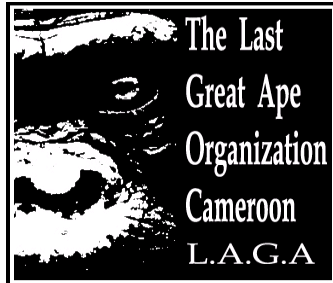


THE LAST GREAT APE ORGANIZATION, CAMEROON LAGA

ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY – DECEMBER 2022



Executive Summary

Many achievements were recorded in LAGA’s collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) despite several challenges posed during the year. These achievements were obtained in the fields of investigation, arrest, prosecution, media exposure, government relations and international activities. Focus was on the fight against the illegal wildlife trade; principally trafficking in pangolin scales, elephant tusks, primates, birds and leopard skins. The EAGLE network’s Central Coordination Unit (CCU) continued to provide vital technical and organisation support that facilitated several operations resulting in a significant number of arrests. 43 traffickers were arrested.

43 major traffickers were arrested at a rate of one for every 9 days and 64% stayed behind bars from the day of arrest. 42 new cases were brought to the courts. 26 traffickers were found guilty and handed prison sentences, fines and damages in 16 court judgements. Damages amounted to some 128,206,627 FCFA (about \$256,417) awarded to MINFOF. Five appeals were lodged against unsatisfactory court rulings. Media exposure was at a rate one media piece per day.

The EAGLE network achieved substantial results and 141 traffickers were arrested across 7 countries. In order to provide a deterrent effect across the Network, 1,966 media pieces were published in national media.

The work of LAGA was supported by Wildcat, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF), Dutch Gorilla Foundation, Pangolin Crisis Fund, - Born Free Foundation, Prowildlife, Olsen Animal Trust (OAT), AXE.

LAST GREAT APE ORGANISATION, CAMEROON (LAGA)
ANNUAL REPORT
January– December 2022

OVERVIEW

Investigations

- A total of 177 investigation missions (of varying lengths) were carried out in 6 regions.

Operations

- Operations were carried out in 4 regions arresting 43 major traffickers resulting in 42 court cases at a rate one for every 9 days.
- Operations were on pangolin scales, ivory including several elephant tusks and ivory pieces, live primates, African grey parrots, birds, leopard skins and human skeletons.
- The rate of imprisonment of arrested offenders stood at 64%.
- 11 traffickers were arrested in the month of September during 4 operations with 2 human skeletons, 154.kg of ivory seized and a young mandrill rescued.
- Over 1,000 kg of pangolin scales were seized and 16 traffickers arrested.

Legal

- 42 new cases were brought to court. Some of the 42 cases began during the year have not yet reached the judgement stage but procedures are ongoing.
- 26 traffickers were found guilty and handed prison sentences, fines and damages. Damages amounted to some 128,206,627 FCFA (about \$256,417) awarded to MINFOF.
- 16 court judgements were passed during the year and five appeals lodged.

Media

- A total of 367 media pieces were produced in national media (radio, TV, written press and internet) achieved at a rate of one media piece per day.

Management

- The Annual Report of 2022 was made available online.
- Recruitment was intensified with candidates selected and some tested.
- Focus was on maintaining high standards in every department and on improving recruitment for investigators.

External Relations and Policy

- Several meetings were held with MINFOF officials, the diplomatic community, national and international NGOs to discuss issues on collaboration, governance, wildlife law enforcement among others.

Strategic Highlights

- The operational focus during the year was on pangolin scales, ivory, primates, birds and leopard skins.
- The strategic focus was ensuring investigations and operations were smoothly carried out despite challenges of diverse nature that were posed.

- A new round of recruitment targeting investigators with specific skills and competences was carried out.
- The CCU evaluated and provided strategic assistance to management, to the operational and organisational functioning of the organisation.

EAGLE Activities

A total of 141 traffickers were arrested across 7 countries of the network during the year

In order to provide a deterrent effect, 1,966 media pieces were published in national media across the network.

An investigator travelled from Cameroon to Côte d'Ivoire to provide assistance and share experience with the team. An investigator from another EAGLE Network country arrived Cameroon for the same purpose.

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Also available:

1. Annual Financial Statement 2021
2. First and Second Semester Reports 2022
3. Media archive – Excel database linked to recorded media pieces
4. Photo archive for media use

For copies contact email; eric@laga-enforcement.org

NARRATIVE REPORT

This report covers the period January to December 2022 and focuses on progress in the activities of each department, notably, investigations, operations, legal, media and management. It also includes a strategic overview and an analysis of the impact of operations on wildlife crime in Cameroon, relations with the Cameroonian government, non-governmental bodies, collaboration with international partners and non-enforcement initiatives that LAGA undertook.

1. Investigations

LAGA's investigation unit carried out 177 investigation missions in 6 regions of the country during the year. The focus was on strict respect for procedures and security measures, a good mastery of investigation rules and a proper application of them. This was strictly supervised at the level of management and at the Central Coordination Unit (CCU). The quality of results improved significantly. There was collaboration with the Central Coordination Unit that provided vital investigation support and guidance. New investigative strategies were put in place to improve on results and this improved results. Some old strategies were revisited and adapted to suit present circumstances. Focus was on reviving good old habits and strengths in carrying out complex and difficult investigations. A number of complex and sophisticated investigations were started and are still to come to the operational stage.

Recruitment was intensified with some candidates interviewed and tested. A drive to recruit online investigators went well underway and a candidate for the position put on test. The contractual relationship with one of the members of the investigation team came to an end. He was wished good luck as he undertakes new endeavours. He leaves the team after several years of service to wildlife law enforcement in the country.

The Head of Department met with some administrative, wildlife, customs and law enforcement officials at divisional levels to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife law enforcement.

The Head of the Department and his deputy were all part of the operation team during operations carried out during the year and this greatly boosted the operation capacity of the whole team.

An investigator from another EAGLE country arrived Cameroon for a month-long investigation support and experience sharing mission. An investigator travelled to Côte d'Ivoire for the same purpose.

