

# The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

## April 2019 Report



### Highlights

- **3 ivory traffickers arrested with 5 fresh ivory tusks and a tail from baby elephants**
- **They were suspected to have recently killed the baby elephants at the Dja Biosphere Reserve.**
- **Legal adviser completed a three-month training at the Durrell Conservation Academy in New Jersey, UK.**

### General

This month was marked by the arrest of **3 traffickers with elephant ivory and tail.**

3 traffickers arrested with 5 ivory tusks and an elephant tail. They had shot and killed baby elephants in the Dja reserve, using the gun of a retired policeman. They travelled to Sangmelima with the ivory and tail, looking forward to selling the illegal products. All 5 tusks weighed less than 1kg and measured about 14cm each indicating they were removed from the heads of baby elephants that were freshly killed as the tusks stunk when officials removed them from the knacksacks that was used by the traffickers to conceal and carry the products. The traffickers seem to master the Dja reserve very well as they used difficult entry and exit points of the reserve that is protected by natural borders such as rivers.

A legal adviser completed a three-month training course at the Durrell Conservation Academy in New Jersey, UK and is travelling back to the country.

## Investigations

- **17 investigation missions** of varying lengths were carried out in **6 Regions** of Cameroon viz: Littoral, West, South and East Regions.
- Good investigation in Sangmelima led to the arrest of 3 traffickers with 5 elephant tusks weighing less than 1kg and 1 elephant tail in Sangmelima.

*Investigations Table*

<b>Investigation Missions</b>	<b>Regions</b>	<b>No. of Operations</b>	<b>No of traffickers arrested</b>
16	6	1	3

## Operation

**An operation** carried out this month with MINFOF **arresting 3 traffickers**.

**11/4/2019 – 3 traffickers arrested in Sangmelima, South Region with 5 ivory tusks and an elephant tail.** 5 tiny elephant tusks and a tail were seized from the traffickers who recently shot and killed baby elephants at the Dja Biosphere Reserve. A retired policeman's gun was used in shooting the baby elephants. The tusks were cut out of the heads of the elephants and taken to Sangmelima where the traffickers tried to sell them and this led to their arrest. 5 fresh little tusks that measured about 14 centimeters long each and weighed a total 1kg for all of the five tusks were seized. The site of the tusks was heartbreaking and this kind of destruction was rarely seen in ivory trafficking. Over the years this reserve was protected to some extent by its natural borders such as rivers but it is now increasingly coming under attacks from traffickers who have been selecting and using very difficult entry points to discourage ecoguards from going after them, while they butcher elephants and other wildlife in the reserve.

*Operations Table*

<b>No of Operations</b>	<b>Regions</b>	<b>No of Traffickers Arrested</b>	<b>Contraband</b>
1	1	3	5 ivory tusks and an elephant tail

## Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out 10 **missions** out of Yaounde-Centre Region: 3 in Douala (Littoral) and 3 in Abong-Mbang (East), 1 in Djoum (South), 2 in Sangmelima (South) and 1 in Garoua (North).
- There are **17 traffickers behind bars this month**: 5 in East region, 5 in South region and 7 in Littoral region.
- **35 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **31 cases** were scheduled in court this month.
- **7 traffickers** were convicted this month.
- **Prosecutions**: There were two court rulings this month.
  - **16/04/2019**: The Abong-Mbang Court of First Instance found the accused **NGUELE Jean and MINKANG ABONDO not guilty**, but the Court found the accused **NGONO NGOUE Julienne, ATEK Elodie and MPOUMEDA MPANDA Thierry guilty and sentenced them to pay 100.000 FCFA each as fines, 41.500 FCFA each as court charges and 1.000.000 FCFA jointly as damages.**  
They were arrested in Abong-Mbang for the illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 31 Kgs of pangolin scales.
  - **24/04/2019**: The Douala - Bonanjo Court of First Instance found the accused **ARREY ETA Morine, MBAH Jacqueline MUBANG, PEYUKKUE Mama and PEPOUNA NJIKANZIE Abdou** guilty as charged and **sentenced them to pay 1.000.000 FCFA each as fines and 21.000.000 FCFA jointly as damages.**  
They were arrested in Douala for the illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 432 Kgs of pangolin scales.
- **Appeal**: An appeal has been filed this month in the case of **NGUELE Jean, MINKANG ABONDO NGONO NGOUE Julienne, ATEK Elodie and MPOUMEDA MPANDA Thierry** in the East Court of Appeal.

### *Legal Table*

No of Missions (Out of Centre Region)	No of Court Judgements	No of Traffickers Given Prison Sentence	Prison term (in months)	No of Traffickers Sanctioned (No prison sentence)	No of Appeals lodged	No of Cases Tried in Courts
10	2	0	0	7	1	35

## 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 LAGA.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: The Sangmelima arrest of 3 persons with ivory, the Doula court hearing of 4 traffickers arrested with close to 2 tons of pangolin scales and 73 ivory tusks, the arrest of a trafficker in Meiganga with over 24kg of ivory and some 12kg of pangolin scales.
- 31 media pieces in French and 21 in English making a percentage of 59.6% in French and 40.4% in English.

*Media Table*

<i>No of Media Pieces</i>	<i>TV</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Internet</i>
52	0	17	27	8

## External Relations and Policy

- The heads of the legal and investigation departments held a meeting with a pangolin conservationist and the centre regional wildlife delegate to map out ways to rescuing and rehabilitating pangolins.
- A legal adviser successfully completed her course at the Durrell Endangered Species Management 2019 programme offered the Durrell Conservation Academy in New Jersey and shall shortly be travelling back to the country.
- The head of the investigation department travelled to Meiganga where he assisted customs and wildlife officials in the prosecution of a trafficker arrested with 3 ivory tusks and 25kg of pangolin scales in the town.
- The head of the legal department held a meeting with the state counsel at Douala Bonaberi court of first instance to discuss a matter pending before the court and he equally held another meeting with the state counsel at Douala Bonanjo for the same purpose. He held a third meeting with the state counsel in Sangmelima to discuss operational strategies.
- A legal adviser would later have held a meeting with the same state counsel after the operation to discuss the matter. A volunteer on trial held a meeting with the state counsel in Abong Mbang to discuss a case pending in the court.

## **Management**

- Preparations for the celebration of the International Labour Day were successfully carried out.
- Preparations to receive the team of auditors who shall be auditing the financial records of the organisation went underway.

## **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: The Telegram (a messaging app)**

We are introduced to a new messaging app, which according to the presenter says is safer and more secure than what we use today for our job; WhatsApp. He indicates that this is a great tool for activists who need to communicate all the time and needs to know their backyard is being covered appropriately by a trusting software. The presenter identifies basic but important features that Telegram has different and that could indeed improve on security. Departs were on the technicalities of the software, on its merits and what may be some of its loopholes. Questions were asked on the reason behind a need to change.

## **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**

3 persons were arrested in Sangmelima with 5 ivory tusks weighing less than 1kg. These traffickers shot and killed baby elephants and the news was taken up by a news site; alwihda info.

[https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-des-bebes-elephants-tues-Sangmelima\\_a72221.html](https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-des-bebes-elephants-tues-Sangmelima_a72221.html)

**This Month in Pictures**



*They shot and killed baby elephants, were arrested and waiting for prosecution proceedings to commence*



*Tiny little elephant tusks near traffickers who were arrested during attempts to sell the tusks*



*Five elephant tusks and a tail seized from traffickers*

*| LAGA legal adviser receives an end of course certificate from the Governor of New Jersey after successfully attending a course at the Durrell Conservation Academy*

