

The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

October 2017 Report



Highlights

- **6 traffickers arrested during 3 different operations, ivory, pangolin scales and leopard skins seized**
- **2 traffickers arrested in Yaounde with two ivory tusks.**
- **2 traffickers arrested in Ebolowa with over 50kg of pangolin scales that were trafficked from as far as Gabon and Congo.**
- **The Deputy Director participated at the 17th MoP to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership held in Douala.**

General

This month was marked by the arrest of **6 traffickers during three different operations.**

2 traffickers were arrested in Yaounde, Centre Region with two ivory tusks. One of them is a long time trafficker and he was arrested shortly after he returned to Yaounde from a mission to get wildlife products. He is suspected to have a ring of poachers who supply ivory. The ivory tusks were hidden inside a plastic bag as the two drove in a car to sell the illegal ivory.

During the second operation of the month, **2 more traffickers were arrested in Ebolowa South Region with over 50kg of pangolins scales.** the two are experienced pangolin scales traffickers having a long standing relationships with other traffickers including a Nigerian national who regularly bought and exported pangolin scales. Their activities span across Gabon and Congo and had been going on for a number of years.

2 traffickers arrested with 2 leopard skins and pangolin scales in Bangangte in the West Region. One of the leopard skins was still fresh indicating that the leopard was recently killed. One of the traffickers who is said to be a traditional notable is suspected to have sold over 10 skins a month before his arrest.

The Deputy Director participated in the 17th Meeting of Parties to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership where he took part in several meeting sessions and side events. He equally held discussions with several top ministry and NGO officials on agenda issues and on wildlife law enforcement.

Investigations

- **31 investigation missions** of varying lengths were carried out in **6 Regions** of Cameroon-Littoral, Centre, South, East, West and Adamawa Regions.
- Good investigations in **Yaounde** led to the arrest of **2 traffickers** with two elephant tusks.
- Good investigations in **Mvangan and Ebolowa** led to the arrest of **2 traffickers** with 71kg of pangolin scales.
- Good investigations in **Bangangte** led to the arrest of **2 traffickers** with two 2 leopard skins and 41kg of pangolin scales.

Investigations Table

| Investigation Missions | Regions | No. of Operations | No of traffickers arrested |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 31 | 6 | 3 | 6 |

Operation

3 operations carried out with MINFOF this month **arresting 6 traffickers**.

9/10/2017 - During the first operations, **two traffickers were arrested with two ivory tusks in Yaounde, Centre Region**. The two were arrested at the Bastos neighbourhood in Yaounde after they arrived on board a taxi that is owned by one of the traffickers. He also has a ring of poachers who supply him with raw ivory while he deals directly with Chinese traffickers. Shortly before his arrest, he had driven his taxi car in from Bafia and it is suspected he went to collect wildlife products. He demonstrated remarkable cautiousness by inspecting the Carrefour Bastos area to ensure all was well for his illegal ivory transaction.

10/10/2017 – **Two traffickers arrested in Ebolowa, Centre Region with 50kg of pangolin scales**. The two were arrested at the Mekalat neighbourhood in Ebolowa They carefully concealed the two bags containing the scales when they arrived the neighbourhood but were uncovered by wildlife officials. They are long time traffickers with a history of trafficking with other nationalities including a Nigerian national who regularly bought and exported pangolin scales. They equally had a collection of smaller traffickers scattered around villages near Djoum and Mvangan. They would go around collecting the scales and when the quantities were significant, they would sell on to a bigger trafficker. Their activities span across Gabon and Congo and had been going on for a number of years

18/10/2017 - Two traffickers were arrested in Bangangte, West Region with two leopard skins and pangolin scales. One of the leopard skins was still very fresh. Pangolin scales were also seized during the operation from the one of the traffickers who travelled all the way from Bangolap, a few kilometres from Bangangte, on a bike with a leopard skin and the pangolins scales. He joined company with the traditional notable who also had a skin. The traditional ruler is suspected to belong to a network of traffickers of leopard skins and is alleged to have sold at least 10 skins a month to his arrest.