Number of Missions

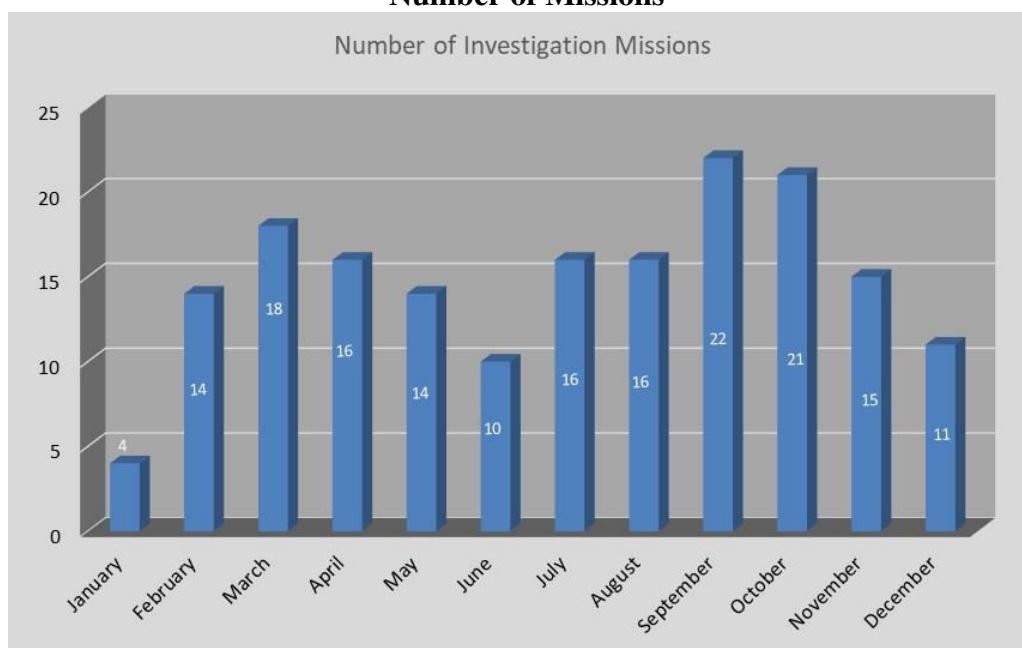


Figure 1: Number of Investigations Missions per Month

2. Operations

LAGA and the Government of Cameroon carried out operations in 4 regions against 43 individuals resulting in 42 court cases at a rate of one every 9 days. A combination of old and new strategies resulted in more complex and sophisticated operations to meet up to the changing tactics of traffickers. The prime focus of operations was on pangolin scales traffickers who accounted for 37% of the traffickers arrested, ivory traffickers who represented 26%, primate traffickers at 14%, bird traffickers representing 9%, and big cat skin traffickers at 5%. Human skeleton traffickers were also arrested and represented 9%. Below are operations carried according to the various months;

In February, a trafficker was arrested in Bonis, near Bertoua, East Region with 242kg of pangolin scales, more pangolins and monkey carcasses were found in a refrigerator at his residence. He activated several traffickers and poachers in the area, who supplied the illegal products. He also bought small quantities of scales locally from bushmeat traffickers. He used his entire family including his wife and children in running the illegal pangolin scales trade. The children would go around the town, collecting the scales. He had the storage facilities for keeping the big quantities of contraband he collected. The seizure represents a massacre of more than a thousand pangolins.

A second operation in February saw 2 traffickers arrested with a leopard skin and a civet skin in Melong, Littoral Region. One of the traffickers transported the skins hidden in bags containing locally made kitchen utensils from Mbouda to Melong where he was arrested. He ran a small shop, selling hardware and used the business as a cover business for wildlife trafficking. This explained why he concealed the skins among kitchen utensils as he moved the contraband from Mbouda to Melong. He belongs to a network of traffickers dealing in cat skins in an area notorious for the illegal activity. They arrived to the place of transaction on a motorbike with the skins.

In March, 6 traffickers were arrested in Sangmelima, South Region, with 5 tusks, chimpanzee meat and parts of several other wildlife. They belong to an ivory trafficking ring that covers most of the South Region including Djoum considered to be a trafficking hotspot. The first trafficker was arrested with the elephant tusks. He denounced the other traffickers who were arrested in a series of

arrests during the following two days. One of them concealed parts of protected wildlife species including the limbs and other parts of a chimp in his car. A dead pangolin was also recovered from the vehicle.

Still in March a trafficker was arrested with 2 baby chimpanzees in Yaounde, Centre Region. The traditional chief was arrested at his residence. He had iron cages to detain and imprison wild animals including the baby chimps that kept holding the bars desperately longing to be outside. At one point during his arrest, the traditional chief shouted - “bring me my gun! I will kill these animals; they will not be taken alive from here”. He resisted arrest and tried to bully the arresting team to letting him free. He bought the animals in Djoum and attempted to sell them in Yaounde.

During the first operation in April, a trafficker was arrested in Douala, Littoral Region with 2 gorilla skulls, a chimpanzee skull and 4 other primate skulls. He was a regular trafficker in skulls and reptiles with international connections in Europe. He extensively used Facebook for his business. He sealed the skulls with plastic tapes and concealed them inside dresses in a plastic bag that is widely used in travelling across the region. He travelled from the crisis hit South West Region to the commercial capital Douala where he attempted to sell the skulls. The operation was carried in collaboration with the Czech-based NGO Save Elephants.

During the second operation in April, a trafficker was arrested in Douala with a live mandrill. A trafficker arrested and a mandrill rescued. The mandrill was tied at the waist with a heavy metal chain to a tree in his dirty yard. The trafficker was supplied with the mandrill a few months before and was trying to get a high profit for it. The animal was malnourished and weak.

During the third operation in April, 5 traffickers were arrested in Akonolinga in the Centre Region with 90kg of pangolin scales. The traffickers were found in several different locations. They attempted to thwart arrest efforts by taking up different locations they were chased down by the arresting team and each trafficker arrested with booty in hand. They also comprised a complete gang with a driver, middlemen and suppliers. They activated several smaller traffickers and poachers in villages around the town.

During the last operation in April, 3 traffickers were arrested in Yaounde with 386kg of pangolin scales. The traffickers, a Malian national and two Cameroonians, ran a lucrative illicit business in pangolin scales. They operated around the Yoko and Ntui areas that are notorious for wildlife trafficking and weak law enforcement. They also had connections close to the Cameroon border with the Central African Republic where the Malian had hidden huge quantities of pangolins scales. He transported the contraband from a Garoua Boulai concealed in a truck that transported maize to the capital city Yaounde. When he arrived, they hid the contraband at the home of one of the traffickers. They also trafficked African grey parrots but were switching to other products. They claimed it was increasingly difficult to find parrots.

An operation was carried in May and a trafficker was arrested in Douala during a follow up operation after a mandrill was seized and a trafficker arrested in April. The trafficker was arrested in a follow up to a live mandrill rescue and arrest operation that took place in Douala last April. A trafficker who kept a mandrill at his residence was arrested as he attempted to sell it. During his interrogation he exposed another trafficker who was the brains and money behind the trafficking, but the second trafficker could not be immediately arrested because he had disappeared and stayed away from his Douala residence to avoid arrest. A different strategy was put in place and one of his “girlfriends” lured him to a bar where he was arrested. The arrest put an end to the primate trafficking network that had links to the south of the country.

In September, 4 operations were carried out, beginning with in Yaounde where 2 traffickers were arrested with 10 elephant tusks weighing 56 kg. They concealed the tusks in a suitcase and transported it on a motorcycle to a residence where they were expected to carry out the transaction. Soon after they arrived, they were arrested during attempts to sell the ivory. The contraband was concealed in the notorious Briqueterie neighbourhood in Yaounde. The traffickers belong to a trafficking ring operating in major ivory trafficking hotspots and especially in a Kye-ossi.. The traffickers are linked to Abdoul Salami, arrested in 2021 with 2 tons of pangolin scales and leopard skins. The ring operates in Congo, Gabon, Nigeria and beyond. Close relatives attempted to free the traffickers by applying pressure on wildlife officials but the attempts were aborted

During the second operation, 4 traffickers were arrested with 2 human skeletons in Douala. They transported the skeletons concealed inside a big plastic bag from their base in the South West Region to Douala where they lodged in a luxury hotel. Later, they moved to another hotel to sell the skeletons where they were arrested red handed. Their arrest is a result of an investigation into the illegal online trade in pangolin scales and leopard skins to India. LAGA and the entire EAGLE Network, as activists, do our best to fight injustice. Human sacrifice and the illegal trade in human bones for black magic and rituals is one of such horrible crimes.

