

ROBIN DES BOIS

ON_{the} TRAIL

Information and analysis bulletin on animal poaching and smuggling

n°19 / Events from the 1st October to the 31 of December 2017

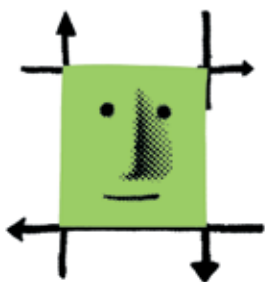
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Original version in French

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Previous issues in French

<http://www.robINDIASbois.org/a-la-trace-bulletin-dinformation-et-danalyses-sur-le-braconnage-et-la-contrebande/>

Previous issues in English

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ON_{the} TRAIL n°19

ROBIN DES BOIS
Non Governmental Organization
for the Protection of Man and the Environment
Since 1985
14 rue de l'Atlas 75019 Paris, France
tel : 33 (1) 48.04.09.36 - fax : 33 (1) 48.04.56.41
www.robindesbois.org
contact@robindesbois.org

Publication Director :

Jacky Bonnemains

Editor-in-Chief:

Charlotte Nithart

Art Directors and coordination :

Charlotte Nithart, Jacky Bonnemains and Elodie Crépeau

Writing:

Jacky Bonnemains and Jean-Pierre Edin

Research and assistant editor:

Elodie Crépeau, Irene Torres Márquez, Marine Giroud-Lécuret, Odile Malassis and Amutha Rock

Cover photo:

Geochelone elegans, Vilmos Vincze

Translation English edition "On the Trail":

Emilie Courtin, Eirann Cohen, Brigitte Robindoré and collectif Robin des Bois.
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CITES APPENDICES

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. 182 Member States

Appendix I : species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances and under import and export permits.

Appendix II : export permit required in order to avoid utilization incompatible with the species survival. Import permit if required by national law.

Appendix III : species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade. In the case of trade from a State that included the species in Appendix III, an export permit of that State is required.



Judgment and sanction

Condemnation, acquittal, fine...



Human death

Guard, ranger, policeman, poacher... by firearm or other means.



Poisoning

By chemicals, pesticides and medicines: cyanide, Carbofuran, Diclofenac, M99 ...



Trapping

Poaching by jaw trap, snare ...



Full moon

Moonlight poaching

Seahorses

Seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.) are listed under CITES Appendix II.

AMERICA

MEXICO

October 23, 2017

Ponciano Arriaga International Airport, State of San Luis Potosí, Mexico

Seizure of 450 "caballitos de mar" in a cardboard box on a parcel delivery platform adjoining the airport. With the sea horses were also found 260 small dried fish belonging to the Syngnathinae sub-family.¹

ASIA

CHINA

October 27, 2017

Lok Ma Chau, Hong Kong, China

1 kg of dried seahorses seized by customs at the border railroad terminus, in the suitcase of a 53-year-old woman on her way to Shenzhen. The station is under surveillance, but practical anyway: once outside of the station, all you have to do is walk across the footbridge over the Shenzhen river to get to continental China.²



INDIA

GANG / REPEATED OFFENSE

October 14, 2017

Thondi, Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

This small port is the starting point of a network selling seahorses fished in the Palk strait. M. Arjunan (40 years old) appears to be one of the linchpins. Policemen caught him at the city's bus station while he was waiting to take a bus to Chennai with an accomplice, G. Jeeva (25 years old). They were transporting 15kg of dried seahorses. They claim to have bought them from some fishermen who fished them "accidentally". They intended to sell them in Chennai to be exported. The noose is tightening around M. Arjunan. This is the second time he is found in a case of trafficking. In May 2016 a certain M. Suresh (36 years old) had already been arrested at the bus station in Thondi with 26kg of seahorses. He had declared he wanted to transport them to Bangalore for M. Arjunan. In this new case M. Arjunan and G. Jeeva were remanded in detention by the Paramakudi Tribunal.³

Corals

AFRICA

ALGERIA

GANG

December 25, 2017

Tébessa, Wilaya of Tébessa, Algeria

A new network uncovered. Three arrests. Seizure of 4.5 kg of coral. The divers were operating on the eastern reefs opposite of Annaba, El Taref, and Skikda. The gang's practice was to smuggle their booty into Tunisia. The coral involved is called "red oil." This confiscated batch is comprised of black coral (order Antipatharia, Appendix II).¹



OCEANIA

FIJI

December 28, 2017

Fiji

Coral rifraf on the Fiji Islands

In the name of its 100 employees and around a hundred villages living from harvesting and breeding coral, the Company Wall Smith International protests against the decision to suspend all exports of live and fossilized coral beginning on 7 January 2018. The board of directors invokes short notice and claim they have been informed of the decision while having a stock of coral worth \$ 14,000 US to be sold on the global market.

The Smith Company would have invented a method to restore coral reefs whitened by global warming using specimens taken from nature, bred within stable thermal and hydrodynamic conditions then replanted in the natural reefs.²



Abalones

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

GANG

October 10, 2017

Noordhoek, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

The Port Elizabeth flying squad, the K9 dog unit and an anti-poaching team set a trap around 6:45 p.m. to intercept a group of poachers in action. The police observed the individuals loading bags into a vehicle, which then drove away. The police followed it and stopped it. In the trunk, they found five bags containing 555 abalones. The vehicle was confiscated. The three men in the car were charged and taken into custody. The batch was estimated at 30,000 rand (\$2,200 US), relatively little compared to estimates of other seizures. Undoubtedly, the abalones were very small.¹

GANG

October 10-12, 2017

Western Cape Province, South Africa

Pressure on abalone stocks from poachers continues. The money involved pushes them to take all sorts of risks.

- Tuesday 10 October around 11 p.m., in **Napier, Overberg District**, the police spotted a Nissan Tida speeding down Sarel Cilliers Road. They started chasing the vehicle, but it accelerated even more to escape. The 29-year-old driver lost control and finished the race crashing into a wall. He was taken to the hospital. 1313 abalones estimated at between 350,000 and 400,000 rand (\$26,000 to \$30,000 US) were found in the car.

- The next day in **Melkbosstrand**, a beach resort about 30 km north of the Cape, the police received a tip around 11 p.m. There were people diving, looking for abalones. A team of municipal and national police, assisted by national parks agents, began surveillance. Around 2 a.m. a Nissan Almera arrived and loaded six bags of abalones. The car took off when the police approached. A chase followed, moving northerly on the N7, in the direction of Malmesbury. The driver lost the police around Chatsworth. A sweep and search operation was carried out in the area, and the vehicle was found abandoned with its haul. The six plastic bags did indeed contain abalones, worth about 650,000 rand (\$48,000 US). The vehicle was confiscated.

- Thursday 12 around 3 p.m., **The Cap**. Following a tip, agents with the K9 dog unit of the Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries searched facilities located in the north Parow neighborhood. They found 6439 fresh abalones, approximately 500 kg. In the back of the BMW X5 - a high range 4x4 - parked behind the building, three boxes containing 598 dried abalones were also found. The shells were worth 900,000 rand (\$66,000 US). A 30-year-old suspect was taken in for questioning.²

GANG

October 31, 2017

Brackenfell, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

It is simply not letting up. The Brackenfell neighborhood is a trafficking hub (see "On the Trail" n°18, pp. 5 and 6). Seizure of over 40,000 units of abalones, weighing about 2233.5 kg, comprising wet, dried and cooked units in a clandestine kitchen on River Road. They were valued at just over 5 million rand (\$370,000 US), or \$160 US per kilo, or \$9.25 US per unit. The marine brigade from the Hawks, agents from the Department of Agriculture Forest and Fisheries (DAFF) and a dog unit had been tipped off about a vehicle suspected to be transporting the abalones. The trail led them to the major trafficking network's kitchen. Two suspects, aged 39 and 42, were arrested on site.³

GANG

November 3, 2017

Caledon, Western Cape Province, South Africa

The smell had become unbearable. Locals in Ian Toerien Road, in an industrial zone, complained to the police around 11 a.m. about suspicious odors coming out of the building. When the police intervened, they discovered a cooking and packing workshop for poached abalones. 64,258 shells waiting to be processed or packaged were seized, along with all of the equipment: six 48 kg gas cylinders, 22 plastic tubs, two stainless steel burners, three 1,500 l water tanks, a refrigerator, two deep freezers, 141 dry racks, a thermometer, a digital scale and some fans. The value of the abalones was estimated at 5 million rand (\$355,500 US). Two suspects, aged 29 and 32, were taken in for questioning and put in custody. Caledon is situated approximately 30 km from the sea and about 100km east of the Cape.⁴



GANG

November 6 and 11, 2017

Mfuleni, Cape Town, Province of Western Cape, South Africa

Two consecutive seizures and arrests in this township near False Bay, about thirty kilometers East of Cape Town.

It was first the flying squad that took interest on November 6 in a van driving in the night on Eersteriver road with three men onboard. Inside, the police found 5553 abalones wrapped in 55 bags, estimated value 1 million rand (\$ 71,000 US). The check also revealed that the vehicle had been stolen during an attack at the beginning of the month. The three men arrested, aged 36, 42 and 46, will be presented before the Blue Downs court.

Some days later, and apparently without any link to the first case, the Tactical Response Team acting on a tipoff disbanded in the early hours of the 11th a processing and packaging workshop set up on Pelican Walk, in the Sunbird Park neighborhood. The stock of shells and equipment seized is estimated worth 3,500,000 rand (\$ 248,800 US). The five suspects aged 18 to 53 arrested on site should they too be sent before the Blue Downs Magistrates' Court, which sees the succession of teams of poachers and traffickers arrested in the False Bay area.⁵



GANG

November 20, 2017

Swellendam, Western Cape Province, South Africa

38,870 dried abalones in a hidden compartment of a truck heading to Gauteng. Value: \$504,680 US. The 28-year-old driver was stopped, the truck seized.⁷



GANG

November 21, 2017

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Two men, aged 22 and 29, were noshing on abalone. More than 30,000 cooked and raw abalones were seized.⁸



GANG

November 24, 2017

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Seizure of 2,000 abalones and a lot of diving equipment. One arrest. More than ten divers fled, leaving a vehicle behind.⁹

GANG

November 27, 2017

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Seizure of 321 abalones split between seven bags. The two traffickers are on the run.¹⁰

GANG

November 29, 2017

Hermanus, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Seizure of abalone and Mandrax®, a sedative that when mixed with marijuana becomes a "recreational drug" commonly used in South Africa. Seven arrests.¹¹

Port Elizabeth, Western Cape province, South Africa

At two o'clock in the morning, a man emerged from the bushes on the side of Marine Drive. He was spotted by a patrol. In two bags, he was transporting 243 abalones weighing 50 kg and estimated to be worth 50,000 rand (\$3,655 US).¹³

GANG

December 28 and 31, 2017

Strand and Milnerton, Cape Town, Western Cape province, South Africa

Neighbourhood Watch members on Beach Road arrested five men in possession of 201 abalones. The suspects were taken into police custody.¹⁴

November 2017

Hout Bay, Cape Town, Province of Western Cape, South Africa

Seven ex-abalone poachers are receiving training to reorient in legal scuba-diving activities. The education was provided by the Guerrini Marine Construction (GMC) company and the Jack's Dive Chest diving school. The initiative is placed within the framework of Operation Phakisa directed by the Department of Public Works and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries aiming to enhance the maritime economy around small South African ports. The trainees come from Handberg, a poor neighborhood of the Hout Bay, scene of recurrent protests. This former township for people categorized as "coloured" during the apartheid-era saw again last September fighting between police and demonstrators protesting the lowering of fishing quotas, with the support of local residents protesting bad living conditions and degraded infrastructure. Fishing is the main livelihood for people in Handberg and with the activity going down for several years gangs from the Cape were able to recruit men ready to dive with a tuba into the cold waters of the bay to poach abalones. The seven men in training to do under-water work were members of these gangs. Once their qualification received, their first task will be to take part in removal of sunken fishing boat wrecks that clog certain parts of the Hout Bay port. After dismantling of the wrecks on land, wood and metals will be recovered by other inhabitants of Handberg and will be repurposed to other local projects. For Stephan Braaf, one of the seven ex-poachers "With the abalone you can earn a lot... but you can actually lose it as well, because if they catch you you're going to go to court... So for me a fixed income is going to be better for my family..."¹²



Giant Clams, Conches, Noble Pen Shells

ASIA

CHINA

October 25, 2017

Danzhou, Province of Hainan, China

Seizure in a postal package coming from the United States of America of a 333,2 g giant clam (*Tridacnidae* spp. Annexe II).¹

SRI LANKA

November 3, 2017

Oluthuduwai, Mannar District, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Arrest of two people. Onboard the pick-up truck, they were driving by night towards a port in the north of the island. In the back, over 680 kg of conch shells (genus *Strombus*), that is 3033 animals being transported in a boat destined for Tamil Nadu in India. Sea cucumbers and conch shells are subject to intense trafficking between the two countries.²

December 30, 2017

Wariyapola, North-Western Province, Sri Lanka

Having received information, police in the town, assisted by the Chilaw coast guards stopped a rickshaw with three suspects onboard transporting a conch (genus *Strombus*) 15 cm in height and weighing 600 g.³

EUROPE

SPAIN

October 11, 2017

Es Mercadal, Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands, Spain

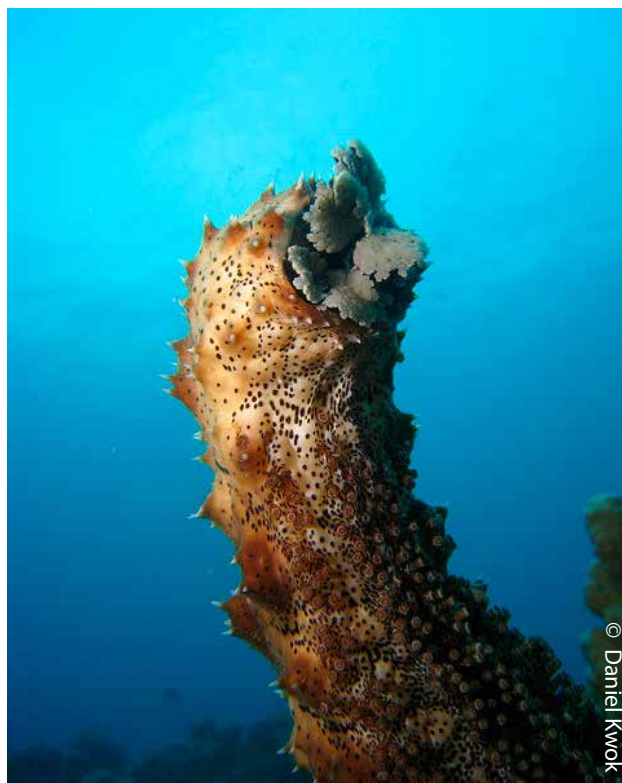
Seizure of three large noble pen shells (*Pinna nobilis*) on the north coast of the Minorca island in the western Mediterranean Sea. Two arrests. Noble pen shell, see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 8.⁴



Sea Cucumbers

Sea cucumbers are on sea bottoms and low grounds of repute. Along with shark fins, abalones and totoaba swim bladders, sea cucumbers are among the "must" of marine gastronomy. At the same time they suffer from a reputation as healers of human diseases since the Ming dynasty. Today, more than 60 species of sea cucumbers are caught in tropical, temperate or polar waters. The circle of sought-after species is widening and eventually the 377 known species of sea cucumbers are threatened with extinction. Dried, they sell for up to \$ 3000 US/kg. There is an urgent need for international protection of sea cucumbers. For much more information on sea cucumbers, see "A Sea Cucumber Ending" in "On the Trail" n°4, p.107.

Class Holothuroidea. *Isostichopus fuscus* is listed under CITES Appendix III in Ecuador.



© Daniel Kwok

In China, the popular word for sea cucumbers is Haishen, which roughly means "sea ginseng." The Ancient Greek scholars believed that Mediterranean sea cucumbers had a phallic form during the breeding season and thus christened them holothurie (holos=whole and thourous=impetuous).

In the south of France, the Occitan language referred to them as "viers marins" ("sea viers") (derived from viech=sex).

In Australia and New Caledonia, sea cucumbers are called "beches de mer" and "biches de mer". The origin of the names is subject to several interpretations. In Southeast Asia, sea cucumbers are called "trepangs".

AFRICA

FRANCE

October 10, 2017

Juan de Nova Island, Scattered Islands in the Indian Ocean District, France

Deportation of three boats, 17 canoes and 83 fishermen practicing illegal fishing. 60 kg of sea cucumber were seized. The boats were returned to the smugglers with enough food, water and gas to reach Madagascar.¹

Sea cucumbers that live in tropical waters, like the *Stichopus Herrmanni*, are useful for coral reefs. They release calcium carbonate and ammonia, which facilitate coral growth and ossification. "When they ingest sand, the natural digestive processes in their guts increases the pH level of the water on the reef where they defecate," says Professor Maria Bryne, who studies the role of invertebrates in the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef off the east coast of Australia.

MADAGASCAR

November 2017

Madagascar

A vessel belonging to the French marine army operating within the Regional Plan overlooking fisheries (PRSP) found a dhow and five canoes illegally fishing sea cucumbers. A kg can be sold on the island for 360,000 ariarys i.e. \$ 114 US. Fishing has been officially banned by the government since 2016. Madagascar used to export 300 tons each year, that is 3 million individuals. The Saint Mary Islands, Nosy Be and the south of the main island are the main trafficking locations.²

Sea cucumbers are purifiers of marine ecosystems, particularly in bays and other semi-enclosed environments. They reduce build-up of decomposing waste on the seabed and prevent the growth of bacteria, plankton, and toxic algae.

AMERICA

COLOMBIA

November 3, 2017

San Onofre, Sucre Department, Colombia

Seizure of 5554 dried and stuffed sea cucumbers. Acetic acid, stoves and other cooking utensils were also seized inside the preparation workshop near the Rincón del Mar village 200 meters from and isolated small road.³



© Ria Tan

Sea cucumbers are the champions of marine soil bioturbation. They feed on sand and silt and discharge from the anus sediments that have been partially cleared of detrital particles. They mix the surface layers of the marine soil from depths of 30 to 50 cm. This work of soil ploughing and oxygenation prepares for settlement of other organisms living on the seabed. Sea cucumbers are a supportive species that work for others.



© Klaus Stiefel

MEXICO

October 13, 2017

Mulegé, State of Baja California Sur, Mexico

Discovery on the Playa El Morro of 146 fresh sea cucumbers in four buckets. The police came on site following anonymous information. The smugglers fled.⁴

October 2017

Colonia Rancho Blanco, Guadalajara, State of Jalisco, Mexico

Seizure on a parcel delivery service platform of five packages reeking of a foul stench and containing 56 kg of dried sea cucumber.⁵

October 18, 2017

Dzidzantún, State of Yucatan, Mexico

They had been arrested in December 2016 on the Tizimín-Mérida highway and in the town Baca with 277 kg and 337 kg of "pepino de mar". The two trafficking women were sentenced to the equivalent of \$ 2,570 and 3,125 US that will be spent on marine environment protection actions and to eight months prison time. They were taken to the State social rehabilitation center. The sea cucumbers belonged to the three-rowed sea cucumber species (*Isostichopus badionotus*).⁶



The *Isostichopus badionotus* measure 20 cm in length and recycle 160 g of organic debris in 24 h. In Bermuda, over an area of 4.4 km², the *Isostichopus badionotus* ingest, “wash,” and digest 500 to 1,000 t of sand per year.



November 3, 2017

Mazatlán, State of Sinaloa, Mexico

Federal police are after drug and wildlife traffickers. After the seizure of 4 kg of a narcotic powder inside a printer transiting through a delivery service platform in Culiacán, they seized in Mazatlán 15 kg of sea cucumber hidden inside cardboard boxes sent through a bus station. A bus was to take on the “merchandise” destined to Matamoros, 12 hours drive away, right near the border to the United States. The seizure happened thanks to the canine squad.⁷

Beginning of December, 2017

Mérida, State of Yucatán, Mexico

Agents of the Conapesca (Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca) intercepted a truck near the cargo area of the international airport. Inside, there were 3 t of precooked sea cucumbers of the *Isostichopus badionotus* species. The “pepino de mar” were ready to fly to an unknown destination. The massive smuggling attempt was thwarted. The “seafood products” lacked any form of legal documentation.⁸

ASIA

To purify the blood, Chinese tradition says that the sea cucumber must be mixed with pork. To treat sexual impotence and urinary incontinence, it must be mixed with mutton, and to improve intestinal transit it must be mixed with tremella, a type of gelatinous mushroom.

China didn't support the listing of sea cucumbers in CITES and said that in the markets, farmed sea cucumbers have replaced wild sea cucumbers. China also believes that data on trade and population status do not suffice. (This opinion dates from 2002, 12th plenary session of CITES. Santiago, Chile.)

INDIA

October 5 and 26, 2017

Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Heavy pressure on the sea cucumber populations in the Palk strait and Gulf of Mannar. Fishermen from Tamil Nadu are specializing in their capture and smuggle them into Sri Lanka. Two big seizures took place this month.

On the 5th it first was in a farm near Mandapam that a packaging workshop was dismantled, and 500 kg seized, following a tip-off. The team of about ten people working there spread into the surroundings when maritime police arrived.

On Thursday 26 near Rameswaram on Pamban island a boat is stopped just in time with a man onboard. He was carrying 600 kg of sea cucumber.⁹

REPEATED OFFENSE

December 7, 2017

Thoothukudi, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Following a tip-off, agents from the WCCB (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau) and local police raided three warehouses in the coastal village of Threspuram. In one of them they stumbled on Mohammed Azharudin (29 years old) and Mohammed Rahim (24 years old), qualified as “frequent offenders” by the inspector T.P. Pradeep of the WCCB. The two men were in possession of 24 kg of dried sea cucumber, which corresponds to 150 kg worth of live animals. They face up to 7 years in prison.¹⁰

Sea cucumbers emit clouds of eggs, larvae, and juveniles. Their disappearance deprives mollusks, crustaceans, fish, and whales from an important food source. An *Apostichopus Japonicus* ejects one to ten million eggs in a single spawning season.

The consequences of the sea cucumbers' disappearance are not all known, but cascading effects are already feared. Polychaetes, shrimps, and fish live above or alongside sea cucumbers. The destruction of these providential habitats would result in the extinction of several benthic species or would press hard on them.



Fishes

AFRICA

LIBERIA

November, 15 2017

Liberia

Joint boarding and inspection of the *Labiko 2*, formerly *Maine*, by the Liberian navy and a Sea Shepherd coast guard. The vessel was on the black list of the NAFO (Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization), the NEAFC (North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission) and the SEAFO (South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization). The *Labiko 2* used gillnets instead of the longlines required by the Liberian fishing license. Some sharks and around thirty fins were found on board.¹

November 2017

Liberia

The trawler *Dzintars*, flying the flag of Saint-Vincent and the Grenadines, was boarded by 10 Liberian soldiers from a coast guard vessel belonging to the NGO Sea Shepherd. The French newspaper *Le Marin* explained that the 56m-trawler had started its career based in the Breton port of Lorient, under the names *Chevalier d'Assas* (ship-owner Lucas) / *Claude Moinier* (ship-owner Petrel, Intermarché), and was sold in 2005 to Spanish investors. The *Dzintars* is suspected of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Gulf of Guinea. It was rerouted for an enquiry at the coast guard station in the port of Monrovia.²

AMERICA

BRAZIL

Arapaima, see also p. 20 ref. 4, p. 21 ref.10 et p.130 ref. 60.

October 15, 2017

Porto Manaus Moderna, Manaus, State of the Amazonas, Brazil

A mixed load was onboard the *A Nunes*, a boat docked in the town center. With a denunciation, investigators from the Delegation for the Environment (DEMA) found there 1300 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II), while those from the Delegation for narcotics found a large quantity of unspecified drugs. The owner, Almir Correa de Araújo (40 years old), was in possession of fake IBAMA (Instituto brasileiro do meio ambiente e dos recursos naturais renováveis) documents to justify possession of the fish. He was taken to the 1st district police station and the arapaima will be given to charities in Manaus.³



October 20, 2017

Tabatinga, State of the Amazonas, Brazil. Border to Colombia and Peru.

Another 200 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) seized towards 8:30 pm in 8 bags on board a boat on the rio Solimões, and a 43-year old suspect arrested. He was coming from São Paulo de Olivença and was trying to reach Colombia close by to sell the fish in the town of Leticia. He tried to escape, and with good reason: he had escaped from the Anisio Jobim penitentiary next to Manaus, where he was doing time under a semi-open regime for drug dealing.⁴

October 21, 2017

State of Rondonia, Brazil

Environmental police got their hands on 189,5 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) in an underground fishing camp by the side of the Luzitana. A freezer truck was on site and the driver didn't have any transportation documents. He was arrested and the vehicle seized. The fish later enhanced the menus given out by the charity Aguas Vivas.⁵

October 23, 2017

Manaus, State of the Amazonas, Brazil

Four wildlife traffickers were arrested on a boat near Demeter port, south of Manaus. They were transporting 1200 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II), 468 kg of tambaqui fish (*Olossoma macropomum*), 68 turtle eggs and a Taurus rifle caliber 38. Taken to the police station, Alexsandro de Azevedo Gomes (24 years old) and Eurico de Lima Barbosa (45 years old) were indicted for transporting fish out of the legal fishing season, Jucelino de Souza Velozo (62 years old) for hindrance to wild animal reproduction relating to the turtle eggs and Armando José Leite Gomes (50 years old) for possession of a fire weapon without a license. They were released pending trial. The turtle eggs were given to the IBAMA and the fish to charities.⁶

Beginning

November 2017

International Airport of Manaus, State of the Amazonas, Brazil

Seizure of 672 fish captured in the Amazon and its tributary the Rio Xingu inside the luggage of Jhon Batalha, 23 years old, student and Leandro Martins dos Santos, 25 years old, security agent. The two traffickers were leaving for Colombia, via Tabatinga. All the fish paddling in plastic bags barely filled with dirty water gorged with bacteria were on the verge of suffocating. They all belong endangered species protected under Brazilian law or CITES. In the wild, they are known for their bright colors and designs on their skin. They are sought for by aquarium owners around the world. Among the victims who almost all died in the headquarters of the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisa da Amazônia (Inpa), Brazilian experts particularly



morn 302 zebra pleco (*Hypancistrus zebra*, Appendix II) not only threatened by ornamental fish trafficking but also in their unique habitat by the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam on the Rio Xingu and eight rays *Potamotrygon orbignyi* listed in Appendix III in Colombia. Jansen Zuanon expert for the INPA speaks of a murderous traffic- 70% of the fish do not survive transportation by land and air- and the irretrievable loss of a live treasure still unknown in its full diversity and contribution to the ecosystem of the Amazon basin. Several gangs are after the small flamboyant fish (see "On the Trail" n°17, p.9).⁷

November 3, 2017

Manaus, State of Amazonas, Brazil

Donation of 300 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) seizure this morning around 9 am by military police to two charity organizations of the town. Agents led an intervention on a boat at dock. They arrested the owner, Paulo Cabral de Vasconcelos (73 years old). He was later released pending trial.⁸

November 17 2017

Tefé, State of the Amazonas, Brazil

An impressive seizure by federal police of 12 tons of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) on board a boat navigating on the rio Solimões (name given to the Amazon between Manaus and the border). The two men intended to sell their catch in Santarém in the State of Pará. They were sent before Justice. The boat and the fish were seized.⁹



**November 24, 2017
Manaus International Airport, State of the Amazonas, Brazil**

New seizure of fish destined to die in transport or to end their lives in an aquarium. This time federal police took interest in the suitcase of a man that turned out to contain 47 ornamental fish and six stingrays wrapped in plastic bags filled with water. The animals had been poached in the State of Pará and were intended to be exported. The man was kept in pre-trial detention.¹⁰



December 11, 2017

Iranduba, Amazonas State, Brazil

On a boat in the harbor, seizure of 600 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II), locally known as pirarucu, and 18 sea turtles. Arrests made by military police.¹¹



December 20, 2017

Engenheiro Passos, Municipality of Resende, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

On board a truck coming from Mimoso do Sul and heading toward Guararema, which is 740 km away: 700 kg of 30 live arapaimas (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II). According to the driver, he and his passenger were coming from a fish farm. As there were not any documents certifying that the transfer was legal, the fish were seized. We don't know what's become of them.¹²

ECUADOR

October 2017

Province of Guayas, Ecuador

Despite protestation from their lawyers according to whom they were not provided with a sworn translator, the crew members of the *Fu Yuan Yu Leng 999* were sentenced in appeal to one-year prison term. The captain of the Chinese fishing ship yet was granted the judges clemency. The four-year prison sentence pronounced against him in first instance court was brought down to a single year. The fishing boat will be returned to the owner against payment of a 6 million US\$ fine. In her holds, the Ecuador coast guards had found nearly 300 tons of shark fins. The *Fu Yuan Yu Leng 999* had been boarded off the coasts of the Galapagos islands (See "On the Trail" n°18 p. 9-10).¹³



December, 22 2017

Near Genovesa Island, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador

The *Don Gerard V*, an Ecuadorian fishing boat, "got lost" in the national park. It was found by the Ecuadorian navy with its 23 crewmen and 8 fiberglass dinghies. There were 30 sharks in one hold, thresher sharks (*Alopias spp.*, Appendix II), silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*, Appendix II), blue sharks (*Prionace glauca*), albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*), and swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*).¹⁴

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OPERATION BROKEN GLASS

October 5, 2017

Portland, State of Maine, United States of America

A federal court opened a case against William Sheldon, Timothy Lewis and Charles Good, accused of trafficking American eels (*Anguilla rostrata*), more specifically glass eels. They pleaded guilty. The three men fell into a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service trap during Operation Broken Glass, an investigation covering 14 States and aimed at putting a stop to the glass eel traffic. These elvers can be sold for over \$2000 US per pound in Asia. A total of 18 suspects were arrested in this operation. They admitted to having traded over \$4.5 million US in glass eels.¹⁵ See "Glass Eels, More Brittle Than Crystal" in "On the Trail" n°4, p.9.

October 25, 2017

Norfolk, State of Virginia, United States of America

The verdict is in. Richard D. Austin (see "On the Trail" n°17 p. 10) got 24 months' imprisonment for trafficking juvenile American eels. Austin already had several previous wildlife-related convictions. This time, he is behind bars for 147 pounds of elvers, which is approximately 300,000 individual eels, poached in Virginia and in Massachusetts. His profit in the affair is estimated at \$162,000 US. He sold his catches to exporters working on the Asian market.¹⁶



November 3, 2017

Norfolk, State of Virginia, United States of America

The guilty verdict was announced today. Tommy Water Zhou (see "On the Trail" n°17 p. 10) got caught in the nets of Operation Broken Glass and was sentenced to 18 months in prison for trafficking American eel elvers (*Anguilla rostrata*), illegally fished in Virginia. The evidence produced in court showed that Zhou trafficked at least 105 pounds of elvers, which is approximately 210,000 individual eels, and worth more than \$105,000. Zhou subsequently sold these elvers to international buyers and exported them from the United States.¹⁷



OPERATION BROKEN GLASS

December 12 and 14, 2017

Portland, State of Maine, United States of America

-Sentencing of Yarann Im to six months prison for having in full knowledge bought approximately one million glass eels (218 kg) poached in Virginia, North Carolina, and in Massachusetts and maliciously sold them in Asia.



- Albert Cray pleaded guilty. He illegally fished glass eels in New Jersey for a total value of \$ 250,000 US in 2013 alone and sold them in Maryland to a sea food merchant.

- Thomas Choi, 76 years old, the sea food merchant in Maryland, was sentenced to 6 months prison and meager fine worth \$ 25,000 US for contraband to Asia of approximately 2.5 million glass eels worth in full 1.26 million US\$.¹⁸

FRANCE

November 24, 2017

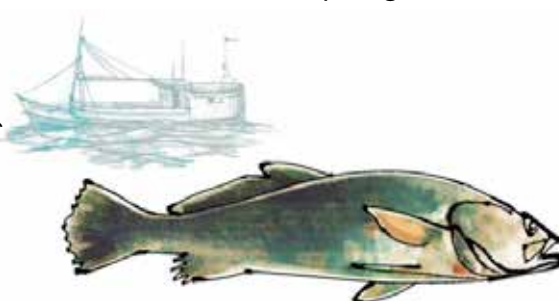
Cayenne, Guyane Department, France

Conviction of two individuals, a man and a woman originating from Brazil and Guyana to 6 months prison suspended sentence for having organized an acoupa weakfish (*Cynoscion acoupa*) swim bladder smuggling towards Surinam and Brazil. 189 kg of fresh swim bladders and 150 kg of dried ones were seized within this investigation. Acoupa weakfish count for almost half of fishing in Guyana. The bladders were processed and packaged in tin metal cabins in Cayenne. Acoupa Weakfish are of the same family as the totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*) but is not listed in Appendix I of CITES.

International trafficking in acoupa weakfish swim bladders is not illegal and the suspended prison sentences inflicted on the smugglers for non-registered work, are far from deterrent. A totoaba swim bladder can be sold in China on the retail market for 14 to 15,000 US\$ per kg.¹⁹



© Une saison en Guyane



The red acoupa is sought after by coastal artisanal fisheries. The increasing local alimentary demand is superseded by the international demand for swim bladders. The species is dependent on the South American continental shelf from the Caribbean to northern Brazil. It would be surprising if the trafficking of red acoupa swim bladders, driven by expatriate Asian communities, were confined to the French Guyana.

