

# The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA March 2019 Report



## Highlights

- **4 major international traffickers arrested with 73 ivory tusks of ivory and over of 1.7kg of pangolins scales**
- **The criminal syndicate had been shipping wildlife contraband to Nigeria before their arrest.**
- **A super volunteer completed a 5-week training programme and returned to Nairobi where his training continues.**
- **LAGA signed a protocol agreement with Customs to fight transboundary wildlife crime. A breakthrough in establishing formal relations with Customs for the EAGLE Network.**

## General

This month was marked by the arrest of **4 traffickers with ivory and pangolin scales.**

4 traffickers arrested with 73 ivory tusks and 1.7 tons of pangolin scales. The crime syndicate had been shipping contraband through Nigeria. As a cover business, one of them owned a telephone shop and used this as front business, a cover-up for the illegal trade in pangolin scales and ivory. The traffickers activated a big network of smaller traffickers and poachers in three regions of the country. They had a warehouse in Douala where the contraband was stored for export.

The Deputy Director and the Director General of Customs signed a protocol agreement laying the framework of collaboration to fight transboundary wildlife crimes.

A legal adviser continued her stay in the UK where she is participating at a Durrell Endangered Species Management 2019 programme offered by the Durrell Conservation Academy.

## Investigations

- **7 investigation missions** of varying lengths were carried out in **4 Regions** of Cameroon viz: Littoral, West, South and East Regions.
- Good investigation in Douala led to the arrest of 4 traffickers with 73 tusks weighing 150.99kg and 1.7 tons of pangolin scales in Douala.

*Investigations Table*

| <b>Investigation Missions</b> | <b>Regions</b> | <b>No. of Operations</b> | <b>No of traffickers arrested</b> |
|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 7                             | 4              | 1                        | 4                                 |

## **Operation**

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

**14/3/2019 – 4 traffickers arrested in Douala, East Region with 73 ivory tusks and 1.7 tons of pangolin scales.** The four are big time professional traffickers who have been exporting contraband to Nigeria. They activated a complicated chain of smaller traffickers and poachers in three regions of the country including Centre, East and South. Several towns and villages ( Batouri, Messanmena, Ngoyla, Abong Mbang Yoko Ayos) known for being hotbeds for wildlife trafficking are among centres where they collected the contraband that was assembled and stored in Douala before export. They equally used front businesses to cover up their illegal trafficking and adopted sophisticated concealment techniques to move the products around. One of the trafficker owns a telephone shop in the Douala central market which was used as a front business and had made trips to China. A second trafficker dealt in pepper and a local spices called “djansang”. He concealed ivory and pangolin scales were inside the pepper and djansang bags when transporting the contraband from the three regions where they activated several small traffickers and poachers.

*Operations Table*

| <b>No of Operations</b> | <b>Regions</b> | <b>No of Traffickers Arrested</b> | <b>Contraband</b>   |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1                       | 1              | 4                                 | 73 ivory tusks weighing 150kg<br>1.7 tons pangolin scales |

## Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **7 missions** out of Yaounde-Centre Region: 2 in Douala (Littoral) and 3 in Abong-Mbang (East), 1 in Djoum (South) and 1 in Sangmelima (South).
- There are **16 traffickers behind bars this month**: 6 in East region, 2 in South region and 8 in Littoral region.
- **33 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **30 cases** were scheduled in court this month.
- **7 traffickers** were convicted this month.
- **Prosecutions:** There were three court rulings this month including:
  - **19/03/2019:** The Abong-Mbang Court of First Instance found the accused **NJOYA NSANGOU Mouhamed** guilty as charged and **sentenced him 6 months suspended sentence during 3 years and to pay 50.000 FCFA as fines and 1.500.000 as damages.** He was arrested in Doume for the illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 24 Kgs of pangolin scales.
  - **20/03/2019:** The Douala – Ndokoti Court of First Instance found the accused **NDOKO Chacard, KOUNGOUE Simon Pierre, OUIWE Sariga and NYAMSI Dipelec** guilty as charged and sentenced them to **45 days imprisonment each and to pay 500.000 FCFA each as fines and 10.000.000 FCFA jointly as damages.** They were arrested in Douala on the 24/01/2019 for the illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 54 kgs of pangolin scales.
  - **21/03/2019:** The Yaounde – Centre Administratif Court of First Instance found the accused **MESSI MEDOU Jean Pierre and MBAH Timothé** guilty as charged and sentenced them to **1 month imprisonment each.** The court also sentenced them to pay **100.000 FCFA each as fines and 2.000.000 FCFA jointly as damages.** They were arrested in Yaounde on the 20/02/2019 for illegal possession of 42 Kg of pangolin scales.
- **Appeal:** An appeal has been filed this month in the case against **NJOYA NSANGOU Mouhamed** at the East Court of Appeal.