3 traffickers more traffickers were arrested in Douala, with 98 kg of ivory in a crackdown on a Nigerian ivory gang. They were arrested in Douala's notorious New Bell neighbourhood. The traffickers blocked the entrance to their residence, hid inside different rooms but were found one after the other and arrested. The ivory was concealed in two suitcases and hidden in one of the rooms. The ring controlled trafficking lines to Nigeria and to Cote d'Ivoire and moved ivory from as far as Congo. One of them claimed to have been smuggling ivory for over 35 years.

Finally, in September, 2 traffickers were arrested and a mandrill rescued in Yaounde. The mandrill was forcefully pushed into a sack and transported to be traded illegally. The animal was brought by a worker in a logging company near the Congolese border. The mandrill lived chained to a tree. When rescued it moved nervously and frantically inside the bag as wildlife officials tried to free him. He was taken to Mvogbetsi zoo for care and support.

In October, 2 traffickers were arrested with 66 kg of giant pangolin scales in Yaounde. One of the traffickers, a Nigerian, has been operating his ring for at least four years and this was known during investigations into the illegal trade in pangolin scales in the area. They travelled from Ntui to Yaounde with the giant pangolin scales concealed in 2 grains bags. They activated several smaller traffickers in the Ntui – Yoko area that is well known for wildlife trafficking activities. They were arrested at a bus station where they concealed the pangolin scales while attempting to sell it.

Still in October, 2 traffickers were arrested with 180 kg of giant pangolin scales in Yaounde. They smuggled the 7 sacks from Lomie, in the East Region to Yaounde. The sacks were hidden in pepper and wild fruits and transported in trucks. One of the traffickers was arrested as he attempted to sell the scales. He denounced the second who was arrested a couple of hours later. They are experienced traffickers who used dealing in wild mango from Lomie to Yaounde as a front business for their trafficking. They equally had several smaller traffickers they activated in Lomie and its environs.

Two operations were carried out in December. 4 traffickers were arrested in Akonolinga with 28 African grey parrots. The crackdown dismantled a ring of parrot traffickers operating in the area. The parrots were transported crammed tight in a small wooden cage and kept in very poor condition. They were leading a ring of local poachers who captured live African grey parrots. They also sold parrots to some notorious parrot trafficking networks in Yaounde and farther afield.

Several parrots were sold by the traffickers during the period of the investigations that took a couple of months.

And during the last operation of the year 3 traffickers were arrested in Nanga Eboko, Centre Region with 120 kg of pangolin scales. Two of them were activating several poachers generating regular killings of pangolins. One of the traffickers used his motorcycle to transport the scales. They are experienced in trafficking pangolin scales and complained that the Covid 19 pandemic hampered their activity, but they were quickly picking up where they left off before the pandemic started. The area is widely known for the illicit bushmeat trade.

Operations Table

<i>Number of Operations</i>	<i>Number of Traffickers</i>	<i>Contraband</i>
17	43	246 kg of pangolin scales and several pangolin and monkey carcasses a leopard skin, a civet skin, 5 elephant tusks, chimpanzee meat, 2 young chimpanzees, 2 gorilla skulls, a chimpanzee skulls and 4 other primate skulls, a live mandrill, 90 kg of pangolin scales, 386 kg of pangolin scales, 56 kg ivory, 2 human skeletons, 98.1 kg ivory, a live mandrill, 66 kg of giant pangolin scales, 180 kg of giant pangolin scales, 28 African grey parrots, 120 kg of pangolin scales

Figure 2: Operation Table

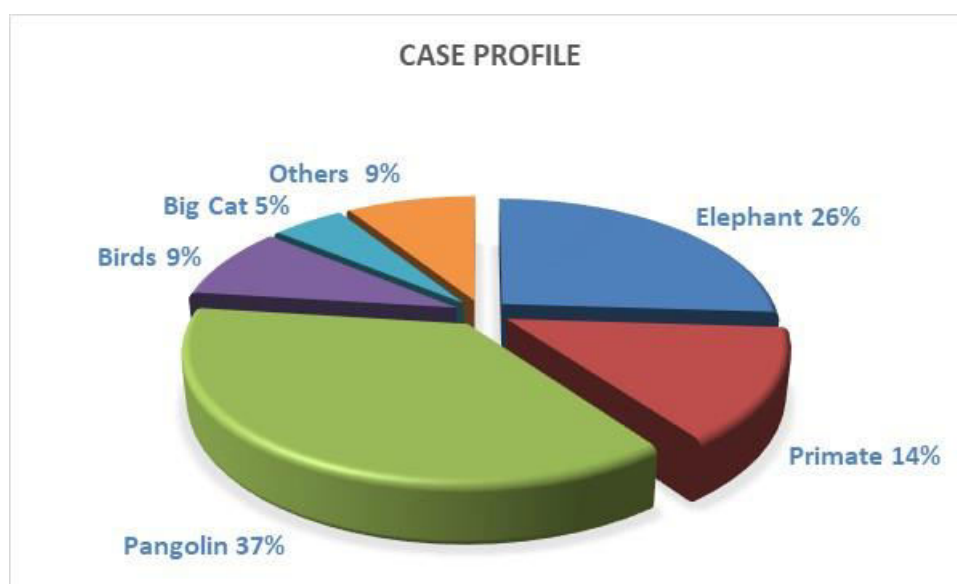


Figure 3: Case profile

3. Legal

A total of 42 new cases were brought to the court and the cases joined old cases that were scheduled, followed-up and tried in various courts. Some jail visits were organized. A court sentenced 3 traffickers to 5 years in prison. They were arrested in September with 2 human skeletons. Another court sentenced a trafficker to 19 months in prison. He was arrested in February

with 246 kg of pangolin scales and 48, 5 kg of bushmeat. A court sentenced two traffickers to 13 months in prison. They were arrested with 386 kg of pangolin scales in April. Damages awarded to MINFOF amounted to some 128,206,627 FCFA (about \$256,417). Some of the cases initiated within the year have not yet reached the judgement stage and the rate of keeping the accused behind bars at the onset of the procedure stood at with 64%. This was low and new strategies are being put in place to improve on the result next year.

A total of 106 missions were carried out of the Centre Region for follow-up of new cases and the creation and strengthening of relations with judicial authorities. More emphasis as a direct result of operations was on pangolin scales that produced over a third of all the cases while ivory cases followed in second.

During the year 16 court judgements were passed with 26 traffickers found guilty and 19 of them given a prison sentence while 7 others were sanctioned to pay fines and damages. 2 traffickers were acquitted. Five appeals were made; in January, March, July, November and in December.

In January, The Court of First Instance found the accused PENE YOKO Armel guilty and sentenced him to 2 months in prison and to pay 920,250 FCFA (about \$1841) as fines and 79.750 FCFA (about \$160) as court fees. He was also ordered to pay 1,000,000 FCFA (about \$2000) as damages. He was arrested in Nanga-Eboko on November 17, 2021 for illegal possession of 86kg of pangolin scales and a baby baboon.