MEXICO

October 9, 2017

Puertecitos, State of Baja California, Mexico

Four traffickers driving in a truck were caught in the net laid out by the federal police, national police, the Mexican Navy, the National Commission on Fisheries and Aquaculture (Conapesca) and agents from the Secretariat for National Defense (SEDENA). Ten totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) swim bladders, measuring between 25 and 60 cm long, for a total weight of approximately 4 kg, were hidden in a cooler.²⁰

October 16, 2017

Loreto, State of Baja California Sur, Mexico

540 kg of silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*, Appendix II) were inside the white truck on the road leading from Loreto to Santa Rosalia. The Ford and its "cargo" were seized. The driver is being questioned by police.²¹



December 28, 2017

Tijuana International Airport, State of Baja California, Mexico

Seizure of 104 totoaba nets (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) containing 52 specimens. Their swim bladders were missing. Their final destination was Tecate, a border town. The idea was for the fillets to pass through Lower California to get to California.²²

ASIA

CHINA

December 29, 2017

Kwai Chung, Hong Kong, China

Arriving from Peru, the container caught the custom's services' attention following an analysis of smuggling probabilities. Well done! It contained about 464 kg of dried hammerhead shark fins (*Sphyrnidae* family). Value would reach up to \$ 370,000 HK (\$ 47,000 US).²³

SRI LANKA

October 12, 2017

Valaichchenai, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka

Four people on board a dinghy in possession of a whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*, Appendix II) weighing 170 kg were apprehended by the coast guard. The animal was seized and the fishermen were handed over to the Batticaloa Department of Fisheries.²⁴



EUROPE

ITALY

October 10, 2017

Gaeta et Formia, Lazio Region, Italy

Three recreational fishermen caught some hefty fines at the end of their lines. Atlantic Bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) fishing has been illegal in Italian waters since the month of August, when the country exhausted its quotas attributed by the European Union for 2017.

Coast guard patrolling the harbor that afternoon first noticed a 54-year-old man hastily loading his car on a private pontoon where he had just moored his boat. He had caught 48 bluefin tuna, which were under regulatory size, in addition. He will have to pay an administrative fine of €8000 (\$9400 US). The fish, worth approximately €1000 (\$1170 US), were judged edible by the local health department. They were donated to religious institutions.

That same day, but this time off the coast of Gaète, about a mile from Punta dello Stendardo, the coast guard inspected a pleasure boat captained by a 39-year-old recreational fishermen. The man had 15 Atlantic bluefin tunas. He received a fine of €2000 (\$2,340 US). A needy family in the region was given the fish, assessed as healthy by a veterinarian.

In the third case, a 63-year-old man was intercepted as he sailed towards the port of Formia – 7 km north of Gaète – on a pleasure boat containing 20 juvenile bluefin tunas already cleaned and gutted, for a total weight of 20 kg. He received a fine of €8000 (\$9400 US).²⁵



OPERATION TORPEDO

End of October 2017

Maiori, Furore and Conca dei Marini, Province of Salerno, Campania Region, Italy

At dawn, coast guard uncovered complicity between fishermen at sea and men on land. Over 100 kg of bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) caught during prohibited fishing time and under the minimum size and weight of 115 cm and 30 kg were seized. The disputed tunas were at most 40 cm long. Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) were also seized.²⁶

Mid-november

Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy

Seizure of 100 kg of non-specified fish and 10 swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) of 4 kg on the fish market. An adult swordfish weighs 100 kg and progenitors are increasingly rare. Global fine amounts to 13,000€ (\$15,100 US).²⁷



RUSSIA

Sturgeons (*Acipenseriformes* spp.) are listed in Appendix I or II.

OPERATION PUTIN - FALL 2017

Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Khabarovsk Krai, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Far East Russia, Krasnoyarsk, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Eastern Siberia Region, Sevastopol, Crimea, Russia

October 11, 2017

- One arrest. The poacher was illegally selling the steaks of a beluga, whose initial weight is estimated at 200 kg, to restaurants.

October 16, 2017 REPEATED OFFENSE

- The end-of-year holidays were approaching. Seizure of 937 kg of caviar, estimated to have a value of around 50 million ruble or \$867,000 US and \$925 US/kg. Three arrests.

October 23, 2017

- Seizure of 17 kg of black caviar and 15 cut, salted, and dried sturgeon. Two arrests.

- Seizure of 2 t of sturgeon, 60 kg of black caviar, and 7 kg of red caviar. The black caviar comes from sturgeon eggs, the red caviar from salmon eggs. One arrest.

November 15, 2017

- Arrest of a trafficker on the Amur River. He had 37 kg of sturgeon and 180 kg of black caviar. The fish, caviar, and boat were seized.

November 16, 2017

- Seizure of 62 kg of caviar distributed amongst 124 plastic containers. A genetic test to determine the species is in progress. One arrest.²⁸

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

October 7, 2017

190 nautical miles off the Northern Territory coast, Australia



An Indonesian boat first spotted by aerial surveillance was boarded and inspected in an Australian fishing zone. On board, agents from the Customs Department and the Fisheries Authority found 200 kg of fish, including at least one shark, and approximately 100 kg of bait. Two long lines equipped with 200 hooks each were also seized. The five members of the crew were transferred to a court in Darwin. The captain was fined \$2000 AU (\$1530 US), while the sailors received two-year good behavior bonds. The ship was confiscated and destroyed.²⁹



Marine Mammals

Polar bears see page 80.

AMERICA

MEXICO

October 18 and November 4, 2017

Sea of Cortez, Mexico

Better never than too late. The Mexican government presented the attempt to save the vaquitas as a last-ditch effort. Conducted by the Marine Mammal Organization of San Diego, NOAA, the Chicago Zoological Society and Duke University, the operation came to an abrupt end, with a two-fold tragedy. A female about six months old who was suckling was promptly released a few hours after her capture. She was very anxious. Veterinarians from Vaquita CPR (Vaquita Conservation, Protection and Recovery) decided to get rid of her before she could have died in the sea pen. As she was separated from her mother, it was inevitable that she would die in the sea. The second victim was an adult female. According to the CPR, she was not lactating or gestating. She died in the sweetly named sea pen El Nido, just a few hours after she was captured. Long before this animal experiment, it was already well known that vaquitas cannot endure captivity. Despite that, the experiment was supposed to continue on with breeding and reintroduction into the Gulf of California. There were 28 of them before. Only 26 of them are left now. Cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p.16, n°17 p.10-11.¹

OCEANIA

SALOMON ISLANDS

GANG

November 1st, 2017

Rapata, Kolombangara Island, Solomon Islands

Police operation that reveals the hazy origin of some of the great dolphins of the Indian Ocean (*Tursiops aduncus*, Appendix II) presented to the public in amusement parks. Informed by locals, agents from the ministry of Fisheries and marine resources with the help of policemen from the Island got hold of 20 dolphins illegally captured on the sea side village and destined to be exported. They were set free. 14 people members of a gang specialized in this trafficking were arrested, and the dolphin traps seized. Investigations are underway to identify any other accomplices. According to Western Province Chief Superintendent Mathias Lenialu, dolphin captures are frequent in the province. The price of an animal would be 100,000 Salomon Island dollars (\$13,000 US). Cf. "On the Trail" n° 15, p.10.²

Marine Turtles

Marine turtles (families Cheloniidae and Dermochelyidae) are listed under CITES Appendix I, including Ridley sea turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), Hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Kemp's Ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys kempii*), loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) and leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*).

AFRICA

KENYA

October 9, 2017

Watamu Marine National Park, Kilifi County, Kenya

The adult green turtle saved from the butcher's knife was released into the Indian Ocean.¹

December 2017

Watamu Marine National Park, Kilifi County, Kenya

- Seizure in the rocks of 19 sea turtles remains, including their shells.

- 19 lost, 1 won. It returned to the sea after it was rescued from a poaching attempt.

Watamu Marine national park covers 10 km². It was founded in 1968. It hosts nearly 600 fish species, 150 coral species, and a countless number of crustaceans, mollusks, and invertebrates, as well as whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*, Appendix II), manta rays (*Manta spp.*, Appendix II), octopuses (Octopodinae family), and barracudas (*Sphyraena barracuda*). Cf. "On the Trail" n°10 p.9, n°13 p.13, n°15 p.11, n°16 p.14.²



LIBERIA

November 15, 2017

Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, Liberia

Sentence to one year in prison for having killed a leatherback sea turtle. Boggay Jones had been arrested November 15 based off of testimonies from local residents. They were thanked by the Deputy Director of the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency).³



MADAGASCAR

December 15, 2017

Mahajanga, Boeny Region, Mahajanga Province, Madagascar

Fresh meat on the beach of Aranta. 20 young sea turtles were cut into pieces. They had been trapped by nets in the night. The poachers fled on a motorized canoe as the fishery patrol approached. The official notice says that currently sea turtles mainly eat toxic seaweed and, therefore, that the consumption of their meat is fatal.⁴

TOGO

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 17, 2017

Lomé, Maritime Region, Togo

The Criminal Chamber of the First Instance Tribunal convicted a trafficking couple, Kokouvi Assigbe and Afi Afanou, sentencing them to 6 months prison, 200,000 FCFA (\$350 US) in fine and et 500,000 FCFA (\$885 US) each in damages to be paid to the ministry of the Environment and forest resources. They had been arrested by judiciary police on March 20 while attempting to sell 66 juvenile marine turtles and five adult shells. Investigations showed they would capture marine turtles and would sell them when they reached the "commercial" size.⁵



AMERICA

BRAZIL

OPERATION ORLA VERDE II

December 15, 2017

Itarema and Acaraú, State of Ceará, Brazil

- The four dead green turtles were stashed in a beach hut.
- Shells and other traces of at least one hawksbill turtle were seized from a fishmonger's stall.⁶

December 2017

State of Roraima, Brazil

Every year, the struggle against tartarugueiros starts over again, even stronger yet. 85 turtles were seized. The survivors were released into the Rio Branco waters close to the Atlantic Ocean. To lay, the turtles swim the river upstream.^{6bis}

MEXICO

October 1, 2017

Puerto Vallarta, State of Jalisco, Mexico

A PROFEPA (Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente) patrol, assigned to monitor and protect sea turtles, discovered a Pacific Ridley turtle caught in a fishing net, drifting with the currents near the Camarones beach. The animal was freed and the fishing gear was picked up to be sure that it did not capture any other turtles or dolphins of any of the species common in Banderas Bay (*Stenella attenuata*, *Delphinus delphis*, *Grampus griseus*).⁷

October 10, 2017

On the road between Pinotepa Nacional and Salina Cruz, State of Oaxaca, Mexico

Again, these backpacks filled with marine turtle eggs on the Mexican west coast.



- A young man, 23 years old, a black backpack, 326 eggs.

-A young man, 17 years old in the same area, 156 eggs.

-A man, 38 years old, a blue backpack, 418 eggs by the side of the same road.

It's the season. Traffic police are on the alert.⁸

October 15, 2017

State of Guerrero, Mexico

Poachers had fled. Agents discovered a plastic bag on the beach that contained 12 Pacific Ridley turtle eggs and a backpack containing 295 eggs. Unfortunately, given the time that had elapsed, the eggs were no longer viable.⁹

October 15, 2017

Cancun, State of Quintana Roo, Mexico

The hotel "Krystal Grand Punta Cancun" was clearly built in the wrong place. Several species of sea turtles are common on the beach and come there to lay their eggs. Local inhabitants complained to the PROFEPA that hotel personnel were handling the turtles to amuse tourists. During the site inspection, PROFEPA agents did not witness any mistreatment. However, they did confirm that when the sea turtles laid their eggs on the beach, hotel employees collected the eggs at the break of day and placed them in so-called "nesting pens" where promotional events are organized to free the juvenile turtles in the presence of personnel and special guests. The hotel claims to have a vague contract signed with the environmental services at the Benito Juarez town hall authorizing these practices. Since they have no federal authorization of any kind, PROFEPA initiated administrative proceedings against the hotel. The beaches are breeding grounds for loggerhead, hawksbill and green turtles.¹⁰

October 24, 2017

Compostela, State of Nayarit, Mexico

Seizure near the Boca de Chila beach of 294 eggs. One arrest.¹¹

October 31, 2017

Acapulco, State of Guerrero, Mexico

Arrest under article 420 of the Penal code of a certain Gilberto N. for unlawful possession of Ridley turtles' eggs. The individual was turned over to the "Regional social rehabilitation center".¹²

November 17, 2017

San Luis Río Colorado, State of Sonora, Mexico

Routine check of a pick-up at a roadblock set up by military police enables to discover pieces of green turtle meat. The loot was turned over to the PROFEPA, the man and woman on board the vehicle were remanded in custody.¹³

December 11, 2017

Guadalajara, State of Jalisco, Mexico

Seizure in two acts.
- 3,172 olive Ridley sea turtles.
Two arrests.¹⁴

ASIA

INDIA

End of October- Beginning of November, 2017

Ganjam District, State of Odisha, India

Laying season is coming for Ridley turtles. Getting ready for the ladies to arrive, State services have been busy. They remind of the temporary ban on trawling in coastal waters within a 170 km line. Last season, 153 turtle corpses had been found along the 40 km of the Ganjam district beaches.

The "no fishing zone" doesn't find full support among fishermen. They claim to not be responsible for the turtle drowning and demand indemnities for the imposed period of inactivity. On the other side, State services count on local organizations and personalities involved in wildlife protection and on the Gopalpur fishing port authorities to enforce the trawling ban. In February of this year, around the mouth of the Rushikulya, biologists estimate at 370,000 the number of eggs left on the beaches by Ridley's turtles. If need be, Fisheries Department and Forest officials announce coercive action could be taken against rebellious fishermen and that two speed boats and two trawlers rented by the administration will be watching over coastal waters.¹⁵

December 2017

Morjim, Mandrem, Agonda and Galgibaga, State of Goa, India

The NGT (National Green Tribunal) orders the Goa government to collect 100,000 rupees (\$1560 US) as compensation for each cabin or other form of occupation of the foreshore where lay the Olive Ridley turtles. Goa is also required to ban lighting effects, loud music, nocturnal parties and camping near the laying zones.

The GCZMA (Goa Coastal Zone Management) pledged to the NGT to remove any trace of settlements on the foreshore.¹⁶

IRAN

December 12, 2017

Tehran, Tehran Province, Iran

Spotted by activists and seized by the environmental police in a Tehran restaurant where she was at risk to be cooked, she has been flown to Qeshm Island and released in the Persian Gulf/Sea of Oman.¹⁷



MALAYSIA

October 7 and 13, 2017

Ligitan et Tawau, Tawau District, State of Sabah, Malaysia

The two young men, aged 30 and 20, and apparently from Indonesia, were each sentenced to four years in prison and a fine of 150,000 ringgits (\$36,700 US), with an additional year in prison if they fail to pay the fine, for having transported and attempted to sell 97 kg of green turtle shells and other body parts.¹⁸



SRI LANKA

October 17, 18 and 22, 2017

Northern Province, Sri Lanka

On land and at sea, Sri Lankan marine patrols fill the news items.

– Boarding of a raft in full action, illegally fishing. Seizure of forbidden nets, scuba-diving gear and three under-water lamps. Arrest of the crew, four men.

– Arrest of a cyclist transporting 13 kg of marine turtle meat.
.../...

- Arrest following a tip off of a driver transporting 9 kg of Indian cannabis.
- Boarding by patrol boats P 142 and P 233 of two crafts, seizure of fishing equipment and fish of which use and capture are forbidden.
- Discovery of a hiding place by the sea side with water gel explosive capsules, three non-electrical detonators and a distress rocket. First observations by maritime police lead to conclude this equipment was destined for illegal fishing activities.¹⁹

November 13 and 14, 2017

Ampara and Mannar Districts, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka

The coast guards are still on the case.

- Two arrests and seizure of seven marine turtles.
- Four arrests and seizure of a fishing boat, 350 kg of fish and forbidden fishing gear.
- Four arrests, seizure of scuba-diving equipment, 812 kg of fish and under-water explosives.²⁰

VIET NAM

November 1, 2017

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

The restaurant had been on the police menu for several months. Two hawksbill turtles were seized.²¹

November 16, 2017

Phu Loc District, Province of Thừa Thiên-Huế, Viet Nam

Two hours before the turtle was meant to go in the soup pot, she was saved by an environmental police raid and released in the sea.²²

OCEANIA

FRANCE

Beginning of November, 2017

Moorea Island, Society Islands Archipelago, French Polynesia, France

Te mana o te moana set back to sea two turtles who nearly didn't make it, one had a harpoon wound right through her shell and owes her rescue to a passing sailboat, the other one from out a freezer where she had been placed on her back.²³



Various Marine Species

ASIA

INDIA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 1st, 2017

Thondi, Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Seizure of 17 kg of sea cucumber, 5 kg of seahorses, 4 kg of dried pipefish belonging to the Syngnathidae family, 12 kg of horse conch flesh (*Pleuroploca gigantea*). Two family members are being questioned by police. The boss escaped.¹



Pleuroploca gigantea

Smuggling between Tamil Nadu and the north of Sri Lanka comprises multiple channels. A dhow loaded with 710 kg of glyphosate was intercepted a few days ago by a marine patrol near the Mannar lighthouse.



SRI LANKA

December 1 and 2, 2017

Beruwala, Province of West Thalamannar Pier, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Maritime police uses any string they can pull. After heroin and cash, sandalwood on a motorbike, 100 tablets of prescription pills, they seized 27 kg of dolphin meat and a whole dolphin, seven conches, 670 kg of fish, five boats, three illegal fishing devices, a van and arrested 13 fishermen and other ocean pillagers.²



EUROPE

FRANCE

November 8, 2017

Marseille, Bouches-du-Rhône Department, France

The trial of a gang of underground fishermen and poisoners was postponed following their request to 18 July 2018. The poaching under-water divers would pillage urchins, octopuses and groupers in the Calanques national park. They sold them to at least six local restaurants and bistros under labels such as Pierrot Coquillages, La Cabane du Pêcheur, Coquillages Montredon, Neptune Coquillages, Grand Bar des Goudes, Chez Yves.

Urchins are unfit for consumption because of lead contamination cause by the past spilling of industrial residue on the cliffs.

The retailers that served the poached products on their terraces overlooking the blue and polluted Mediterranean Sea only were fined between 500 and 1500 € (\$600-1800 US) and will have to follow a one-day-long “environmental training”.³



OCEANIA

FRANCE

November 30, 2017

Collectivity of New Caledonia, France

Are Vietnamese “blue boats” back? None of these clandestine fishing boats had been intercepted for the past seven months in the French exclusive economic zone (EEZ) waters around Grande Terre and its surrounding islands. On Thursday at dawn, the surveillance frigate *Vedémiaire* and the coastal surveillance ship *Dumbéa* caught two of them near the Bélep archipelago, about 45 km northwest of Grande Terre. They had first been sighted in the Australian exclusive economic zone and had been tracked since November 27 by a French Air Force Falcon 200 Guardian. According to a press release by the French Navy, the crew surrendered but “not without having resisted and attempted to avoid verifications by the inspection team.” And for good reason, they were in possession of a number of shark fins and 31 barrels for sea cucumbers. The fins were estimated at over 70,000 Pacific francs (\$680 US) per kilo. The two boats and their crews were rerouted to Noumea so that charges could be pressed. Between November 2016 and March 2017, approximately 50 “blue boats” were intercepted in violation of regulations in the French EEZ of New Caledonia (see “On the Trail” n°16, p.6).⁴

Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles

The United States of America, Brazil, Madagascar, India, Mexico, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, by canoe, plane, Mercedes Benz, by post, in socks or under chocolates, for meat, scales, petmania, games of gambling, tortoises and freshwater turtles are slaves to trafficking in conspiracy. The trade in turtles is universal. The most spectacular seizure of the quarter was made in Libya. The 3,000 Kleinman’s tortoises took the road to Egypt. Old IUCN documents from 2003 say that in three generations their range has shrunk from 123,000 km² to 16,600 km². The same document predicted extinction of the species by 2025. The end is coming.

Cumulative quarterly seizures: Examples

3000 Kleinman’s tortoises
(*Testudo kleinmanni*, Appendix I)
1392 Indian star tortoises
(*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I)
342 parrot beaked tortoises
(*Homopus areolatus*, Appendix II)
202 yellow-headed sidenecks
(*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II)
109 Madagascar radiated turtles
(*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I)

AFRICA

LIBYA

End of November 2017

Jerdes el Abid, Marj District, Libya

This is the second tortoise seizure in Libya reported by “On the Trail” (see n° 12 p.16).

The 3000 Kleinman’s tortoises (*Testudo kleinmanni*, Appendix I), a heritage and emblematic species in Libya, were hidden under a load of hay. The truck was coming from the Tobruk region and was heading once again toward Egypt. The checkpoint commander wants the tortoises to be released in their natural environment as quickly as possible, once the prosecutor’s authorization has been obtained and resources are available.¹



MADAGASCAR

November 12- 14, 2017

Ambohidrapeto, Province of Antananarivo, Madagascar

Recovery at the bottom of a side road of a hundred-baby Madagascar radiated turtles (*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I) stuffed into socks, cardboard boxes, a suitcase and a bag and vetted for airline smuggling. A simple grain of sand threw off the whole trafficking but didn't save the endangered turtles that can be sold for thousands of dollars per unit in Asia.²



December 15, 2017

Ivato International Airport, Analamanga region, Madagascar

Seizure of four Madagascar angulated tortoises (*Astrochelys yniphora*, Appendix I) and nine radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I) from the luggage of three passengers with a final destination of Guangzhou. "The mastermind of the gang is Chinese," says the local press. The tortoises had been captured on the Mahajanga and Toliara sides of the main island, in the west and the south.³

AMERICA

BRAZIL See also p. 10 ref. 6, p. 11 ref. 11.

OPERATION YELLOW-HEADED SIDENECK AND TRINEMIS

October 2017

Lábrea, Canutama, Tapauá, Paulini e Boca do Acre and Cujubim Sustainable Development Reserve, State of Amazonas, Brazil

- Seizure of 133 yellow-headed sidenecks (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II) poached in the Rio Jutai.
- Seizure of 66 yellow-headed sidenecks, 26 South American river turtles (*Podocnemis expansa*, Appendix II), 8 red-headed river turtles (*Podocnemis erythrocephala*, Appendix II), 188 turtle eggs and 648 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) poached in the Rio Purus, plus a rowboat and a raft.

All in all, 11 million reais in fines were imposed (\$3.5 million US).⁴



October 18, 2017

Lake Pacoval, State of Para, Brazil

The 36 turtles were found turned onto their backs by the side of Lake Pacoval. Close by, the Santarém police found six fishing nets. There also, it is laying season and female marine turtles are all the more vulnerable that water levels are very low due to a drought. A week earlier, in the same area, a man transporting 18 live turtles and 83 eggs was arrested.

The Amazon basin is home to at least 15 species of turtles victim to trafficking for food, the pet trade trends but also of water pollution by mercury and mining sludge.⁵

October 18, 2017

Santarém, State of Pará, Brazil

Seizure of 85 turtles in bags. They apparently were set free. Three arrests. The meat and eggs are part of the Amazonian gastronomy.⁶

November 16, 2017

Presidente Figueiredo, State of Amazonas, Brazil

Seizure of three yellow-headed sidenecks (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II) and one red-footed tortoise (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II), all alive, and 30 eggs. One man has been arrested.⁷



From December 1 to 6, 2017

São Félix do Araguaia, State of Mato Grosso, Brazil

Seizure of one canoe, three pirogues, two outboard motors, 22 nets, and 27 turtles which were released back into the waters of Araguaia River, a tributary of Tocantins River. Fines for two men and one woman between 27 and 61 years old.⁹



December 12, 2017

Vale do Javari Indigenous Land, State of Amazonas, Brazil

Military police seized 700 tortoises, including red-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II) and yellow-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II), as well as 150 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) in three rowboats on the Rio Ituí, along with weapons, cartridges and illegal fishing devices.¹⁰

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

November 21, 2017

State of Texas, United States of America

Last February, Byron Paul Pitre (34 years old) sold three Eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina*, Appendix II) and sent them by mail from Louisiana, where he lives, to a purchaser in Corpus Christi, Texas. But it turned out that the purchaser was an infiltrated agent from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Louisiana State legislation bans the sale and transportation of eastern box turtles. In May 2017, the USFWS invited themselves to Pitre's house with a search warrant. Agents found 230 box turtles (*Terrapene* spp., Appendix I or II), 119 map turtles *Graptemys* (Appendix III), 45 leopard tortoises (*Stigmochelys pardalis*, Appendix II), 20 African spurred tortoises (*Centrochelys sulcata*, Appendix II) and 88 turtle eggs of non-identified species. Paul Pitre stated that he caught reptiles in the wild and sold them to private individuals in Texas, Nevada and New Jersey. District Judge John D. Rainey ordered him to serve three years of probation and pay a \$2,500 fine.¹¹



FAMILY AFFAIRS

December 15, 2017

Beaumont, State of Texas, United States of America

Travis Leger and his half brother Jason Leckelt were sentenced to 21 and 16 months of prison without remission. Their accomplice Rickey Simon was sentenced to 3 years of probation for breaching the Lacey Act, which prohibits interstate trafficking of protected species. In this case, they were alligator snapping turtles (*Macrochelys temminckii*, Appendix III in the United States of America). Leger had already pleaded guilty in August (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p. 19). The 30 to 40 turtles were transferred to a hatchery, to participate in the program to repopulate waterways in the southwestern United States. Alligator snapping turtles can live longer than 100 years and weigh over 90 kg.¹²



MEXICO

October 25, 2017

Centla, State of Tabasco, Mexico

A turtle enthusiast police patrol seized three musk turtles (*Staurotypus triporcatus*) and one Tabasco mud turtle (*Kinosternon acutum*) in a bag that a man dropped when he saw the patrol and fled. A little later, on the road from Macuspana to Villahermosa, the military patrol found a turtle that was in danger of being run over. They entrusted all five turtles to the PROFEPA. The turtles were all released in the Tabasquillo river.¹³

ASIA

BANGLADESH

October 24, 2017

Ramsagar, Dinajpur District, Bangladesh

A venerable turtle, 24 kg and 60 cm long, nearly 90 years old, but of a species not clearly identified, was released in the historic waters of Ramsagar at 11 p.m. She had been hooked by a boy in the village of Auliapur that afternoon, and sold a few hours later for 16,600 takas (\$200 US) to a fish wholesaler. The police recovered her just in the nick of time, after receiving a tip.¹⁴



CHINA

October 25, 2017

Shenzhen Bay Control Point, Guangdong Province, China

Hong Kong customs intercepted a 50-year-old man trying to drive a car across the border into continental China. He had hidden 7 box turtles (*Cuora* spp., Appendix II) under the passenger seat, wrapped in black socks and white tape. The turtles are estimated at \$14,000 US.¹⁵

INDIA

REPEATED OFFENSE

GANG

September – October 2017

Morena and Chennai Districts, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Red-crowned roofed turtle syndicate shut down
Thamim (Thameem) Ansari, a well-established cinnamon trader in Chennai, is suspected of having transported by road, from the Chambal region in the Madhya Pradesh to Chennai in Tamil Nadu several hundred red-crowned roofed turtles (*Batagur kachuga*, Appendix II).
.../...

To do so, he used a very luxurious Mercedes-Benz that avoided the curiosity of road patrols and, overall, proved to be much safer than endless and dangerous transfers by bus or train. The police have several photos proving that the Mercedes went through the Sagar toll booth near the Chambal River, a tributary of the Ganges. The prior arrest of two accomplices and the confessions of Kailashi Chavi Ram and Ajay Singh led to the arrest of Thamim Ansari in his home in Chennai. The cinnamon trader drove nearly 4000 km round-trip to take deliveries of roofed turtles, stolen by Kailashi from a rehabilitation and release center for crocodiles, gavials and aquatic turtles in Deori, on the banks of the Chambal River. Kailashi supplied fish for the Deori center. "The fact that the ring could snatch these critically-endangered reptiles from a State-run breeding center indicates how deep the smugglers' tentacles are spread," according to those at the very head of the investigation.

In September, Ansari had already been caught red-handed with three accomplices, transporting 477 spotted black terrapins (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*, Appendix I) and tricarinate hill turtles (*Melanochelys tricarinata*, Appendix I), in 23 bags, in the Tuticorin district (Tamil Nadu). They were on their way to Sri Lanka by sea before travelling to China by plane.¹⁶



Batagur kachuga

October 9, 2017 Bengaluru, State of Karnataka, India

Seizure in a car of 1012 turtles, mostly juveniles, contained in seven bags and battered by the long journey in poor conditions:

- 852 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix II)
- 122 tricarinate hill turtles (*Melanochelys tricarinata*, Appendix I)
- 27 Indian tent turtle (*Pangshura tentoria*, Appendix II)
- 11 red-eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), an invasive exotic species.

The director of this national and international traffic, destined for Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Hong Kong via Chennai Air Cargo, is the manager of a pet shop that sells terrestrial and aquatic animals. The theoretical value of the shipment on the international market is \$650,000 US. The native species are receiving veterinary care. The red eared sliders will be killed. The vehicle was driving towards the international airport.¹⁷



GANG

October 23, 2017

Kanewal District, State of Punjab, India

The two men, in possession of 50 kg of meat, were caught red-handed hunting turtles near Saraya Sidhoo, and arrested. They were taken into custody until charges could be pressed. According to Muhammad Hussain Gashgori, director of the provincial Wildlife Department, they are part of a gang specialized in turtle meat that has been pirating the region for six months and selling the meat to Chinese restaurants. They poach in the Chopar Hatta canal and various other sites in Punjab. The Wildlife Department has begun a manhunt to find the other members of the gang, who have fled.¹⁸

November 18, 2017

State of Uttarakhand, India

Seizure of three Indian tent turtles (*Pangshura tentoria*, Appendix II) and a red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) also called a Singapore turtle. The son of a leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a major political power in the country is involved with an accomplice in turtle and fish trafficking for aquariums. Despite that the number of turtles illegally held and put for sale by Mohit Sharma, 30 years old, is small compared to usual seizures in Uttarakhand and the rest of the country, the divisional forest officer relying on preliminary inquiries suspects a large-scale trafficking and the existence of a network extending all the way to Delhi. Red-eared slider turtles are considered in India to be an invasive species, dangerous for public health- their eggs would be toxic. They would be illegally bred in India to compensate for the disappearing of domestic species and to fuel demand for "lucky charm" turtles and turtle meat.¹⁹

November 11, 2017

Sidhartha Nagar District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Arrest by the 43rd battalion of the SBB (Sashastra Seema Bal) of a Nepalese individual aged 37 smuggling 17 turtles captured in India, one of them black, two red ones and 14 grey coloured all destined to Nepal.²⁰

December 11, 2017

Chennai International Airport, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Two men arrested: Safur Ali, 33 years old, and Mohamed Thamim Ansari, 27 years old. They were on their way to Bangkok on a Thai Air Asia flight. In their suitcases, they had, respectively, 130 and 80 juvenile Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I), hidden in plastic boxes under some chocolates. They were sentenced to two fines of 50,000 rupees (\$780 US).²¹



MALAYSIA

September 30 and October 2, 2017

Padang Besar, State of Perlis, Malaysia

Fined 10,000 ringgit (\$2450 US) for a Wildlife Conservation Enactment offense, and 20,000 ringgits (\$4890 US) for animal abuse. The man was carrying 48 turtles of a non-specified species in 48 Styrofoam boxes. For this kind of trafficking, he could have gotten up to 10 years in prison or 200,000 ringgits (\$48,900 US) in fines. For animal abuse, he risked up to one year in prison and 50,000 ringgits (\$12,230 US) in fines.²²



MYANMAR

October 26, 2017

Tachileik, Shan State, Myanmar

The 342 parrot beaked tortoises (*Homopus areolatus*, Appendix II) were just barely hatched and in a sorry state. They are receiving antibiotics and vitamins in a specialized shelter in the Zeepingyi forest. They were seized in a house. Their natural predators are ravens and raptors, jackals and monkeys. To protect themselves, they spend most of their time living under rocks and dead leaves. They are very much in demand in neighboring China, where they are used for gambling games.²³



PHILIPPINES

November 10, 2017

Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Philippines

Another fruitful operation for customs. They seized 123 live Chinese softshell turtles (*Pelodiscus sinensis*), hidden in a shipment of eels. The sender is in Guiguinto, in the province of Bulacan, and the receiver in Taiwan. The species feeds on insects, small rodents or snakes and plants in paddy fields and wetlands. The eels were not confiscated. They were accompanied by the regulatory permit.²⁴

THAILAND

November 30, 2017

Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

Seizure at 1am of 330 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I) in three anonymous suitcases that were not picked up on baggage carousel number 6.²⁵



VIET NAM

October 2017

Province of Gia Lai, Viet Nam

"If you want a pet, please get a cat or a dog! Leave wildlife in the wild" reminds (Education for Nature – Vietnam).