## Media

- **45 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio, TV and internet including; 18 written press materials (10 in French and 8 in English), 13 radio news flashes (7

in English and 6 in French), 6 TV productions(3 each in French and in English) and 8 internet publications, 6 in French and 2 in English.

- Interviewee: Littoral regional delegate of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and the Deputy Director of the Last Great Ape Organisation - LAGA.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: the seizure of close to 2 tons of pangolin scales and 73 ivory and arrest of 4 suspected traffickers, the signing of an MoU between LAGA and the Customs, and 2 other persons arrested in Yaounde with over 40kg of pangolin scales.
- 25 media pieces in French and 20 in English making a percentage of 55.6% in French and 44.4% in English.

### *Media Table*

| <i>No of Media Pieces</i> | <i>TV</i> | <i>Radio</i> | <i>Newspapers</i> | <i>Internet</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 45                        | 6         | 13           | 18                | 8               |

### **External Relations and Policy**

- The Deputy Director equally participated at meeting at the European Union to discuss issues related to collaboration in wildlife law enforcement.
- Accompanied by the super volunteer, he participated at a meeting organized by ZSL and which aimed at understanding what is being doing at the level of training among the various conservation organisations in the country and how to synchronise efforts.
- The Deputy Director held meetings with the Director of Penal Affairs at the Ministry of Justice and Keeper of the Seals to discuss wildlife law enforcement operations.
- The Head of Legal Department held a meeting with the State Counsel of Douala - Bonaberie while one legal adviser met with the State Counsel of Abong Mbang to discuss matters pending before the respective courts and a volunteer at the legal department met with the State Counsel of Yaounde - Centre to discuss strategies concerning a matter pending before the court.
- A legal participated in a workshop organized by TRAFFIC in Sangmelima where he did two presentations:
  - *the experience of LAGA in the fight against corruption in the wildlife sector in Cameroon;*
  - *the drafting of wildlife offence statements and the evaluation of civil claims.*

### **Management**

- A new convention of collaboration was signed with the Directorate General of Customs. This is an important breakthrough in establishing formal relations with Customs for the EAGLE Network.
- Hosting and training of the super volunteer was successfully done with the 5-week training programme coming to an end and he returned to Nairobi.
- A section of the team started a self-defense course while first aid training continued for those who have not done theirs.
- The premises of the new office were finally occupied while furnishing with office stationeries and materials were done.

## **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/Actiwithvism/tabid/77/Default.aspx>.

## **Presentation: Female Genital Mutilations**

As a continuation of the celebration of the 2019 International Women's and the first presentation of the month that focused on the retrospections of the celebration in Cameroon, another lady picks up the challenge and talks about the plight of victims of Female Genital Mutilations. She explores the cultural and historical dimensions of the FGM and gives us a rare insight into how the phenomenon is spread in Africa. While some countries could have as low as 1.4 % of the female population that has suffered FGM, another African county Guinea has an alarming 96% rate. The causes and consequences were presented analyzed and later debated during discussions that looked at some more problems connected trying to change an ugly tradition that is simply just denying to go away.

## **Finance**

**In preparation and would be made available soon as possible on the LAGA website [www.laga-enforcement.org](http://www.laga-enforcement.org) .**

## **Link of the month**

4 persons were arrested in Douala with close to 2 tons of pangolin scales and 73 ivory tusks by wildlife officials of the Littoral Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife in collaboration with Judicial police officials: The four are in the New bell prison while wait for judgement. It was reported by several national and international online news site including:

<https://www.camer.be/73289/11:1/cameroon-cameroun-mobilization-to-fight-the-destruction-of-wildlife.html>

<https://information.tv5monde.com/info/cameroun-saisie-de-2-tonnes-d-ecailles-de-pangolins-et-200-pointes-d-ivoire-290126>

<https://www.geo.fr/environnement/cameroun-saisie-de-2-tonnes-decailles-de-pangolins-et-200-pointes-divoire-194910>

<https://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-busts-ivory-pangolin-traffickers/4839359.html>

<http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190315-saisie-record-deux-tonnes-ecailles-pangolin-cameroun>

**This Month in Pictures**



*Four arrested with ivory and pangolin scales await being moved to wildlife office*



*Close to 2 tons of seized pangolin scales seized and transported to wildlife office (above and below)*



*Dozens of ivory tusks stored at wildlife office after seizure (above and below)*