Still in January, The Ambam Court of First Instance found the accused MOHAMADOU Ibrahim guilty and sentenced him to 4 months in prison and to pay 1,000,000 FCFA (About \$2000) as fines and 60,000,000 FCFA (about \$120,000) as damages. He was arrested in Ambam on October 21, 2020 for illegal possession of 626 kg of ivory tusks.

In the third ruling of January, the Kribi Court of First Instance found the accused BEMEHIHE Clara Rosalie guilty and sentenced her to a one-month imprisonment term and to pay 500,000 FCFA (about \$1000) as damages. She was arrested in Kribi on December 10, 2020 for illegal possession of a mandrill.

In March, the Bertoua Court of First Instance found the accused NGUEKENG KITIO Chamberlain guilty and sentenced him to 19 months in jail and to pay 180,000 FCFA (about \$320) as court fees. He was also ordered to pay 3,000,000 FCFA (about \$6000) as damages. He was arrested in Bonis on the 08/02/2022 for illegal possession of 246 kg of pangolin scales and 48,5 kg of bushmeat.

In May, the Douala – Bonaberi Court of First Instance found the accused LANGMIA Barry DINGA guilty and sentenced him 2 months in prison and to pay 200,000 FCFA (about 400) as fines and 389,000 (about \$780) as court fees. He was also sentenced to pay 7,570,000 FCFA (about \$15140) as damages. He was arrested in Douala on the April 5, 2022 for illegal possession of a chimpanzee skull, 2 gorilla skulls and 5 monkey skulls.

Still in May, the Bafang Court of First Instance found the accused TANTOH Divine, Samuel SUH and NGONG Elvis NDANG guilty and ordered them to pay 500,000 FCFA (about \$1000) each as fines and 11,900 FCFA (about \$24) each as court fees and 400,000 FCFA (about \$800) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Bafang on the November 4, 2021 for the illegal possession of a mandrill.

In May and a third court ruling by the Djoum Court of First Instance found the accused NDONGO Léonard guilty and sentenced him to 15 days suspended sentence during 2 years, and to pay 25,000

FCFA (about \$50) as fines and 35,800 FCFA (about \$70) as court fees. He was arrested in Djoum on the July 14, 2021 for illegal possession of a mandrill.

The last court decision in May by the Ambam Court of First Instance found the accused ABAGHA MESSA Albert and AMINOUM Mamadou guilty and sentenced them to 8 months in jail and to pay 1,000,000 FCFA (about 2000) each as fines, 1,910,030 FCFA (about \$3820) jointly as court fees and 37,000,627 FCFA (about \$74,000) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Ambam on the November 6, 2021 for illegal possession of 9 ivory tusks.

In June, the Yaounde – Centre Administratif Court of First Instance found the accused ADAMA Mana and TCHAMGNE NDJENDE Mario guilty, and ordered them to pay 200,000 FCFA (about \$400) each as fines, 195,000 FCFA (about \$ 400) each as court fees and 3,000,000 FCFA (about \$6000) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Yaounde on the 09/06/2022 for illegal possession of 1 lion skin and 1 leopard skin.

In July, the Douala – Bonassama Court of First Instance found the accused NUMVI Christopher guilty and sentenced him to 3 months in prison and to pay 100,000 FCFA as fine and 2,000,000 FCFA (about \$4,000) as damages. He was arrested in Douala - Bonaberi on April 8, 2022 for illegal possession of a mandrill.

The Ngoumou Court of First Instance found the accused OTTOU ATANGANA Moïse not guilty and acquitted him. He was arrested in Yaounde - Bandouma on the March 28, 2022 for illegal possession of two chimpanzees. An appeal against the ruling was filed at Centre Court of Appeal.

In August, the Douala – Bonanjo Court of First Instance found the accused NDAWOU Elisabeth guilty and sentenced her to a 6-month jail term suspended for 3 years and to pay 1,070,000 FCFA (about \$2,140) as damages. She was arrested in Douala on the August 3, 2020 for the illegal possession of one rhinoceros horn.

In October, the Yaounde - Ekounou Court of First Instance found the accused BAH Abasse and WANDJI Paul Eloi guilty. The court sentenced them to 13 months in prison and to jointly pay 581,300 FCFA as fines and 29,650 FCFA (about \$60) each as court fees. They were also sentenced to pay 10,000,000 FCFA (about \$20,000) as damages. They were arrested in Yaounde on April 23, 2022 for illegal possession of 386 kg of pangolin scales.

The Nkongsamba Court of First Instance found the accused NGUEKENG Gilbert Pacôme and LAPA Dieudonné Gabri guilty. The court ruled that they should pay 3,000,000 FCFA (about \$6,000) each as fines and 150.000 FCFA (about \$300) each as court fees. They were arrested in Melong on February 23, 2022 for illegal possession of a leopard skin and a civet skin.

The Douala - Bonassama Court of First Instance found the accused AKO Vialli EBOT, CHE Eric and RAMDY GUEMOH guilty and sentenced them to 5 years in prison and to pay 100, 000 FCFA (about \$200) each as fines. They are wildlife traffickers arrested on the September 19, 2022 for illegal possession and sale of human skeletons.

In November, the Yaounde – Centre Administratif Court of First Instance found the accused MOHAMADOU Awal not guilty and acquitted him. However, the court found the accused ABOUKAR Ali guilty and sentenced him to 2 months in prison, to pay 200,000 FCFA as fines and 45,610 FCFA (about \$91) as court fees. He was also ordered to pay 620,000 FCFA (about \$1,240) as damages. They were arrested in Yaounde on September 3, 2022 for illegal possession of 56 kg of ivory tusks. An appeal was at the Centre Court of Appeal.

In December, the Douala – Bonanjo Court of First Instance found the accused NGOUNGOURE Amsetou, ABDOUL Nassirou and SEGUN Shoyombo guilty and sentenced them to 12 months suspended prison sentence during 3 years and to pay 2,547,000 FCFA (about \$5,094) as damages. They were arrested in Douala on December 20, 2022 for illegal possession of 98 kg of ivory tusks. The ruling was appealed at the Littoral Court of Appeal.

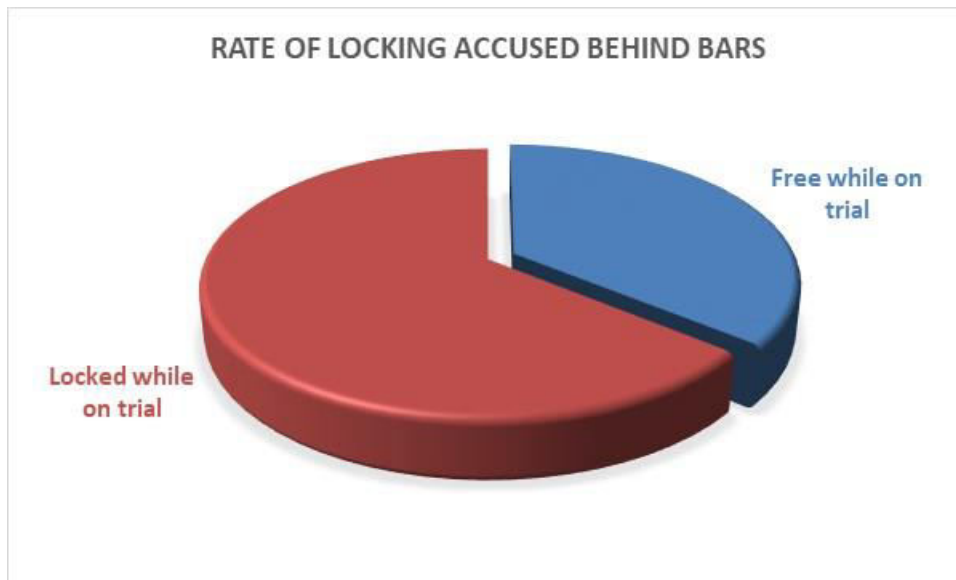


Figure 4: Rate of locking accused behind bars

4. Media

A total of 367 media pieces were produced and pushed into media including numerous articles in all media – radio, television, written press and the internet; achieved at a rate of one media piece per day. September and November months recorded the highest number of media pieces. January and August recorded the lowest. The low output could be explained by the lack of arrest operations in January, July and August.