Voluntary handing over of an impressed tortoise (*Manouria impressa*, Appendix II) who will soon be returned again to nature in the Ka Kinh reserve.²⁶



October 17, 2017

Viet Nam

An impressed tortoise (*Manouria impressa*, Appendix II) was freed, after its owner was convinced by the "Leave wildlife in the wild" campaign. The lucky one will go back to the wild, under the surveillance of the Asia Turtle Program (ATP).²⁷

October 20, 2017

Ba Ria Vung Tau Province, Viet Nam

Seizure of three Indochinese box turtles (*Cuora bourreti*, Appendix II) for sale on Facebook.²⁸



October 26, 2017

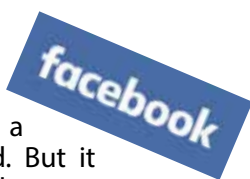
Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

A Malayan snail-eating turtle (*Malayemys macrocephala*, Appendix II) was wandering the streets of District 1 of the capital, which is not the safest place for a turtle, especially when it is in poor health. It will need some time before it can be released in the wild.²⁹

October 30, 2017

Viet Nam

It was a "rescue purchase," a practice that is often criticized. But it did enable the Facebook purchaser to turn the keeled box turtle (*Cuora mouhotii*, Appendix II) over immediately to the Cuc Phuong Rescue Center via ENV.³⁰



EUROPE

BELGIUM

End of October 2017
Belgium

The man smuggled 334 Greek tortoises (*Testudo graeca*, Appendix II) from Morocco to Belgium. None of them survived the stress of the voyage and the change in climate. The man was sentenced to nine months in prison and fined 100,000€ (\$118,000 US) in damages to be paid to the implementation CITES office and to SOS Reptiles (see "On the Trail" n°14 p.21).³¹



SPAIN

October 21, 2017

Almería Port, Province of Almería, Autonomous Community of Andalusia, Spain

The car-ferry was coming from Oran, Algeria. In his car, the 41-year-old man, known under the initials KB and living in Massy near Paris, France, was hiding in a cardboard box pierced with some holes four common tortoises (*Testudo graeca*, Appendix II). The trafficker was sent before the Almería court.³²

ITALY

Beginning of October 2017

Olbia, Province of Sassari, Region of Sardinia, Italy

Routine boarding check on the ferry to Civitavecchia, north of Rome. Customs officers with the Guardia di Finanza found a Greek tortoise (*Testudo graeca*, Appendix II) in a camper's vehicle. The man was unable to present a CITES certificate, and was turned over to the Tempio Pausania prosecutor.³³

Snakes

AFRICA

TOGO

October 2017

Lomé, Togo

- Two python skin traffickers were sentenced to two years in prison (cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p.23).
- Two turtle traffickers were sentenced to six months in prison (cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p.14).¹



GANG

November 15, 2017

Lomé, Maritime Region, Togo

Judicial epilogue and arrest last April of Amadou Mohamed and two accomplices at the Hotel Excellence in Lomé, as they were preparing to sell a batch of 783 ball python skins (*Python regius*, Appendix II) for a total weight of 219.36 kg ("On the Trail" n°17 p. 23). Only Amadou Mohamed and Kolegain Ablam were sent before court, an accomplice and a buyer have apparently vanished from the procedure. They were sentenced to the same penalty, 24 months in prison of which 14 are suspended sentence and one million francs CFA (\$1,770 US) in fine, to what is added for each of them two million francs CFA in damages in favor of the ministry for the Environment and forest resources.²



AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 3, 2017

Maidstone, State of Vermont, United States of America

David Buyak committed a violation of the law on non-native species. He may be fined \$722 US. He claims that the 12 eastern hognose snakes (*Heterodon platirhinos*) are the offspring of a male and a female trapped in Connecticut and raised on his property in Maidstone. However, there are no eastern hognose snakes in Vermont and they are not welcome. Their bite is painful and their venom is toxic to amphibians.³



December 13, 2017
Phoenix, State of Arizona, United States of America

Sentencing of Jonthan Sampson Benson to five years of probation and \$4,725 US in damages. Benson pleaded guilty. He admits to having captured two Gila monsters (*Heloderma suspectum*, Appendix II), two prairie rattlesnakes (*Crotalus viridis*), two tiger rattlesnakes (*Crotalus tigris*), a speckled rattlesnake (*Crotalus mitchellii*), a Hopi rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis nuntius*) and an Arizona black rattlesnake (*Crotalus cerberus*) in Arizona and selling them in Southern California in November, 2013 and in July, 2014.⁴

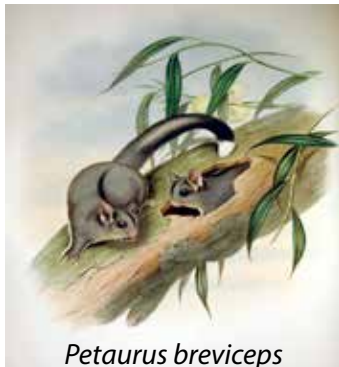


MEXICO

November 25, 2017
Mexico City, Mexico

More seizure in the bus station in the north of the Mexican capital.

The two packages contained six snakes belonging to the species olmecan pitviper (*Atropoides olmec*) and a sugar glider (*Petaurus breviceps*).⁵



Petaurus breviceps

November 28, 2017
Puebla, State of Puebla, Mexico

Discovery in a parcel service of a live ball python (*Python regius*, Appendix II) wrapped in a fabric bag hidden in a package addressed to a location in the State of Quintana Roo. The employees warned city police, who in turn call upon the PROFEPA. The young reptile was travelling without any legal documentation. He was given for care to the Veterinary for reptiles and amphibians Association who found him in good physical condition. The PROFEPA is attempting to trace back his path.⁶



ASIA

INDIA

October 16, 2017
Aurangabad District, State of Maharashtra, India

The police station has had two Indian sand boas (*Eryx* spp., Appendix II) on its hands for the past two days. "We got a 20,000-rupees bonus for confiscating them, but if the two snakes die in

custody, we could get suspended." A chief inspector confirmed that the forestry authorities cannot be reached. That seems often to be the case during the Diwali celebration, characterized by increased poaching and other improper behavior in forests. The police turned to rural farmers for advice on how to feed and handle the two snakes that a trafficker had been about to sell in a nearby town.⁷

October 16- 17, 2017
Tegnaha, Gonda District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Two Indian sand boas (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) are "in custody" at the police station in waiting for the forest services to take them on.

Sand boas are sold by the kg. Before being sold, they are force fed glucose. The boa price rate would be over \$31,100 US in this state. Four men are remanded in pre-trial detention. Their job they had to convoy the snakes would have earned them each between \$ 300 and 500 US.⁸

October 27, 2017
Sitamarhi, State of Bihar, India

Arrest by the 51st battalion of the SSB of two Indian individuals from Uttar Pradesh and transporting to Nepal an Indian spectacled cobra (*Naja naja*, Appendix II) and an Indian sand boa (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) both trapped in India.⁹

November 12, 2017
Sitamarhi, State of Bihar, India

Arrest by the 20th battalion of SSB of Anbar Ali and seizure of a sand boa (*Eryx* spp., Appendix II) captured in India and destined to Nepal.¹⁰

November 19, 2017
Kamunja, Amravati District, State of Maharashtra, India

The young 22-year-old man is in deep trouble. He was arrested 30minutes after having displayed himself with a dead 2.40m long Asian rock python (*Python molurus*, Annexe II) around his neck on Facebook. He will be remanded in custody for at least three days. He faces up to three years in prison. The warning came from CARS (Centre for Animal Rescue and Science). Its director, doctor Deshmukh reminds that Asian rock pythons live on the edge of cultivated lands, between rocks in the hills and if possible near water. There was a swamp near the capture spot. Other arrests are expected. CARS has already saved 500 snakes in the district after being warned or called upon for help by local inhabitants." This time also we received the call but before our team could reach there, the python was killed brutally."¹¹



November 29, 2017

Basantmala, Khordha District, State of Odisha, India

The village market was in full-swing. The joint intervention by Khurda forestry agents and Snake Helpline agents led to the seizure of 11 cobras – nine monellate cobras (*Naja kaouthia*, Appendix II) and two Indian spectacled cobras (*Naja naja*, Appendix II). No one has claimed ownership.¹²

December 4, 2017

Sultan Bathery, Wayanad District, State of Kerala, India

Trafficking in Indian sand boas (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) earns big when it doesn't fail. The five guys aged 23 to 63 would have bought this one from someone a native in Tamil Nadu \$22,000 US and was about to sell him double the price in Karnataka. The black market for lucky charm snakes is spinning upwards.¹³



December 4, 2017

Pune District, State of Maharashtra, India

Sand boas are booming (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II). More and more people want to be prosperous and begin so by spending on the local black market 5 million rupees (\$77,745 US) to buy a boa and its protection.¹⁴

December 11, 2017

Thane, Thane District, State of Maharashtra, India

Arrest at a rickshaws station of three men transporting an Indian sand boa (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) in a plastic bag. "The species is used for black magic " according to police who, for their part, estimate that the price rate on the local market for a mean sized individual is 150,000 rupees (\$2,330 US).¹⁵

December 14, 2017

State of Bihar, India

Seizure of an Indian sand boa (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) weighing 410 g and a meter long smuggled from India to Nepal. One arrest.¹⁶

December 21, 2017

Baruipur, South 24 Parganas District, State of West Bengal, India

Seizure of six vials supposed to contain snake venom in the form of crystals, powder and liquid. Six arrests.¹⁷

INDONESIA

SPEAKER NETWORK

Beginning of November 2017

Surabaya, East Java Province, Indonesia

Nine king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*, Appendix II) and five Indonesian pit vipers (*Trimeresurus hageni*) seized inside two audio speakers. The 14 venomous snakes are very young. This is a variation of a smuggling technique. The previous cargo was found in a doll. The final destination was South Africa.¹⁸

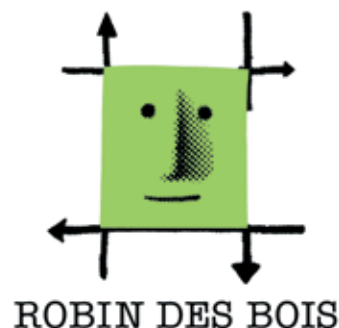


VIET NAM

October 16, 2017

Vung Tau, Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province, Viet Nam

A narrow escape for a python (Pythonidae family) that almost finished in the soup pot, like many of its species. A volunteer for Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) spotted it at a restaurant that had the live animal on display for reptile-specialty-lovers. He contacted the hotline of the NGO, and they were able to call in the Department for the Protection of Forests. The python was released in the Binh Chau national park.¹⁹



Sauria

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

November 24, 2017
Nuwerus, Western Cape Province, South Africa

A search of the car that was trying to evade a traffic check contained 48 surprises for the police. The Armadillo spiny-tailed lizards (*Ouroborus cataphractus*, Appendix II) were still alive. Their estimated value per individual is \$1,070 US.¹



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AMERICA

BRAZIL

October 19, 2017
Uberlândia, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

The postal package sent from Sao Paulo contained a young iguana (*Iguana* spp. Appendix II) in very poor condition, wrapped in plastic fabric, its body bound with tape to keep it from moving. The package was closed up again without the young iguana, and delivered to its recipient by the mailman, accompanied by a police officer. A 25-year-old woman was caught in the act. She said she had bought the animal on Internet for \$60 US.²



EL SALVADOR

October 8, 2017
El Salvador

To spice up their media broth, producers of the Salvadorian edition of the reality-TV show "Top Chef" had decided to include iguanas to the menu. The contestants saw no harm and applied themselves to kill the lizards, cut off the tails, skin the pieces of meat and cook them. Pictures proudly posted on the show's Facebook page caused an uproar. Confronted with the accumulation of shocked comments the images were erased. The show host Gina Salazar then posted a video in which she explains: "purchase of the cuisine products was done legally and according to the ministry of Culture's rules"...

facebook

But the Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources Lina Pohl contradicted her statement. In response the show's producers released documents that according to them gave them authorization to buy the iguanas and cook them.³



ASIA

INDIA

October 18, 2017
Bangalore, State of Karnataka, India

The sleuths of the Criminal Investigation Department burst into the offices of a private parcel service, called Mahalakshmi. There, they discovered spiny-tailed lizards (*Uromastyx* spp., Appendix II) concealed in shoe boxes ready to be shipped to Villupuram in Tamil Nadu. The packages came from the town of Hosur, 35 km from Bangalore. The lizards were handed over to a veterinary clinic until an authorization from the public prosecutor allows them to be released in the Bannerghatta national park.⁴

November 1st, 2017
State of West Bengal, India

Arrest by the 53rd battalion of the SSB of Keshab aka Anjay Roy and seizure of two tokay geckos (*Gekko gekko*) captured in India and destined to Nepal.⁵

November 4, 2017
Nagaon District, State of Assam, India

Seizure of 53 Tokay geckos (*Gekko gekko*). Rumor has it that they are sold more than \$30,000 US on the Asian black market, enough to stir greed among traffickers. Three arrests.⁶

December 27 2017
Banarhat, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India. Border to Bhutan.

The smugglers of eight tokay geckos (*Gekko gekko*) are Indian citizens but came from Bhutan. This year, the SSB has seized within 47 operations 148 geckos and other reptiles while making 65 arrests.⁷

VIET NAM

Vung Tau, Ba Ria Vung Tau Province, Viet Nam
The monitor lizard (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II) was being used to attract people to a restaurant. Fortunately, it did not have any identity papers. It was confiscated and if all goes well, it will be released in the Phuoc Buu Conservation Reserve in Xuyen Moc district.⁸

Crocodilians

AFRICA

LIBERIA

December 29, 2017
Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary, Margibi County, Liberia

Seizure of a juvenile Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*, Appendix I). It will be immediately released without bail. The sanctuary hopes that it will reach its adult length of 5 to 6 m.¹



AMERICA

ARGENTINA

End of November, 2017
Embarcación, Department of General San Martín, Salta Province, Argentina

Freedom for a caiman of 1.30 m who was chained to the bare ground of a garden, thanks to Amigos de los Animales (*Caiman* spp. Appendix I or II). The reptile was released into a swamp.²

BRAZIL

October 10, 2017
Itaquirai, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

The federal police confiscated a caiman (*Alligatoridae* spp., Appendix I or II) in the back of a Chevrolet S/10 pick-up truck, with Sete Quedas license plates, near the reservoir lake of the Iguaçu dam. The vehicle had tried to escape, but was caught. The driver claimed that he had found and picked up the animal on the side of a country road, and that he was taking it to his farm to "release it in a pond." The man was 34 years old, and was taken to the Navirai police station with his two passengers, 18 and 36 years old. The environmental military police (PMA) confiscated the animal. They fined the driver 5,000 reais (\$1535 US). He could also get between six months and one year in prison.³



GUATEMALA

October 22, 2017
Guatemala City, Department of Guatemala, Guatemala

The firemen warned by neighbors saved a young crocodile (order Crocodylia, Appendix I and II) roaming famished in the streets of the San Rafael Buena Vista neighborhood. He was given for care to Arcas, the association in charge of wildlife rescue. The refugee is aged about eight months.⁴



December 18, 2017
Santana, State of Amapá, Brazil

Seizure of 70 kg of caiman meat (*Alligatoridae* spp., Appendix I or II) in a pick-up truck. Christmas was around the corner. Brasília was expecting its roasted caimans.⁵

December 29, 2017
Tartarugalzinho, State of Amapá, Brazil
Two caimans (*Alligatoridae* spp., Appendix I or II) one to two meters long were seized in a pick-up truck. They were going to Brasília.⁶



MEXICO

October 5, 2017
Mazatlán, State of Sinaloa, Mexico
The young American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*, Appendix I), 1.20 m long, was held prisoner in a room in a house, but was in good health. PROFEPA inspectors were informed by a telephone call and came to seize the animal, then freed it in the El Tapahuito estuary marshes.⁷

November 4, 2017

Acapulco, State of Guerrero, Mexico (attention note de bas de page pas bonne)

The fire department has inherited an American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*, Appendix I) anonymously turned in by fishermen or boaters who had captured him on October 19 and immediately exhibited on social networks. Agents from the PROFEPA examined him and decided to release him into the Santa Cruz de Mitla lagoon. Investigations have begun so to identify the vandals.⁸

EUROPE

ITALY

Beginning of December, 2017

Catania-Fontanarossa Airport, Region of Sicily, Italy

Seizure from the belongings of a passenger residing in Italy and returning from the island of Madagascar, his country of origin, of fashion and travel accessories made from crocodile skins. Eighteen belts, a bag, three wallets, four briefcases, "fine pieces of work worth 8,000 €" (\$9,460 US) specify customs officers. The passenger was targeted because she had traveled through Paris and Milan.⁹

Various Reptile Species

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

November 25, 2017

North West Province, South Africa

At the intersection between routes R556 and R510, a bunch of rather unfriendly street peddlers try to push turtles and chameleons on motorists. The police stand by.¹

GUINEA

October 4, 2017

Dixinn, Conakry Region, Guinea

An unlucky day for Lancinet Doumbouya. He was loading crocodile skins (*Crocodylidae*, Appendix I or II) into his car, near the Camayenne Hotel, when an officer from the Nature Conservation Corps stopped by to drop off a letter, and spotted him. The officer notified his colleagues, who came and picked up the trafficker and seized 32 tanned skins from the vehicle. A search was carried out in Lancinet Doumbouya's workshop, and led to the seizure of an additional nine tanned crocodile skins, three bags made of crocodile hide and one made of boa skin (*Boa* spp., Appendix I or II). The suspect confessed. However, because at that time the penitentiary administration was on strike, the Dixinn public prosecutor extended his time in custody by another 48 hours, and instructed the Water and Forestry Department to keep him in custody until his trial date.²

AMERICA

BRAZIL

November 27, 2017

Cambé, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of 23 snakes including one 1.75-m boa (*Boa* spp., Appendix I or II), one turtle and a nocturnal raptor. The animals are now in transit at the Parana Environmental Institution. The clandestine pet dealer was denounced by neighbors. Police also found 50 rats, meant to be eaten by the snakes. The man was taken to the police station.³



EL SALVADOR

October 17, 2017

El Rosario, La Paz Department, El Salvador

Police raid in an underground and wretched breeding farm for turtles of the species Pacific coast giant musk turtle or *Staurotypus salvinii*, 2000, iguanas and black spiny-tailed iguanas *Ctenosaura similis*. Most of the turtles were dying. This seizure happened just days after a scandal born on a TV show where four iguanas were cooked on live broadcast (*Iguana* spp. Appendix II).⁴



Ctenosaura similis



Staurotypus salvinii

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 30, 2017

State of New York, United States of America

Chaoyi Le now better lays low. The Chief U.S. District Judge Frank P. Geraci himself has taken on his case. He sentenced him to time served (since 11 August 2017 i.e. 81 days), and to \$5000 US fine. He was also ordered to pay \$3,519 in compensation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Chaoyi Le was this time indicted for having attempted to send a parcel containing seven live ball pythons (*Python regius*, Appendix II) addressed to Shanghai from Amherst, State of New York, on 22 April 2014. The same day he was checked at the boarder by Canadian customs with three live albinos hog-nosed snakes (*Heterodon nasicus*) hidden in his socks (See "On the Trail" n°18, p.27). It was a bad day, but he was no newcomer to the business. Already convicted for a similar trafficking, Chaoyi Le was part of "a complicated transnational reptile smuggling scheme" according to the USFWS. The agency noted that in the well isolated package equipped with hand warmers the snakes were wrapped in cloth bags typically used to contain reptiles. Written on one of the bags were trade names for ball pythons: "Enchi Ghost," "Pastel Enchi Ghost," and "Butter Enchi," all common trade names for ball pythons color morphs. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service thanks the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Canadian ministry for the Environment and climate change for having contributed to the interruption of the Chaoyi Le channel.⁵



GUATEMALA

October 19, 2017

Nueva Concepcion, Escuintla Department, Guatemala

Arrest of a woman detaining 37 turtles and two crocodiles (*Crocodylia*, Appendix I or II) of unknown origin which she had for commerce. The animals were first given to the Antigua Xotic shelter. The turtles were quickly released. Esperanza M. H. was completely unknown to the Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (CONAP) which is in charge of delivering permits to keep wild animals in the country. She stands liable before justice.⁶



MEXICO

8 octobre 2017

Manzanillo, Etat de Colima, Mexique

An American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*, Appendix I) was released into the sea by PROFEPA, after being seized by the municipal police in Potrero Grande. The young female, 1.10 m long and weighing 15 kg, was being held in a plastic basin.

The same day, civil defense services alerted PROFEPA that they had found a Pacific Ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*, Appendix I) nest in Salagua. The nest had been partially pilfered, but 15 eggs were recovered and handed over to the turtle protection center in Cuyutlan.⁷

November 17, 2017

Mexico City, Mexico

A Solomon Ground Boa (*Candoia carinata*, Appendix II), a burmese python (*Python molurus bivittatus*, Appendix II), a ball python (*Python regius*, Appendix II), two Ramsay's pythons (*Aspidites ramsayi*, Appendix II), a bearded dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*), a milk snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*), a corn snake (*Elaphe guttata*), two green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*), two grooved tortoises (*Centrochelys sulcata*, Appendix II), three Texas turtles (*Gopherus berlandieri*, Appendix II), a wood tortoise (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II), an Afghan tortoise (*Testudo horsfieldii*, Appendix II) were placed under sequestration at the house and at the expense of the homeowner in waiting for the (improbable) documents proving the reptiles' legal origin.⁸

November 26, 2017

Acapulco, State of Guerrero, Mexico

-Seizure of a 2 m long boa (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II) in a hacienda.

-Immobilization of a 1.5 m long boa at the crossroads of Constituyentes avenue and Ejido street.

The two snakes were given for care to the UMA Aracné.

-Seizure from between the hands of two kids who were trying to sell him on the beach on the other side from the Princess hotel of an American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*, Appendix I) who was rapidly set back into the sea.⁹

End of November 2017

Puebla, State of Puebla, Mexico

34 green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II), 27 mud turtles (*Kinosternon sp.*), two meso-American mud sliders (*Trachemys venusta*) were waiting for their turn at the bus station. City police during their round of this strategic place had noticed the "noisy" packages.¹⁰



ASIA

CAMBODIA

October 26, 2017

Pursat, Pursat Province, Cambodia

Seizure at a restaurant called Moha Leap, of 20 kg of wild meat, along with live animals, softshell turtles (Trionychidae family), and other turtles and snakes. The restaurant owner "recognized his error" and is trying to negotiate the amount and the payment terms for his fine. According to Wildlife Alliance, the meat was burnt and the snakes released near Tonle Sap Lake.¹¹



INDONESIA

October 24, November 7 and 10, 2017

Supadio International Airport, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia

- Seizure of 30 reticulated pythons (*Python reticulatus*, Appendix II)
- Seizure of 26 reticulated pythons and one earless monitor lizard (*Lanthanotus borneensis*) (see "On the Trail" n°11 p.17).
- Seizure of two red-eyed crocodile skinks (*Tribolonotus gracilis*).¹²



PHILIPPINES

October 26-30, 2017

Manila Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Philippines

Serial murders in the cargo area. The four Philippine cobras (*Naja philippinensis*, Appendix II), the viper (Viperidae family) and the 10 Philippine sailfin lizards (*Hydrosaurus pustulatus*) all died of suffocation, except one. They were on their way to the city of Sjöbo in Sweden, in airtight boxes with no holes to let in any air. According to the customs declarations, the packages contained "pastries."¹³

SINGAPORE

November 3, 2017

Singapore

Sentencing of Lau Kin Wei Clement to 4700 dollars (\$3,450 US) for possession of three Wagler's pit vipers (*Tropidolaemus wagleri*), a paradise tree snake (*Chrysopelea paradisi*), a painted bronzeback



snake (*Dendrelaphis pictus*), a common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*, Appendix III in the United States of America), an alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*, Appendix III in the United States of America). The man didn't pay the fine. An alternative penalty of 23 days in prison was imposed on him. He faced up to 500,000 dollars (\$373,680 US) in fine and/or 2 years in prison.¹⁴

THAILAND

October 11, 2017

Wiang Khuk, Mueang Nong Khai District, Nong Khai Province, Thailand. Border with Laos.

Police Senior Sergeant Major Thinnakorn Pengpa, of the Wiang Khuk police station, thought he would be spending a quiet evening counting his earnings from his illicit activities. But a teenager to whom he had supplied 200 yaba pills – a very popular amphetamine in the region – for resale, got nabbed and talked. Thinnakorn Pengpa was arrested by his colleagues around midnight, in a hotel room with 20,000 baht (\$630 US) in cash, four yaba pills, a gun and four bullets. He also had two other guns and 22 bullets in his van. In the next room, the police discovered Phitsanupong Suntharos (40 years old), a suspected accomplice who stated that he had been recruited by a businessman in the Suphan Buri province to deliver 600 kg of turtles and cobras, in 12 different bags, to a client on a dock of the Mekong controlled by Sergeant Major Thinnakorn Pengpa. The cargo had already crossed the border with Laos, on its way to the Vientiane prefecture. Identical trafficking in protected species has apparently occurred at least twice in the past. Phitsanupong Suntharos was paid 10,000 baht (\$315 US) for each delivery. A subsequent investigation concluded that Thinnakorn had previously been involved in illegal activities and been subject to warnings and disciplinary punishment. He was dismissed from the police department, and his sentencing could be more severe because of his position at the time of the offenses.¹⁵

TURKEY

October 13, 2017

Istanbul Atatürk International Airport, Turkey

A Turkish traveler coming from Singapore had 99 snake skins and three crocodile (*Crocodylia* spp., Appendix I or II) skins hidden in his baggage.¹⁶

EUROPE

GERMANY

November 12, 2017

Berlin, Germany

At the Berlin Bazaar, seizure of leather goods made of snake and crocodile skins (*Crocodylia* spp., Appendix I or II) at a stand run by a Moroccan merchant and a stand run by a Senegalese one.¹⁷

Amphibians

ASIA

TURKEY

October 18, 2017

Central Anatolia Region, Turkey

Military police freed 7500 individuals into the wild. They were frogs. Five poachers are behind bars. Their minivan was inspected as they drove through Cappadocia with dozens of fishnets filled with frogs. They were driving toward Adana to sell them to an exporter. The animals had been captured in the Kizilirmak River basin, in Eastern Anatolia. This case was one of the largest seizures of frogs to take place in Turkey. Frog-hunting is authorized only with a permit and at certain times of the year, and some species are entirely protected. The two main export markets are France and China.¹



Butterflies

ASIA

CHINA

November 7, 2017

Jinan, Province of Shandong, China

This is the largest butterfly trafficking network ever discovered in China since it joined CITES in 1973. The so-named Wei, Xu and Zhu had founded a biotechnological company in 2015 that served as a cover to their trafficking. They had available the computing means to circumvent the “Golden Shield” set up by government, that prohibits access to many internet sites and international social networks, and they bought rare butterflies captured in the Philippines and Malaysia on Facebook for resale to Chinese collectors. Wei had been denounced in January 2016 by internet users because he had posted photos of his latest purchases on a social network. Not long after, customs’ in Jinan seized a package sent from Malaysia registered to contain “dresses” but holding actually 2800 dead butterflies, among which 1264 individuals were from species protected under CITES, notably the Luzon peacock swallowtails (*Papilio chikae*, Appendix I) that can reach 10,000 yuan (\$1,500 US) a piece.



Total value of the package is estimated at 1.5 million yuan (\$222,500 US). The Jilin Tribunal sentenced Wei to 10 years prison time and 50,000 yuan in fine (\$7,600 US), his two accomplices to 7 and 5 years prison to which is added fines worth 40,000 (\$6,100 US) and 20,000 yuan (\$3,050 US).¹



Birds

Brazil is losing its colours and musicians. Every year, 30,000 songbirds and chicks are seized in cars on the roads that cross the meadows and forests. Despite the efficiency of the flying brigades, it is to be feared that these 30,000 victims represent only 10% of the poaching. The standard fine is \$153 US for every bird stolen from the wild. The bill is increased if the offender is charged with illegal trade and animal abuse and one of the species is listed in CITES. After the cyanide and pesticide attacks, southern Africa continues to lose its precious natural knackers.

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

**Beginning December 2017
Hluhluwe, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

The K9 canine brigade has just entered in action. With a notable team member named Mali, a three-year-old Belgian shepherd and his master with 26 years' experience on the anti-poaching field, the district K9 followed a trail up to a mass grave of poisoned white-backed vultures (*Gyps africanus*, Appendix II). Yearly costs to operate the K9 are estimated at \$ 100,000 US.¹



MOZAMBIQUE

**November 6, 2017
Limpopo National Park, Gaza Province, Mozambique**

37 dead vultures (*Gyps* spp., Appendix II) and 2 dead jackals (*Canis* genus) found near several antelope carcasses sprayed with pesticides.

A little further away, the toxic carcass of a zebra is surrounded by 12 dead vultures. The massacres were discovered in the Limpopo national park in Mozambique, right next to the fence that separates it from the Kruger park in South Africa. The rangers suppose that the poachers poisoned the antelope and zebra carcasses to attract lions and kill them. The demand for lion bones in Asia is growing, and other body parts of the king of the savanna are in demand in southern Africa for traditional Muti medicine. African vultures are endangered species. These natural knackers are defenseless against chemicals. The Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF) has been sounding the alert for several years now. For vultures, see in particular "On the Trail" n°11 p.65.²



Gyps africanus

TUNISIA

October 2, 2017

Oudhref, Gabès Governorate, Tunisia

The police inspected a vehicle that turned out to be transporting 2000 green avadavats (*Amandava formosa*, Appendix II). The ministry of the Interior estimates that just one of these birds is worth 1000 dinars (\$400 US). Bird trafficking is flourishing in Tunisia, particularly trade in European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*). Some are exported to France, via Marseille, and can be found for sale at the flea market for €150 (\$175 US).³

ZIMBABWE

November 23, 2017

Zambezi National Park, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Discovery by a member of the Bhejane Trust of 35 knob-billed geese



© Arno Meintjes

(*Sarkidiornis melanotos*, Appendix II) and two red billed ducks (*Anas erythrorhynchos*) poisoned by the edge of the Chambonda river. Two were saved by Chris Foggini, vet at the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust.⁴

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

October 2017

Paraná, Paraná Department, Entre Rios Province, Argentina

Seizure of two red-crested cardinals (*Paroaria coronata*, Appendix II), one ultramarine grosbeak (*Cyanocornis brissonii*), four safran finches (*Sicalis flaveola pelzelni*), one golden-billed saltator (*Saltator aurantiifrons*), three hooded siskins (*Spinus magellanicus*), one red pileated finch (*Coryphospingus cucullatus*), five capuchin birds (*Perissocephalus tricolor*) and two double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulea*).

Seizure of cage traps. The joint operation led by the DGFA (Dirección General de Fiscalización Agroalimentaria) and police was a success. Yet the open sources mention nothing of arrests of poachers or traffickers. The birds were taken to the San Martín park, first step before release for all the valid survivors.⁵

October 2017
Buenos Aires, Argentina



The absent-minded trafficker had forgotten the rhea (*Rhea* spp., Appendix I or II) beside an ATM in the busy streets of the capital among the stray dogs surprised by this new comer. The freshly born bird is now in a safe vet's house. He should be released into his natural habitat as soon as his condition allows so.

The rhea is the largest South American bird. Nicknamed the South American ostrich, they cannot fly and the female deposits her eggs in a hole not very deep in the ground. Rheas eat large leafed plants, clovers, grains, roots and fruit and sometimes insects, lizards, frogs and snakes. Rheas are hunted for their skin, their meat, their eggs and for their feathers locally to make dust brooms.⁶

October 13, 2017
González Catán and Martínez, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Seizure by federal police of 80 birds in two petshops, Northern cardinals (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), yellow cardinals (*Gubernatrix cristata*, Appendix II), finches (genus *Carduelis*), parakeets (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II), scarlet-headed blackbirds (*Amblyramphus holosericeus*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), rusty-collard seedeaters (*Sporophila collaris*) and chopi blackbirds (*Gnorimopsar chopi*). The question is if all these cages have been destroyed.⁷



October 19, 2017
Mendoza, Heras Department, Argentina

Seizure of 30 yellow grosbeaks (*Pheucticus chrysopheplus*), various trapping tools, cages and documents proving poaching and illegal trade activities.⁸

October 19, 2017
Province of Jujuy, Argentina

Two new residents for the CAFAJu (Center for care of Jujuy indigenous wildlife) managed by the ministry of the Environment: a military macaw (*Ara militaris*, Appendix I) and a golden winged cacique (*Cacicus chrysopterus*). It is unsure the military macaw can be set free into the forest. Before being seized from a home by environmental police in Cordoba, he spent a year locked in cage.⁹



Cacicus chrysopterus

End of October 2017
Laguna de los Padres Lake, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

A theft of colours in the Laguna de Los Padres reserve. 50 green, red, black birds disappeared from the aviary. "All our birds were taken and among them some were endangered " regrets a guard from the reserve. The yellow cardinals (*Gubernatrix cristata*, Appendix II), scarlet-headed blackbirds (*Amblyramphus holosericeus*), northern cardinals (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) and black-backed grosbeaks (*Pheucticus aureoventris*) stolen had just been seized from a trafficker's home days before. The thieves also got their hands on cages, weapons, fishing gear seized by guards inside the reserve during patrols.¹⁰

November 2, 2017
Berazategui, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Seizure of 80 birds, Golden billed salators (*Saltator aurantirostris*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), true thrushes (genus *Carduelis*), passerines (genus *Turdus*), blue fronted amazons (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II), red-crested cardinals (*Paroaria coronata*, Appendix II) and yellow cardinals (*Gubernatrix cristata*, Appendix II).¹¹

Mid-December, 2017
Tigre, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina

20 birds for sale on Facebook, including toucans (family *Ramphastidae*) and blue-fronted Amazons (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II). The police succeeded in "cornering" the seller during a set-up meeting in the parking lot of a service station on Highway 197. The birds were transferred to the Delta Terra Reserve, administered by the AZARA Foundation.¹²



BRAZIL

The Poached

These birds are the main victims of poaching.

Between 2002 and 2009, the CETAS (Centro de Triagem de Animais Silvestres) collected 250,206 of them.

41,294 died shortly after.

108,622 were released into the wild.

45,395 were placed in captivity.

1,135 escaped.

Species particularly targeted for their songs are in descending order:



Sicalis flaveola
Saffron finch



Saltator similis
Green-winged saltator



Sporophila caerulea
Double-collared seedeater



Cyanocopsa brissonii
Ultramarine grosbeak



Sporophila angolensis
Chestnut-bellied seed-finch



Gnorimopsar chopi
Chopi blackbird



Paroaria dominicana
Red-cowled cardina



Zonotrichia capensis
Rufous-collared sparrow



Sporophila nigricollis
Yellow-bellied seedeater



Sporophila collaris
Rusty-collared seedeater



Amazona aestiva
Blue-fronted amazon



Turdus rufiventris
Rufous-bellied thrush



Paroaria spp. ex: *Paroaria coronata*, red-crested cardinal



Sporophila albogularis
White-throated seedeater



Spinus magellanicus
Hooded siskin



Icterus jamacaii
Campo troupial



Sporophila maximiliani
Great-billed seed-finch



Coryphospingus cucullatus
Red-pileated finch

These species are also part of authorized or illegal breeding. The birds, poached in natural habitats, are sold in the markets, traded locally, or used to supply pet stores and farms. The federal law prohibits the capture and detention of wild animals except if permits and approvals are issued by IBAMA (Instituto brasileiro do meio ambiente e dos recursos naturais renováveis). ¹³

October 3, 2017
Cantagalo, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

At a young 18-year-old man's place, police seized 31 safron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), four black manakins (*Xenopipo atronitens*), a double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulescens*) recently captures. They were immediately set free.¹⁴



October 4, 2017
João Pessoa, State of Paraíba, Brazil



During an operation designed to confiscate weapons and narcotics, the military police discovered seven birds, including one parrot (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II) in a house. The birds and the man were taken to the police station for cases of *flagrante delicto*. After signing a statement, the suspect was released.¹⁵

October 8, 2017
Salvador de Bahia, State of Bahia, Brazil

Raid carried out by the company for the protection of the environment (Coppa) on the local wild animal market. The operation took place at 7 in the morning. Seizure of over one hundred birds. Some sellers started running. Others were taken to the police station. For the moment the birds are at the Coppa headquarters for identification and to receive emergency care. The goal is to send the whole feathered crowd back to the wild.¹⁶



October 9, 2017
Terra Boa, State of Paraná, Brazil

The police showed up after having received a tip about dogs being mistreated. Rufous-bellied thrushes (*Turdus rufiventris*), European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*), green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), safron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*); all in all, 67 birds captured recently in the forest were confiscated by the environmental police in the home of the self styled bird-breeder.¹⁷



October 9, 2017
Barra Bonita, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Five parrot chicks (*Psittacidae* spp.), 11 double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), a green-winged saltator (*Saltator similis*), European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) seized before they could be sold on WhatsApp. The newborn parrots were worth \$160 US each. Two men have been heard by the police. The cages were also confiscated.¹⁸



The smaller parrots are being kept under observation and fed by hand. The stronger birds were released.

