

The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

April 2020 Report



Highlights

- **Despite the challenges and risk posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the fear it brings, the LAGA team intelligently multiplied its efforts resulting in a total of 8 wildlife traffickers arrested during 4 operations.**
- **2 young mandrills rescued during 2 arrest operations, in Yaounde and Lolodorf in the South Region**
- **4 traffickers arrested with a leopard skin in the border town of Kye- Ossi, in the South Region**
- **A pangolin scales trafficker was arrested with 50 kg of scales in Dimako, in the East Region**
- **The team diligently and creatively carried out investigations and assisted 4 wildlife law enforcement operations with emphasis on respecting state-level and organization-level protective measures against Covid-19**

General

Covid-19 pandemic piles obstacles but the LAGA team keep pushing forward. The month was remarkably marked by the **doubling of results with 8 traffickers arrested with 2 live mandrills, 50kg of pangolin scales and a leopard skin.**

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, pangolin scales traffickers still calmly carry out their illegal trade and a woman arrested in East Region with 50kg of pangolin scales. She is longtime trafficker employing several poachers and supplying major trafficking markets in Yaounde. She violently resisted arrest. Two young mandrills were rescued during the arrest of a primate trafficker in Yaounde and two in Lolodorf in the South Region where 4 traffickers were equally arrested with a leopard skin, precisely at the border town of Kye-Ossi. The arrested ran an illegal wildlife trade along the border area.

Protective measures put in place against the Covid-19 were observed and the LAGA team enabled wildlife officials to arrest 8 traffickers in 3 different towns. Supplementary protective measures were taken for the entire teams including wildlife officials and law enforcement members during operations and very special measures relating to the handling of primates were taken for the rescued mandrills. Emphasis was put on creative thinking and intelligent actions. The team was sent home but still came and pushed forward with resolve and a spirit of activism. The team's achievements during these trying times, are rare and exceptional.

Investigations

- **9 investigation missions** were carried out in **4 Regions** out of the 10 Regions including the Centre, East, South and West Regions.
- Good investigations in Kye-Ossi led to a successful operation with the arrest of 4 traffickers with a leopard skin.
- Good investigations in Dimako led to the arrest of a trafficker with 50kg of pangolin scales.
- Credible information from an informant in Yaounde led to the arrest of a trafficker and a young live mandrill rescued in Yaounde.
- Good investigation in Bipindi led to the arrest of 2 traffickers and a young live mandrill rescued in Lolodorf.

Investigations Table

| <i>Investigation Missions</i> | <i>Regions</i> | <i>No. of Operations</i> | <i>No of traffickers arrested</i> |
|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 9 | 4 | 4 | 8 |

Operation

4 operations carried out this month with MINFOF **arresting 8 traffickers**.

3/4/2020 – 4 traffickers arrested in Kye-Ossi, South Region with a leopard skin. The traffickers belong to a trafficking ring close to the Gabon border, operating along three countries, Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, ensuring smooth illegal trade in parts of protected wildlife species including leopard skins and ivory. While two are dealers, two others are professional drivers ensuring the transboundary trafficking is expertly carried in the area.

9/4/2020 – a trafficker arrested in Dimako, East Rgion with a 50kg of pangolin scales, amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The woman had been arrested several times by the gendarmerie and released without any charges brought against her. She kept a gang of several poachers in several localities including Mbang and Atchoc in the East Region, who supplied her with wildlife products. She would travel to the notorious Nkolndongo market in Yaounde where she supplied other traffickers. She violently resisted arrest during the operation hoping his friends at the gendarmerie who constantly release her following each arrest would come to her rescue. It is considered that the

origin of the pandemic is related to the illegal trade in pangolins and consumption of its meat in China.

17/4/2020 – a trafficker arrested in Yaounde, Centre Region with a young mandrill. He had been keeping the mandrill he had bought in Akom II in the South Region for some time while exploring opportunities to sell the animal.

25/4/2020 – 2 traffickers arrested in Lolodorf, South Region with a young and wounded mandrill. The pair had travelled overnight to avoid detection and arrived the town of Lolodorf where they set out to sell the animal before their arrest. They collaborated in wildlife trafficking; one of them specializing in the buying and the other checking out clients. They bought the mandrill in a small village called Bipindi.

Operations Table

| <i>No of Operations</i> | <i>Regions</i> | <i>No of Traffickers Arrested</i> | <i>Contraband</i> |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 4 | 3 | 8 | 1 leopard skin, 2 live mandrills, 50kg pangolin scales |

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **5 missions** out of Yaounde - Centre Region: 1 in Lolodorf (South), 1 in Kribi (South), 1 in Kye-Ossi (South), 1 in Dimako (East) and 1 in Mfou.
- There are **7 traffickers behind bars this month**: 3 in the East Region and 3 in Littoral Region.
- **25 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **21 cases** were scheduled in court this month.
- **1 trafficker** was convicted this month.
- **Prosecutions**: There was a court ruling this month.
- **30/04/2020**: The Douala - Bonanjo Court of First Instance found the accused **SUA Jocelin not guilty and LADINGA Joseph NCHUNU guilty, and sentenced him to pay 100,000 FCFA as fines and 1,000,000 FCFA as damages.**

They were arrested in Douala on the 24/05/2019 for the illegal possession and circulation of 237 kg of pangolin scales.