The stories had as principal focus wildlife law enforcement operations and court activities including the Bertoua arrest of a trafficker with 246 kg of pangolin scales; the Nkongsamba arrest of 2 traffickers in possession of a leopard and civet skins; the Yaounde arrest of a traditional ruler with 2 baby chimps, the Sangmelima arrest of 4 traffickers with 5 ivory tusks; the Douala arrests of a trafficker with a mandrill and another with primate skulls; the Akonolinga arrest of 4 traffickers with 90 kg of pangolin scales the Yaounde arrest of 3 traffickers with 386 kg of pangolin scales, the Yaounde arrest of 2 traffickers with 56 kg of ivory, the Douala arrest of 3 traffickers with 100 kg of ivory tusks, the Mbankomo arrest of 2 mandrill traffickers, the Yaounde arrest of 2 traffickers with 66 kg of pangolin scales, the Douala arrest of 3 human skeleton traffickers, the Yaounde arrests of 2 traffickers with 180 kg of pangolin scales, the Akonolinga arrests of 4 traffickers with 28 African grey parrots and the arrest of 3 traffickers with 120 kg of pangolin scales in Nanga Eboko.

Quotes or interviews used in the various news stories and articles were from The Lom & Djerem Divisional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife, the Littoral Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife, the Founding Director of the EAGLE Network and IUCN Director General, the LAGA Head of Media Department

The distribution of Wildlife Justice Magazine continued. Wildlife Justice is a thematic journal that focuses on wildlife law enforcement and conservation issues.

The Deputy Director participated in the filming of the series dubbed *Unsung Heroes* by Wildaid. The series seek to shade light on conservationists for their contribution in protecting wildlife.

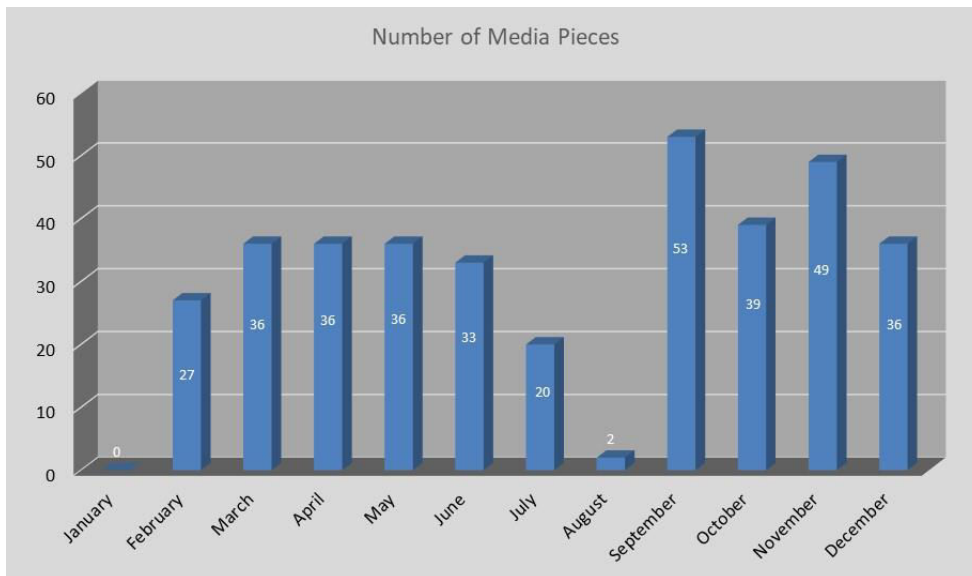


Figure 5: Number of Media Pieces Produced and Published

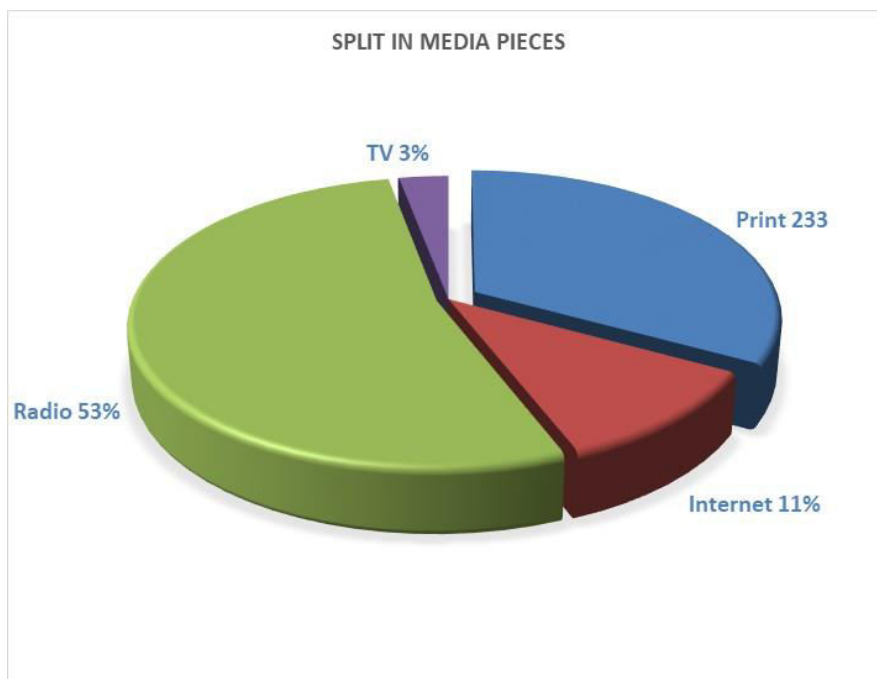


Figure 6: Split in Media Pieces

5. Management

Despite difficulties in ensuring adequate resources for the organisation, all the departments worked hard to improving on the results. The Annual Report of 2021 and the First Semester Report of 2022 was uploaded online. The electronic versions are available online on the LAGA website www.laga-

enforcement.org. This is a result of teamwork involving all the departments in LAGA – Investigations, Legal, Media, Operations and Management.

Two regions of the country that are facing security problems continue to pose a challenge but plans have been put in place to quickly cover the regions once the situation on the ground improves.

Within the framework of The Global Portrait Project, the portrait of the Deputy Director in was published online. The portrait was painted by artist James Nickells who is the founder of the Global Portrait Project. He is painting an environmental activist from each of the 196 countries chosen from around the world. The Deputy Director was selected for Cameroon. Watch the painting - <https://youtu.be/acZB0AV8Xyg>

Recruitment for the investigations department continued with one volunteer tested. Several recruitment tests were done. An online investigator started his training and testing period. A member of the investigation team's contract was not renewed.