October 2017
Osasco, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of nine wild birds: chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*) and double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), chopi blackbirds (*Gnorimopsar chopi*), safron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) and red pileated finches (*Coryphospingus cucullatus*). The suspects were at no loss for explanations. They had won the birds in lotteries or had inherited them from their parents. The birds were transferred to the Tietê park in Sao Paulo.¹⁹

October 17, 2017
Ivinhema, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

Seizure of 34 baby parrots (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II), of a doubled-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulescens*) and a goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*). They were given to the Centro de Reabilitação de Animais Silvestres (Cras). One arrest. A fine worth 6130 U\$. He had already sold 15. His price was \$19 US a piece in the neighbor State of Sao Paulo.²⁰



October 23, 2017
Rosana, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 46 blue-fronted amazons (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II), seven birds from the falcon family (family Accipitridae or Falconidae, Appendix I or II), two barn owls (*Tyto alba*, Appendix II), two burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*, Appendix II) and three common caracaras (*Caracara plancus*, Appendix II).



They were all in the back seat and trunk of the car stopped at the road check on the road from Rosana to Sao Paulo. The two men claimed only being accountable for the transportation. They would have nothing to do with poaching in the forest and sale on the Sao Paulo markets. They were sentenced to a fine worth 420,000 reais, that is \$132,000 US.²¹

October 26, 2017

Highway BR 060, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

Two young Paraguayan men, 19 and 20 years old, were transporting two toucan chicks (*Ramphastidae* family) when they were stopped by military police in Bela Vista. They said that they had found the chicks on the side of the road and wanted to take them home to Bela Vista Norte (Paraguay), on the other side of the Apa River. They were taken into custody until their trial. They could get between six months and one year in prison. The toucan chicks were sent to the Centro de Reabilitação de Animais Silvestres (CRAS) in Campo Grande, the State capital. The CRAS is one of the largest shelters and treatment / rehabilitation centers for confiscated animals. It is managed by the State of Mato Grosso do Sul. Since it opened in 1987, it has taken in approximately 41,000 animals, 68% of which are birds.²²



October 28 2017

Arraial D'Ajuda, State of Bahia, Brazil

Seizure of 44 birds including parrots and parakeets (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II). The birds found a new shelter, they were admitted to Centro de Triagem de Animais Silvestres (CETAS).²³

October 29, 2017

São Luiz, Nasponili and Mina do Mato, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil

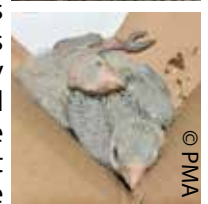
Seizure of 80 birds held captive, rufous-collared sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), yellow-bellied seedeaters (*Sporophila nigricollis*), black-throated grosbeaks (*Saltator fuliginosus*) and chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*). "This is a minor offense, the guilty are mainly liable to an administrative fine" said the head of environmental police. The newspaper Divulgação underlines in an editorial note that "it is unacceptable that a crime that threatens the freedom of living beings be considered minor." "Preventing a wild bird from flying is an act of extreme cruelty."²⁴



October 30, 2017

Campo Grande, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

She is 22 years old. On the road, she was stopped by federal police. Routine came up with a surprise. In a cardboard box, she was transporting two baby parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) only weeks old who were transferred to the Centro de Reabilitação de Animais Silvestres (CRAS). Right off she was sentenced to a fine worth 1,000 reais, i.e. \$ 314 US for unlawful possession of animals protected by law. But she risks much more for she is also accused of illegal trade in wildlife.²⁵



November 1, 2017

São José da Coroa Grande, State of Pernambuco, Brazil

Over 30 birds were seized. The house was full of cages, some of which were empty and others overcrowded. Among the prisoners could be found seven-colored tanagers (*Tangara fastuosa*, Appendix II), jandaya conures (*Aratinga jandaya*, Appendix II), tropical mockingbirds (*Mimus gilvus*) and sayaca tanagers (*Thraupis sayaca*). The operation was carried out in a protected zone on the coast, by the IBAMA and the Chico Mendes Institute.²⁶



November 2, 2017

Rodovia Régis Bittencourt, Itapeacerica da Serra, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 30 mistreated and thirsty birds, including golden-crowned conures (*Aratinga aurea*, Annexe II), red-breasted toucans (*Ramphastos dicolorus*, Appendix III in Argentina), ringed warbling finches (*Poospiza torquata*), cinnamon warbling finches (*Poospiza ornata*), and rufous-collared sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*), from a car. The NGO SOS Fauna provides emergency care. Three arrests.²⁷

November 2, 2017

Macaé, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of 20 passerines: green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), rufous-collared sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*) and black-throated grosbeaks (*Saltator fuliginosus*). They left their cage in the gardens of private residences near the União Reserve, and went to the Desengano park in Santa Maria Madalena. Several weapons and munitions were seized. A man was arrested and released on bond. All of the violators risk a fine of 500 reais for each bird (\$153 US).²⁸

November 6, 2017

Pedras do Fogo, State of Paraíba, Brazil

Saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), campo troupial (*Icterus jamacaii*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), white-throated seedeaters (*Sporophila albogularis*). All in all, 78 birds, for sale in the city streets, were taken to the Centro de Triagem de Animais Silvestres (CETAS) in Cabedelo. Seven people were arrested.²⁹



November 6, 2017

Ilhabela, State of São Paulo, Brazil

A small menagerie was seized from an inn of the Perequê neighborhood. A 69-year-old man was in possession of five red-bellied conures (*Pyrrhura frontalis*, Appendix II), two parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), two conures (*Aratinga* spp., Appendix II) and two turtles (*Chelonoidis carbonarius* or *Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II). According to environmental police the animals were not mistreated. The man was fined 8,300 reais (\$2,550 US). The IBAMA and an NGO were entrusted with the animals.³⁰



November 7, 2017

Santa Luzia, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

68 passerines seized, including green-winged saltator (*Saltator similis*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), bruant chingolos (*Zonotrichia capensis*), blue-black grassquits (*Volatinia jacarina*) and double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*). A 31-year-old man was arrested. He sold his catches in Belo Horizonte.³¹

November 13, 2017

Camapuã, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

A blue-and-gold macaw chick (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) was seized in the home of a 52-year-old woman who was arrested for illegal breeding and faces a fine of \$1536 US.³²

November 14, 2017

Três Lagoas, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

A 74-year-old man was fined the equivalent of \$4500 for illegally possessing and trying to sell two great-billed seed finches (*Sporophila maximiliani*), two chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Sporophila angolensis*) and four saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*).³³



November 18, 2017

Porto Morrinho, Corumbá, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

Seizure and release of 500 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) captured in the Pantanal at the border of Bolivia and destined for the markets of Belo Horizonte. The trafficking convoy consisted of a taxi, a van, and 12 cages. Four arrests.³⁴

November 20, 2017

Três Lagoas, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

250 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*)³⁵

November 23, 2017

Juiz de Fora, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of 72 wild birds from a 64-year-old individual. They were transferred to IBAMA facilities. The fate of the cages is unknown. It goes without saying that the best choice would be to destroy them.³⁶



OPERATION SÃO FRANCISCO

Enf of November 2017

São José da Tapera, Poço de Trincheiras, Santana do Ipanema, State of Alagoas, Brazil

The operation took place in three cities and was coordinated by the Instituto do Meio Ambiente (IMA), Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis (IBAMA) and the environmental battalion (BPA). Hundreds of birds and a monkey that had been captured 10 years earlier were seized and taken to the CETAS in Maceió. A black-chested eagle (*Geranoaetus melanoleucus*, Appendix II) had been in a cage for four years. The other species identified included seedeaters (*Sporophila* genus), plumbeous seedeaters (*Sporophila plumbea*) and copper seedeaters (*Sporophila bouvreuil*).³⁷



December 5, 2017

Capitão Andrade, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

For having illegally held 22 green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), two double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*) and four rufous-collared sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*), the 55-year-old man was fined \$8730 US.³⁸



December 5, 2017

Taubaté and São José dos Campos, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Cages, cages, and more cages. And inside of them, 25 wild birds with falsified rings aiming to prove that they were born on a breeding farm. The equipment used to make the counterfeit rings was also confiscated.³⁹

December 7, 2017
Narandiba, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 16 chopi blackbirds (*Gnorimopsar chopi*) and one yellow-bellied seedeater (*Sporophila nigricollis*). One arrest and a fine for poaching, trade and mistreatment of wild animals totalling 50,500 reais, or \$15,700 US.⁴⁰



© Polícia Militar Ambiental

December 16, 2017
Volta Redonda, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of 23 wild birds, including a toucan (*Ramphastos toco*, Appendix II). They were initially transferred to the city zoo. Three arrests.⁴¹



© TV Rio Sul

OPERATION PIRACEMA

December 29, 2017
Agissê, Municipality of Rancharia, State of São Paulo, Brazil

The master of the house did not have the right to possess the two caged blue-fronted Amazon (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II). However, he was authorized to keep them as the police did not have a place to host them!⁴²

End of December 2017
Cantaduva, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of two saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) and one blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) from two locations. Two arrests.⁴³

COSTA RICA

October 31, 2017
Alajuelita Canton, Province of San José, Costa Rica

The magnificent scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*, Appendix I) feature of a species at a loss was removed from a house and a cage. He was to begin with turned over to a shelter for turtles and snakes in Santa Ana.⁴⁴



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ECUADOR

October 19, 2017
Napo Province, Ecuador

Four macaws, blue-and-yellow (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) and scarlet (*Ara macao*, Appendix I), were released in the protected forest of Selva Viva (1700 ha) by the provincial Department of the Environment. The animals were considered apt to return to the wild after one year under care and

observation at the AmaZOOonico Rescue Center, an NGO that also manages the forest, located near the city of Tena. Since the beginning of the year, approximately 170 animals have been released in the province, including monkeys, caimans (*Caiman spp.*, Appendix I or II), macaws and river turtles (*Podocnemis spp.*, Appendix II).⁴⁵

November 2017
Portoviejo, Manabí Province, Ecuador



In application of article 247 of the Penal Code, a man was sentenced to one year in prison and a payroll deduction equivalent to \$375 US for having illegally

kept and attempted to sell a red-masked conure (*Aratinga erythrogenys*, Appendix II).⁴⁶

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 13, 2017
Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, State of Texas, United States of America

Seizure of 54 birds' nests in the luggage of a passenger arriving from Viet Nam. They are used in the preparation of soups and broth. Importation is banned in the United States to limit the risk of introducing pathogenic viruses such as HN or Newcastle disease (aviary pseudopeste). The nests were destroyed.⁴⁷

October 16, 2017
Los Angeles, State of California, United States of America

Kurtis Law was sentenced to one year in prison (see "On the Trail" n° 17, p. 32). The 93 "good luck" songbirds, all listed in CITES Appendixes I and II, would have been worth \$90,000 US if they had been sold on the black market. Only eight birds survived the attempted contraband from Viet Nam. Law, a vendor on Internet, claims to be the "Jane Goodall to the Asian bird world." His main interest was in protecting the birds, giving them new homes in the United States".

The investigation file pointed out that the birds that Law was selling could be purchased for \$1-2 US each on their markets of origin, and sold for \$1000 US to Asian communities in southern California. The deputy prosecutor called for a two-year prison sentence, stressing the high risk of repeat offense.⁴⁸



MEXICO

October 9, 2017
Monterrey, State of Nuevo Leon, Mexico

Seizure at an individual's home of a wounded pygmy owl (*Glaucidium spp.* Appendix II). She was given for care to the La Pastora park as protocol requires.⁴⁹

October 16, 2017

State of Mexico, Mexico

PROFEPA carried out a seizure operation in three different locations. First, two yellow-naped Amazons (*Amazona auropalliata*, Appendix I), one orange-fronted conure (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II) and one monk parakeets (*Myopsitta monachus*, Appendix II) were confiscated and a veterinary clinic in Tlalnepantla de Baz; then a mealy Amazon (*Amazona farinosa*, Appendix II) and a keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*, Appendix II) in the Cuauhtémoc and Coyoacán districts, in Mexico City. The parrots were handed over to Abraham Lincoln Aviary in Polanco, while the toucan was sent to the "Unit for the Management of Wildlife Conservation" (UMA Deval Animal).⁵⁰

October 16, 2017

Durango, State of Durango, Mexico

A northern caracara (*Caracara cheriway*, Appendix II) was found injured at the Guadalupe Victoria international airport and placed in observation at the school for veterinary and zootechnical medicine before being released by the PROFEPA. It flew off at the same time as an American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*, Appendix II) that had been injured and brought to the veterinary clinic.



On the same day, the agency released a Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) that had been handing over with its mother by a town inhabitant. The mother was blind and will spend the

rest of her life with the School for Veterinary Medicine and Breeding at the University of Juarez.⁵¹

October 19, 2017

San Luis Potosi, State of San Luis Potosi, Mexico



The PROFEPA released a small menagerie today: two Harris' hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*, Appendix II), one northern caracara (*Caracara cheriway*, Appendix II), a common barn-owl (*Tyto alba*, Appendix II) and two gray foxes (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) in Armadillo de los Infante,

four coyotes (*Canis latrans*) on municipal land in Ejido San Juan de Guadalupe. They had spent some time getting back on their feet at the Tangamanga Zoo and the Unit for the Management of Wildlife Conservation (UMA) "Los Tecolotes".⁵²

October 26, 2017

Ixtapaluca, State of Mexico, Mexico



An inhabitant of the Buenaventura neighborhood had been holding magnificent birds prisoner in the common areas of a housing development. This prisoners included a red-lored Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix I), four monk parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*, Appendix II), a mitred conure (*Aratinga mitrata*, Appendix II), a militari macaw (*Ara militaris*, Appendix I), two orange-fronted conures (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II), a white-crowned parrot (*Pionus senilis*, Appendix II), a yellow-napped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*, Appendix I), a Patagonian conure (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*, Appendix II), a green-cheeked Amazon (*Amazona viridigenalis*, Appendix I), a brown-backed solitaire (*Myadestes occidentalis*), a keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*), an emerald toucanet (*Aulacorhynchus prasinus*), a northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) and an American robin (*Turdus migratorius*). The PROFEPA also found two common iguanas (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II) and two Mexican gray squirrels (*Sciurus aureogaster*). The man received a fine of 109,560 pesos (\$5740 US).⁵³

October 26, 2017

Manzanillo, State of Colima, Mexico

He was roaming in the port city with a macaw (*Ara* spp., Appendix I or II) attached to his left arm. The bird was untied and seized, an inquiry is opened.⁵⁴

November 18, 2017

Monterrey, State of Nuevo Leon, Mexico

Seizure on a market place of 84 birds including three Green conures (*Aratinga holochlora*, Appendix II), 20 passerines (genus *Turdus*) a cardinal (genus *Cardinalis*), 14 desert cardinals (*Cardinalis sinuatus*), two altamira orioles (*Icterus gularis*), three Green jays (*Cyanocorax yncas*), a red-winged black bird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), three yellow-headed blackbirds (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*), 11 mockingbirds (genus *Mimus*) and three lark buntings (*Calamospiza melanocorys*). Capture and sale of these species in banned by law since 2010. Two sellers escaped.⁵⁵

November 22, 2017

Xochimilco, Mexico City, Mexico

Seizure of two red-lored amazons (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II).⁵⁶

December 2, 2017

León de los Aldama, State of Guanajuato, Mexico

Seizure of three orange-fronted conures (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II).⁵⁷

December 16, 2017

Monterrey, State of Nuevo Leon, Mexico

One white-throated magpie-jay (*Calocitta formosa*), one blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), one red-lored Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II), one keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*, Appendix II), one orange-fronted conure (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II), two lilac-crowned Amazons (*Amazona finschi*, Appendix I), and one yellow-headed parrot (*Amazona oratrix*, Appendix I). The birds have been seized on the roof of a house, in corrugated iron-covered cages.⁵⁸



Calocitta formosa

December 25, 2017

Navolato, State of Sinaloa, Mexico

For sale on the roadside: five white-fronted Amazons (*Amazona albifrons*, Appendix II) and one orange-fronted conure (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II). The seller fled. According to the veterinarians, the erratic way in which the birds were flying may be due to their captivity in overpopulated cages for a long time.⁵⁹

PERU

October 21, 2017

Los Angeles, Mariscal Nieto Province, Moquegua Region, Peru

Two red-fronted macaws (*Ara rubrogenys*, Appendix I) surviving cage-life in a restaurant in the city were seized by the National Forests and Forest Wildlife Service (SERFOR) and the Ilo police Department for the Protection of the Environment. Featherless areas on their necks and heads indicated pecking due to stress. The two birds were far from home. Red-fronted macaws feed on seeds, wild fruit and cactus of the *Cereus* genus. But extended agricultural activity in their habitat zones means that they are tempted by easy food supplies and become an exasperation for farmers. They gather in flocks in fields, starting in May after their nesting season is over, and feast on peanuts and corn. That is where they are shot down, or trapped and sold as pets, sometimes even poisoned by the pesticides spread on the crops. The species is endangered: a study carried out in 2011 to define the maximum extent of its habitat and count the remaining population only identified 35 reproduction sites and 805 individuals.⁶⁰

November 15, 2017

Atalaya Port, Atalaya Province, Ucayali Region, Peru

27 parakeets (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), 19 canary-winged parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolurus*, Appendix II) and an ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*, Appendix I) seized in a clandestine pet shop on the docks.⁶¹



December 13, 2017

José Luis Bustamante y Rivero, Arequipa, Arequipa Province, Arequipa Region, Peru

Two canary-winged parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolurus*, Appendix II) made up as parrots. Parrots sell for more than parakeets.⁶²

ASIA

INDIA

November 5 and 12, 2017

Lac Veliyur, Kanchipuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The monsoon is in full strength in Tamil Nadu. Many natural and artificial ponds and lakes are overflowing among the 1942 listed in the Kanchipuram District. It's a blessing for the numerous migrating water birds that make a stop here at this time of the year. Dozens of species coming from Europe, Canada, Australia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh Myanmar and Siberia feast on fish, shellfish, gastropods and amphibians. It is also the high season for poaching. The hunting methods are basic but efficient: handmade face loaded rifles, sling shots, collets, mechanical traps and glue. Poachers often operate in groups: they send scouts at sundown to find the birds' nocturnal dwellings, then come in around 3 am. As soon as one bird is disturbed all the others fly off. That's when the shooting starts. .../...



A recent study carried out in 27 wet zones of the District by the National Center for Biological Science (NCBS) and the National Conservation Foundation (NCF) enabled to assess the damage. Out of the 53 identified water bird species, 47 are hunted. Each wet zone studied is covered by at least 10 poachers, who kill or capture an average 21 birds per raid. Wild water birds are sold on five open markets and eaten in at least 426 restaurants in the District, sometimes under the untruthful label "chicken". The pond heron (*Ardeola grayii*) and the cattle egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) are the more frequently found on menus, sold 150 rupees (\$2,3 US) a piece. Cormorants and darters (genus *Anhinga*) are worth 300 rupees (\$4.6 US), the whistling teal (*Dendrocygna javanica*) 500 rupees (\$7.7 US). More rare, the Asian openbill (*Anastomus oscitans*) and the black-headed ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) cost 1000 rupees (\$15.4 US), while the spot-billed pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*) is the most expensive, at 2,500 rupees (\$38.5 US) a piece. 272 poachers accepted to answer to the survey. All men aged 26 to 54, 73% declare that poaching is motivated by economic reasons. They on average gain 13,000 rupees (\$200 US) per month.

Ainsi S. Ellapan (27 years old), P. Moorthy (45 years old) and A. Appadurai (60 years old), arrested on November 5th red handed on the edge of Lake Veliyur with three makeshift rifles and five dead birds. They come from a village near Arakkonam, about thirty kilometers away. They belong to the Narikuravas tribe, famous community of hunting nomads often spoken of in "On the Trail". The three men were fined 5,000 rupees (\$77 US) each. M. Sivakumar, resident in Uthiramerur 30 km south was for his part arrested on November 12th by on a lake bank with his makeshift rifle and half a dozen killed birds. He was burdened with the same fine, a standard one that does not appear to be deterrent.⁶³



Pelecanus philippensis - \$38US

November 12, 2017

Kanchipuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Poaching on the lake of several migratory birds. Seizure of a makeshift rifle. One arrest. A fine worth 5,000 rupees, that is \$75 US.⁶⁴



November 25, 2017

Loktak Lake and its surroundings, State of Manipur, India

A survey of the lake and its banks by forest agents and volunteers from the Toubul Youth Development Association and the Global Science Center led to discovery of 13 nets and numerous traps, all intended for poaching migrating birds coming from the North. The survey concentrated around Toubul, Khoijuman, Kwasiphai and villages settled beside the lake. Naturalists have great concern for the decline in the number of birds coming to Lake Loktak in the winter. Local poaching is one of the causes.

About forty migrating birds make stops at Lake Loktak, notably pied harriers (*Circus melanoleucos*, Appendix II), common shelducks (*Tadorna tadorna*), mandarin ducks (*Aix galericulata*) and grey-leg geese (*Anser anser*).⁶⁵



Circus melanoleucos

November 30, 2017

Doddaballapur, Rural Bangalore District, State of Karnataka, India

Seizure and rescue of two eagle owls (*Bubo bengalis*, Appendix II), four arrests.

Owls and mottled wood-owl (*Strix ocellata*, Appendix II) are after capture, skinned, mutilated, sacrificed and cut according to the rituals of black magic to attract happiness or misfortune. Prosperity and revenge are the two pillars of traffic. A wildlife warden in the district says that the remains of nocturnal raptors are often covered with hair, red ash and safran powder. Between the new moon (Amavasya) and the full moon (Purnima) traffic extends for the same irrational reasons to red-backed kite (*Haliastur indus*, Appendix II), loris (*Loris* spp., Appendix II) and Indian sand boas (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II).⁶⁶

See. "On the Trail" n°3 p.35 and n°18 p. 22.

Novembre 30, 2017

Khatima, Udham Singh Nagar District, State of Uttarakhand, India. Border to Nepal.

The birds coming from Siberia and Asia to spend winter in the South are arriving. The Sharda dam hold is one of their first migration halts. Everything goes for poachers, from poisoned bred balls, bait with a hook inside to rifles. The situation is alarming and law enforcement are powerless. For the first time cooperation between village committees and forest guards has been organized to counter the pillaging and damage to the regions hospitality. "The forest department is keeping a tight vigil and various teams are patrolling the area at night. Villagers have also been asked to work in tandem with the department to curb poaching." Brahminy ducks, mallards, shovelers, greylag geese, gadwalls, teals, pochards, redhead ducks and coots should benefit from this partnership.⁶⁷

December 9, 2017

Bahadurgarh, State of Haryana, India

They're really after the peacock (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) in the forests of the Aravalis mountain. A 14-year-old boy was found with a dead peacock on his shoulders. He was released after a few hours. It was the 2nd confirmed poaching of this emblematic bird within a fortnight. Several activists and volunteers from the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) decided to inspect the forest. Everyday they picked up broken peacock feathers, peacock bones and carcasses, traps for jackals and nilgai antelopes and alcohol bottles" While peacock poaching takes place throughout the year for its feathers, the incidents increase during winter for the meat " says a resident in Bairol.⁶⁸



December 10, 2017

Vrindavan, Mathura district, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

13 peacocks (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan or *Pavo muticus*, Appendix II) died after eating poisoned seeds near the Garud Govind Hindu temple. Four were saved by veterinarians.⁶⁹



December 2017

Sivasagar District, State of Assam, India

No respite for the migrating birds from the north. After several thousands of kilometers, they are greeted and retained in true barrages of nets, patches of disseminated poison and other welcoming systems. Poachers and retailers have no concern for consumers' health. NGOs speak of several cases of human food poisoning after having eaten toxic meat.⁷⁰



INDONESIA

November 2017

Indonesia

Caged birds are a popular pastime in Indonesia, especially on the island of Java. This hobby is pushing the straw-headed bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*, Appendix II) straight towards extinction. They sell for between \$300 and \$1,100 US on Indonesian markets. A few specimens come from bird breeders, but most come from the forest. Wild bulbuls are considered better singers than the "products" of breeding. The better their songs, the more expensive they are. The species used to be very common in Greater Sundas, Burma, continental Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Today, the straw-headed bulbul is considered extinct in Burma, Thailand and on Java and Sumatra. Yet the species, although listed in CITES Appendix II since 1997, is not strictly protected by national law. Sanctions, when they exist, are minor. Smuggling from Malaysia remains active and it is unsure whether the population in Singapore is completely protected from the traffic. A recent survey (2017) in Singapore revealed that the population was around 200 specimens, which makes it the last viable population within its original distribution zone. In the past 15 years, in Kalimantan and the neighboring states of Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysia, the last bulbuls have retreated to areas that are difficult to access.

Already in 2007, chicks were sold for nearly \$400 US per individual, by Agar gum resin collectors in the Menyapa Mountains in Easter Kalimantan. They were then transported through a series of travel stages, particularly maritime, to the capital city of Jakarta.

A decree from the ministry of Forests, dating from 2003, on the capture and collection of wild plants and animals, cautiously authorizes wild samples to be taken of a very few bird species, in order to consolidate breeding farms. The straw-headed bulbul is not on the list. It is difficult to imagine how some bulbuls could come from breeders, since for at least the past 14 years, it is forbidden to catch wild specimens in order to genetically contribute to the breeding stock. Anyone in Indonesia who possesses a straw-headed bulbul is thus in violation of Indonesian law.



The authors of an article published in Bird Conservation International call for urgent measures, such as dissuasive reinforcement of sanctions, and listing the bulbul on the IUCN list of critically endangered species and on CITES Appendix I.⁷¹

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GANG

November 16, 2017

Indonesia

The smuggling system is standard, and it's torture. The police seized 41 white cockatoos (*Cacatua alba*, Appendix II) and 84 eclectus parrots (*Eclectus roratus*, Appendix II) compressed in sections of plastic tubes, closed on the ends by wires. The birds could not make the slightest movement. They were found in four different places in eastern Indonesia. Investigators brought in four members of a specialized network. They face a maximum of five years in prison and \$ 7,400 US in fines if found guilty. They apparently have connections in the Philippines, according to Dwi Adhiasto of the Wildlife Conservation Society. There are 131 endangered bird species in Indonesia. Many can be found for sale in markets in the country's large cities, and many others are exported.⁷²

IRAN

October 7, 2017

Langrud, Province of Gilan, Iran

Migrating birds have just spent the winter in the northern swamps near the Caspian Sea. Already on the Saturday market place in Langrud, over a hundred poached birds are for sale alive, woodcocks (genus *Scolopax*) and great snipes (*Gallinago media*) and most often dead, green-winged teals (*Anas crecca*), northern pintails (*Anas acuta*), common mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*).⁷³

Beginning of November 2017

Asalouyeh, Bushehr, Bushehr Province, Iran

– Seizure of 10 falcons in a vehicle stopped on the road by police.

– Seizure by Asalouyeh police of 37 falcons in four different vehicles.

The main species confiscated were saker falcons (*Falco cherrug*, Appendix II) and peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*, Appendix I with reservations by Saudi Arabia).

The two cargoes were destined for countries in the Persian Gulf. The hunting code states that anyone who breeds, hunts, purchases, sells, transports, possesses or traffics in falcons can be sentenced to up to three years in prison and fined several million rials (1 million rials = \$28 US). At least four men under arrest. The falcons are in poor health, dehydrated, their eyelids sown shut. They are receiving the necessary care; reopening their eyelids is a delicate operation.⁷⁴



November 13, 2017

Garma, Kerman Province, Iran

The two men were flying birds attached to strings on the ground. After a police chase, the two poachers' motorcycles were immobilized. The two men are being interrogated by prosecutors. They are from the southern provinces and were trying to catch falcons by baiting them with small birds. They wanted to then export the raptors to Gulf countries. Seven pigeons, three quails, cages and trapping equipment were also seized.⁷⁵



December 13 and 21, 2017

Iranshahr, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Iran

- In a car, seizure of 13 houbara bustards (*Chlamydotis undulata*, Appendix I) and one common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II). One arrest.

- In a car, seizure of 24 houbara bustards (*Chlamydotis undulata*, Appendix I). Although they had been mistreated, they were still alive.⁷⁶

KUWAIT

November 2017

Al Abdali, Checkpoint with Iraq, Jahra Governorate, Kuwait

Customs officials seized 23 Shaheen peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus peregrinator*, Appendix I) coming from Iraq. The smuggler had drugged them and hidden them in his suitcases. Three of them are dead, 20 will be sent back to Iraq.⁷⁷



MALAYSIA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 12, 2017

Kota Samarahan, State of Sarawak, Borneo Island, Malaysia

Four Indonesian traffickers were sentenced today to one year in prison along with a fine of 1000 ringgits (\$230 US) each, for having attempted to cross the border between Malaysia and Indonesia with 755 oriental magpie-robins. Two brothers, Hendry and Samsui Abdul Hadi, Supriadi Saripuddin and Agus Tahir (aged 30 to 40 years) were in possession of 56 cages full of birds, when they were intercepted by the military police on September 15, around 4:40am.



The main vulnerability of the oriental magpie-robin (*Copsychus saularis*) is that it sings well. It also includes a few imitations of other birds in its repertoire. It is not shy, and frequently approaches houses. It can often be found in trees along streets and gardens, or perched on roofs. It is a migratory bird, and spends the spring and summer at altitudes between 1000 and 2000 m, in the hills of the Himalaya, then goes south in the fall. It can be found from Pakistan through Southeast Asia.⁷⁸

PAKISTAN

October 10, 2017

Golarchi, Badin District, Sindh Province, Pakistan

Eight falcons (*Falco spp.*, Appendix I or II) seized by agents of the provincial Department of Wildlife, assisted by rangers. They had been captured in Baluchistan and transported by a poacher from the town of Dera Murad Jamali all the way to Karachi. The man is being held in custody.⁷⁹



October 17, 2017

Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, Punjab Province, Pakistan

Nine falcons (*Falco spp.*, Appendix I or II) were seized. They had boarded in the bag of a Qatari, Ali Muhammad Al-Sada, who was about to return home on a private jet. The trafficker was taking into custody.⁸⁰



October 20, 2017

Lakki Marwat, Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Seizure inside two vehicles of 68 red-legged partridges (*Alectoris rufa*) and 20 Siberian cranes (*Grus leucogeranus*, Appendix I). The priors were to be delivered in Peshawar from Baluchistan, the latter in Bannu from Karachi. The two offenses are sanctioned with two fines worth 170,000 Rs, that is \$1,600 US.⁸¹



November 6, 2017

On the road between Lakki Marwat, Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Mianwali, Province of Punjab, Pakistan

A saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*, Appendix II) was coming from Marwat. With the trafficker, they were heading towards Islamabad. He had been bought from poachers in a village near the border to Afghanistan.⁸²

THAILAND

October 10, 2017

Don Mueang, Province of Bangkok, Thailand

The National Parks Department's Yiaow Dong ("Wild Falcon") carried out a raid in a spare parts manufacturing company in the northern suburb of Bangkok. At least 40 white-breasted waterhens (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) and 10 red-whiskered bulbuls (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) were seized. The company owner was charged with illegal possession of wildlife.⁸³

FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 14, 2017

Nonthaburi, Province of Nonthaburi, Thailand

-Seizure of 600 red-whiskered bulbuls (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) in an illegal breeding farm.

-Seizure of common hill mynas (*Gracula religiosa*, Appendix II) at two brothers' home. The public prosecutor had delivered a search warrant after a cyber patrol had found evidence of online sale of protected bird species captured to fuel the caged song birds' trade market.⁸⁴

VIET NAM

October 3, 2017

Hanoi, Viet Nam

Release of a grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) whose species was promoted to Appendix I of CITES last year. He was in a sad cage in a pottery shop in the old touristic neighborhood. He will never see again the Central African forests, but his life will be better in a shelter for wild birds near the city.⁸⁵



November 3, 2017

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

13 raptors seized in the garage of a street vendor. A fine of 6 million dong (\$264 US).⁸⁶



November 10-14, 2017

Phu Vang District, Thua Thien Hue Province, Viet Nam

The raptor was released in a propitious environment after three days of care and observation. It had been confiscated from an individual who had been keeping it in a cage.⁸⁷

November 29, 2017

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

The coffee shop had a caged raptor, presumably a white-rumped falconet (*Polihierax insignis*, Appendix II).⁸⁸

EUROPE

GERMANY

December 22, 2017

Munich's Franz Josef Strauss Airport, Free State of Bavaria, Germany

It's the season for trapping in South America and for smuggling in Europe.

