrested



Arrested in the capital city Yaounde by wildlife officials working with police officers as they attempt to sell gorilla skulls

Link of this month

- CRTV broadcast the arrest of the two brothers in the Littoral region for illegal possession of ape skulls. In a region that was in the past home to many primate species, the arrest of the chimps traffickers is a sad reminder of why the chimps disappeared in the forests . Three broadcasts on national television highlighted the plight of the chimpanzee and the necessity to effectively apply the law. It attempts to help the public understands why arrest operation are carried out and the necessity to respect wildlife and the wildlife law.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt6_yfiUJmE