An investigator travelled to Côte d'Ivoire to provide assistance and share experiences with the team. An investigator from an EAGLE country arrived Cameroon for the same mission.

An external audit by Moore Stephens was initiated and satisfactorily carried out with very good results.

A series of thought-provoking sessions of presentations and debates for the LAGA team were organised to foster activism and leadership skills. A wide range of topics including activism were presented and debated. This initiative also aims at strengthening the capacity, unity and values of the LAGA family.

6. External Relations and Policy

The Deputy Director held a meeting with a consultant from Tetra Tech, a US –based group, to introduce the EAGLE Network and discuss the fight against wildlife crime.

The Deputy Director held a zoom meeting with Community Manager of Timby on the use of a data collection software and its application in the fight against wildlife crime.

He held a meeting with a consultant from Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) to present the activities of the organisation and discuss data collection in the bushmeat sector in the country.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with an official of the South African based Institute for Security Studies to discuss wildlife crime in the sub region.

He participated at a meeting that included wildlife and NGO officials to discuss sections of the new wildlife bill that tackles wildlife crime.

The Deputy Director and the Head of the Legal Department, participated at a zoom meeting of the Cameroon Pangolin Working Group to plan activities for the World Pangolin Day.

The Deputy Director participated at a workshop in Douala that focused on enabling participants from Gabon, Congo, CAR and Cameroon understand the functioning of the data collection app, Timby.

The Deputy Director did a presentation on wildlife law enforcement procedures during a training for police, customs and wildlife officials of the three northern regions of the country.

The Deputy Director travelled to Abidjan where he participated at workshop that focused on illicit economies and conflict in West Africa. Organized by Global Initiative Against Transnational Crime (GI TOC), participants were drawn mainly from areas linked to the fight against organized crime in the sub region.

He held a meeting with the Dan Chandler and Matt Shirley from the IUCN SSC Pangolin Specialist Group to discuss the fight against pangolin scales trafficking and the management of seized scales in Cameroon.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with two officials of the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and three High Commission Officials in Yaoundé to discuss wildlife law enforcement in the country.

He held a meeting with the State Counsel in Garoua to pave the way for close collaboration with the team during operations. He held another meeting with the Chief of Customs in the North Region to strengthen collaboration.

The Deputy Director held a meeting at the US Embassy in Yaounde with officials of the Regional Environment Office of the US Embassy in Accra, Ghana. Discussions focused on several conservation initiatives including wildlife law enforcement.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with officials of the US Department of Justice who were trainers at workshop on fighting illegal logging. He held another meeting with Elinor Corlburn a senior counsel of the Justice Department.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with officials of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife to discuss issues related to the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding. He was accompanied to the meeting by the assistant head of the investigations department.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with officials of the Ministry of Territorial Administration to discuss issues related to the Minister's decision requesting international non-governmental organizations to submit documents to the ministry. He was accompanied by the assistant head of the investigations department to the meeting.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with officials of the Tikki Hywood Foundation to discuss pangolin rescue and rehabilitation. They also discussed law enforcement activities and the strengthening of collaboration.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with two TRAFFIC officials to discuss pangolin conservation and the development of the Cameroon Pangolin Working Group.

He participated at a workshop on the training officials of the Nsimalen International Airport. He did a presentation on wildlife law enforcement during the workshop that was organized by TRAFFIC.

He held a meeting with the Sub Director of Development and Wildlife Exploitation to discuss issues related to the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and lawyers' representation in wildlife cases in court.

He held a meeting with the Centre Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife to discuss the fight against wildlife crime and strengthen collaboration.

The Heads of the Legal and Investigations Department participated in joint missions with MINFOF officials in Yaounde and Ebolowa to evaluate activities carried out under the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with the Director of Criminal Affairs at the Ministry of Justice to discuss an ongoing wildlife matter and strengthen collaboration.

He participated at a meeting that focused on improving operational procedures for the management of ivory stocks in government storage facilities.

He held a meeting with the manager of the Limbe Wildlife Centre to discuss issues related to rescued primates and collaboration in fighting wildlife crime.

The Head of the Legal Department and legal advisers held several meetings with administrative, wildlife and judicial officials to strengthen collaboration and in some cases to discuss ongoing cases, build common strategies and strengthen collaboration.

7. LAGA and the EAGLE Network

LAGA's new model for NGO – Government collaboration establishing wildlife law enforcement, bringing about results with an innovative approach geared at changing the existing system and triggering a paradigm shift in the way NGOs tackle wildlife crime is being realised within the EAGLE network. The model is focusing on the prosecution of major traffickers, not the small-time poacher who is motivated by the city dwelling traffickers. This involves fighting head on the major obstacle to the application of the wildlife law in Africa – Corruption. LAGA's experience and model is currently operating within the EAGLE network that group 9 countries.

The replication of the LAGA model is also geared at taking cross section lessons outside of wildlife conservation; these include the fight against corruption, fostering activism, fight against child trafficking etc.

<http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Replication/tabid/166/Default.aspx>

The EAGLE network is now responsible for the replication activity of the LAGA model but LAGA continued assistance of young projects in the domain of investigation, operation, media and management. In this regard technical support was given to other EAGLE Network projects

8. Fostering Activism

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>**

9. Strategic Overview of Wildlife Crime in Cameroon and Operations' Impact

Beyond the number of operations and their effectiveness, there is an even more important factor in evaluating LAGA's work – the strategic value of the operations and its impact on the illegal wildlife trade. In this regard, LAGA is choosing diversified operations, which carry an added value to expose and map the different angles of wildlife crime in Cameroon. Consequently, the LAGA-MINFOF work sheds light on the nature of illegal wildlife trade in the sub-region. The strategic focus this year was on pangolin scales, ivory, primates, birds and leopard skins

9.1 Pangolin Scales

Over 1000 kg of pangolin scales were seized from 16 traffickers during the year. The illegal trade has returned in full force after the Covid 19 pandemic disruptions in several activities including trafficking: They represented the biggest group of traffickers arrested and demonstrates the importance of not relenting efforts targeting pangolin scales traffickers as this is an illegal trade that can involve several kinds of traffickers. Unlike ivory trafficking where you find highly specialised and top level traffickers dominating and controlling the trafficking, pangolin scales can bring every kind of trafficker together. The poor trafficker with just a few kilograms being activated by the major traffickers handling hundreds of kilograms as witnessed during the year.

In February, a trafficker was arrested in Bonis, near Bertoua, East Region with 242kg of pangolin scales. More pangolins and monkey carcasses were found in a refrigerator at his residence. He activated several traffickers and poachers in the area, who supplied the illegal products. He also bought small quantities of scales locally from bushmeat traffickers. He used his entire family including his wife and children in running the illegal pangolin scales trade.

In April, 5 traffickers were arrested in Akonolinga in the Centre Region with 90kg of pangolin scales. The traffickers were found in several different locations. They were a complete gang with a driver, middlemen and suppliers. They activated several smaller traffickers and poachers in villages around the town.