The 28 ornamental birds whose species were not specified were in the luggage of a female Mexican "beautician". Five birds were dead, and seven others died shortly afterwards. Too much stress during the Mexico-Munich trip.⁸⁹

SPAIN

October 2017

La Rambla, Province of Córdoba, Autonomous community of Andalusia, Spain



Seizure of two grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I) illegally bred and raised and equipped by the time of the Seprona intervention (Servicio de Protección de la Naturaleza) with fake certificates.⁹⁰

November 6, 2017

Peñas de Aia Natural Park, Gipuzkoa Province, Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, Spain

A common crane (*Grus grus*, Appendix II) was mistaken for a pigeon. It's hard to believe. The long legs of the tall bird were broken by the lead bullets. He had to be put down. In 2016, 36 poaching events of falcons and vultures were registered in the Spanish Basque province.

"That is the tip of the iceberg" say the local ecologists.⁹¹

OPERATION SUZAKU

December 21, 2017

Province of Alava, Basque Country Autonomous Community, Spain

Seizure of 2,000 exotic birds smuggling into Spain through the Pamplona, Madrid-Barajas, and Bilbao airports in the luggage or clothing of several traffickers. The concerned species are protected by CITES and by national laws in their countries of origin. The gang was led by a former smuggler who had worked his way up through the ranks. For example, the toucans from South America sell for \$50 US in their home country and sell for \$3,000 US in Spain and in countries of the European Union. The gang's profits had reached 500,000 € (\$590,000 US). The operation, conducted in cooperation between the Guardia Civil, Europol, and Ameripol, resulted in 29 arrests in Spain and in Latin America.⁹²



FRANCE

Beginning of October 2017

Biguglia Nature Reserve, Haute-Corse Department, France

Six flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*, Appendix II) were slaughtered in a pond. The autopsy revealed that they were riddled with shots. The Department is pressing charges and is looking for witnesses.⁹³

October 8, 2017

Arques, Pas-de-Calais Department, France

Decapitation of a peacock (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) in a public garden. It was the town mascot in the North of France.⁹⁴

October 19, 2017

Pau, Pyrénées-Atlantiques Department, France

11 veteran poachers (60 to 83 years old) of ortolan buntings (*Emberiza hortulana*) believed they could get an acquittal considering the customary tolerance of forest guards. The Court of Appeals confirmed the first instance judgment. The fines are maintained, seizure of the "matoles" (passerine traps) is confirmed. Nevertheless, permanent suspension of the hunting permits is cancelled. See "On the Trail" n°15 p.37.⁹⁵



REPEATED OFFENSE

October 28, 2017

Fressenneville, Somme Department, France

Environmental police enter a person's home with a search warrant. From his garden came melodious singing, and over the fence bush investigators spotted a trebuchet, a typical trap for passerines. Two other traps were seized. The breeding farm was dismantled. An Eurasian siskin (*Carduelis spinus*) was immediately set free.⁹⁶



Beginning of December, 2017

Porto-Vecchio, Corse-du-Sud department, France

Lead shots in five American flamingoes (*Phoenicopterus ruber*, Appendix II) by the Chiappa pond. Four were dead; the fifth was wounded.⁹⁷

ITALY

October 14, 2017

Orbetello, Province of Grosseto, Region of Tuscany, Italy

Seizure of crested larks (*Galerida cristata*), meadow pipits (*Anthus pratensis*), Eurasian tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*), white wagtails (*Motacilla alba*) and spotted flycatchers (*Muscicapa striata*). The hunters specialized in the tiny ones. Spotted flycatchers weigh less than 10 g.⁹⁸



October 14, 2017

Florence, Tuscany Region, Italy



© Enpa Milano

Seizure following denunciation of 150 live birds trapped in cages with their legs tied including song thrushes (*Turdus philomelos*), common blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) and a little

owl (*Athene noctua*) and 200 birds belonging to protected species in a freezer. The poacher was caught near his home in full action with nets and electronic callers. He has been indicted for, among other offenses, cruelty to animals.⁹⁹

Mid-october 2017 EMILIE

Pouzzoles, Campania Region, Italy

Arrest of a dog breeder and European goldfinch catcher (*Carduelis carduelis*). He is accused of breach of the law regarding the protection of wildlife and cruelty to animals. Seizure of a net.¹⁰⁰

October 2017

Orio al Serio Airport, Province of Bergamo, Lombardia Region, Italy

It was on return from Bacau (Romania) that a band of Italian hunters were checked by airport customs reinforced by Forest riflemen from Brescia. They were transporting in their luggage 1119 bodies of small birds including goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*), European greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*), various wagtails (genus *Motacilla*), meadow pipits (*Anthus pratensis*), corn buntings (*Emberiza calandra*), common linnets (*Linaria cannabina*), yellowhammers (*Emberiza citrinella*), spotted crakes (*Porzana porzana*), fieldfares (*Turdus pilaris*) and woodlarks (*Lullula spp.*). Bird hunting season is in full swing in Eastern Europe. In Romania woodlark hunting is permitted since 1996. Ornithologists consider the woodlark as some sort of umbrella, under which its legal hunting hides that of numerous protected species in Romania. Italian customs attempt to intercept the poachers on return. The eight gang members were indicted by the Bergamo General Attorney for unlawful possession and fraudulent import of animals illegally hunted.

The case is to be seen in the light of a seizure that occurred about the same period in Hungary with more than 3000 dead birds on board a van coming from Romania and heading towards Italy. The driver was arrested.¹⁰¹



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UNITED KINGDOM

December 8, 2017

Chesterfield, Derbyshire County, United Kingdom

A search warrant led to the seizure of several live falcons. Investigation is under way.¹⁰²

December 19, 2017

Yate, South

Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

Suspicious of illegal taxidermy. Alas, the two tawny wood-owls (*Strix aluco*, Appendix II) had nothing to declare.¹⁰³



Pangolins

It's not getting any better. The seizures for the quarter of October, November and December 2017 totalled 13,132 kg of scales, representing a taking of of nearly 40,000 pangolins. This record includes a seizure of 11,900 kg of African pangolins in China in July 2017, which was revealed at the end of November after the suspects were arrested. Convictions for trafficking in live pangolins or scales range from 4 years in India, 5 to 7 years in Malawi, and 9 years in Zimbabwe.

The four African pangolin species (*Manis gigantea*, *M. temminckii*, *M. tetradactyla*, *M. tricuspis*) et the four Asian species (*Manis crassicaudata*, *M. culionensis*, *M. javanica* and *M. pentadactyla*) are listed under CITES Appendix I.

"On the Trail " n°19

The value of a pangolin on the black market, according to media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/ animal	Réf.
Asia	Indonesia	15,000	18
		196	19
	Malaysia	66	22
		200	23

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

Lulekani, Tzaneen and Hoedspruit, Limpopo Province, South Africa
November 2017

- Six people involved in keeping two live pangolins in a cage in Lulekani, a "township" in the east of the province, 13 km from the town of Phalaborwa, very close to Kruger park. Aged between 29 and 52 years old, one woman and five men were arrested by the Provincial Endangered Species Unit after being denounced by neighbors. They will appear before the court soon.

- In Tzaneen, other informers identified two people, 25 and 35 years old, in possession of a pangolin. They were arrested at the Life Style Shopping Centre.

-Rescue of a pangolin whose unusual and illegal captivity had been reported by the neighborhood. This is at least the 8th to have been rescued since the beginning of the month in the province.¹

November 13, 2017
Kuruman, Northern Cape Province, South Africa
The female pangolin from Kuru



Approximately two years of age, she was in a blue box when her two kidnappers were stopped. The two poachers were released on bail for 10,000 rand, or \$710 US, the largest amount ever required in bail for a pangolin case. The pangolin was transferred to the veterinary clinic at the National Zoological Gardens and anesthetized for a medical exam and treatment for external lesions and broken scales. DNA samples were taken in order to identify her exact place of origin and to complete the investigation file. She was then transferred to the veterinary hospital in Johannesburg where she was treated for dehydration. The pangolins ensnared in the Veld are subjected to brutal conditions in captivity and fast for several days. For a week or so, the team went out to find termites and ants in the veld to feed her. She was then taken to the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, a perfect habitat for pangolins. Kuru, her new name, is monitored by biologists on the reserve, and she can be seen from time to time feasting on ants at the base of trees. Special thanks to Nicci Wright, Wildlife Project Manager at the Humane Society International and to all those who enabled "On the Trail" to tell this miracle story in our chapter on pangolins.²



End of December 2017
Near Giyani, Limpopo Province, South Africa
Two arrests and rescue of a pangolin.³

BOTSWANA

October 27, 2017
Gaborone, South-East District, Botswana

Arrest of four men and a woman transporting a live pangolin in a van, near University of Botswana campus. Someone had denounced them. Agents from the Directorate of Intelligence and Security Services (DISS) assisted by the Department of Wildlife captured them. Patricia Opelo Bayani (34 years old), Samuel Marambe (17 years old), Ketso Mothibi (35 years old), Dilotlhoko Mogotsi (47 years old), and Shathani Mugwana (48 years old) declare to have acquired the animals through a certain Coxoe Xikore in the Ghanzi Region, 700 km North-west of Gaborone. They kept in police custody while investigations continue.⁴

CAMEROON

GANG
October 10, 2017
Ebolowa, South Region, Cameroon

The two traffickers had been specializing for several years in semi-wholesale scales trafficking, with a network stretching from Gabon to Congo-Brazzaville. They worked with a Nigerian who took care of the smuggling into his own country. In Cameroon, they pirated villages in the forest areas around Djoum (department of Dja-and-Lobo) and Mvangan (department of Mvila). They were arrested in possession of 70 kg of scales in the Mekalat neighborhood, by agents from the Department of Forest and Wildlife, assisted by the Last Great Ape Organization (LAGA).⁵



GANG
November 21, 2017
Douala, Littoral Region, Cameroon

128 kg of scales in five bags were seized, and three wholesalers were arrested. Two of them bought their supplies from pangolin gatherers near Doumé, 500 km from Douala. The third was in charge of finding purchasers in the large harbor city. The trio also dabbled in ivory. They are being held in custody.⁶



KENYA

November 12, 2017

Kenya

Investigators from the Big Life Foundation expected to catch a trafficker selling meat and scales, but when they arrived at the meeting point, the phony purchaser realized that the pangolin was still alive, rolling himself into a ball in a bag, with damaged scales. Agents from the Kenya Wildlife Service arrived at the scene, after being notified by the foundation.⁷



October 8, 2017

Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary, Liberia

The female that arrived at the wildlife shelter in poor condition on September 1, with two others pangolins, has been freed. She had been ensnared and suffered from an infected wound on her thorax. It took six weeks of treatment and many walks in the forest to find food, accompanied by volunteers, before she was back on her feet.⁸



LIBERIA

December 24, 2017

Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary, Margibi County, Liberia



A black bellied tree pangolin weighing 2 kg was to be sold in public, perhaps for a festive dinner. It was seized and immediately released back into the forest. Another specimen was released the same day, after it was rehabilitated in a sanctuary.⁹

MALAWI

October 8, November 10 and 23, 2017

Border with Mozambique, Malawi

- This was the first pangolin case for Malawi. Two men from Mozambique, Maritinyo Alberto (21 years old) and Paulino Felish Njanja (25 years old), were arrested on October 8 by agents from the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), as they tried to bring a live pangolin into the country, where they intended to sell it. The two men had hidden a second specimen on the other side of the border, ready to be fraudulently introduced into the country if the sale of the first was successful. - They appeared in court after being held in custody until the trial. The judge ordered that the pangolin be transferred to a protected area. The animal was released in the Liwonde national park. - The humane raptors got seven years.¹⁰



ZIMBABWE

October 27 and 31, 2017

Bulawayo, Bulawayo Province, Zimbabwe

The minimum sentence in Zimbabwe now seems well-established: nine years in prison for any violation of the Parks and Wildlife Act. Judge Franlin Mkhwananzi did not hesitate despite Josam Mumpande's age (62 years old). He was charged, along with his accomplice Anthony Kasiriworo (48 years old), of possession of a 5-kg live pangolin. Following a denunciation, the two men were arrested on October 27, near the Hillside Dam, as they transported the animal in their car.¹¹



REPEATED OFFENSE

November 25, 2017

Zimbabwe

A versatile trafficker, known for trading in ivory, but this time caught with a dead pangolin in his game bag, was arrested. He was sentenced to nine years in prison.¹²



CHINA

October 11, 2017**Shenzhen, Province of Guangdong, China**

This is the first time this year in the Shenzhen district. Seizure of 500 g of pangolin scales.¹³

**July 1, 2017, Mid October and November 29, 2017****Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China**

Customs revealed the world's largest seizure of pangolin scales. The event took place on July 1st in the port of Yantian.

A suspicious container was declared as empty, but was actually transporting 176 bags of charcoal in its first rows, and behind them, 239 pangolin scales, or 11.9 t torn from 20,000 to 30,000 tree pangolins (*Manis tricuspis*) and long-tailed pangolins (*Manis tetradactyla*).

The two suspects were arrested in October and November 2017, after a long inquiry and cross investigations. One of them lives in Bozhou, in Anhui Province. Bozhou is a major hub for raw materials for traditional Chinese medicine.



The bags filled with scales (20 kg) were stamped with the brand COTIPLAST from a company based in Abidjan that is specialized in recycling and weaving polyethylene bags. It is thus likely that the bags were sent from the Ivory Coast or a bordering country. The authorities did not reveal anything about the country of origin.¹⁴

December 12, 2017**Tai Po District, Hong Kong, China**

Intense contraband activity today in this district. A lot of turmoil, hefty seizures, only one arrest. It first was a customs patrol that during the morning fell on several men loading cardboard boxes onto a speedboat. At the sight of the agents the team jumped into the boat and speeded away, abandoning a great deal of electronic parts and pangolin scales inside two vehicles. Later in the day two speedboats are stopped in the area, suspected to be linked to the morning's seizure. In one of them customs discovered more hidden electronic components and a 35-year-old man was arrested. In full, the day's seizures toll counts the two speedboats, two road vehicles, 816 cameras, 3,373 telephones and 469 used tablets, for a total value estimated at about 10 million Hong Kong dollars (\$1.3 million US).¹⁵

INDIA

November 6, 2017**Balaghat District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India**

The lies just keep coming. A pangolin was saved just in time by rangers before being sacrificed under the patronage of a sorcerer with the aim of summoning the wealth from the sky, or more pragmatically to cash out twice the amount claimed from an ATM with credit cards. For the same reasons, three tigers and leopards were poached and stripped of some of their organs in the corridor between the Pench and the Kanha reserves. The first sacrifices had been pinpointed at the time of the recent change of currency. At least two tigers had given their lives so that "it would rain money in new currency".¹⁶

INDONESIA

October 5, 2017**Dumai, Riau Province, Indonesia**

Customs agents were informed that a batch of pangolins destined for Malaysia would be coming through the port. The patrol spotted a suspicious car and followed it, but the driver was able to escape, abandoning 95 live pangolins and two boxes full of 37.55 kg of scales.¹⁷



October 24, 2017

Riau Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

101 live or recently deceased pangolins on a fishing boat. The two sailors, aged 22 and 25, admitted that they had been paid to carry the load to Malaysia. Local experts estimate that each of the pangolins seized was worth approximately \$15,000 US. The smugglers face a fine of \$7300 US and five years in prison.¹⁸



GANG

October 30, 2017

Road between Pelalawan and Pekanbaru, Province of Riau, Indonesia

Stopped by a police patrol, a minivan with two men inside transporting 301 kg of live pangolins (i.e. about 75 individuals) piled into bags. The animals were intended for exportation, seemingly to Malaysia on the other side of the Malacca Strait. The seizure is estimated worth 200 million Indonesian rupees (\$14,700 US). According to Kombes Gidion Arif Setiawan, director of criminal investigations for the Riau police, the two traffickers would be linked to the network dismantled in Bengkalis.¹⁹



JAPAN

December 11, 2017

Tokyo, Kantō Region, Japan

On the Mercari digital flea market, a police cyber patrol identified two stuffed Malayan pangolins (*Manis javanica* Appendix I) and one stuffed false gavia (*Tomistoma schlegelii* Appendix I). The 23-year-old pangolin seller said that they were part of the family's property. The antique dealer who sold the false gavia says that a customer had left the "object".

The Tokyo police pressed charges. The sale of these specimens listed in CITES Appendix I requires prior approval from the Environmental ministry. The three "objects" were seized.²⁰



MALAYSIA

October 7, 2017

Kubang Pasu District, State of Kedah, Malaysia

The Malaysian Peninsular national parks and Wildlife Department was acting on a tip. Agents with a warrant carried out a search around 6:30 a.m. in a facility in Hosba where 127 pangolins were held captive. Two Malaysians and two Thais were arrested; the animals and two vehicles were seized.²¹



2 kg

October 26, 2017

Kota Kinabalu, State of Sabah, Malaysia

Two men aged 25 and 27 arrested near Tanjung Lipat beach while they were holding a young weighing some 1.9 kg in a plastic crate in the back seat of their car. A certain "Mastang Roy" had been spotted on social networks trying to sell the animal for 150 RM (\$35US) per kilo. An internet user denounced him to the Sabah Wildlife Department that managed to trace back up the lead. The seized pangolin is very weak.²²



November 4, 2017

Dongongan, State of Sabah, Malaysia

A live 4 kg pangolin on sale for 900 ringgit i.e. \$ 200 US.²³

November 6, 2017

State of Kedah, Malaysia

Two seizures came one after the other in this State neighboring Thailand, transit point for wildlife traffickers heading for China. First in the town Changlun at a road block where a Malaysian citizen was arrested with 85 live pangolins, then near the border where a Thailand citizen was stopped with 55 bags containing each a live pangolin and more bags filled with scales.²⁴

November 16 and 17, 2017

Kuala Lumpur International Airport, State of Selangor, Malaysia

The 13 suspicious packages came from several different addresses, from Kuching in Sarawak and from Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, but they were all going to the same person based in Hong Kong. They contained a total of 337 kg of scales of all sizes. Specialists are analyzing them to determine the origin of the pangolins. It is possible that the shipment is a mix of African and Asian scales. This is the first time that the postal platform at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport has been officially involved in pangolin trafficking. In seven months, the Malaysian customs department has seized over 15 tons of scales (see in particular "On the Trail" n°18 p.38 and 17 p.42).²⁵



NEPAL

October 24, 2017

Adamghat, Dhading District, Central Development Region, Nepal

Seizure of 2 kg of scales. Three arrests.²⁶

SRI LANKA

November 12, 2017

Kalpitiya, North West Province, Sri Lanka

Discovery of four big bags of scales for 130 kg total inside a house. A smuggling by boat from southern India or poaching in the Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Badulla districts.



Someone who knows pangolins well in Sri Lanka tells the following tale. "Once upon a time there was a deer and boar hunter who had shot a pangolin. Thinking it to be dead, he hoisted it onto his shoulders and around his neck. After gaining its strength back, it balled up, in the usual defense position. The hunter was found dead from suffocation the next day near his home."²⁷



Yala Park

Pangolins are excellent swimmers. Unfortunately for them, in the water they sometimes come across predators other than poachers.

THAILAND

November 21, 2017

Chong Sam Mor border checkpoint, Province of Chaiphum, Thailand

Two Thai citizens were blocked by police as they were heading to Laos in two Toyota Sport Rider vehicles loaded with 105 live pangolins piled in bags, for a total weight of 1 ton. Pramote Kerdlamool (32) and Payao Supsinthu (38) declared to have bought the animals in the Lad Lum Kaew District and to have intended to cross the border by the Thai -Lao Friendship Bridge in à Nong Khai, only at a 20 km distance from Vientiane.²⁸



VIET NAM

October 19, 2017

Gia Van, Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam

Nocturnal seizure in the north; 32 pangolins on the roof of a bus, 69 turtles crammed together in a hidden compartment and two bears paws. Two pangolins died of a skin infection after being taken to a shelter. This is the lowest mortality rate of all the seizures carried out up until now by the police and Save Vietnam's Wildlife. The 30 surviving pangolins are scheduled to be released soon.²⁹



Mid November Viet Nam

The NGO Save Vietnam's Wildlife released 28 pangolins, and is getting ready to release another 50 more in the next few weeks. When asked whether the pangolins that survived seizures and quarantines would be protected from poachers, the NGO responded, "We always pick out release sites carefully in order to maximize the rate of survival for the animals, based on different criteria like habitat, food resources and availability of protection by rangers."³⁰



November 19, 2017

Hung Yen, Hung Yen Province, Viet Nam

Express delivery for restaurants in the Quang Ninh province interrupted by the police. 112 live pangolins, weighing a total of 510 kg, were rescued. There were 112 when they started out. There were 113 when they arrived. A baby was born along the way.³¹

December 21, 2017

Province of Bac Giang, Viet Nam

Traffic police in the Province discovered over 200 kg of scales in a car during a check. One of the suspects attempted to escape but was caught. He would have bought the scales in Laos with the intention of selling them in Viet Nam.³²



Pangolins and Elephants



AFRICA

CAMEROON

COCOA NETWORK FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 15, 2017

Sangmélima, Dja-et-Lobo Department, South Region, Cameroon



Ivory and scales, the two go hand-in-hand in traffickers' sales strategies and wallets. The police and agents from the Forests and Wildlife Department witnessed proof of that fact once again when they caught a man, his wife and their nephew red-handed. The operation was carried out in cooperation with the NGO LAGA. Four tusks and a large bag of scales were seized. The three family members

got their ivory supply from an accomplice who was well-established in Gabon and in Yen, in the south of the country, where he dealt with Baka pygmies. The "merchandise" was generally towards the port city of Douala, before then setting sail for Asia, or heading through Nigeria. To keep it safe during the on-land transfer, the ivory and scales were often hidden in bags of cocoa beans, since the main suspect is also involved in the chocolate sector.¹

MALAWI

November 2017

Malawi

Malawi : ivory and scale trafficking leads to prison.

-Three men with 2 kg of raw ivory in the Kasungu national park on September 4. Sentenced on November 15 to 18 months in prison.

-Two men with 19.4 kg of raw ivory in the Kasungu national park on September 13. Sentenced on November 15 to 24 months in prison.

-One man with 1.3 kg of raw ivory in Lilongwe on September 27. Sentenced on November 20 to 24 months in prison.

-Two men with a live pangolin smuggled through the Mozambican border. Sentenced on November 21 to 5 years in prison.²



ZIMBABWE

November 3, 2017

Hwange and Victoria Falls, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

ZimParks is satisfied. 280 years in prison is a good score. The courts have ruled. Too quickly perhaps, unless the investigation files were really complete and well-prepared.

In one week, the two courts in Hwange and Victoria Falls examined 56 cases of poaching, and 31 suspects received sentences ranging from 9 to 12 years in prison. Among them, Justice Zulu, who was a security guard at the Ngamo Safaris reserve and had managed to escape when his partner Innocent Nyathi was arrested in december 2016; and Namatoni Ndlovu, elephant poisoner and tusk collector (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 90); and Jonathan Dude, a guy from Tsholotsho.³



ASIA

THAILAND

November 7, 2017

Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

Seizure of 116 kg of raw ivory and 15 kg of pangolin scales in the freight area of the airport. The packages came from the Congo and had falsely been declared to be "fish maw." The total load is estimated at 11 million bath, or \$338,000 US. Customs authorities have stated that between October 2016 and October 2017, 46 shipments of illegal wildlife products were seized, representing an overall value of 315 million bath, or over \$10 million US.⁴



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GANG

December 12, 2017

Near Bangkok, Thailand

Chaiyamart, 35, is behind bars again. According to the AMLO (Anti Money Laundering Office), the 35 year-old man had 28 bank accounts in Thailand, Viet Nam, Laos and Malaysia. He had been stopped at a roadside checkpoint in 2014. The police suspected him to be at the head of a massive Siamese rosewood trafficking operation. The investigation discovered that he was also involved in smuggling live pangolins and ivory. However, he was freed in 2016 and resumed his activities while broadening his palette: wood, ivory, pangolins, but also orangutans and rhinoceros horns. The NGO EAL (Elephant Action League) took part in the operation.⁵

VIET NAM

November 2017

Viet Nam-China

The report recently published by the ministry of Finance confirms the key role that the country plays in air, water and road transit of live or dead animals or their parts heading for China. As of today, and since the beginning of the year, 42 cases of smuggling have been revealed, mostly involving ivory, pangolins and rhinoceros horns. The flow of wildlife towards China is often combined with the exports of agricultural products. One kg of ivory on the local black market goes for between \$1300 and \$2200 US per kilo. A meeting between Vietnamese experts and authorities from the neighboring Chinese province of Guangxi took place at the beginning of October to try to define and implement measures that will put a stop to this scourge.⁶



Primates

AFRICA

GABON

October 25, 2017

Libreville, Estuaire Province, Gabon

They were selling a young female chimpanzee (*Pan spp.*, Appendix I), approximately four months old and decked out in a baby dress, on Facebook. Ghislain Biyoghe and Falilou Seck were identified online by Conservation Justice. They were taken to the Estuaire judicial police headquarters, where they came to an agreement with investigators, who “opted for a transactional act,” according to the press. The little chimpanzee was put in quarantine at the Franceville International Center for Medical Research (CIRMF), before being transferred to the Lekedi reserve near Bakoumba, in the Upper-Ogooue region. The Lekedi reserve is a private reserve run by a subsidiary of the Compagnie Minière de l’Ogooué (COMILOG), which is a subsidiary of the ERAMET group. The company uses the reserve to green its image and for the amusement of its employees, while exploiting a “world-class manganese ore deposit,” 50 km away. Elsewhere in Gabon, the company also exploits veins of niobium, tantalum, rare earths and uranium.¹

facebook

GUINEA

November 23, 2017

Conakry, Conakry Region, Guinea

Two citizens of Sierra Leone have been arrested. They were involved in the attempted sale of a young chimpanzee that was apparently brought into the country by bribing officials at the Forécariah border post. The two criminals are Abou Doumbouya and Aboubacar Cherif. The chimpanzee is now in the hands of the nature conservation corps and the NGO Guinée Application de la Loi Faunique.²

December 20, 2017

Ourekaba, Mamou Region, Guinea. Border with Sierra Leone.

Rescue by rangers supported by the GALF (Guinée-Application de la Loi Faunique) of a female chimpanzee baby. Her mother was shot dead while still carrying her in her arms. Her older sister died of her injuries after a long ordeal. The survivor has a broken arm. Two arrests.³



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Beginning of October 2017

Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo

After a long walk in the forest, vets from Gorilla Doctors and from the Lwiro Center for Primate Rehabilitation (CRPL) were able to free an eastern gorilla baby (*Gorilla beringei graueri*, Appendix I) from a wire snare that had been set by a poacher. Although the wound cuts through to the bone, the little gorilla should be all right.⁴



December 27, 2017

Lwiro, Democratic Republic of the Congo

A L’Hoest’s monkey (*Cercopithecus lhoesti*, Appendix II) arrived at the refuge, the 97th monkey that the rangers have taken from the hands of the rebels.⁵

AMERICA

BRAZIL

November 5, 2017

Ourinhos, State of São Paulo, Brazil

The man had been paid \$153 US to convoy the four baby capuchins (*Cebus spp.*, Appendix II) from Londrina in the State of Paraná to São Bernardo do Campo in the State of São Paulo 500 km away. He was stopped by police acting on information retrieved at the Ourinhos bus station on the Transbrasiliana line. He was to deliver the “merchandise” at the terminal station. The four tiny capuchins are being examined by vets at the environmental police headquarters.⁶



November 2017

Cajazeiras, State of Paraíba, Brazil

Rescue of a male capuchin (*Cebus* spp., Appendix II) detained in a bird cage much too small by a resident of the Hope neighborhood. A video posted on WhatsApp had alerted the vet services in town. The small prisoner suffered martyrdom, tied up at the waist with a rope, in bright sunlight, lacking water and food and in pitiful physical condition. He was taken on by the Vigilância Ambiental but his administrative process is far from over: he should then be given to the IBAMA in João Pessoa. The penalty for illegal possession of wildlife is 6 months to a year imprisonment and 500 reais (\$153 US) in fine.⁷



MEXICO

October 2017

Federal highway between Atlacomulco (State of Mexico) and Maravatio (State of Michoacán), Mexico

A package that was moving around was seized from the baggage compartment of a bus line connecting Mexico City and Guadalajara. It contained two Geoffroy's spider monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi*, Appendix II), no passenger claimed knowledge or ownership of these two stowaways.⁸

November 5, 2017

Villahermosa, State of Tabasco, Mexico

Seizure of two Guatemalan howling monkeys (*Alouatta pigra*, Appendix I) and 50 painted buntings (*Passerina ciris*). The trafficker faces up to nine years prison term and a fine between 300 and 3000 days' salary.⁹

PERU

October 2017

Mariano Melgar District, Arequipa Region, Peru

Rescue of a common squirrel monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*, Appendix II). The small primate was roaming in the Arequipa suburbs. The local section of the Forest and wildlife administration will take care of him.

The common squirrel monkey lives in the tropical forests of South America except for the coastal forests of South-East Brazil. Adult, they can measure 30 cm with a 40 cm tail. During the mating season from September to November, groups of squirrel monkeys can count 300 individuals. Their predators are eagles, snakes and Man who uses them as pets or lab animals. Without that they can live to about twenty years.¹⁰

ASIA

INDONESIA - ORANGUTANS

October 1, 2017

Eka Bahurui, East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan Province, Indonesia

Aloi is a young male approximately two years of age. According to Mr. Opik, who had him in his home, the orangutan was found in the middle of his garden six months ago. Members of the BKSDA (Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam) and the NGO APE Crusader, who had come to free the small primate, were not convinced by that explanation. "Children orangutans will always stick to the mother until the age of 6-8 years. Separation of the mother and child can ascertain that the mother died," said Faruq of APE Crusader.¹¹

October 3, 2017

Banyu Abang, North Kayong Regency, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia

For two weeks, a young female, approximately three years of age, had been closed into a 1m² -wooden crate that was nailed shut so that she could not escape. Bahtiar, the farmer who was holding her, explained that he had found her in one of his fields near a palm oil plantation and nicknamed her Isin. It was he who had called the authorities. The BKSDA sent a team accompanied by rescue workers from International Animal Rescue (IAR). Isin was put to sleep, extracted from the box and taken to the Ketapang Wildlife Center, where over 100 orangutans are recovering, as best they can, from the abuse that they have encountered with human beings. They are released in the forest as soon as their condition makes it possible. But for Karmele Ilano Sanchez, Program Director for IAR in Indonesia, "Having such a large number of orangutans undergoing rehabilitation, with more having to be rescued all the time, makes it increasingly difficult to find safe places where we can release them."¹²



October 10, 2017

Blang Pidie, Aceh Province, Sumatra, Indonesia

Another female saved by the BKSDA.¹³

October 12, 2017

Tampang Tumbang Anjir, Gunung Mas Regency, Province of Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

Rescue team from the BOS took on a female orangutan who had been taken in, as a baby, into a palm oil plantation run by Agro Timur Abadi (ATA). Out of the 18 orangutans living at the BOS shelter, eight come from the Gunung Mas Regency.¹⁴

November 9, 2017

Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park, Katingan Regency, Province of Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

Full release for two orangutans deprived of freedom for the last 10 years. In 2006, when they were in their early years, they had been smuggled into Thailand by airways or by sea then returned to Indonesian authorities. After 11 years of learning social skills and life in the wild on the BOSF campus in Nyaru Menteng, they discovered the joys and risks of the national park and the forest not entirely untouched.¹⁵

November 14, 2017

Betung Kerihun National Park and Danau Sentarum National Park, Province of West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Border to Malaysia.

Released by the SOC (Sintang Orangoutan Rescue Foundation) and the BKSDA of three female adults. After a four-hour-long boat ride from Putussibau, the three orangutans are now in the process of discovering and appropriating for themselves the Rongun forest crossed by the Mendalam river. The ecosystem meets the species main needs. Nevertheless, orangutans have never been spotted in this particular area of the park Betung Kerihun national park. According to local experts, this is actually a positive factor as it excludes the risk of potential territorial conflict with fellow orangutans.¹⁶

December 13-14, 2017

Murung Raya Regency, Central Kalimantan Province, Indonesia

After 11 years of learning and socialization, eight orangutans—four males and four females—left the BOS school in Nyaru and found themselves with complete freedom and full responsibility for their own survival in the protected forest of Bukit Patikap. The orphans were 15 years old and weighed 80 kg.¹⁷

INDONESIA, except orangutans

October 2017

Java Island, Indonesia

The two siamangs (*Symphalangus syndactylus*, Appendix I) for sale on Facebook for \$500 US. They are now at the Tegal Alur Rescue Center. The police found them in a cardboard box and a plastic bag. They had been trapped on the island of Sumatra and sent to Java through the harbor city of Bakaheuni.¹⁸

October 27, 2017

Derek, Deli Serdang Regency, Province of North Sumatra, Indonesia

A joint team from the Indonesian Species Conservation Programme (ISCP) and the Scorpion Foundation freed a loris (*Nycticebus* spp., Appendix I) that had been captured a month ago in the Sibolangit forest.¹⁹

November 6, 2017

Kondang Merak Natural Reserve, Malang Regency, Province of Eastern Java, Indonesia

Eight slow lorises (*Nycticebus coucang*, Appendix I), four males and four females, seized over the course of several operations in July 2017 (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 44), by Kediri police were set free into the Kondang Merak protected forest known to be an ancient habitat for lorises. Only the individuals whose teeth had not been extracted during captivity are returned into the wild after a time of convalescence and re-appropriation of their survival instincts at the Bogor International Animal Rescue campus on the Island of Java.²⁰

LAOS

October 9, 2017

Laos

The Laos Wildlife Rescue Center (LWRC) has announced that they are trying to save a young red-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nemaeus*, Appendix I) that had been kept in captivity as a pet. The monkey is not doing well. He is very weak, dehydrated and suffering from stomach problems. The vet has treated him and he has accepted his first bottle of milk and eaten a few leaves and some flowers, which is encouraging. But his future is still uncertain.²¹



THAILAND

Beginning of October 2017

Samut Songkhram, Samut Songkhram Province, Thailand

Bobo, a female northern pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II) was taken from her "owner". She had been purchased for 5000 bahts (\$150 US) on Facebook, five years ago. At the time, she was about three months old. Since then, she had been sleeping in the woman's bed and spending her days locked up in a cage in the garden. The Wildlife Friends Foundation has taken charge of her and she is now in a pen with two other macaques.²²



Mid October 2017 Thailand

The Wildlife Friends Foundation has taken in two abandoned baby Bengal slow lorises (*Nycticebus bengalensis*, Appendix I). The second one was found on the side of the road. "He's very relaxed. We suppose he's been a pet for some time now." Once a pet always a pet?²³



Beginning of December 2017 Ko Samui, Province of Surat Thani, Thailand

Rescue of three northern pig-tailed macaques (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II).

