

The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

August 2015 Report



Highlights

- **3 major wildlife traffickers arrested in Lomie and Yaounde with ape skulls, giant pangolin scales among other products.**
- **Court hands sea turtle shell trafficker 2 years jail term and orders payment of damages worth over 6 million CFA F.**
- **Three LAGA members on missions in other countries under the EAGLE Exchange programme.**

General

This month was marked by two operations that led to the arrest of 3 wildlife traffickers and a significant court ruling of 2 years jail term to a wildlife trafficker.

During this month, **3 wildlife traffickers were arrested during two operations carried out in Lomie and in Yaounde.** The first operation carried out in Lomie East, resulted in the arrest of 2 experienced and dangerously adept traffickers who used a couple of well-drilled skills to elope arrest in the past. 2 chimpanzee skulls, 2 gorilla skulls, red river hog teeth and elephant teeth were confiscated from the two as they were trying to sell the contraband.

During the second operation carried out in Yaounde, **a wildlife trafficker was arrested with giant pangolin scales in a Yaounde** after travelling from Mindorou. Apparently, this is just one of his numerous trips to the capital with pangolin scales where he does business and seems to have several buyers in Yaounde.

LAGA's head of investigations department travelled on mission to Guinea for wildlife law enforcement operational support while an investigator travelled to support Togo and the assistant head of the media and external relations department travelled to Gabon for experience and skill sharing in both countries. All three missions fall within the framework of the EAGLE Exchange programme.

A sea turtle shell trafficker handed a significant 2-year jail term by a court in the South West.

Investigations

- **17 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in 4 **Regions** of Cameroon - East, Centre, , West and North West Regions.
- Good investigations led to the arrest of **2 traffickers with 2 gorilla skulls and 2 chimpanzee skulls, elephant and red river hog teeth in Lomie**
- Good investigations in **Yaounde** resulted in the arrest of one dealer trying to sell 4 kg of giant pangolin scales.
- Under the EAGLE Exchange Programme an investigator travelled to Togo to assist and share skills and experiences with the TALFF project.
- Under the same programme, the head of the investigation department travelled to Guinea to assist in a high profile operation involving the arrest of a senior wildlife official for his involvement in wildlife trafficking and illegal of CITES permits.
- He equally assisted the TALLF project with investigative and legal procedures for planned operations.

Operation

2 operations carried out this month with MINFOF **arresting 3 traffickers**

- **04/08/15 – 2 traffickers arrested with 4 apes skulls, elephant and red river hog teeth in Lomie, East.** They are veteran poachers and experienced wildlife traffickers who have been supplying diverse wildlife products including ivory and pangolin scales to Chinese traffickers and they used a couple of excellent tricks in moments leading to their arrest as they examined the transaction area, kept an undercover to watch out for wildlife officials. Early in the morning of their arrest, they visited the area apparently reserved for their transaction, made an expert examination of the surroundings, combing outlets and then left. They later came without the products and did a last round of inspection and then went away. On coming back they appeared from an entirely different direction and had an undercover to backup their moves.
- **06/08/2015 – One trafficker arrested trafficking giant pangolin scales during a successful operation** carried out in **Yaounde, Centre Region**. Carefully packaged in a bag, the trafficker travelled from Mindourou in the East Region to Yaounde where he tried to sell the scales in a popular neighbourhood before his arrest. This is not his first attempt at selling the scales because he has a number of contacts and is known to have been travelling from Mindourou to Yaounde frequently to supply pangolins scales. Mindourou is close to Lomie where the sale of pangolin scales has developed rapidly over the years and it is a thriving illegal business in the logging town.

Legal

- LAGA's legal department carried out **18 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 2 in Kribi (South) 1 in Djoum (South), 1 in Bertoua (East), 1 in Batouri (East), 1 in Lomié (East), 1 in Dschang (West), 2 in Douala (Littoral), 2 in Edéa (Littoral) , 3 in Limbe (South West), 2 in Buea (South West) and 2 in Bafia (Centre).
- There are **35 dealers behind bars during this month**: 13 in East Region, 7 in Centre region, 4 in Littoral Region, 2 in North West Region; 3 in South Region, and 6 in South West Region.
- **43 cases** were followed up by the legal department this month.
- **37 cases** were scheduled and being tried in court this month.