During the last operation in April, 3 traffickers were arrested in Yaounde, Centre Region with 386kg of pangolin scales. The traffickers, a Malian national and two Cameroonians, ran a lucrative illicit business in pangolin scales. They operated around the Yoko and Ntui areas that are notorious for wildlife trafficking and weak law enforcement. They also had connections close to the Cameroon border with the Central African Republic where the Malian had hidden huge quantities of pangolins scales. They also trafficked African grey parrots but were switching to other products. They claimed it was increasingly difficult to find parrots.

In October, 2 traffickers were arrested with 66 kg of giant pangolin scales in Yaounde, Centre Region. One of the traffickers, a Nigerian, has been operating his ring for at least four years and this was known during investigations into the illegal trade in pangolin scales in the area. 2 other traffickers were arrested with 180 kg of giant pangolin scales in Yaounde, they equally had several smaller traffickers they activated in Lomie and its environs.

And during the last operation of the year, 3 traffickers were arrested in Nanga Eboko, Centre Region with 120 kg of pangolin scales. Two of them were activating several poachers generating regular killings of pangolins. They complained that the Covid 19 pandemic hampered their activity, but they were quickly picking up where they left off before the pandemic started.

9.2 Ivory

Two operations carried out in Douala and Yaounde resulted in the seizure of over 150kg of ivory from two well developed artworks that span the sub region and beyond. Ivory trafficking invariably operates in networks, with enough sophistication and funds to carry out the intricate business of selling illegal ivory tusks. The networks operate cross border trafficking and move ivory along frontiers with specialised skills and knowledge. In September, 2 ivory operations were done with 2 traffickers arrested with 10 elephant tusks weighing 56 kg. The traffickers belong to a trafficking ring operating in major ivory trafficking hotspots and especially in a Kye-ossi, a border town. The traffickers are linked to Abdoul Salami, arrested in 2021 with 2 tons of pangolin scales and leopard skins. The ring operates in Congo, Gabon, Nigeria and beyond. Close relatives attempted to free the traffickers by applying pressure on wildlife officials but the attempts were aborted. During the second operation, 3 traffickers more traffickers were arrested in Douala with 98 kg of ivory in a crackdown on a Nigerian ivory gang. The ring controlled trafficking lines to Nigeria and to Cote d'Ivoire and moved ivory from as far as Congo. One of them claimed to have been smuggling ivory for over 35 years.

The first ivory operation of the year saw the arrest of 6 traffickers in Sangmelima, South Region, with 5 tusks, chimpanzee meat and parts of several other wildlife species. They belong to an ivory trafficking ring that covers most of the South Region including Djoum considered to be a trafficking hotspot.

9.3 Birds

The illegal trade in African grey parrots was once more the focus in the East Region. A notoriously lively ring was dismantled. The ring included poachers of live parrots and traffickers who supplied networks in bigger towns. 28 African grey parrots were rescued and 4 traffickers arrested in December. They had been active all the time continuously selling parrots as investigations into their illegal business was well underway. They seemed to know some wildlife law enforcement officials. The illicit trade, it should be noted, can only thrive if there is corruption because African grey parrots, like other parrots, are noisy and can't be transported nor stored without drawing attention and the traffickers need to be able to manipulate and corrupt. Even the traffickers today admit, it is becoming extremely difficult to gather huge quantities of the parrots because, they are dwindling very fast in the forest. This could explain why the four traffickers sold small quantities of parrot, albeit, fairly regularly.

9.3 Live Primates

Chimpanzees are amongst the most illegally traded primates in the country and two baby chimpanzees were seized from a traditional authority: Baby chimpanzees are generally the object of such devastating trade and they then turn to be resilient to the maltreatment they receive. This encourages traffickers to commit to illegally trading them. Mandrills are also commonly illegally traded in the country. Live primates are always rescued from precarious situations; malnourishment and diseases. They arrive sanctuaries in very bad state and generally require fast measures to save them from death.

Still in March a trafficker was arrested with 2 baby chimpanzees in Yaounde, Centre Region. The traditional chief was arrested at his residence. He had iron cages to detain and imprison wild animals including the baby chimps that kept holding the bars desperately longing to be outside.

In September, 2 traffickers were arrested and a mandrill rescued in Yaounde, the mandrill was forcefully pushed into a sack and transported to be traded illegally. The animal was brought by a worker in a logging company near the Congolese border. The mandrill lived chained to a tree. When rescued it moved nervously and frantically inside the bag as wildlife officials tried to free him. He was taken to Mvogbetsi zoo for care and support

9.4 Leopard Skins

The illegal trade in leopard skins has taken hold in the west of the country because of traffickers are taking advantage of culture to launder their illegal business. They use the cover of tradition and culture of the West Region to illegally trade in leopard skins with impunity. 2 traffickers were arrested with a leopard skin and a civet skin in Melong, close to the West Region. One of the traffickers transported the skins hidden in bags containing locally made kitchen utensils from Mbouda in the West Region to Melong where he was arrested.

10. Corruption and Wildlife Crime

LAGA has been an experiment field for methods of fighting corruption within a law enforcement and application process. All bribing attempts are documented into our case tracking systems. LAGA is not an observer of corruption; it was created to fight corruption, redirecting the positive pressures existing within the system, usually wasted in large conferences, to specific corruption attempts and the field realities that form corruption. These bribery attempts are vigorously fought against and vehemently condemned by LAGA. LAGA is not a watchdog group and not created as an observer, it fights directly whenever corrupt practices or bribery attempts have been observed.

This ongoing fight is directed towards issues that touch on corruption and bad governance. In 5 cases, corruption was observed and exposed following the arrest of traffickers. During the trial of 3 traffickers who were sentenced to 13 months in prison, corruption attempts were observed but luckily the presiding judge was unequivocal in her repudiation of such attempts.

In September, when 2 ivory traffickers were arrested in Yaounde and taken to the police office, family members attempted bribing police officers handling the matter and their boss. The officers stood their ground and pushed back the attempts. This did not discourage the relatives of the traffickers who attempted stopping the case at the level of the wildlife office but the Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife equally pushed back and refused their attempts at “negotiating”

This happened again in the same month in Douala following the arrest of 4 traffickers with human skeletons. They attempted bribing police officers who refused. The last operation in September witnessed the same approach, following the dismantling of the Nigeria-linked gang and the arrest of 3 ivory traffickers in Douala. As wildlife law enforcement officials were establishing the offence report, they received pressure from family members of the traffickers. They proposed money to the judicial police officer and wildlife officials who refused. After witnessing the steadfast attitude of law enforcement officials, another approach consisting basically of negotiating for their release was initiated by approaching one of the deputy state prosecutors.

Two traffickers were arrested in October trafficking in pangolin scales and they immediately set out attempting bribing their way out. They failed to bribe the wildlife law enforcement officials and police agents in charge of the establishment of the offence report. They were finally asked to pay a significantly low amount of money to be granted bail.

Annex I – List of Cases 2022

The list of cases and details of specific cases are made available on demand. Please contact eric@laga-enforcement.org for further information.