- An ex-coconut tree climber in charge of harvesting coconuts was fired due to a lack of discipline. It has been caged for four years.

- Two females have been caged for seven years in the home of expats. They had bought the females for next to nothing on the roadside, and are leaving the island.²⁴

Cf. "On the Trail" n°11 p. 42, n°14 p. 44.



Nina et Maya



VIET NAM

October 2017

Ho-Chi-Minh-city, Viet Nam

Another good catch for Education for Nature's hotline 1800-1522. The owner deliberately turned in a slow loris (*Nycticebus pygmaeus*, Appendix I) to appropriate authorities. He was placed in the care of the Cat Tien shelter, in the North-East of Ho Chi Minh City.²⁵

October 2017

Xuyen Moc District, Province of Ba Ria Vung Tau, Viet Nam

Seizure in a restaurant of a macaque (*Macaca* spp. Appendix I or II). He was kept in observation in the headquarters of the Binh Chau national park.²⁶

October 18, 2017

Anh Son District, Nghe An Province, Viet Nam

A couple of stump-tailed macaques (*Macaca arctoides*, Appendix II) had been very bored behind their fence for the past year. One of them only has one arm. The other arm was undoubtedly ripped off in a trap. They are both now safe and sound at a shelter in the Pu Mat national park.²⁷



October 24, 2017

Bo Trach District, Quang Binh Province, Viet Nam

The owner of a northern pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II) had to be persuaded to hand over the macaque to the district forest rangers.²⁸



October 25, 2017

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

A baby northern pig-tailed macaque was confiscated from a coffee shop (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II).²⁹

October 27, 2017

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Wisereaction of someone who did not appreciate being given the gift of a loris (*Nycticebus* spp., Appendix I). Within 24 hours. The gift was at the Cu Chi Rescue Center.³⁰



October 31, 2017

Dien Chau District, Nghe An Province, Viet Nam

The Facebook loris (*Nycticebus* spp., Appendix I) vendor was had. He delivered the lorises directly to police officers in civilian clothes.³¹

facebook

November 8, 2017

Nghe An Province, Viet Nam

The northern pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II) had been closed up in a cage for at least six months. It was taken to the Pu Mat Rescue Center.³²



November 14, 2017

Da Nang Province, Viet Nam

Release of a northern pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II) that was on exhibit in a pet shop. The forestry services are assessing its ability to live once again in the wild.³³

November 21, 2017

Binh Phuoc Province, Viet Nam

Voluntary hand over of a black-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nigripes*, Appendix I) that had been living in captivity for five years. It is now at the Bu Gia Map national park rescue center.³⁴

November 25-26, 2017

Bien Hoa, Dong Nai Province, Viet Nam

The baby langur (genus *Cercopithecidae*, Appendix I or II) was for sale on Facebook. The city police reclaimed it.³⁵

facebook

Beginning of December 2017

District of Tinh Bien, Province of An Giang, Viet Nam. Border with Cambodia.

Release of a long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II), without the rompers it was wearing in an “eco-friendly hotel”.³⁶

December 19 and 20, 2017

Phan Thiet, Province of Binh Thuan, Viet Nam

Seizure of two pig-tailed macaques (*Macaca nemestrina* or *Macaca leonina*, Appendix II) from the carts of two vendors selling corn on the cob.³⁷

EUROPE

SPAIN

October 2017

Madrid, Community of Madrid, Spain

The Servicio de Protección de la Naturaleza de la Guardia Civil in Madrid has been investigation for several months. Two small monkeys were abandoned on the doorstep of two different veterinarian clinics. No documentation, no chip to help identification of the owners of the two orphans originating from Latin America. Private households are not allowed to possess monkeys in Spain's capital. The pygmy marmoset (*Callithrix pygmaea*, Appendix II) and the talapoin (*Miopithecus talapoin*, Appendix II) were given for care to the AAP-Primadomus near Alicante.³⁸



Guanacos and Vicuñas

AMERICA

PERU

October 2017

Aucara District, Lucanas Province, Ayacucho Region, Peru

400 vicugna (*Vicugna vicugna*, Appendix II) were just transferred by truck to the high plateaus of Aucara. According to the plan, 250 families will profit from the sustainable management of these camelids, by shearing them selling their wool and avoiding poaching.¹



November 2017

Parinacochas, Paucar del Sara Sara and Lucanas Provinces, Ayacucho Region, Peru

Poachers are most active in the southern part of the region. 100 vicuñas (*Vicugna vicugna*, Appendix II) were discovered sheared and butchered. That makes 150 since the beginning of the year. Poaching has not exactly been avoided.²

Mid-December 2017

Puquio, Province of Lucanas, Peru

60 vicuñas (*Vicugna vicugna*, Appendix II) savagely killed and sheared. The Chaupi peasant community is tormented by the poachers. It is powerless in the face of attacks and deplore the lack of local government intervention. The patrols are insufficient. They count the dead vicuñas but do not prevent the bloodshed. At least 160 vicuñas have been poached since the beginning of the year.³

Felines



Leopard Cubs

Cuthbert Edmund Swan (1870–1931)
Bury Art Museum

Speeding up. In 2013, in the first issues of “On the Trail” leopard lynching was uncommon in India. Today, it’s common. In addition to the poison of joint violence, electrocution, barbed wires and pesticides are also poisons for leopards and tigers. Fortunately, the Bombay High Court protects tigers, nucleuses of resistance are still holding good and rescues of leopards or cubs illuminate the dark news.

After the banning of travelling circuses in Mexico, Bengal tigers and lions are dispersed and continue to be abused.

“On the Trail n°19

The value of felines or felines parts on the black market, according to media or official sources

Continent	Country	Animal/parts	US\$	Ref.
Africa	Tanzania	Lion claw	1420	29
Asia	India (Assam)	Skull, skin, claws, teeth and bones of a tiger	27,800	46
	India (Gujarat)	Tiger paw	3900	53

LEOPARDS

Leopards (*Panthera pardus*) are listed under CITES Appendix I.

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

October 8-13, 2017
Peddie, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

A leopard had been on the prowl around the village of since the month of August, and the police had been notified. On Sunday, October 8, a shepherd realized that several of his goats had been killed, according to him by the leopard. As he was waiting for his children, who had gone to fetch a wheelbarrow to remove the carcasses, the leopard supposedly attacked him. His dogs protected him and chased the feline away, but the man was injured. On Friday, the 13th, the leopard was killed by the villagers.¹



October 30, 2017
Itsani, Vhembe District, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

The discovery of an adult leopard corpse, hit by several rifle bullets, along the site of a road caused concern among the residents, especially since immediately a rumor spread that another leopard was marauding in the area. Gunshots were reportedly heard during the night. The management of the nearby Kruger national park has no information on any wandering leopards. It remains a mystery. Some say that the carcass fell from the vehicle of a poacher on the run.²

October and December 2017
Grahamstown, Western Cape Province, South Africa

He had bragged on social media while carrying his trophy shoulder high. The leopard, which is said to be the largest in the province, had been tracked by a pack of dogs (cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p. 49). Dale Venske simply got an administrative fine of 8,000 rand or \$590 US. He escaped legal proceedings. "An R8 000 fine is a travesty of justice"... "it shows that authorities were in cahoots with 'ecological asset looters,'" denounces the director of the Landmark Foundation. Leopards are on the verge of extinction. Between 2005 and 2014, more than 10,000 individuals were traded internationally for trophies.³



CAMEROON

Mid October 2017
Cameroon

Two arrests. Two leopard skins and a large bag of pangolin scales. Joint operation between the NGO LAGA and the police.⁴

GABON

Mid-november and December 2017
Moanda, Haut-Ogooué Province, Gabon

François Xavier Ngouga and Landry Doumbi had been under judicial-police surveillance for several weeks. Things unfolded rapidly when they scheduled a transaction concerning four leopard skins with a buyer in the mining city of Moanda. Immediately dispatched on site, a joint team from the Franceville police and the Waters and Forest Office assisted by members of the NGO Conservation Justice interrupted negotiations. Caught red handed, two of them are arrested and consequently condemned to 6 months jail and a 100,000 CFA francs fine, ie \$180 US. As often the buyer does not seem to have been troubled. According to the press, François Ngouga, listed some names and nicknames of accomplices living in Koulamoutou and its surroundings.

Koulamoutou, chief town of Ogooué-Lolo Province, is located at the crossing of roads leading to the Lopé national park and the Mount Birougou national park. Local police should take on to arrest these accomplices.⁵



UGANDA

November 13, 2017
Uganda

Arrest of two traffickers in possession two leopard skins from Kenya. One man is of Indian nationality, the other is from Uganda.⁶



ASIA

INDIA

October 7, 2017**Aliganchikere, Davanagere District, State of Karnataka, India**

Lynching with stones and sticks of a leopard aged about three years. He had accidentally entered a green house where peppers were grown. The farmer found him when he came to spray pesticides. About 150 villagers circled him and beat him to death, preventing the forest guards from intervening. This is the third leopard lynched in the area in 15 months.⁷

October 16, 2017**Ujjain, Ujjain District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India**

The goddess Lakshmi did not protect Prakash Mehar (52 years old), Bhoklaram Mehar (64 years old) and Srijethanand Krishnani (63 years old). They were going to celebrate her with tantric rituals, by calling on a leopard skin during Diwali, one of the most important Hindu celebrations, set on October 19, this year. But the police were notified. Prakash and Bhoklaram Mehar were arrested on a motorcycle, as they transported the hide. During their interrogation, they identified Krishnani as the person who had made the transaction possible. The goddess is believed to bring wealth and abundance. The three men received charges for violating wildlife protection laws and were presented to a judge, who put them in custody until their trial. But everything is not lost for them: they can use this time to reflect on Lakshmi's other attributes, as she is also goddess of morals, ethics and inner prosperity...⁸

October 17, 2017**Chamoli District, State of Uttarakhand, India**

Somebody squealed on Suresh Lal, a dogsbody in the wildlife trade in this State. Deputy Inspector Amit Nautiyal was waiting for him on the Nand Kesari bridge, on Deval road. Suresh Lal was carrying a skin 1.52 m long. He claimed that he had not killed the leopard himself. Someone would have asked him to deliver the skin to a purchaser in Haldwani, in exchange for a commission. The skin should be handed over to the forestry department to ascertain the gender and age of the leopard.⁹

October 30, 2017**Near Dangadha, State of Odisha, India**

Seizure of a skin. The leopard was killed in the Similipal national park. Two arrests.¹⁰

November 1, 2017**Similipal National Park, State of Odisha, India**

Seizure of a leopard skin, 1.83 m long, and pangolin scales. Two arrests.¹¹

**November 26-27, 2017****Ranjani, Sangli District, Upwan, Thane District, State of Maharashtra, India**

- Two 2-month-old leopard cubs, a male and a female, were reunited with their mother, a reunion that was essential to their survival after being lost for 24 hours. They had been spotted for the first time around 3 a.m. on Sunday by some farm workers. At 7:30 a.m., they were captured by a team from the Manikdoh Leopard Rescue Center (MLRC). They underwent a very brief medical check-up and then were placed in a box and put in a field, near where they had been spotted. The rescuers had also recovered a third leopard cub that was lost and they put it in the same box. During the night, the mother came and got them.

This reunion between the mother and her cubs helps reduce conflict with humans. Before, unaccompanied leopard cubs were taken to zoos or other enclosed places, where the mortality rate was high. At the same time, the mother cats would prowl around and in villages, looking for their cubs and exposing themselves to the anger of village inhabitants.

This is the 27th operation of this kind in the State since the beginning of 2017. Over 40 young leopards have been reunited with their mothers in the past two years.

- At dawn, two leopards entered the Upwan neighborhood. Stray dogs began barking, signaling their presence. The Hindustan Times reported that no one panicked. It was not the first time that this had happened. "We weren't shocked to see the leopards. They might have come in search of an easy prey. They entered the premises, and minutes later, vanished into the dark toward the Sanjay Gandhi national park."¹³

November 24, 2017**Gurgaon, State of Haryana, India**

A telephone call from the village of Bhango tipped the police off to the presence of a leopard carcass. The initial sources mentioned a collision with a vehicle. The forest rangers do not really believe it. "As of now, what we know is that the dead cat is lying in the hills. It is therefore unlikely that a vehicle would hit the leopard in the hilly area." Reports of leopards have been frequent in the past three months, around Gurgaon.



On October 5, a leopard entered the Maruti Suzuki automobile factory, and it took 36 hours for a team of rescuers to capture the animal and get it out of the sticky situation it had gotten itself into.¹² Video surveillance of the Maruti Suzuki factory

LEOPARDS - FOLLOWED

27 novembre 2017

Chalisgaon, District de Jalgaon, Etat du Maharashtra, Inde

The Minister for Water Resources and Sanitary Education in the State of Maharashtra is an odd bird. In his latest feat, he participated, gun in hand, in hunting down a leopard rightly or wrongly accused



of being a man- (and woman-) eater. Parliament and part the public immediately demanded that he resign, accusing him of violating the law on the protection of wildlife. This is the second time that Girish Mahajan has waived his gun around in public. One week ago, he was lambasted by the press and by feminists for having advised a liquor company to use women's names to boost their sales. The leopard managed to escape the vindication of the villagers and the minister.¹⁴

November 28, 2017

Samba District, State of Jammu and-Cachemire, India

A leopard died caught in barbwire.¹⁵



November and December 9, 2017

Darbai, Chhindwara District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

It took five of them to electrocute the leopard, rip out the teeth, claws, tail and whiskers before throwing the body in a neighbor's well. They believed that spreading the leopard organs inside their estates would make them prosperous. The five together had set up a superstition-based cooperation. Four of them are in custody, the fifth is on the run.¹⁶

December 4, 2017

Mangaon, State of Maharashtra, India

Post-mortem examination in progress. The nails and teeth were removed from the corpse when the ex-leopard of about 4 years in age was found in an advanced state of rotting.¹⁷

December 4-6, 2017

Roha, Raigad District, State of Maharashtra, India

-Discovery of a rotting corpse. The teeth and 17 claws out of 18 had been ripped off.

-Three arrests and recovery of six claws.¹⁸

December 22, 2017

Thane, Thane District, State of Maharashtra, India

Satish Khole is a financial consultant, Shobha Tiwari is associate director with an industry supply company, Yunus Shaikh is her employee. Khole and Shaikh were caught by police after a denunciation in the Kasarvadawli neighborhood while they were attempting to sell off a stock of leopard and deer skins estimated worth 1.5 million rupees (\$23,320 US). They gallantly gave in Tiwari as part of the gang.¹⁹

Decembre 25, 2017

Mangrol, Junagadh District, State of Gujarat, India

Another suspicious death. The body was found under a bridge. He was five or six years old.²⁰



IRAN

Mid November 2017

Tarom, Hormozgan Province, Iran

Killed for unknown reasons, by an unknown hunter, with an illegal gun.²¹



CHEETAHS

Cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) are listed in Appendix I of CITES.

ASIA

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

October 2017

United Arab Emirates

Despite the entry into force of a law banning the detention, breeding and sale of wild animals that represent a danger for public order – more and more stray adults have been observed – cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*, Appendix I) continue to be advertised for sale on Facebook and Instagram. They are purchased when they are just a few weeks old, at which stage they are considered to be cuddly toys, rather than dangerous animals.

A study carried out by the NGO International Cheetah Conservation Fund (ICCF) showed that approximately one hundred cheetah cubs are smuggled out of Somalia every year. At the high point in the traffic, that figure it was four times higher.

The emirates ministry of the Environment has played down the ICCF estimates and, without giving any precise information on the number of felines seized at the border or within the country, has simply stated that the numbers are dropping and that inspections are carried out regularly on the animals in pet shops and related activities.

There are three possible outcomes for the animals that are confiscated, which can include baby gibbons and chimpanzees, lion cubs and bear cubs: they can be returned to their country of origin, given to a zoo within the country or abroad, or put to death. There are apparently still five major dealers in wild animal pets in the United Arab Emirates.²²



facebook

IRAN

November-December 2017

Tehran Province, Iran

Dismantlement of a gang specialized in snaring cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*, Appendix I) in national parks and selling them in and around Tehran. After a long investigation, the cheetah cub, which was about eight months old, was seized in the garden of a home in Karaj—after at least two months in captivity. It was anesthetized for a medical exam in a veterinary clinic. “It is thin, lethargic, and its growth is stunted”, concluded Iman Memarian, the doctor.²³



LIONS

African lions (*Panthera leo*) are listed under CITES Appendix II, Indian lions (*Panthera leo persica*) under Appendix I.

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

October 10, 2017

Rietvlei Nature Reserve, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Two lionesses were found dead, very probably poisoned. River was first discovered around 1:30 p.m. by the participants of a lion observation tour. Blood was coming out of her nose, which suggested possible poisoning. The reserve personnel decided to get the other lions out of harm's way. Serabi was spotted around 8 p.m. She was lying on the ground near a fence with two crows, who were also dead. The police investigation carried out onsite led to the discovery of pieces of meat covered in white pellets. The carcasses and meat were handed over to the Onderstepoort veterinary services for autopsy. The four surviving lions are now under surveillance in a smaller enclosure. The lions on the reserve are between 4 and 5 years old. They are neither wild, nor tamed: they were confiscated from people.²⁴



LIONS - FOLLOWED

November 27, 2017

Groot-Marico, Nord-West Province, South Africa

Two more lions poisoned and mutilated, their paws and heads cut off. This time it happened at the " farm Broekmansfontein ". Police were only able to establish the massacre. Loss for the owners is estimated at 500,000 rand (\$35,500 US). The lions fate was not to live a long life. " Farm Broekmansfontein " is a game reserve.²⁵



December 2017

Alldays, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

Arrest of a 28-year-old man suspected of involvement in the poisoning and amputation of a lion near Alldays. The two accomplices are nowhere to be found. Cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p.55.²⁶



December 31, 2017

Makhado, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

Two men arrested. They had just killed a lion in a hunting reserve with poisoned bait. They had taken its head and legs and had tried to skin it. Two accomplices are on the run.²⁷



KENYA

November 6, 2017

Southwest Kenya



Despite the appearances, the vital prognosis is positive. The tip of the 2 m long spear was removed from the nasal cavity and the wound was disinfected by the veterinary team deployed by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and by the Kenya Wildlife Service. The team is permanently available in the counties of Narok, Nyamira, Migori, Kisu, Homa Bay, and Siaya.²⁸

TANZANIA

November 18-22, 2017

Julius Nyerere International Airport and Kisutu, Region of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

- Dilipkumar Patel, Indian citizen and manager of the "Nyanza Commercial Farm" in the North-West of the country, had been arrested with inside his luggage 17 lion claws wrapped in a bag and covered with carbon paper. He intended on taking an Emirates airlines flight to India via Dubai. But he had been denounced: "Our intelligence team knew what the suspect was carrying in his bag even before he arrived at the airport. We, therefore, arrested him before he passed the security check point." Simultaneously two white collar accomplices were arrested, Ashok Kumar (34 years old, Chief Operations officer at the "Nyanza Commercial Farm") and Sanjif Kumar (41 years old, Director of Tanzania Breweries Limited in Muoma), accused of having provided Patel with the lion claws. The cases have been disjointed.

- The public attorney today requested exemplary punishment against Dilipkumar Patel. Four accusation witnesses were presented before court. Without an export permit, the 17 claws, estimated value 53,483,500 shillings (\$24,143 US), are deemed "government trophies". The Principal Resident Magistrate Cyprian Mkeha sentenced Patel to a fine worth 534 million shillings (\$240,000 US), or in case of non-payment to 20 years prison! Failing to pay, Dilipkumar Patel was sent back to prison.²⁹



AMERICA

MEXICO

October 4, 2017**Santiago de Querétaro, State of Querétaro, Mexico**

The restaurant inauguration did not go unnoticed. Residents complained on social networks about the presence of a lion in a cage at the restaurant. When the PROFEPA (Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente) arrived to inspect a week later, the feline and cage had disappeared. But employees confirmed that the cat had been there "for about an hour" the previous Saturday, to attract passers-by. Moreover, the owner also has a "lion-breeding establishment" that has been declared in the category of Sites and Installations Managing Wildlife Outside of their Natural Habitat (PIMVS). A follow-up PROFEPA inspection of the property revealed incoherent markings on the male lion, held with three females. The facility lacked veterinary services and kitchen, and the inner fence at the site is incomplete. The inspectors found no trace of the registry where vaccines, deworming and various other treatments are meant to be recorded. Administrative proceedings have been initiated against the operator, who faces a fine of 50 to 50,000 pesos (from \$2.75 to \$2750 US). He has been ordered to abstain from displacing or exhibiting lions without authorization. The male of questionable identity could be confiscated.³⁰

October 13, 2017**Puerto Vallarta, State of Jalisco, Mexico**

An African lioness, about five years old and weighing 200 kg, was wandering through a street in the suburbs. The municipal "green patrol" was able to catch and transfer her to the municipal zoo. She was not in very good shape, suffering from malnutrition and dehydration. Wounds were visible on her thighs and her head, undoubtedly caused while she was in captivity. The PROFEPA decided to transfer her today the Black Jaguar-White Tiger Foundation, which runs a wildlife shelter near the volcano Ajusco, not far from Mexico City. An investigation is underway to find the person who had been holding the big cat.³¹

December 19, 2017**Cabo San Lucas, State of Baja California Sur, Mexico**

The nice lion in the cage will take the ferry. It will be transferred from its cage in Lower California to Gran Santuario Mexicano Jaguar Negro Tigre Blanco, near Mexico. This institution is a PIMVS. A fine equivalent to \$ 22,700 US for the owner of the feline.³²



ASIA

INDIA

GANG

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 9, 2017**Khaga, State of Uttar Pradesh, India**

Sarfaraz Qureshi was on the run for ten years. In March and April of 2007, ten lions were poached from the Babariya range, between the towns of Amreli and Junagadh, in the State of Gujarat. The criminal investigation at the time led to the dismantling of the Baheliya gang and the arrest of 32 people. Sarfaraz Qureshi and an accomplice, Mohammed Ayyub Qureshi, got away. The gang had originally been specialized in poaching tigers in the north of India, until the scarcity of tigers made business unstable, so they began hunting lions further south. They scammed their clients by selling lions' bones, claws and teeth as tiger parts, which were fraudulently exported through Nepal and on to China and Taiwan. The entire gang was sentenced in 2008 to 3 years in prison and fined 10,000 rupees (\$215) each. A notorious trafficker named Circusal, based in Madhya Pradesh, financed the operations. He supposedly made 250,000 rupees (\$6300 US) on every lion killed. Among the other members of the gang were Keshav Kosh, who sold animal parts in southern India, and Shabbir Hussain, who is Sarfaraz Qureshi's father. The police did not forget the son. He was finally denounced. The antiterrorist brigade picked him up in his native town of Khaga.³³

EUROPE

FRANCE

October 9, 2017**Noisy-le-Sec, Seine-Saint-Denis Department, France**

Seizure of a lion cub in an apartment in the Paris suburbs.³⁴



LEOPARD CATS

Wild leopard cats (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) are listed under CITES Appendix II, except the subspecies *Prionailurus bengalensis bengalensis* which is listed in Appendix I in Bangladesh, India and Thailand.

ASIA

INDIA

October 31, 2017

Bhumeshwar Pahar, State of Assam, India

Two leopard cat orphans, rescued by villagers in May, were kept for several months, and fed artificial milk and taught hunting and survival instincts by the experts and educators at a shelter specialized in teaching and de-domesticating wild animals. The two leopard cats were recently released in the Bhumeshwar Pahar forest. After two days surrounded by trees and the forest ecosystem, in an acclimatization cage, the doors of the cage were opened and the two little felines took the big plunge.



Special thanks to the villagers in Panchapur and Athugaon, the Assam ministry of Forests, the Mobile Veterinary Service (MVS) and the NGOs International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Wildlife Trust for India (WTI).³⁵

VIET NAM

December 5, 2017
Hanoi, Viet Nam

Several Bengal leopard cats were given as gifts at the end of the year. Instead of keeping or selling them, the unfortunate beneficiaries brought them to ENV (Education for Nature – Vietnam).³⁶



End of December 2017

Bao Yen District, Province of Lao Cai, Viet Nam

Sale of leopard cats in public. One of them had a paw amputated.³⁷

CLOUDED LEOPARD

Clouded leopards (*Neofelis nebulosa*) are listed under CITES Appendix I.

October 2017

State of Assam, India

Seizure of a clouded leopard skin by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau.³⁸

TIGERS

Tigers (*Panthera tigris*) are listed under CITES Appendix I.

AMERICA

MEXICO

October 27, 2017

Ocotlán, State of Jalisco, Mexico

Two individuals were driving through the town with a three-month-old Bengal tiger cub (*Panthera tigris tigris*, Appendix I) in their car. They were intercepted by members of the Jalisco State Unified Force and turned over to the Guadalajara prosecutor. The PROFEPA took charge of the little cat, who seem to be in good physical condition.³⁹

November 24, 2017

Jerécuaro, State of Guanajuato, Mexico

Two Bengal tigers set under receivership. 'The big cats' are in a decent physical state. The owner has a few days to prove their origin in legal.⁴⁰

ASIA

INDIA

May to October 2017

Bor Wildlife Sanctuary, Districts of Nagpur, Wardha and Amravati, State of Maharashtra, India

Ramdas Shende is on the run. He electrocuted a tiger thanks to a pirated connection. Then he halfway burned the body before the police arrived. The autopsy may tell if the paws, the whiskers, or the skins were recovered before the attempt at cremation.⁴¹

TIGERS - FOLLOWED

Beginning of October 2017

Buffer zone of the Kanha tiger reserve, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Aside from being the superintendent of the main national park in India, Sudhir Mishra has a talent for acting. Passing as a "panda" - a tantrist priest or religious guide and genealogist- he set a trap for five poachers trying to sell four tiger claws and a tooth. Leading negotiations over the telephone, he organized to meet with them in the Mangla district, inside the reserve buffer zone, where forest guards awaited them. The tiger parts and two bicycles were seized. The five men arrested are members of the Baiga and Gond tribes, a nomadic forest farmer tribes and excellent hunters whose traditional way of life is conflicting with the creation of natural reserves. This leads to much conflict. In this case, the traffickers wanted specifically to sell their loot to a "panda", prone to pay higher so as to use the animal parts for magical rituals. "Pandas" have spread among villagers a superstition according to which tiger claws, paws, teeth, bones and whiskers would bring wealth, would reveal the location of buried treasures and bring luck in gambling. This nonsense are particularly damaging in Madhya Pradesh where the Kanha and Pench tiger reserves are subjected to intensified pressure from poachers.⁴²



October 5-6, 2017

State of Maharashtra, India Tiger fishermen- continued

We recall from cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p. 54-55 that the 13 fishermen in the reservoir of the Totladoh dam had profited from a strange release on bail, perhaps granted by the judge of Ramtek under public pressure. It was September 1, 2017. The forest administration immediately announced its intention to appeal, but because of administrative clashes, it was not until September 4th that the Court of Appeals considered and overturned the first trial's judgement. In the meantime, the 13 suspects were freed. Presenting themselves as penniless and powerless poor people, the 13 tiger fishermen, through their lawyer, took the case to the High Court of Bombay, which ruled that their release was invalidated.

The High Court accepted the arguments of the expert Shukul, who recalled that 150 tiger bones, 12 claws, whiskers, and weapons had already been seized and that the investigation and the collection of evidence was not yet finished. The high-ranking magistrates also drew upon the example of Suraj Pal, the famous tiger skin trader commonly known by the name of Chacha, who liberation had also been overturned. To be continued...above the High Court of Bombay, there is the Supreme Court!⁴³

October 2017

Bor Sanctuary, Chandrapur-Tadoba yandhari District, State of Maharashtra, India

The big cats, tigers and leopards, fall victims of farming poisons and electrical poison. The latest is TF5 ex T27-C1 aged 2 years. She was labeled with a man-eaters reputation since last May. The chief forest curator had sentenced her to death and to elite gunmen were on her trail when the High Court in Mumbai, following a complaint filed by a tiger lover, ordered that she be anesthetized and captured.

On July 10, one of the last catchers in the country, the famous Nawab Shaukat Ali, succeeded in immobilizing the fugitive who was parked in a cage for several days waiting for men to decide her fate. On July 29, on Tiger Day, she was declared safe for release into the Bor Sanctuary with only constraint being to have to wear a transmitter collar enabling to locate her 24/7 and give the alert were she to get too close to housing or human activity.

All went well for two months but starting at the end of the month of September, three attacks two of which were deadly were attributed to TF5.

The High Court decided then to rule in the shoot one sight option. For the second time the chief forest curator ordered for her to be shot dead and the High Court in Mumbai before validation of this decision demanded proof of her guilt. Pictures of the victims, GPS and UHF records were provided with a census that shows no other tiger than TF5 is present in the critical zone.

So the High Court acknowledged the authorization to shoot her down. Over the next few days the tiger covered 500 km across the Nagpur and Amravati District to return to the Bor Sanctuary and final come in mortal contact with an electric fence in the Wardha District 50 km away from Bor. .../...



TIGERS - FOLLOWED

Electrical fences kill gaurs, deer, elephants, jackals, boars. Electrical fencing is a passive hunting method, fearfully quiet and unpunished. The farmers are sought out by judicial authorities, their statements recorded while they still escape trial.

Mishra, the Chief forest curator, still wonders what event or harassment had caused the two year old tiger to leave so abruptly the Bor Sactuary where over the two months before she had been settling in and had kept between her and human activities a reasonable and safe distance.

Kishore Rithe, ex-member of the National Board for Wildlife and present director of the Satpuda goes even further: "The fact that she had stayed in Bor peacefully for about two months showed that she was coming to terms with life in the wilderness. So what caused her to move out? This question needs to be answered before we accuse her of being a maneater."⁴⁴

Mid-November 2017

Bombay, State of Maharashtra, India

Bail denied for Chika (cf. "On the Trail" n°10 p. 40). His case gets worse. He was believed to be only a tiger skin carrier, but the investigation proves that he is also a poacher and his hunting record includes a sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*, Appendix I). Chika provided birth certificates indicating that he was a minor at the time of his arrest in 2013. The experts prove that these are false. Chika was in business with the infamous Sarju.⁴⁵

November 16, 2017

Biswanath District, State of Assam, India

The trio was stopped on the road leading to Pabhoi. All three, among them a poacher well-known to the forest services and a school teacher that may be his brother, were transporting in bags the skull, skin, claws, teeth and bones of a tiger shot in the forest separating Assam from Arunchal Pradesh. They wanted to sell the loot Rs 18 lakh, i.e. \$ 27,800 US to four or five middlemen who would have taken care of smuggling the remains to China via Myanmar. The tiger was poached in the Pakke Tiger Reserve. The forest rangers have a photo library of the tigers going back 10 years, and the Wildlife Institute of India has 30,000 photos taken by hidden cameras placed in parks and other protected areas that host tigers. The photos will help the WCCB to locate with certainly the area of origin of the poached tiger. Experts speak of tigers as "walking gold". Tiger wine and tiger skin are delicacies and luxurious objects for the Chinese and Vietnamese elite. The Pakke Tiger Reserve has a lot left to do about the looters. The forest reserve of Papum, which surrounds the reserve, is harried by illegal loggers. ⁴⁶

November 18, 2017

States of Karnataka and Uttarakhand, India Karnataka Domesticated Elephants to Protect Tigers

The contract has been signed. Six elephants are going to make the 2000-km drive in a truck, to go to the Rajaji Tiger Reserve. The elephants will be accompanied by their mahouts, who will stay with them for several weeks to teach the elephants the local dialect. After that learning process, the tigers will be transferred to the reserve. "Certainly, the reserve is porous and we don't want to repeat the problems that afflicted Sariska and Panna. Before we translocate the tigers, we need to have elephants in the field for vigilance and patrolling," said the head of the reserve Rangers. The translocation of the elephants and their mahouts will cost 2,500,000 rupees, or \$39,000 US and will be financed through the CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) federal fund.⁴⁷

November 19, 2017

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Nilgiris District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The postmortem examination of the sub-adult tiger that was discovered on Sunday revealed that it had starved to death after being caught in a trap five or six days earlier, and managing to escape with an infected wound on its neck. The tiger was 2 ½ years old. "Its stomach was completely empty and it had lost weight," according to the Times of India.⁴⁸



November 21, 2017

Faridabad, Faridabad District, State of Haryana, India

Conviction of Bhima, repeated offender in tiger poaching, sentenced to three years prison and 10,000 rupees (\$155 US) in fine. He had been caught red handed carrying and transporting a tiger skin and ivory in August 2012. His first conviction for poaching and trafficking dates back to 2002. He was then arrested for the same doings in 2005, in 2008, in 2014 and finally in 2016 in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Uttarakhand. He is now behind bars for a fair amount of time. Other trials await him, unless he escapes. See "On the Trail" n°15 p.60.⁴⁹



TIGERS - FOLLOWED

November 17, 18, 19 and 21, 2017

State of Maharashtra, India

-23 tigers less since the beginning of the year in this State. Reports don't count naturally occurred deaths. In most cases, the dead tigers are incinerated on site.

- Poisoned dead cattle carcasses are baiting the tigers and killed them. A male and female were discovered at sunset on Friday night. The autopsy was done on Saturday. The results were communicated on Sunday. They confirm that the tigers died after feeding off a cow whose body was poured over with non-diluted insecticide. An empty wrapping package of the pesticide Thimet was found on site.