Legal Table

| <i>No of Missions (Out of Centre Region)</i> | <i>No of Court Judgements</i> | <i>No of Traffickers Given Prison Sentence</i> | <i>Prison term (in months)</i> | <i>No of Traffickers Sanctioned (No prison sentence)</i> | <i>No of Appeals lodged</i> | <i>No of Cases Tried in Courts</i> |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 21 |

Media

- **52 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio, and internet including; 27 written press materials (16 in French and 11 in English), 17 radio news flashes (10 in French and 7 in English) and 8 internet publications, 5 in French and 3 in English.
- Interviewee: The Deputy Director of the Last Great Ape Organisation - LAGA.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: the court hearing of a man arrested with 5 leopard skins in Bandjoun, the Kye-Ossi arrest of 4 with a leopard skin, the Dimako arrest of a trafficker with 2 bags of pangolin scales, Covid-19 and wildlife trade, the Yaounde arrest of a trafficker with a live mandrill, and the Lolodorf arrest of 2 with a live mandrill.
- 10 media pieces were produced on Covid-19 pandemic and its relationship with illegal trade in pangolins.
- 15 media pieces were produced on the pangolin.
- 8 media pieces were produced on other topics but connected to Covid-19
- 26 media pieces were published in French and in English respectively making a percentage of 50% each in French and in English.

Media table

| <i>No of media pieces</i> | <i>TV</i> | <i>Radio</i> | <i>Newspapers</i> | <i>Internet</i> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 52 | 1 | 17 | 27 | 8 |

External Relations and Policy

- The head of the legal department and a legal adviser held a meeting with the state prosecutors in Ambam and in Kribi each, to discuss strategies on the various cases initiated during the month while he and other two legal advisers held a meeting with the state counsel in Mfou on cases pending at the court. A legal adviser held a meeting with the Abong Mbang state prosecutor to discuss matters with the same purpose

Management

- The entire team was sent home following the increase in cases of Covid-19 but came back to push for operations with remarkable success, courage and activism. Management placed emphasis on the conscientious application of prescribed measures. The measures included governments instructions to preventing Covid-19 in the country and supplementary directives developed by the organization to fully reinforce and protect the health of every LAGA member. Coordination of field activity and ensuring financial activities were efficiently carried out despite the difficulties presented by the situation.

Activism Front

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>.

Presentation: No presentations were done this month.

Finance

In preparation and would be made available soon as possible on the LAGA website www.laga-enforcement.org .

Link of the month

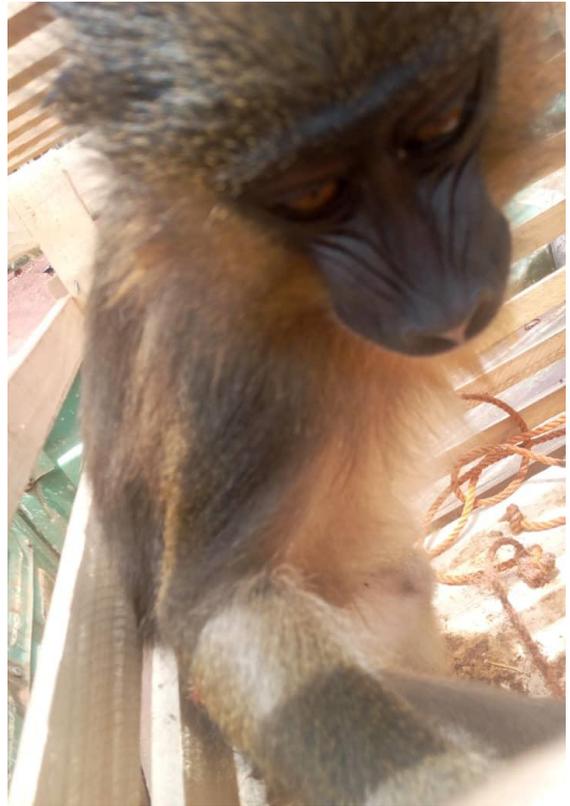
Camer.be, an online news site focused this month on Covid-19 pandemic and its relationship with the illegal trade in pangolins. The article equally calls attention to the ban of wildlife trade as part of the solution to contain Covid-19 as well as prevent future health crisis.

<https://www.camer.be/mobile/79884/11:1/cameroun-covid-19-and-wildlife-trade-cameroon.html>

This Month in Pictures



Wounded young mandrill rescued from traffickers in Lolordorf, South Region



Rescued from trafficker in a bustling neighborhood in Yaounde



Leopard skin seized from 4 traffickers plying their illegal trade at the Cameroon Gabon frontier (left), Despite Covid-19 pandemic pangolin scales are still trafficked, seized from trafficker in the East (above)