Annex II - the Year in Pictures



Three arrested in September with 100 kg of ivory, traffickers at wildlife office



Arrested in September with 5 6kg of ivory, traffickers at police station shortly before offence statements are written



2 traffickers at police station following arrests with 66 kg of giant pangolin scales in October



2 traffickers at police station following arrests in October with 180 kg of giant pangolin scales





He was found with 246kg of pangolin scales and carcasses of wildlife species loaded in a refrigerator in February

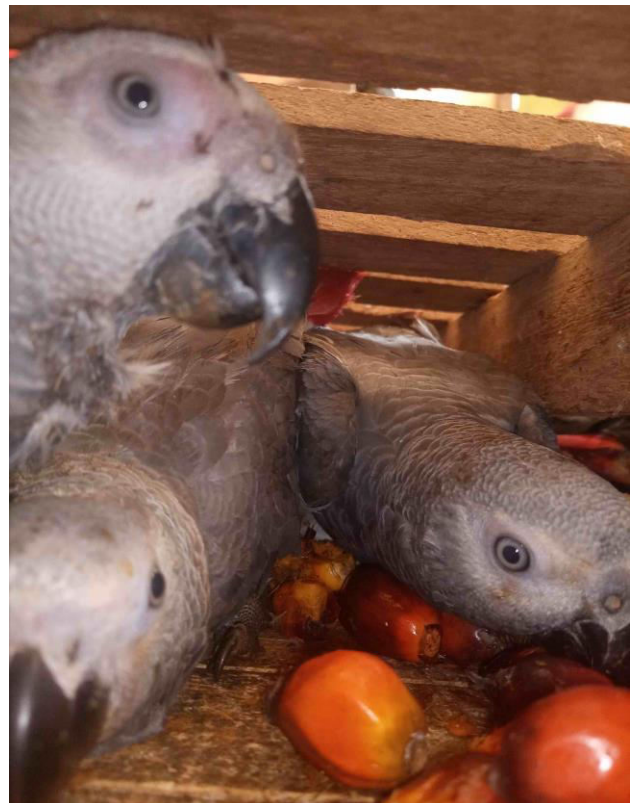


One of five traffickers arrested with 90kg of pangolin scales in April

In April, Malian and Cameroonian arrested for trafficking 386kg of pangolin scales



4 traffickers waiting for prosecution proceedings to begin, they were arrested for trafficking in 28 African grey parrots in December

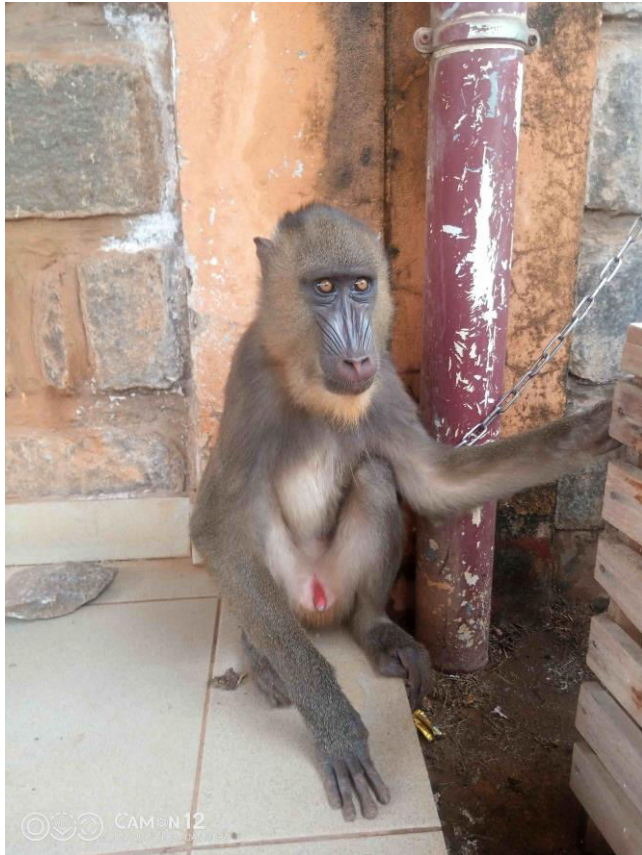


The parrots were crammed in an unsuitable wooden cage



Arrested in April for trafficking several primate skulls; at wildlife office





He was rescued from traffickers, at wildlife office in September



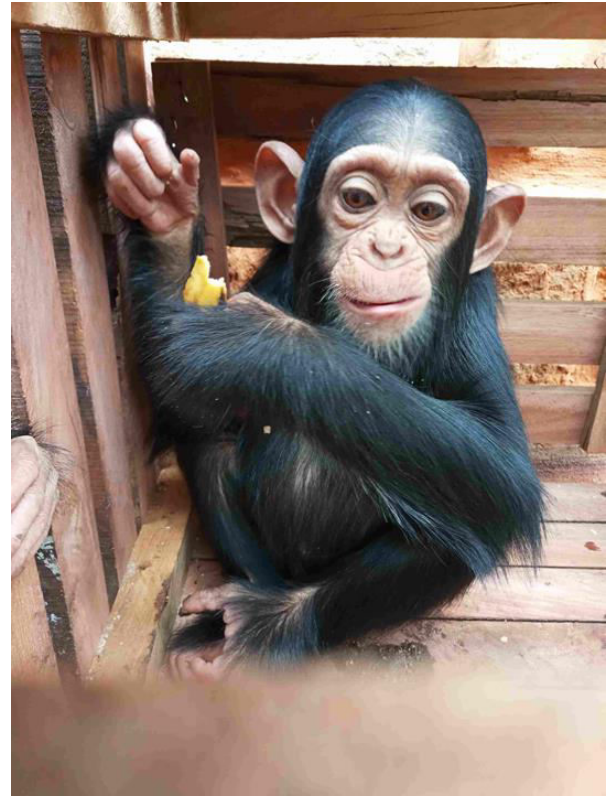
Human bones seized from traffickers in Douala in September



Arrested with a leopard skin and a civet skin during their attempts at selling them in February



Caged chimpanzees held captive at the residence of a traditional authority They were released in March



A gang of ivory traffickers arrested in the South Region shortly before prosecution begins, in March



Annex III - Some media links

Several online news sites carried stories on the arrest of traffickers within the year and here are some examples:

In July, Camer be, an online news site published the story on the court hearing of three suspects arrested with 386kg of pangolin scales at the Mimboman neighbourhood in Yaounde.

<https://www.camer.be/91777/11:1/cameroun-pangolin-scales-traffickers-at-the-ekounou-court-cameroon.html>

In September, Camer be, published the story of two traffickers arrested with 56kg of elephant tusks in Yaounde.

<https://www.camer.be/mobile/92390/11:1/cameroun-trafiquants-arretes-a-yaounde-cameroon.html>

In October, Camer be, published the story of two traffickers arrested with a leopard skin and a civet skin in Melong.

<https://www.camer.be/mobile/90174/11:1/cameroun-two-men-arrested-with-a-leopard-skin-cameroon.html>

In November, Stopblablam.com, an online news site published the court sentence of three traffickers convicted for trafficking in human bones. They were arrested after a long standing investigations into pangolin scales and leopard skin trafficking to India...

<https://www.stopblablam.com/societe/1611-9685-douala-cinq-ans-de-prison-pour-trois-trafiquants-d-ossements-humains>

In December, Stopblablam.com, published the story of the arrest of 2 traffickers with 180 kg of pangolin scales in Yaounde.

<https://www.stopblablam.com/societe/0212-9767-traffic-d-especes-protegees-pres-de-700-kg-d-ecailles-de-pangolin-saisies-depuis-le-debut-de-l-annee-2022-au-cameroun-ong>