Suspicion aims at 10 or 15 families who bring their 300 head-herds to graze in the forest illegally and use the Bawanthadi dam reserve waters to irrigate their crops. On Tuesday, the chief of forest guards was relieved duty; he is suspected to request a "bonus" of 1000 rupees (\$15 US) for himself to see through the dossier when there is a request for compensation when cattle is attacked by wild animals. Other irregularities have been noticed in these services and central authority in Nagpur is now going to require communication of GPS records for patrols in the Paoni sector. The MSTRIPES (Monitoring System for Tigers Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) should be implemented without further delay. The project consists of reinforced surveillance of villages and shops along the corridors taken by tigers with specific attention to electrical fencing and bait-carcasses placed by some squatters to kill tigers and if possible bargain some of the skeleton parts.

- The former director of the forest service of the Nawegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve denounced the actions of the Chorkhamara eco-development committee, whose members encouraged electrocution of wild animals.

Tigers and elephants are not the only ones to be electrocuted; at least 180 pink flamingos were too for the five last years.⁵⁰

November 25, 2017

Shahdol, Shahdol Distrit, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Death lingers over tigers. This adult whose body doesn't present any visible wounds measured 2.8 meter from the nose to the end of the tail. He was found about a hundred meters from a school yard by a fire wood gatherer. Madhya Pradesh holds the sad title of being the deadliest Indian State for very big cats. 33 deaths in 2016. Already 23 since the beginning of 2017. In 1995, Madhya Pradesh could pride itself in being home to 10% of the world's tiger population. In 2017, there is not much left but shame. Wildlife protectors say that tigers' paths between reserves are eaten at by a series of quarries and mines and crowded by the incessant coming and going of work field machines. "The government refuses to designate new protected zones to protect financial interests of local politicians".⁵¹

November 27, 2017

Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve, State of Uttarakhand, India

The tigers and others are fed up with tourists. And yet a new entrance to the Jim Corbett park – 1288 km² – has just been inaugurated. The idea is to enable Kotdwar (117,000 inhabitants) to take advantage of commercial benefits from the incoming visitors, 250,000 a year. Corbett is open from November 15 to June 15, when it is forced to close due to the coming monsoon.⁵²

December 1st, 2017

Between Gadhoda and Sabar Dairy, State of Gujarat, India

Seizure of a tiger paw after a convoy was intercepted. A car and motorcycle on the Gadhoda-Sabar Dairy road. Value of the paw is estimated at Rs 2.5 lakh (\$3,900 US) on the International market.⁵³



TIGERS - FOLLOWED

FAMILY AFFAIRS GANG

December 3, 7, 11, 12 and 13, 2017

Hapur Uttar Pradesh District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

-He is the 24th since the beginning of the year to suffer a non-natural death. This one was electrocuted by a makeshift trap entirely built by a wired hooked up to a wooden poll of an electricity company. A frequent practice that the government and electricity producers are trying to undermine. The usual excuse that they were attempting to catch a boar or some other herbivore was advanced by the five poachers aged 20 to 45 and who all have the same last name (Singh).

-Another attack with stolen electricity. The body was not moved, enclosed with marking tape. Nothing is to be touched until the canine brigade arrives. Hard to say whether it is a male or female tiger.

-Discovery of a dead tiger cub. Less than a year old. He is probably a son of the victim found yesterday. Investigators are worried about the rest of the brotherhood.

-Light is shed on the series of tiger deaths in the District. 14 suspects, all from the same tribe are being questioned by police. At their homes there were whiskers and tiger teeth. On the run, the gang chief was arrested in Uttar Pradesh. The other cub of the electrocuted mother tiger is still actively being searched for by forest guards riding on elephant back.⁵⁴



GANG

December 8, 2017

Seoni, Seoni District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Truth Serum Controversy

All legal means are viable to make suspects spit out information, especially when it comes to a tiger serial killer. Dalbir Shrichand Bawaria was implicated in February 2012 in the poaching of T13, a famous Pench tigress. Her skin was seized a year later by the police of Nepal in the Nuwakot district, along with four other skins and seven bags full of bones. Bawaria was arrested at the beginning of the year. He was betrayed by an accomplice named Chika, whose gang is said to be responsible for the trafficking of 20 tiger skins from Pench and Vidarbha. Bawaria knows the tiger stripes by heart. His first conflict with the law on this subject dates back to 2009. Bawaria had accepted to take a truth serum. At the last minute, he refused. He feared for his mental health. The suspects are submerged into a state of semi-consciousness by an injection of Penthotal or Amytal and respond succinctly to precise facts and without the possibility of resorting to lies. The use of truth serum ("narcotest") is rare and is generally only applied amongst alleged perpetrators of spectacular crimes or scams that excite the public opinion. The Supreme Court prohibits the practice if the interrogated subject has not given formal consent, and the results cannot alone be considered as confessions or evidence.

They must be backed up by the field discovery of tangible proof. The injection of narcotics can be fatal. Dalbir finally accepted the experiment. The results at the time of publication are not yet known. The court will have the ability to reject the test conclusions if it took place under conditions that do not respect privacy or *Habeas corpus*.⁵⁵

December 19, 2017

Panna Tiger Reserve, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Poaching. This is the 26th since the beginning of the year in Madhya Pradesh. Three years old, the tiger fell into a boar trap.⁵⁶



December 31, 2017

Khatima, Champawat District, State of Uttarakhand, India. Border to Nepal.

Seizure of a 2.48 m long skin and 8.3 kg of bones. He was poached near a lake a later a butcher came to Kakra to skin him. Two men, Raju and Mahabir, were arrested.⁵⁷

VIET NAM

November 6, 2017

Bim Son, Province of Thanh Hoa, Viet Nam

Over 100 in 2000, less than 50 in 2012, less than 5 in 2017. Extinction is coming fast for the wild tigers in Viet Nam. There are more of them in breeding farms and others ride cars and trucks (see specially "On the Trail" n°17 p.61, n°11 p.49, n°8 p.43, n°7 p.54 et n°5 p.65). Usually they ride towards China where they are killed, butchered and exploited up to the last whisker. This one was uncovered after a nighttime road check. The SUV was coming from the Nghê An province in the north of the country. He was stopped 120 km south of Hanoi. The driver is behind bars. The 300 kg tiger was sent in the meantime to a transit center. His future is uncertain.⁵⁸

November 9, 2017

Bien Hoa, Dong Nai Province, Viet Nam

It took three shots in the air to calm everyone down when the police raided a clandestine butcher shop, where a dozen suspects were about to butcher a 200-kg tiger, surrounded by various edible organs taken from the carcasses of other protected species.⁵⁹



TIGERS - FOLLOWED

November 26, 2017

Gia Vien, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam

One morning, the police arrived with a search warrant at the home of Hien, and when they opened the lid of the freezer, they found two frozen tigers, weighing 50 kg each.

Hien stated that he had purchased the tigers from a certain Truong in the neighboring town of Ninh Binh. Truong says that he bought the tigers in the province of Nghe An, further south. Apparently, Hien was stashing the tigers, that had come from a tiger farm, until they could be butchered and used to make tiger wine.⁶⁰



EUROPE

FRANCE

November 24, 2017

15th arrondissement of Paris, France

A tiger escaped from the Bormann-Moreno circus, set up in the middle of Paris. The fawn was shot down with a shotgun by the circus director. It would have been preferable to use an anesthetic syringe gun.

Christophe Marie, spokesman for the Brigitte Bardot Foundation, asked Nicolas Hulot, Minister of Ecology, to ban the exploitation of animals in circuses as has already been done in 13 member States of the European Union, and deplores that Mrs. Hidalgo, mayor of the capital, continues to authorize circuses with animals.

Briefly kept in custody, the owner of the circus admits that the enclosure fences were not high enough. The two-year-old tiger could jump over it. Traffic on a tramline was interrupted for an hour. Some passers-by were panicked, others were emotional having seen the bloodshed of the wild beast.⁶¹



OCELOTS

Ocelots (*Leopardus pardalis*) are listed under CITES Appendix I.

AMERICA

COLOMBIA

December 6, 2017

Between Rivera and Neiva, Huila Department, Colombia

The ocelot is the third largest feline in Colombia, after the jaguar and the puma. A young male, about eight months old and still dependent on his mother for nursing, was seized from the baggage compartment of a bus. The species was persecuted in the 1960-1970s for use in fashion and the beauty of its fur in the United States and Europe. Today, ocelots are sought after as a pet for exhibition. Owning an ocelot is seen as a mark of social success.⁶²



PUMAS

Pumas (*Puma concolor*) are listed under CITES Appendix II, except the subspecies *Puma concolor costaricensis* listed under Appendix I.

AMERICA

MEXICO

October 4, 2017

Tequila, State of Jalisco, Mexico

A 41-kg adult male was wandering through the streets of a residential zone. It entered a house, where it is very trustingly went to sleep. The municipal fire department was alerted and called the PROFEPA, who intervened along with members of the Participative Environmental Surveillance Committee. The feline was sedated, then evacuated to the Guadalajara zoo. His blunt claws, absence of parasites and familiarity with houses indicate that he was raised in captivity.⁶³

PUMAS - FOLLOWED

PERU

October 31, 2017

Ocoña District, Province of Camana, Ayacucho Region, Peru

A puma was victim of a lynching. He had been captured, tied to a tree near the river and beaten with a stick. Police, forest guards and agents from the Arequipa zoo immediately came on site after a witness warned of this. Covered in contusions and hit by gun shots, the survivor was taken to the zoo to undergo surgery and general anesthesia and surgery.⁶⁴



LYNX

Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) are listed under CITES Appendix II except the Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) listed under Appendix I.

EUROPE

SPAIN

End of October 2017

Toledo, Autonomous community of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

The Iberian lynx had fallen into a trap, a trap-cage where he was intentionally lured with fresh bait. Agents from the APAM-CLM (Asociación Profesional de Agentes Medioambientales de Castilla La-Mancha) got there before the poachers. The feline was released into the mountain south of Madrid. Hotline for any trap or apparatus intended to immobilize or kill wildlife: 112.⁶⁶



SWITZERLAND

Beginning of November, 2017

Canton of Vaud, Switzerland

Two orphans found next to their poached mother were fed deer's meat that was prepared as if the game had been hunted by their mother. After growing for several weeks, they were released in the Alps of the Vaud, where they seem to be getting along fine. However, one of the sisters needed a bit of help from the forest rangers. She attacked a goat, which indicates inadequate hunting instinct. So, the rangers put a deer carcass within her territory, and she quickly ate it. Shortly afterwards, she hunted another deer and a fox, signifying that she was back on the right track.⁶⁷

VARIOUS SPECIES FELINES

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

November 9, 2017

Plano, State of Texas, United States of America

Between April 9, 2015 and June 29, 2016, he exported approximately 68 packages containing skulls, claws and parts from protected species, with a total fair market value in excess of \$150,000 US. His client was a wholesaler in Thailand. Arongkron "Paul" Malasukum (41 years old) was finally arrested by undercover USFWS agents that he had commissioned to purchase a tiger's skull and some lion skulls in two auctions in Texas. He gave them cash and told them which batches to bid on, in the hopes of avoiding federal laws. Once the purchases were made, he would send the trophies to his domicile in Woodside, New York, then on to Thailand. Arongkron "Paul" Malasukum is pleading guilty at the District Court for the Eastern District of Texas.⁶⁸

MEXICO

October 9, 2017

Lerma, State of Mexico, Mexico

The status of "Unidades de Manejo para la Conservación de la Vida Silvestre" (UMA) attributed to the "El Saja Reserve" in 2007 appears to be usurped. During an inspection, the PROFEPA noted several irregularities, in addition to the presence of two felines without records of legal origin. The management plan originally presented to the "Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales" (SEMARNAT), in order to obtain authorization to open the reserve, called for a veterinary treatment room, a quarantine zone, litter and a confinement cage for the 10 felines exhibited. None of that existed. Neither was there any record of the animals coming in and leaving. The purchase invoice for a young female jaguar did not include

the full identification number on her chip, and an adult male African lion had no legal origin: only an illegible invoice was shown to the inspectors. The two animals were seized.⁶⁹

December 10, 2017

Atempan, State of Puebla, Mexico

Seizure of a bobcat (*Lynx rufus*, Appendix II) and a margay (*Leopardus wiedii*, Appendix I) on a farm.⁷⁰

ASIA

BANGLADESH

14 novembre 2017

Jessore, Khulna Division, Bangladesh

Seizure of four lion and four leopard cubs in a luxury car that was heading toward the border with India. The origin of the felines is mysterious. There are not any wild specimens in the country, and the zoos that the authorities are aware of have not declared any lion or leopard births in the last three years. The car belongs to the manager of M/S Gold International, a recruitment agency in Banani, a neighborhood in Dakha. As he is on a trip in Saudi Arabia, he is impossible to contact. Gazipur Safari Parks took in the eight young felines. Four days afterwards, "End Wildlife Trafficking" an official report published in the United States, cited Bangladesh as a "focus country" for the trafficking. A "focus country" is a country that, despite tangible, convergent and cooperative efforts, remains a major country for poaching, transit, or consumption of wildlife that is protected by international conventions.⁷¹

CHINA

December 8, 2017

Shenyang, Province of Liaoning, China

Rescission of the first instance conviction of two circus men, sentenced to 8 and 10 years prison, for having transported without the required authorizations a tiger, three lions, a bear and a macaque from May to July 2016. Li Rongqing and Li Ruisheng had been arrested last July on the Shenyang road coming from Suzhou with a tiger in their vehicle. The Court of Appeal acquitted the two men on the motive that



between the two trial dates legal rules had evolved and it is no longer required to register for authorizations to transport wild animals that were raised in legal conditions. Rongqing is going to re-open his circus and demands financial compensation.⁷²



Leopards and Elephants

AFRICA

GABON

October 16 and 18, 2017

Mouila, Ngounié Province, Gabon

One arrest after another by the judicial police and the Department of Waters and Forests: two teams that supplied a flow of protected species transiting down route Nationale 1 to Libreville.

First on Monday, Mamfoubi Ndembi and his fellow were intercepted with two panther skins and an elephant tail. All three of them live in Ndendé, near the Congolese border. The first two claim to have gotten the skins from two residents of Ndendé, while the third denies all responsibility. He was just the driver and was aware of nothing. They have been condemned to 6 months jail with 3 to 4 suspended.

Then on Wednesday, it was Maxime Moussouguila Mouketou's turn. He was in possession of two ivory tips and a panther skin. He has been condemned to on month jail suspended. The owner of the ivory, Jean-Félix Mokambo, and the owner of the skin, Raymond Mboumba, were also arrested.¹

November 21, 2017

Lambaréné, Moyen-Ogooué Province, Gabon

Sourou Koudjokehou, citizen of Benin, has been bailed. His bounty, a panther skin and an ivory tip, is seized.²

SENEGAL

November 21, 2017

Mbour, Thiès Region, Senegal

Seized from a shop and from the shopkeeper's home: a leopard skin, 5 kg of raw ivory and 10 items made of crocodile skin (Crocodylidae family, Appendix I or II).³



ASIA

INDIA

Mid Decembre 2017

Near Siliguri, Darjeeling District, West Bengal State, India

Seizure of a leopard skin 2.30 m long. The three suspects are between 35 and 75 years old. Apparently, at least two of them are from Bhutan or Nepal. It is said that their boss is Pawan Khatak. In his home, a leopard skin, raw ivory, and 55 kg of bear hair were found. Khatak spends his time between Nepal and West Bengal.⁴

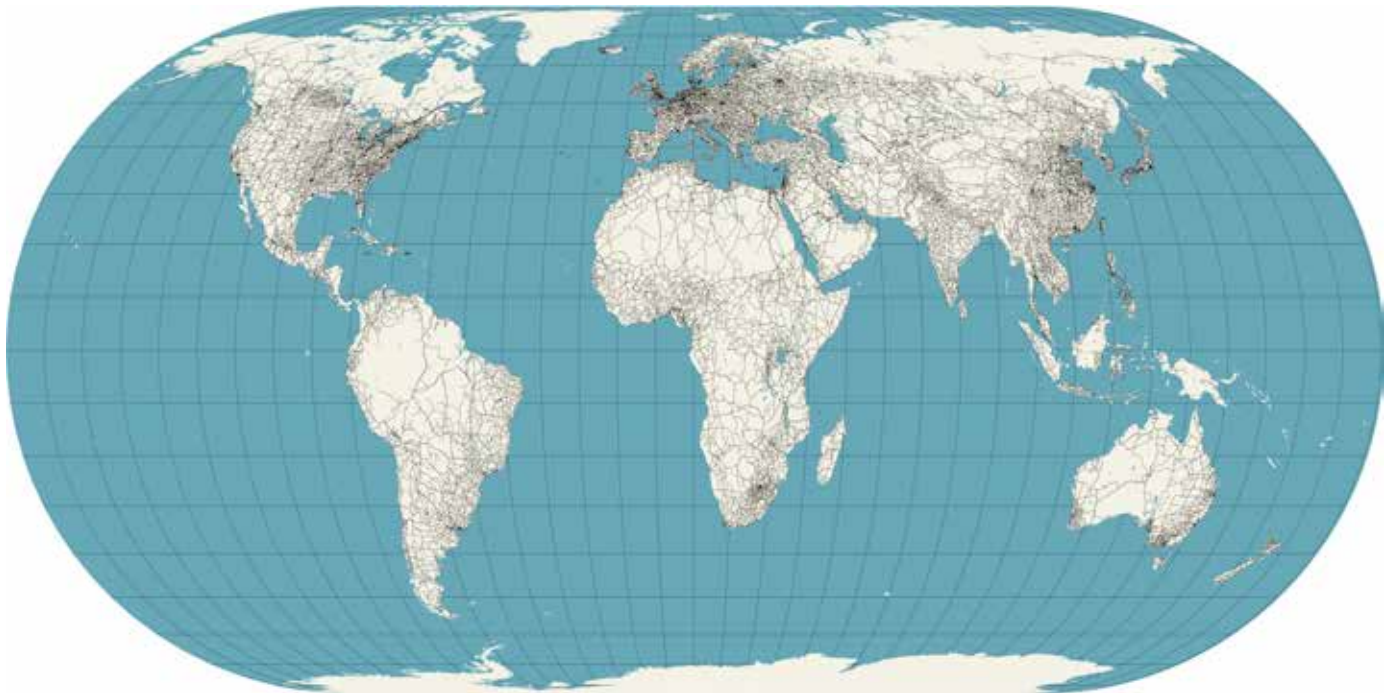
Roadmania

Seven experts at James Cook University, Cairns, Australia, published a disturbing overview of the goals of the G20 and a few driving-force nations regarding road construction between now and 2050, particularly in the southern hemisphere.

These roads will cut across and deform the planet. They will invade all types of ecosystems, from mountains to marshes to sea coasts, and will quite certainly be an accelerating factor in the disappearance of animal species in the wild.

The total length of the worldwide network of roads has increased by approximately 12 million km since 2000, and an additional 25 million km are planned or hoped for by institutional investors before 2050. The additional roads would be enough to wrap a sterile and impermeable band of pollution around the Earth 25 times, aggravating the extent and intensity of flooding locally and upstream.

Unpaved roads and other trails for clearing and exploiting forests (over 100,000 km in equatorial Africa) eject tons of dust and mud into the environment, seriously altering aquatic ecosystems. Forest trails in Malaysia and Indonesia produce 275 t of erosion sediments per hectare and per year.



World road network in 2014

Map Guillaume Sciaux www.pacha-cartographie.com

Roads increase accessibility to all types of resources. In the Brazilian Amazon, 95% of deforestation occurs in within 5.5 km of either side of a paved road. Similar trends can be observed in Thailand, on the island of Sumatra, in Panama, in Cambodia. Everyone also knows that poachers use roads, even when in poor condition, to exploit animal resources that had been preserved until the roads were built. The simple presence of a road through the savanna or the forest, offering various possibilities for approach and escape, attracts poaching. Overall monitoring on the Malaysian peninsula shows that 90% of traps and poachers' camps are located less than 5 km from a road.

Poaching and plant theft are not the only perverse effects of road construction and traffic. Based on a very solid bibliography, the authors of the study mention forest fires, real estate speculation, illegal mining activities, land clearing to product illicit drugs, mudslides and landslides. The only way to unclench the stranglehold with which human genius and civil engineering have decided to jail the Earth would be to carry out comprehensive, transparent, publically accessible impact studies, to evaluate the necessity of a project and all of its direct and indirect negative effects, and to do so on an international scale when a road crosses several countries or an entire continent.¹





CAMEROON

December 2017

Kendjom-Keku Mountain, Northwest Region, Cameroon

The Farm-to-Market Road is a typical example of an infrastructure funded by international institutions like the World Bank and the African Development Bank, with no study done on the impact on biodiversity, or even on the future of the last chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*, Appendix I) in Northwest Cameroon.

The new road, which cuts through Kendjom-Keku Mountain "like a red snake" 2000 m above sea level, attracts speculators from the agro-food sector, it draws forest-clearing livestock farmers who need grazing land and it opens the way for bush meat traffickers and animal poachers who, until now, could not easily access those areas. The dense forest of Kedjom Keku is insidiously transformed into blueberry plantations, corn and wheat fields, and even into potato fields if the work of the Agriculture Research Development Initiative (ARDI) is successful.

Soon, we will be seeing erosion, water pollution and landslides. One of the immediate consequences of the colonization of Kedjom-Keku Mountain is of interest to all of humanity. There is no sign of life from the small local chimpanzee population; the last trace dates back two or three years. "They have been killed or forced to migrate," speculates Martin Mikes, manager of the Kedjom-Keku NGO.

"Of the four chimpanzee populations {in Cameroon}, the most threatened is indisputably the one in Kedjom Keku, which was estimated at eight individuals in 2013 and is isolated from the other populations," said Osiris Doumbé, a specialist in *Pan troglodytes ellioti*, to the special correspondent for the Mongabay newspaper.²



© Eugene N. Nforngwa

AMERICA

BRAZIL

November 1, 2017

Votuporanga, State of São Paulo, Brazil

The Maned Wolf (*Chrysocyon brachyurus*, Appendix II) was saved by firefighters. It was lying on the side of the road after having been hit by a car. It was taken to a veterinary clinic, and its prognosis is optimistic.

The Maned Wolf resembles a wolf in its silhouette and a fox in its ears, pointed muzzle and fur. It is listed in the 12th volume of "Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia," and Hans Krieg, the naturalist who observed it in the Paraguayan chaco in the 1930s, described it as follows: "It is only through good luck that we may meet a Maned Wolf on the steeps, whether it be solitary or a couple during the mating season. Its stiff mane and high, but short stature makes it look, from a distance, more like a foal or an antelope, than a wolf."

The species was slaughtered for its fur. Livestock farmers also accused it of killing calves and foals, which Krieg formally denies. The Maned Wolf eats small rodents, palm nuts, fruit and gastropods in the marshes.³



© Clodomiro Esteves Junior

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

End of November 2017

Richmond, State of Virginia, United States of America

A miraculous road accident survivor. The lynx (*Lynx lynx*, Appendix II) got stuck in the radiator grill of a Toyota Prius and stayed there for 80 km. The driver only noticed her passenger when she arrived at her destination. The feline apparently suffered only from a minor cut, and will soon recover and be released near the place where it was hit.⁴



RICHMOND ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL

MEXICO



October 7, 2017

Progreso, State of Yucatan, Mexico

Eleven administrative proceedings have been initiated against the owners of cars that were spotted on the beach in a place called “El Playón,” despite the urgent measures in force to protect the nesting sites. The automobilists did not hesitate to take down the warning signs and the stakes that had been put up for protection around the site. Vehicle traffic causes the nesting zone to become too compact, can destroy or disturb the nests and expose the eggs to predators, or even crush newly hatched babies.⁵

ASIA

CHINA

October 4, 2017

Near Co Ngoin Lake, Tibet Autonomous Region, China

Chasing Tibetan antelopes (*Pantholops hodgsonii*, Appendix I) in a 4x4 is neither amusing, nor authorized by Chinese legislation. Seven people were questioned by the police after a video of their adventure was circulated on Internet. None of the antelopes was killed or injured, but the physical and psychological consequences are not known.⁶



IRAN

October 8, 2017

Fars Province, Iran

Poaching at the Bamou national park. Venison, especially wild goat (*Capra aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), was found at the hunter's home. He also had two rifles. He faces between three months and one year in prison. “I poach throughout the park,” he admitted. Bamou is big – 48,000 ha – but all of the western part, one quarter of the surface area, has been purged of its wild mammals by poaching, by invasive and illegal human activities and by a highway cutting through. Apparently, there are still a few leopards in the park, which extends between Persepolis et Shiraz.⁷

December 2017

Miandasht Wildlife Refuge, North Khorasan Province, Iran

The current project to open up the district of Sanhakht has caused dismay among the ecologists. They still hope that the provincial authorities and the government will oppose the continuation of the construction.

The asphalt road was to go through 10 km of the Miandasht Wildlife Refuge, and was to run along its eastern border. It was obvious that the leopards and deer were at risk of collision, and that poachers will have easy access to protected flora and fauna. The construction is currently suspended 2 km from the refuge.⁸

EUROPE

SPAIN

October 2017

Villanueva de la Reina, Province of Jaén, Autonomous Community of Andalusia, Spain

The year has been a deadly one for the Iberian Lynx and the Iberline plan. Hunters are not the only one to be blamed. Twelve adult or young Iberian lynx died, most killed in collisions. The A4 highway is murderous for felines. A plan to fence it off is underway. Work is moving slowly.⁹

End of November 2017

Near Bilbao, Province of Biscay, Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, Espagne

A car with all of its lights blaring chased two terrified brown bears (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) on a mountain road. The Fundacion Oso Pardo was upset to see the video on social networks. They put out a reminder that when a car comes across a bear, it should slow down and take all necessary driving precautions to enable the bear to find an escape route as quickly as possible.¹⁰

FRANCE

October, November, December 2017

Morbier, Mamirolle, Villers-le-Lac, Bonlieu, Doubs and Jura Departments, France

Tragic road accidents. Seven lynx (*Lynx lynx*, Appendix II) hit by cars in three months. Six dead, one seriously injured. All seven were hit-and-runs.¹¹

Wolves

Wolves (*Canis lupus*) are listed under CITES Appendix II except the populations of Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan listed under Appendix I.

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 29, 2017

Union County, Oregon State, United States of America

A 38-year-old man killed a wolf, and says that he acted in self-defense. The identity of the man was not published. He was chasing wapitis when he saw three canidae. He thought they were coyotes. One of them supposedly pounced on him before he even realized that it was actually a gray wolf. According to the investigation, the wolf was 24 meters from the hunter when it was shot. The district prosecutor substantiates the hunter's version. There will not be any legal proceedings. Since the wolf has returned to the Oregon, this is the second fatal shooting in self-defense. In March 2016, a wolf keeper killed a wolf that was approaching his sheep. Last year, another coyote hunter supposedly killed a wolf by accident. He pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to pay several thousands of dollars. He had to hand over his gun to the authority. This fall, the State put a quiz on its website to help hunters to tell the difference from coyotes and wolves. However, agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service killed four wolves in the neighboring county of Wallowa. Their pack is said to have repeatedly attacked domestic livestock.¹

EUROPE

FRANCE

Mid October 2017

Grenoble, Isère Department, France

The administrative tribunal of Grenoble ruled that the order, made in September 2015 by the prefect of Savoie authorizing six wolves to be killed, was illegal. The judge pointed out that wolf hunts can only be authorized if the owners of sheep herds have taken all available precautions to protect their animals. The NGOs call for the suspension of indemnities for sheep farmers who do not protect their flocks from attacks attributed to wolves.²



Wolves Sitting in a Tree
Sergei Pankejeff (1886–1979)
Freud Museum London

November 7, 2017

Nancy, Meurthe-et-Moselle Department, France

"There is only one urgent need, that is for the State to take action against the devastating effects of wolves. These attacks constitute a true source of trauma, and have even led to the creation of a psychology unit," according to the representative of the prefecture of the Vosges. Based on that powerful argument, the administrative tribunal of Nancy decided to reject the requests from the Group for Mammal Studies of Lorraine, calling for the suspension of orders from the prefects of the Vosges and Meurthe-et-Moselle, authorizing farmers to shoot wolves in self-defense. Three sheep farmers in the two neighboring départements consider that they have been victims of harassment by one or more wolves, and have demanded that the State authorize the elimination of the trouble-makers.³

2017 - France

41 wolves legally shot as part of the "removal and defense firing" framework

2 wolves poached

10 wolves killed by collision or undetermined cause (possibly natural)

Fall 2017- France

Certainty:

A dead wolf struck by a car was found at the edge of the National 113 in the Crau plain. The wolf continues its exploration in the South of France.

A living wolf has been seen several times in the Somme. The wolf continues its exploration in the North of France.

Uncertainty:

A wolf-like canine was observed in the Lyons forest in Normandy.

According to the newspaper *Le Chasseur Français*, the last wolf was killed in 1912 in Normandy. In the absence of predators, the wild boar became then the public enemy n°1 of the *lieutenants de l'ouvetier* (Grand Wolfcatcher).

NORWAY

November 21, 2017

Oslo, Eastern Norway Region, Norway

One point for wolf enthusiasts. The court has suspended the authorization to "cull" wolves in the south-eastern part of the country. The initial quota targeted 12 wolves in the region. Five have already been killed. Seven are on deferment.⁴



Bears

AMERICA

CANADA

October 3, 2017
Quebec City, Quebec Province, Canada

In 2015, the Fourrures Mont-Royal illegally exported three polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*, Appendix II) skins to China. Two additional skins were seized from their facilities and four more were taken from taxidermist accomplices. They were for sale for approximately \$15,000 US each. The company has pleaded guilty. They were fined \$22,500 Can (\$17,500 US). The money will be transferred to the Environmental Damages Fund which finances projects to improve natural environments. The Fourrures Mont-Royal are now listed in the registry of environmental violators.¹



October 30, 2017
Surrey, Province of British Columbia, Canada

A resident of Richemont has been fined a total of \$20,250 Can, or \$15,780 US, for trafficking brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) paws and gall bladders.²



MEXICO

October 16, 2017
Guachochi, State of Chihuahua, Mexico

The hunters claim that they shot in self-defense. The body of the black bear (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) was recovered by the PROFEPA so that its fur could not be sold.³



Mid-December 2017

Saltillo, State of Coahuila de Zaragoza, Mexico

An American black bear (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II). Adult male, 1.95 m, 160 kg, hit in the lungs by a bullet and shrapnel.⁴

ASIA



© Robin des Bois

For sale on the roadside in Laos

ARMENIA

December 2017
Aparan, Aragatsotn Province, Armenia

Release of three brown bears (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) who were captive for years in a dark storage area and in two restaurants. The Armenian government and the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets acted with the support of IAR (International Animal Rescue).⁵



© IAR

INDIA

December 30, 2017

Ramanagara District, State of Karnataka, India

Ramesh had put a scoop of millet (ragi), containing a homemade explosive, in the path of the bear (*Ursus spp.* Appendix I or II). The bear tasted it and died shortly afterward from a heart attack. His jaws were dislocated and the hemorrhages were gaping. The terrorist was picked up by the forest ranger when he came to take possession of the remains. This type of trap is common in the district. The goal is to take the paws, teeth, claws, nails, meat, skin, or feathers from the animals. The poachers teamed up with quarry workers to obtain the explosive substances.⁶

IRAN

October 7, 2017

Abdmanaf, Mazandaran Province, Iran

Life is tough also for bears (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) in the north of Iran. First, a severe drought this year considerably limited the food supply in the mountainous regions. The brown bear's diet consists mainly of grasses, roots, berries, nuts, insects and small mammals. The early cold wave and snow are forcing them to look for food lower down in the valleys, bringing them closer to villages and agricultural areas. They have not built up sufficient reserves of fat to begin hibernation. In the past six days, three bears have approached the villages of Baladeh, Kalaleh and Amol. Each time, they have been taken care of by Dr. Akrami, a veterinarian in the area, who anesthetizes them with tranquilizer darts, then releases them. Today, on request from the residents of the village of Abdmanaf, he rescued another one, a 4- or 5-year-old male caught in a steel cable. The bear was transported far from the village and he slowly came back to his senses.⁷



October 27, 2017

Taleqan County, Alborz Province, Iran

A new incursion of poachers high up in the mountains above the city of Taleghan. All available forces arrived on the scene. After a chase that lasted for several hours, through the night and in the snow, three armed men were circled and disarmed. A large-caliber .308 rifle, 6 bullets, knives and the body of a just-killed brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) were recovered. According to the new criminal code, the bandits face a fine equivalent to \$14,500 US and three years in prison to the maximum.⁸



Mid November 2017

Veladzah, Baladeh Noor district, Province of Mazandaran, Iran

A brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II), caught in the fence surrounding an apple orchard, was rescued. He fled as soon as he had been freed by the environmental forces. The conflict between bears and fruit farmers is relatively common in the province.⁹

Beginning of December 2017

Oz, Province of Mazandaran, Iran

The owner of the orchard moved the carcass of the dead bear out of the trap that he had made to protect his fruit trees, and then buried it on his property.

Environmental forces were called in following some confidential and concordant information that they had received. At first, the fruit farmer refused to give the authorities access to his fields. After the prosecutor issued a search warrant, the bear's burial location was discovered and the fresh carcass was exhumed. With that evidence, the poacher faces between three months and three years in prison.¹⁰



VIET NAM

October 2017

Tam Dao, Province of Vĩnh Phúc, Viet Nam

Oscar is one of the survivors of the infamous Cau Trang Bear Farm in Halong Bay, where 26 Asian black bears (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I) have died in the past few months.