- **Prosecutions:** there were 3 judgments this month.
 - 07/08/2015: The Edea Court of First Instance – Littoral, found the accused **BANY Simon** guilty of illegally killing protected wildlife species and sentenced him as follows: **2 months imprisonment** and to pay **28,450 CFA F as fines, 250,000 CFA F as damages and to serve 3 months imprisonment in default of payment of the fines.** BANY Simon was arrested on the 3rd of June in Edea for illegal possession of 6 sea turtle shells and a chimpanzee skull.
 - 18/08/2015: The Bafia Court of First Instance – Centre, convicted **MBENTAIE DOUGLAS** to **6 months suspended sentence and to pay a fine of 10 000 CFA F.** He was also convicted to pay **450 000 CFA F as civil damages and 30 000 CFA F as cost fees or serve 6 months in jail in default of the payment of the said cost fees.** He was arrested in Bafia for illegal possession and circulation of 5 chimpanzee skulls.
 - 25/08/2015: The Buea Court of First Instance – South West convicted **FIOGNON KOCOU** to **serve two prison sentences of 2 years each, with both sentences running concurrently and a fine of 200,000 CFA F with 9 months imprisonment in default of payment of such fines. He was also sentenced to pay 65,000 CFA F as cost fees or serve a further 6 months jail term in default of payment of the said cost fees and to pay 6,600,000.CFA F as sum total of special and general damages.** FIOGNON KOCOU was arrested in Idenau for illegal possession and circulation of 9 sea turtle shells.
- **Appeal:** An appeal has been filed this month in the Centre Court of Appeal in the case involving **MBENTAIE DOUGLAS** arrested in Bafia, Centre.

Media

- **38 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio and internet including: 14 written press material (9 in English 5 in French), 4 radio talk shows all in English, 19 news flashes 5 in English and 14 in French, 1 internet publication in French.
- **Guests include:** the CARPE/IUNC focal point Kinshasa, DRC and Viban Jude the Mbi crater faunal reserve conservator.
- **Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including;** the arrest of ape skull and elephant teeth traffickers in Lomie, the Yaonde arrest of a giant pangolin scale trafficker and the conviction and sentencing in Buea of a trafficker in sea turtle shells .
- 18 media pieces in English and 20 in French making a percentage of 53% in French and 47% in English.
- Under the EAGLE Exchange Programme, the assistant head of the media and external relations department travelled to Gabon for an experience and skills sharing mission.

External Relations and Policy

- The deputy director held a meeting with two print journalists from Belgium who are in the country to cover the poaching and trafficking of wildlife especially great apes.
- The head of the legal department held two meetings, the first with the Upper-Nyong divisional delegate of forestry and wildlife and the second with the state prosecutor in Abong Mbang as a prelude to the carrying out of the operation in Lomie.
- Other meetings were held by the legal department with state prosecutors in Buea, Kribi and Bafia.

Management

- Continued work on ensuring data security and safety procedures for LAGA members
- Beginning of work on reformatting and auditing LAGA's finance .

Activism Front

Erin Brockovich - film projection

- What does a single mother of three children from two dislocated marriages, who has had an accident and had been jobless do when she discovers that residents of the town she now lives in had been drinking contaminated water? Most people would crumble under the enormity of their personal responsibilities and struggles and would never give such an issue a second thought, not to talk starting a fight. Not Erin Brockovich anyway. Drawn from a true story, Erin Brockovich is a perfect example of a modern heroine in a dual world of the powerful against the weak and vulnerable. A modern day fighter who despite all the odds engages a David vs Goliath clash involving an energy giant that had poisoned the waters of the town for over 30 years. With a totally unknown, small time law firm that had represented her on the accident suit she filed, they battle the energy giant and hundreds of citizens get a landmark tort settlement of hundreds of millions. The story is a shining example of just how one person alone can make a huge difference. It has bravery and determination and most especially it has a woman, a strong and stubborn one. Discussions after the presentation of the movie focused on her bravery, her domestic responsibilities and on what lessons could be drawn from her cast-iron determination to succeed.

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>.

EAGLE Front

- Three LAGA members from the investigation and media and external relations department travelled to other projects under the framework of the EAGLE Exchange Programme.
- The management and investigation departments provided operational and technical support to the TALFF project during crackdown operations.

Finance

In preparation and would be made available soon as possible.

This Month in Pictures



Two veteran poachers and major wildlife traffickers at the Lomie Forestry and Wildlife post shortly before interrogation after their arrest for trafficking in ape skulls, elephant teeth and red river hog teeth. They have been supplying wildlife products to several traffickers including Chinese traffickers (left). Products seized from them (Above)



A bag of giant pangolin scales seized by wildlife officials in capital city Yaounde (above) and trafficker undergoing questioning at a police station after travelling from the East of the country with the scales.



Link of this month

CAMEROUN :: DES PRESUMES TRAFIQUANTS ARRETES AVEC 2 KG D'OR :: CAMEROON



CAMEROUN :: DES PRESUMES TRAFIQUANTS ARRET...

Trois présumés trafiquants d'espèces fauniques ont été arrêtés à Abong Mbang avec plus de 2 kg d'or illicite qui pourraient valoir plus d
View on www.camer.be Preview by Yahoo

Two arrested for wildlife trafficking in Lomie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BycwAeqms8M&spfreload=10>

Arrest of two in Lomie for ape skull, elephant and red river hog teeth by wildlife officials of the Lomie Forestry and Wildlife Control Post during a crackdown operation that found the two during the illegal transaction. The town of Lomie is known to be a trafficking hotspot in the East region that is rich in wildlife species but longstanding illicit trafficking in endangered species may be paving their extinction in the region.