

# The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

## March 2017 Report



### Highlights

- **2 traffickers including a Ghanaian national arrested during an operation targeting an international network of parrot traffickers.**
- **The Director arrived the country for a week-long working visit**
- **A legal adviser from Madagascar ended a three-week long evaluation period.**

### General

This month was marked by an arrest of **2 traffickers in African grey parrots.**

Two parrot traffickers, one of them Ghanaian, arrested with 218 African Grey Parrots, which they intended to export illegally from Cameroon. This large network of parrot traffickers operates in several West and Central Africa and connects it with Asia and Europe. The illegal trade in African Grey Parrots has always been a well organized international crime with high complicity. The UN CITES convention recently listed this bird in the Appendix I, giving it the highest level of protection from intense illegal trade endangering its population. The parrots are recovering now so they could be released back to the wild.

## Investigations

- **20 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **5 Regions** of Cameroon - Littoral, East, Adamaoua, and South Regions.
- Good information led to the arrest of 2 international traffickers in African grey parrots in Yaounde.
- The Head of Investigations Department held collaborative meetings with customs officials in Douala, Limbe, Tiko and the Anti-trafficking Unit of the Douala International Airport.

*Investigations Table*

Investigation Missions	Regions	No. of Operations	No of traffickers arrested
20	5	1	2

## Operation

**One operation** carried out this month with MINFOF **arresting 2 traffickers**.

- **24/03/17 – Two arrested in Yaounde, Centre Region for unlawful possession and export of African grey parrots.** A Ghanaian parrot trafficker and his accomplice were arrested with 218 African grey parrots they were about to illegally export from Cameroon. Shortly before their arrest, they had illegally assisted in the shipment of a haul of the parrots through an Air Ivoire flight to Ghana via Ivory Coast where they were intercepted in Accra. The network that is big, experienced and complex involves parrot traffickers dealing in an international illegal trade in countries of the West and Central African sub regions and connecting to Asia and Europe. The organisation and sophistication is professional with several layers of trafficking within the chain.

*Operations Table*

No of Operations	Regions	No of Traffickers Arrested	Contraband
1	2	2	218 African grey parrots

## Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried **14 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 4 in Douala (Littoral), 4 in Mfou (Centre), 1 in Nsimalen (Centre), 1 in Dschang (West), 2 in Bertoua (East) and 2 in Batouri (East).
- There are **26 dealers behind bars this month**: 6 in East region, 4 in Centre region, 3 in Northwest region, 4 in Southwest region, 3 in West region, 3 in South region and 3 in the Littoral region.
- **31 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **28 cases** were scheduled and being tried in court this month.
- **4 dealers** were convicted this month.
- **Prosecutions**: We had 2 judgments this month.
- **20/03/2017**: The Yaoundé Centre -Administratif Court of First Instance – Centre, found the accused **NJIKAM Jean Esai and NSANGOU NDASSA Ibrahim** guilty of illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of trophies of totally protected species. They were sentenced to **12 months imprisonment, suspended for 5 years; 276,579 FCFA as court cost and 4,770,000 FCFA as civil damages**. They were arrested in Yaounde for the illegal possession and commercialization of 3 zebra skins, a leopard skin and sculpted ivory pieces.
- **27/03/2017**: The Bonaberi Court of First Instance – Littoral, found the accused persons **YAOBAO Long and CHEN Peng** guilty of illegal possession and circulation of trophies of totally protected species. They were sentenced to **3 months imprisonment each; 2,000,000 FCFA as fines; 11,355,550 FCFA as court cost and 226,405,000 FCFA as civil damages**. They were arrested in Douala on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 for the illegal possessio and circulation of 5.4 tons of pangolins scales. The appeal opposing the low sentence was issued.

*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
14	3	2	6	2	1	31

## Media

- **23 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio and internet including; 10 written press material (5 in English and 5 in French), 10 radio news flashes (6 in French and 4 in English), and 3 internet production (all in French).
- Interviewee: Forestry engineer at the Littoral Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife,.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: The arrest of two Chinese nationals in Douala with over 5 ton of pangolin scales, the Yaounde arrest of two with 3 zebra skins, 1 leopard skin and several ivory objects, the arrest of Africa's biggest primate trafficker in Guinea and the incineration of over 3 ton pangolin scales by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife.
- 14 media pieces in French and 9 in English making a percentage of 61% in French and 39% in English.

*Media Table*

No of Media Pieces	TV	Radio	Newspapers	Internet
23	0	9	10	3

## External Relations and Policy

- The Director arrived the country for a week-long working visit and accompanied by the Deputy Director they held meetings with the US Ambassador, the Canadian High Commissioner and the Cousellor at the German Embassy. Discussions focused on the evolution and challenges of wildlife law enforcement in Cameroon and Africa and what solutions are available for use.
- Two meetings were held by the Head of the Legal Department; firstly with the state counsel in Douala - Bonaberi and secondly, with the advocate general at the Littoral Appeal Court to discuss some court cases while some legal advisers held meetings with State Counsels in Mfou and Batouri discuss cases in their respective jurisdictions. A legal adviser held another meeting with advocate general of the East Appeal Court on a mat pending in a court in the region.

## Management

- Two new legal advisers continued their volunteering period for a test that is going to determine their ability to become effective activists.
- A volunteer from Madagascar completed a three-week long volunteering and test period and safely returned to his country.

### **Activism Front: Movie: The Queen of Katwe**

Many succumb to poverty and deprivation but not Fiona, a genius in chess who comes from the earth's poorest of the poorest but who refused to carve in to this fate. She fights her way through a slim chance of hope, her ability to play chess like a grand master and undo the odds by bringing in success and dragging her family from the filth and insecurity of one of Africa's slumps to a shining new house at a suburb she could only dream off. This could not have been possible without the dedication of a bright and young coach who gives all he could to save desperate children and coaches Fiona to believe in her abilities while guiding her to meander through huge challenges. The movie is a shining example of poverty in Africa, bravery and determination to succeed if given the minimum of opportunities. The movie is culled from a life experience. The Queen of Katwe draws the members of the LAGA family to heightened levels of emotion as they go through the 2-hour long movie without visibly feeling time passing. Discussion focused on determination and the will to succeed, courage and never let go attitude that we all need to pass through. It equally points out the activism of our young coach who stands by his poor chess players who beat the odds against life and vanity.

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>.

### **Link of the month**

The online site, [alwihdainfo](http://www.alwihdainfo.com) that reports in French, comes back on the arrest of two Chinese nationals with over 5 ton pangolin scales. The two traffickers were arrested in Douala as they prepared to ship 5.4 tons of pangolin scales out of the country.

[http://www.alwihdainfo.com/Criminalite-faunique-deux-Chinois-arretes-a-Douala\\_a49807.html](http://www.alwihdainfo.com/Criminalite-faunique-deux-Chinois-arretes-a-Douala_a49807.html)

### **Finance**

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

## **This Month in Pictures**



*Two parrot traffickers arrested in Yaounde for illegal possession and export of African grey parrots. The illicit trade in African grey parrots has extensively exterminated populations of the parrots and the UN CITES convention last year gave it the highest protection ever in a bid to halt the damaging trend*



*Cages ready for packaging of parrots to be transported by flight found at the premises of the parrot traffickers.*



*218 parrots packed inside a cage at the outskirts of Yaounde ready for illegal shipment*