Operations Table

| No of Operations | Regions | No of Traffickers Arrested | Contraband |
|------------------|---------|----------------------------|--|
| 3 | 3 | 6 | 2 ivory tusks 50kg of pangolin scales 2 leopard skins 10kg of pangolin scales |

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried **12 missions** out of Yaounde-Centre Region, 1 in Douala (Littoral), 1 in Nkongsamba (Littoral), 2 in Ebolowa (South), 1 in Sangmelima (South), 1 in Meiganga (Adamaoua), 1 in Bamenda (Northwest), 2 in Bafoussam (West), 1 in Bangangte (West) and 2 in Bertoua (East).
- There are **23 traffickers behind bars this month**: 4 in East region, 2 in Adamaoua region, 2 in Northwest region, 3 in Centre region, 3 in Southwest region, 1 in West region, 5 in South region, and 3 in Littoral region.
- **35 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **32 cases** were scheduled and being tried in court this month.
- **3 dealers** were convicted this month.
- **Prosecution**: We had 2 judgments this month.
 - **10/10/2017**: The Meiganga Court of First Instance – Adamaoua, found the accused **NASSOUROU Abdoulaye** and **Aboubakari** guilty of illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of trophies of totally protected species including 2 crocodile skins, 2 leopard skins and a lion skin; while **YAYA Boubakari** was found not guilty. **NASSOUROU Abdoulaye** and **Aboubakari** were sentenced to: **7 months in prison and to pay 52.950 F CFA as court fees and 5.205.000 FCFA as civil damages.** They were arrested in Meiganga on the 13/04/2017.
 - **19/10/2017**: The Yaounde Ekounou Court of First Instance found the accused person **DONFACK Alphonse Thomas** guilty as charged and sentenced him to **pay 675.600 F CFA as fine and awarded to MINFOF the sum of 3.000.000 FCFA as civil damages.**

He was arrested in Yaoundé on the 08/06/2017 for illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of a leopard skin and 45kg of pangolin scales.

There was an appeal against the court ruling in the matter concerning **DONFACK Alphonse Thomas** at the Yaoundé Ekounou.court.

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 |
|---|------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 12 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 32 |

Media

- **48 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio & internet, including; 16 written press material (9 in English and 7 in French), 17 radio news flashes (9 in French and 8 in English) and 6 internet publications (4 in French and 2 in English).
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: the various court cases against wildlife traffickers of the month, the Yaounde arrest of two ivory traffickers, the apprehension of 2 suspects trading in pangolin scales in Ebolowa, the sentencing of 3 traffickers in Meiganga for lion and leopard skin trafficking and the Bangangte arrest of two with leopard skins and pangolin scales.
- 25 media pieces in English and 23 in French making a percentage of 52.1% in English and 47.9% in French.

Media Table

| No of Media Pieces | TV | Radio | Newspapers | Internet |
|-----------------------|----|-------|------------|----------|
| 48 | 0 | 17 | 16 | 6 |

External Relations and Policy

- The Deputy Director attended the 17th Meeting of Parties to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership where he took part in several meeting sessions and side events. He equally held discussions with several top ministry and NGO officials on topical issues of the meeting and on wildlife law enforcement. He also held a briefing meeting with the Head of the African Program of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He participated in the stream that focused on biodiversity and crime, took part in a couple of side events including the pangolin and ivory side events while holding a meeting to discuss the implementation of the CABAG project. The 5-day meeting brought participants from several countries in the Central African sub region, the European Union and the US.

- The Deputy Director and the Head of the Legal Department took part in a ceremony organised at the West regional delegation to mark the handing over of functions by the outgoing Regional Delegate, who is on retirement, to the newly appointed Regional Delegate.
- The Head of the Legal Department held a meeting with the Advocate General of the East Court of Appeal to discuss issues pending in court, he equally held a meeting alongside a legal adviser with a state counsel at the Yaounde Centre Administratif Court of First Instance. Another legal adviser held meetings, with state counsels in Ebolowa and Meiganga, respectively, to discuss some wildlife cases in the various courts.

Management

- Jean Claude Vignoli, a super volunteer, continued his training, working with various departments of the organisation.
- Three volunteers continued their test with the investigation department.

Activism Front:

Presentation: The Economic Crisis in the Sub Region

A legal department adviser attempts an explanation for current economic crisis the sub region faces as petrol prices have exposed the inadequacies of economic policies by the various regimes. He goes through economic causes of the slump but what catches the attention of his audience is governance and bad politics. Discussion moved from economic analysis to real politicking, governance and colonialism, the role of the white and his institutions etc.

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

Camer.be, a popular website carrying mostly news from Cameroon, published a story on the arrest of two traffickers arrested in Yaoundé. They were arrested by wildlife ministry officials and police officers over the unlawful possession of elephant tusks.

<http://www.camer.be/63414/11:1/cameroun-ivory-traffickers-arrested-in-yaounde-cameroon.html>

Finance

Please check LAGA website www.laga-enforcement.org for monthly financial reports.

This Month in Pictures



Ivory trafficker at police station following his arrest in Yaounde (above)



Two leopard skins seized from two traffickers who equally had pangolin scales for sale. (Above) One of the traffickers claims to be a traditional notable but seems to prefer wildlife trafficking (Below)



Two pangolin scale traffickers at the wildlife office shortly after they were found with 50kg of pangolin scales they were looking forward to selling (left)