Oscar is a survivor, and covered with wounds. His rescuers said that he looked like he had literally been in a war. His paws were mutilated and he had respiratory problems. He is much better now at the Animals Asia shelter for abused bears, except for his teeth which were in such poor condition that the ex-Song Sot – his name when he was imprisoned – could not even eat a banana or a half-melon unless they were cut up into small pieces. "Sadly, broken or decaying teeth are the most common affliction suffered by bears rescued from bile farms where they are kept locked up in tiny cages. They typically vent their sadness, fear and frustration by chewing at the bars," said the head veterinarian of the NGO. That is why the South African veterinary dentist, Cedric Tutt, came to see him. Oscar is one of the first six bears to be treated by the specialist. According to his health report, "Oscar has once again been able to indulge his appetite for tasty bananas, melon and other treats - some of the very things that make life after captivity so pleasurable." Regular visits from Dr. Tutt have been scheduled.¹¹

November 6, 2017

Ninh Binh, Province of Ninh Binh, Viet Nam

The four skeletal Asian black bears (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I) weighed between 25 and 30 kg each. They were kept in two neighboring houses. Illegally exploited for bile extraction, they had been locked up in small, dirty cages for twenty years. They were freed through a joint operation between Four Paws Vietnam and the provincial forestry service.¹²

EUROPE

GERMANY

December 1, 2017

Mönchengladbach, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

A postal package from Russia containing a bear skin with head, clearly prepared by a professional taxidermist, was seized. The customs document actually stated the origin as *Ursus arctos* (brown bear). A customs officer reminded all those looking for an exotic Christmas gift to check for information on the customs department website. The addressee had not applied for an import permit.¹³

FRANCE

Mid October 2017

Val d'Azun, Hautes-Pyrénées Department, France

"Honey" pots, some of which were labeled "bear poison," have been found since mid-October in a part of the valley where plantigrades are frequent. Hikers alerted the Ferus association. After threats to slaughter bears were sent to several news media on September 15, through a video of a masked and armed commando, the association has launched operation "Vigie ours" ("Bear look-out"), requesting that any sign of poaching be reported. The suspicious honey pots were brought in after that operation began. They are attached to branches at human height, which is also bear height. The first one was found on October 16. Their contents are being analyzed, but whether it is a joke or not, Ferus is pressing charges for "attempted destruction of a protected species."¹⁴

RUSSIA

Mid October 2017

Khassan, Primorsky Krai, Russia. Border with China.

Five bear paws were in the car of a Chinese citizen thanks to the vigilance of the dog unit.¹⁵

End of December 2017

Zabaykalsky Krai, Russia

Seizure of 498 brown bear paws (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) in a minibus and 37 deer lips doomed for the Chinese market.¹⁶



Hippopotamuses

Les hippopotames (*Hippopotamus amphibius*), sont inscrits en Annexe II de la CITES.

AFRICA

KENYA

December 7, 2017

Tana Delta, Tana River County, Kenya

It's Christmastime, a time for Nature's gifts. The hippopotamus head was on a motorcycle, and was off to a local market. The victim was from the Tana Delta.¹

UGANDA

November 2017

Uganda

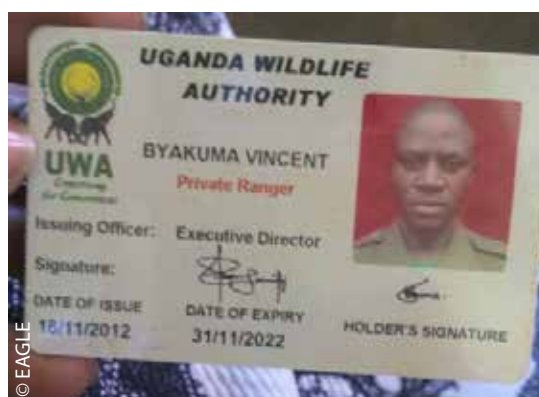
127 hippopotamus teeth = 4 years in prison. Cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p.66.²



October 31, 2017

Pakwach, Nebbi District, Northern Region, Uganda

A Uganda Wildlife Authority agent has been arrested. He was trafficking hippopotamus teeth.³



Rhinoceroses

The official toll for the year 2017 exceeds for the 5th time the threshold of 1,000 poached rhinos in South Africa. It amounts to 1028 including 504 in Kruger Park. Fetuses are not included in the number. For the October, November, December 2017 quarter alone, three females were in gestation when they were poached. Poaching in Kaziranga National Park in India is comparable to that of 2001. It would not exceed 5 individuals in 2017. It's down dramatically.

For poaching or horn trafficking, prison without remission sentences are between:

2 months in Hong Kong
14 months in the United Kingdom
14,15 and 20 months in Vietnam
18 months in the United States
5 years in Zambia
11 years in Swaziland
8,10 and 18 years old in Malawi
4,18 and 20 years in South Africa
20 years in Tanzania

The white rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* and black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* ranging in Africa are listed in Appendix I, except for the white rhinoceros populations of Swaziland and South Africa which are listed in Appendix II for trade of live animals and hunting trophies.

The 3 Asian rhinoceros species are in Appendix I: *Rhinoceros unicornis*, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, *Rhinoceros sondaicus*.

"On the Trail" n°19

The value of horn on the black market, according to media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref.
Asia	China	25.700	30
	(Hong Kong)	25.600	31
	Thailand	48.400	39



EASTERN AFRICA

MALAWI

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 23, 2017

Zomba, Southern Region, Malawi

Esau Billy, his father Aaron Billy Masaka, and a cousin, Lloyd Shaibu, were sentenced to 18 years, 10 years and 8 years in prison, respectively, for having killed a well-known rhinoceros, named Jabesi, in the Liwonde national park (see "On the Trail" n°18, p.66). The horns were found in a family freezer, and are now part of the government stock of trophies. The freezer, in compliance with the Zomba court ruling, was given to the Liwonde park. The ruling, that everyone agrees is dissuasive, is the harshest ever imposed in the country for poaching an endangered species and attempting to sell its parts.¹



TANZANIA

Mid October 2017

Mkomazi National Park, Kilimanjaro and Tanga Regions, Tanzania. Border with Kenya.

A female black rhinoceros, raised at the Dvur Kralove Zoo in the Czech Republic and transported by plane from Leipzig, Germany in June 2016, died of injuries after a confrontation with another rhinoceros. The victim, born in 2012 and known as Eliska, was with three other black rhinoceroses born in zoos in the European Union and transplanted to Tanzania to consolidate the black rhinoceros populations that have suffered from poaching. The Mkomazi national park extends over more than 3200 km².²

ZAMBIA

GANG

December 22, 2017

Chadiza, Eastern Province, Zambia

The two Chinese citizens and the three Zambian citizens were caught in the act of transporting 32.5 kg of horn. They pleaded the court for clemency. "Our families will have big problems if we are sent to prison." They were sentenced to five years of prison without remission, starting from the date of their arrest in July 2017. Cf. "On the Trail" n° 18, p. 69.³



ZIMBABWE

October 30, 2017

Zimbabwe

The Harare courts, in Zimbabwe, agreed to the Interpol request. The Botswana police spokesperson confirmed, "We're just waiting for the stamp from Harare officials to validate the extradition."

In Botswana, they have been waiting for Dumisani Moyo since 2012, when he disappeared after being released on bail until his trial for illegal possession of a rhino horn. Moyo was on the run until he was caught in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe, at the beginning of August (see "On the Trail" n° 18 p. 69). Moyo, 52 years old, has a bad reputation that stretches throughout all southern African countries. He begged the court not to transfer him to Botswana, where he claims he will be mistreated. He pleaded his own defense, which enabled him to obtain extra time in order to find a lawyer and to complete his file, before undoubtedly appealing. To be continued.⁴

November 2, 2017

Harare, Province of Harare, Zimbabwe

Edson Chidziva, former director of ZimParks, is trying to get away with a rather twisted legal argument. His defense invokes the fact that Chidziva was already charged, in 2015, with negligence in a case of a horn that disappeared from a safe that he was guarding, and in the end, he was acquitted. The defense has pointed out that two years later he is now being charged with the same thing. The procedure is supposedly unconstitutional, even though it is not the disappearance of one horn that is being held against Chidziva, but the disappearance of at least fifty horns (see "On the Trail" n° 18 p. 69).⁵

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

October 2017

South Africa

Tortuous story of a horn cutter who did not want to be called a poacher

Jacques Els was in possession of at least 30 horns. An illegal war treasure that he hoped sell one day, some day when all the rhinos have disappeared and their horns are at peak value and can be sold legally. In March 2012, the Louis Trichardt Regional Court, in the province of Limpopo, sentenced him to eight years in prison, plus a four-year suspended sentence and a fine of 1 million rand (\$73,000 US) to be paid to the Green Scorpions, for possession and illegal trade of rhinoceros trophies. He had acquired the horns from a certain Tom Fourie, who committed suicide seven years ago. According to the investigation, the rhinos were anesthetized and their horns were cut off the live animals. Els only did five months in prison, at first. He was released on bail for 4 million rand (\$292,000 US) until the appeals court announced its ruling. His lawyers appealed immediately after the initial sentence was made.

The court, stating that Els was not involved in a case of poaching and that the only crime he committed was the amputation of a rhinoceros, and not a case of mortal poaching, the judge reduced his sentence from 8 to 4 years, which means that Els is theoretically going to have to go back to prison for three years and seven months. In the end, all of the horns were "stolen" from his farm in Thabazimbi in September 2010.⁶

October 12, 2017

Kempton Park, Province of Gauteng, South Africa

Shuangshuang Xue, 24 years old, was sentenced to four years in prison for having attempted to illegally export horns from the Johannesburg International Airport to Hong Kong. She was coming from Lusaka, Zambia, with a stop-over in South Africa (see "On the Trail" n° 18 p. 72). Genetic analysis showed that the 14 horns and sections of horns were from five males and one female, all white rhinoceroses. None of the exhibits could be linked to a known poaching episode or to any State trophy collection.⁷



Mid October 2017

Near Hoedspruit, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

- Death of a poacher.
- Serious injury for another poacher.
- A third is on the run, but being tracked by the dog unit.

Following an incident on the hunting reserve, several weapons and ammunition were seized.⁸



October 19, 2017

Entabeni Safari Conservancy, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

It is a sad first for the reserve, founded 23 years ago. The adult female was poached and its two horns stolen. Its offspring of 21 months was hit. It is being monitored by veterinarians and could be referred to a specialized orphanage. The reserve, dedicated to photo safaris, extends over 22,000 ha.⁹



October 1 and 22, 2017

Wildschutsberg Game Reserve, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Two attacks in three weeks on this ranch.

– Two 10-year-old males, in plain daylight. It was a Sunday. They had been sighted in prime condition at 11 a.m. At 4 p.m., a helicopter spotted them, dead, 300 m from each other.

– Two females, approximately 8 and 15 years old, and a 4-year old male, on another Sunday, in the middle of the night. Two corpses were found on Monday morning; one of the females was still alive. The two dead animals had been entirely dehorned. The survivor still had her horns. But she died during the operation to remove a bullet from her shoulder. "I don't have any left. They are all dead. They've killed seven in the past three years," sighed Greg Harvey, owner of the reserve.¹⁰



October 22, 2017

Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, South Africa

Serial Murder into Pilanesberg

Two black rhinos were massacred during the night. They were found at dawn. One still had its horns. He had managed flee the ambush. He died without having lost his horns. The other one, a cow with full-term calf, was found near a track, hit by car and its long horn cut off. The butchers did not have time to saw off the short horn that is partly hacked.

A third carcass was found in an isolated spot. It was already rotting away. A bullet was found in its side.¹¹



October 9, 19, November 2, 2017

Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, South Africa

- Minus two, a male and a female.

- Minus one.

- Minus one gestating female and one young rhinoceros. The horns were in place. The poachers were not able to complete their operation.

The park has lost a total of 13 individuals to poaching since the beginning of 2017.¹²

October 25, 2017

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

Sentencing of Paul Ubisi Julio Nvhimbithi to 20 and 18 years of prison. They took part in an exchange of gunshots with rangers while they were poaching. An accomplice, Nelson Mathebula, was hit by a bullet. The ranger tracked him for 250 m by following the trail of blood. He was rescued by an emergency physician who arrived to the site by helicopter, but he did not survive. Usibi was armed with large caliber 458. His backpack contained an axe. The Advocate General in his indictment said that the two convicts from Mozambique were in some way responsible for the death of their sidekick by having launched offensive shots on the rangers without complying to the summons. The court of Skukuza is specialized in rhinoceros poaching cases (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p. 75).¹³



GANG

November 6, 2017

Grahamstown, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Postponement of the trial of the Ndlovu trio - Jabulani, Forget, and Sikhumbuzo. They were accused of poaching 22 rhinoceroses (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p. 70). The three men remain free on bail, despite the serious risk of evasion that the prosecuting attorney highlighted.

Yet again, poachers have been very clever with the procedures. Jabulani turned down legal aid, choosing a famous legal firm in Port Elisabeth. The new attorneys were not available on the trial day. Jabulani must sell his home to pay them. The trial has been postponed to June 4th.¹⁴

KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

November 13, 2017

The battle has been lost for JP van Zyl-Roux, a member of the Hawks for 10 years and who has now been sidelined for the past two years for unclear reasons. His main mistake may have been contributing to the arrest of Dumisani Gwala, a bigwig in wildlife trafficking and corruption, whose trial is endlessly postponed due to supposed procedural flaws. After multiple appeals and attempts with administrative mediation, JP van Zyl-Roux will be emptying his office mid-November. "The entire business is stupefying, it's a circus of absurdity," lamented his lawyer, Jacques Botha to the newspaper The Witness. The soldier JP van Zyl-Roux has not been saved (see "On the Trail" n°17 p. 78).¹⁵

FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 13, 2017

Mkhuhlu, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Mbuyane father and son seem to be involved in poaching. Two large-caliber weapons were found in their home.¹⁶

November 16, 2017

South Africa

A young female, shot in the back and dehorned, is now in the good care of Saving the Survivors.¹⁷



November 20, 2017

Near Hoedspruit, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Three men suspected of poaching were spotted in a rhinoceros breeding farm. Shots were fired. One suspect is dead. The other two fled. A revolver and a saw were seized.¹⁸



November 26, 2017

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

Walter Mhangani, Emmanuel Mdhuli and Xongani Mathebula appear before the Skukuza Special Court. They are charged with breaking after having entered Kruger national park without passing through the official entry, unlawful possession of weapons, and poaching in conspiracy of three white rhinoceroses.¹⁹



December 2, 2017

Ngwelezane, Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

K. Shandu, the judge responsible for Dumisani Gwala's case, is deprived. Dumisani Gwala is a boss involved in all kinds of business (cf. "On the Trail" n°12 p 71, n°14 p.63 and 66). Shandu is suspected of accepting money from the defence counsels to indefinitely delay the trial. JP Van Zyl-Roux, (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p 72) is satisfied with this progress. He was hired by the NGO Saving the Wild to manage its investigations department. Gwala was arrested in 2015 by Van Zyl-Roux's team, when the latter was a

member of the Hawks. For the moment, the trial is planned for May 2018. Despite his violence during his arrest, his lavish lifestyle, and the risk of evasion, Gwala is free on bail. If the change in judges is confirmed, the hearing might not be postponed for a 16th time.²⁰

December 2 and 3, 2017

Grahamstown and Ventersburg, Eastern Cape and Free State Provinces, South Africa

Progress on anti-poaching?

In both provinces, poaching is rising, while it is dropping in Kruger park. Cooperation between the police of the two provinces and the Department of Environmental Affairs investigators has led to the arrest of eight suspects in 48 hours. Two were picked up in a bakkie that was being used by three poachers to enter the Great Fish River Nature Reserve, and six others in a convoy of two powerful vehicles containing a .458 rifle, ammunition, axes, knives, night-vision binoculars, cash in rand and in US dollars, and five telephones. All of the equipment was seized.

The .458 rifle is of particular interest. It may be the weapon used to kill five rhinoceroses in the Wildschutsberg Game Reserve in October. According to non-official sources, the preliminary ballistic cross-checking seems to confirm that hypothesis. Most of the suspects are foreigners.²¹

December 8, 2017

South Africa

Saving the Survivors made a vain attempt to rescue a two-year old female shot in her front left paw. She was exhausted after roaming around the whole night.²²



December 25, 2017

Enoch Mgijima, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

She was due to give birth in two or three weeks. She was killed on Christmas night and dehorned 60 m from the southern fence of the Lawrence de Lange hunting reserve (1,200 hectares), near a cemetery. She is the 12th victim of the year in the province.²³



NAMIBIA

October 14, 2017

Etosha National Park, Kunene Region, Namibia

The Namibian reported that the poacher, Luteni Muharukua, who entered the park illegally with the intention and tools necessary for poaching, was charged by a rhinoceros that "appeared from nowhere." His accomplices fled, after having hid him on a neighboring mountain. The suspect was arrested the next day by police. His leg is injured; he is hospitalized and treated, and well-guarded.²⁴

November 2017

Windhoek, Khomas Region, Namibia

Follow-up on the Lu and Chen case, and the five rhinoceros horns. Yanghui Lu escaped to China after he was released on bail. Nan Chen will go to court in February 2018. But the judge is giving him a chance to escape, too, because until then, Chen will also be free on bail (see "On the Trail" n° 16 p.69).²⁵

December 1, 2017

Omungwelume, Ohangwena Region, Namibia. Near the border with Angola.

Three men, aged 20, 21, and 31, were arrested at a roadblock. In the vehicle, police found a backpack containing two fresh horns.²⁶

SWAZILAND

November 20, 2017

Swaziland

Two men from Taiwan were caught in 2016, in the process of exporting 35.14 kg of horns, cut up into 31 fragments estimated at 2.4 millions US\$, that is \$ 68,300 US/kg (see "On the Trail" n°16 p.70). They were each sentenced to two different prison terms of 11 and 9 years for illegal possession of horns, trade in horns and smuggling. The two sentences run concurrently. DNA analyses revealed that the horns were from eight different rhinoceroses. After they were arrested at the King Mswati III Airport in Swaziland, a bag belonging to them was intercepted at the Johannesburg International Airport. Their trick was to put the pieces of horn in 5 L wine boxes. In addition to the prison terms, they are required to pay a fine of \$3000 US to the government of Swaziland and to each of the reserves where the rhinoceroses were poached, the Madikwe Game Reserve in the North-West province, the Balule Game Reserve in Limpopo and the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal.²⁷



AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OPERATION CRASH

November 14, 2017

Miami, State of Florida, United States of America

Michael Hegarty, member of the Rathkeale Rovers gang, was sentenced to 18 months in prison, followed by three years on parole, for criminal trafficking in conspiracy of a libation cup (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 78 and n°13 p.76).²⁸



Mid-November 2017

Haute Vienne Department, France

The Rathkeale Rovers have diverse tricks. In France, they work on behalf of so-called Irish public works companies. With their used trucks and the Eastern European accomplices, they sell adulterated and stolen tar at cheap prices. Their coatings break off with the first bad weather. Around a hundred tarring sites have been identified, 300,000 € of checks have been credited to around twenty bank accounts. At least equivalent sums were probably paid in cash by victims of the scam who did not dare to file complaint. The Rathkeale Rovers are routinely arrested and released under judicial control, from which they make a game out of escaping.²⁹

ASIA

CHINA

October 30, 2017

Hong Kong International Airport, China

Seizure of 1.4 kg of presumed horn cut into pieces and hidden in food wrappings, for a total value of \$280,000 HK, or \$36,000 US (\$25,700 US/kg). The passenger, aged 31, was coming from Maputo, Mozambique, via Doha, Qatar.³⁰



November 12, 2017

Hong Kong International Airport, China

A fruitful day for the Hong Kong customs officers.

– Seizure of 1.8 kg of presumed rhinoceros horn in the backpack of a passenger coming from Beira, Mozambique, via Johannesburg, South Africa.

– Seizure in the jacket and socks of a passenger from Xiamen, in the province of Fujian, of 800 g of presumed rhinoceros horn.

The customs department estimates the value at \$520,000 HK total for the 2.6 kg of horn, i.e. \$66,600 US, or \$25,600 US/kg.³¹

INDIA

October 23, 2017

Bongalmora, Lakhimpur District, State of Assam, India

A horn was confiscated, and the four people who were trying to sell it were arrested.³²

October 19, Thursday November 2, Saturday November 4, November 9 and 10, 2017

Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India

– Hangal and Pegu had been haunting in the park for a few days. Hangal is a sharpshooter who was hired by local poachers. He is from Manipur. He did not have time to use his AK 56 or his A .303. He and his partner were circled and disarmed by the police and forest rangers before they could act. There were 2000 rhinoceroses in the park, and there still are. An expert in criminology explained that the .303 is the ideal weapon for killing rhinos, and that the new trend in automatic weapons, such as the AK 58, is meant to protect poachers from rangers, in case of confrontation.



Calibre .303



AK56

– Thursday, November 2. Three poachers equipped with AK-47, escaped through the night after having shot a male rhino and stolen his horn. “We believe that they arrived from the north, crossing the Brahmapoutre, and waited for the right moment, hiding on a sandbank,” said a ranger, without giving his identity.

– Saturday, November 4.

The job was wrapped up quickly, in a matter of minutes, around midnight. Shots rang out in several parts of the park. The rangers did not know which way to go. The gang brought down two rhinos, a mother and her calf, and sawed off their horns. The two bodies were found lying one against the other. Specialists say that the raid’s military-like organization suggests that the members of the gang are militants from an autonomous, Communist group from Karbi Anglong. The mother was officially known as the “pride of Assam.”

– November 11. The All Assam Students Union (AASU) organized a major pro-rhino demonstration in the district of Golaghat and demand that the Assam Forestry Minister, Pramila Rani Brahma, resign.³³



November 1, 2017

Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India

Poaching lull in the largest and most famous park in the country

Only two cases of poaching since the beginning of the year. That report is comparable to 2001. Rangers are now equipped with night-vision goggles and semi-automatic weapons to dissuade poachers. Cameras have been installed on top of 30-m watch towers and transfer live footage to a control room. Homemade firearms have been confiscated in the villages around park, and 38 local micro-development projects are promoting weaving and other hand made craft. These efforts seem to have paid off. There is better coordination between the forest rangers and the State police, which facilitates reactivity and makes interventions and anti-poaching investigations more efficient. The park administration is not resting on its provisional laurels. They are expecting the poaching organizations to develop new strategies. For the moment, poachers have turned to other parks and sanctuaries in Assam that are less well-equipped, such as Pobitora and Orang.³⁴

November 11, 2017

State of West Bengal, India

The SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal) 17th battalion arrested Giranb Das, residing in the Alipurduar district, and seized a horn, weighing 750 g and measuring 18 cm long, that Das was trying to smuggle across the border from Bhutan. The tax value of the horn is set at 35,100,000 rupees (\$540,000 US).³⁵

December 3, 2017

Bokakhat, Golaghat District, State of Assam, India

Seizure of a horn weighing over one kg and arrest of the seller, Bipin Borah.³⁶

December 2017

Alluvial floodplains of the Dooars, State of West Bengal, India

While preparing for their crime, or after, the poachers are accustomed to staying in hotels or other resorts on the fringes of the Gorumara national park. "We want managers and employees to provide us with information immediately if they have suspicious customers." An information campaign was launched and negligent hotel-keepers could be accused of complicity.³⁷



LAOS

October 23, 2017

Wattay International Airport, , Laos

The airline Silk Air transported two Chinese citizens, whose luggage was searched on arrival, on a flight from Singapore to Vientiane. Their baggage contained 11.1 kg of horns. The two traffickers had planned to take a domestic flight to the Luang Prabang province in the north to get closer to the Chinese border.³⁸



THAILAND

October 10, 2017

Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

Seizure of Chinese travelers' baggage coming from Lusaka, Zambia, and destined for Cambodia, via Addis-Ababa and Bangkok. The bags contained 6.2 kg of horns, estimated locally at approximately \$300,000 US, i.e. \$48,400 US/kg.³⁹



December 2017

Thailand

Wongchan Nikon works in quarantining at the airport. He is in prison now. He acknowledged that several times, upon the request of a man named Sen—a Chinese citizen—he took luggage from the carousel, and left with his security badge without any problem. He then gave the suitcases to an anonymous correspondent. Rhinoceros horns were in the suitcases. The last suitcase, one too many, had 14 horns with an estimated worth of 50 million baht, or approximately \$ 1,530,000 US.

Nikon admits to performing this service several times for 3,000 baht (\$ 92 US) per kg—"just to get the suitcase out of the airport". He stopped the game because he feared that he would be caught in the act. But the network came back with an irresistible offer: 9,000 baht (\$ 276 US) per kg. Nikon was back.

A Vietnamese man was arrested at the same time as him. He came to look for the smuggled goods, to take them to Viet Nam. The ghost-like Sen paid him 170,000 baht (\$ 5,211 US) for each mission. The horns came from South Africa via Dubai. The network had contacted 42-year-old Nikon on the Line application.⁴⁰

GANG

December 12, 2017

Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

Seizure of 16 horns for a total weight of 12.5 kg. Arrest of a Chinese citizen and a Thai citizen who disembarked on a flight coming from South Africa. The police, after having received information from the NGO EAL, subsequently arrested M. Bach Van Hoa, one of the two brothers of the Bach family, who is said to have headed the network and imported 56.5 kg of horns into Thailand in the last four months.⁴¹

EUROPE

NETHERLANDS

December 19, 2017

Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, Province of North Holland, The Netherlands

Seizure of five horns and four items presumably made of horn from the baggage of a Chinese passenger coming from South Africa and on the way to Shanghai. He is in custody for at least 15 days. The customs officers estimate the seizure to be worth 500,000 € or \$590,000 US.⁴²



Rhinos and Elephants

AFRICA

NAMIBIA

October 2017

Namibia

According to news from Mr. Shifeta, elephant and rhino poaching is down in the country (20 in 2017, vs. 101 in 2016, and 27 in 2017 vs. 60 in 2016, respectively).

75 traffickers have been arrested since the beginning of the year, most of them linked to Asian networks. 30 horns, 103 tusks and 69 pieces of tusks have been confiscated by the police and the army.¹

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 24, 2017

Boston, State of Massachusetts, United States of America

Guan Zong Chen, alias Graham Chen, a professional antique dealer and Australian national, has a long history of trafficking in rhinoceros horn, ivory and coral. He was just tried for an overall trade estimated at \$700,000 US. In 1989, he was arrested in Chengdu, in the Chinese province of Sichuan, for illegal importation of carved ivory coming from the United States. He was placed under house arrest for several years, but continued trafficking with assistance from a Chinese national, Jin Jie Yang, and the owner of a courier service in Concorde, New Hampshire. The two of them were intermediaries, enabling him to fraudulently import ivory and horns to China.

Once he had served his sentence, he went back to the United States and continued using the Concord courier platform to ship ivory and horns, and among other things, a libation cup hidden in a porcelain vase and some raw horns purchased at an auction in Beverly Hills, California. He was wanted by the US justice, and was picked up in July in Australia, and extradited to the United States. He pleaded guilty partially and faces up to 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 US (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 81).²

ASIA

CHINA

October 17-18, 2017

Hong Kong International Airport, China

Three passengers, aged 20 to 34, coming from Harare, Zimbabwe, via Dubai, were arrested. Two of the women were transporting 43 kg of semi-raw ivory in their cabin bags, and the third had 2 kg of rhinoceros horn, cut into three pieces, tied to her chest and thighs.



It is interesting to note that given the proliferation of imitation and counterfeited articles, the Hong Kong customs systematically talk about "presumed" rhinoceros horns and ivory in their press releases. The three female smugglers were sentenced to two months jail.³

EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

November 9, 2017

London, United Kingdom

Abbas Allawi has been sentenced to 14 months in prison (see "On the Trail" n°17, p.87). On October 19, 2016, a search warrant and the sniffer dogs of the Metropolitan Police's Wildlife Crime Unit brought in the trophies. The sentence was as follows:

- 14 months for possession and trade of three rhinoceros horns.

- 7 months for 40 kg of raw elephant ivory.

- 3 months for 4 hippopotamus teeth.

The sentences run concurrently.⁴

Elephants

If we have to talk about imminent extinction, Asian elephants are much more threatened than African elephants. By the end of 2017, Sri Lanka's and Indian's super-tuskers and Indonesia's pygmy elephants are disappearing at top speed. The official and global value of an Asian elephant in China is just over \$300,000 US compared to just over \$150,000 US for an African elephant. Asiatic ivory is more appreciated in Asia than African ivory.

Ivory is not the only material sought in the elephant. In 10 years, 70,000 elephants from Africa would have legally fed tanners and world fashion.

The African elephant, *Loxodonta africana*, is listed in CITES Appendix I, except populations from South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe which are in Appendix II. The Asian elephant, *Elephas maximus*, is listed in Appendix I.

"On the Trail" n°19 Black market raw ivory quotation from media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref.
Africa	Kenya	967	4
		770	11
		1,925	12
		1,603	13
	Uganda	108	31
	Zimbabwe	250	46
		2,500	50
	Gabon	120	74
Asia	China (Hong Kong)	2,570	89
	India (Kerala)	1,156	115
	India (Arunachal Pradesh)	4,243	41*
	Viet Nam	1,300-2,200	6**

* Chapter Multi-species

** Chapter Pangolins and Elephants

EASTERN AFRICA

BURUNDI

November 27, 2017

Bigina, Kayogoro, Makamba Province, Burundi

Seizure of a Kalachnikov, 2,250 cartridges, a detonator, and 18 elephant tusks.²

KENYA

Mid October 2017

Masai Mara Reserve, Narok County, Kenya

Elephant Voices, Save the Elephants, Mara Elephant Project and Elephant Aware are once again calling public attention to the invasion of elephant travel routes by the anarchic appropriation of wilderness areas to be converted into agricultural land surrounded by fences and protected from incursion by wild animals.

The call from these NGOs, whose skill and desire for mediation are well recognized in Kenya, in Africa and in the international community, was triggered by the weakening and slow death of Nalakite, the matriarch of the Masai Mara who was watched over for many long hours by her three orphans. Nalakite was the victim of a spear attack a few months ago, and died of her infected wound. She is another victim of the conflicts between men and elephants.

For nearly 2 years, a report written by the NGOs in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service, has proven that encroachment by human activities of the main migration corridor in the Masai Mara reserve has been confronting elephants with inextricable difficulties. However, the county and government authorities remain passive, letting the men and the elephants sort out their vital problems among themselves.³



November 28, 2017

Chogoria, Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya

Seizure of several tusks, including some that were fresh, for a total weight of 58 kg estimated by local authorities to be worth \$56,000 US, or a little less than \$1000 US/kilo (\$967 US/kilo). The three traffickers arrived at a hotel on a scooter with the ivory in a bag, to bargain with rangers dressed as civilians and pretending to be clients.⁴



End of November 2017

Olarro Conservancy, Narok County, Rift Valley Province, Kenya

Assassinated by two spears in the bush. The tusks were cut off and weighed according to protocol, before going into the State trophy collection.⁵



December 1, 2017

Kyuso, Kitui County, Eastern Province, Kenya

117 kg of raw ivory. Life sentence or a fine of 20 million shillings (\$192,000 US) for each of the two people. Cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p.88.⁶



Beginning of December 2017

Kenya. Near the border with Tanzania

Silence and camouflage.

Hit by a spear in a vital organ, the elephant was able to walk 100 m before it collapsed. Its tusks were then amputated and it was covered with branches. A patrol found it a few days afterwards.⁷

December 4, 2017

Eastleigh, Nairobi, Nairobi County, Kenya

Two arrests. Two tusks cut into four pieces. 5 kg of ivory. The swindlers were coming from Maai Mahiu, 65 km from Nairobi.⁸

December 6, 2017

Olarro Conservancy, Narok County, Kenya

The veterinarian Limo and assistants from DSWT (David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust) put a male wounded by a spear to sleep in the middle of a large family of adult and young elephants.⁹

Mid December 2017

Near the Nairobi National Park, Nairobi County, Kenya

A dead elephant was found. Chris Leadismo, a ranger and member of Save the Elephants, paid tribute to this victim.¹⁰

December 15, 2017

Mtsangatu and Tiribe, Kwale County, Kenya

Arrest of two civil servants practicing ivory trafficking. Said Kuzidi, school teacher at the Mwamasa primary school, held in Mtsangatu a pair of tusks weighing 34 kg. Hamisi Makoti, a county enforcement officer, had hidden in Tiribe another pair weighing 16 kg. Value of the lots is estimated at 4 million shillings (\$38,480 US, that is \$770 US/kg) by the Kenya wildlife service (KWS). The ivory is not fresh. The suspects were still searching for a buyer. Held in custody at the Kwale police station, they were to be indicted.¹¹



FAMILY AFFAIRS

December 16, 2017

Kisima, Samburu County, Kenya

The father and son were trying to sell 15 tusks weighing 27 kg in all. There are estimated to be worth 5.4 billion shillings, the equivalent of \$52,000 US and \$1,925 US/kg. The tusks were from elephant calves. It seems that the poaching has been happening for several years now.¹²

December 22, 2017

Rumuruti, Laikipia County, Kenya

Seizure of 30 kg of raw ivory estimated to be worth \$48,100 US, or \$1,603 US/kg. 2 arrests.¹³

MALAWI

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 4, 2017

North of Malawi

Two-staged arrest of two brothers, Chancy and Patrick Kaunda, suspected of being behind the attempted smuggling between Tanzania and Malawi of 781 tusks or pieces of tusk hidden in a truck under bags of cement (see "On the Trail" n°1 p. 33).¹⁴

GANG / REPEATED OFFENSE

October 11, 2017

Lilongwe, Malawi

Winston Humba (38 years old) was at the head of a prosperous ivory workshop in the capital, the product of which was shipped to Thailand and Malaysia. Using heavy machines, they cut the tusks into pieces that were adapted to smuggling. He was arrested by the police on 26 December 2016. In his workshop, investigators found 126 kg of ivory scraps lying on the floor, left over from a 475-kg batch sent to Zambia. The court sentenced him to seven years in prison. Winston Humba already had a police record for cases involving trafficking wild animals. Four of his accomplices had been sentenced previously: in March, Godfrey Kaludzi was sentenced to four years in prison with hard labor for possession of 126 kg of ivory, and in September, Golden Bakili, Mussa Malopa and Samuel Chiweta, received the same sentence for illegal sale of ivory. The new National Parks and Wildlife Act which came into force in February 2017 in Malawi calls for sentences of up to 30 years in prison.¹⁵



November 4, 2017

Nkhotakota District, Central Region, Malawi

Two men, aged 45 and 56, were sentenced to 13 years in prison for having poached elephants that had just been transferred to the reserve from the national park of Liwonde. Faliki Simeon and Thomson Zindo pleaded guilty and asked for clemency from the court, pointing out that they were the only breadwinners for their families. The prosecutor requested a harsh sentence. "This malpractice of killing wild species is pulling down the development of the country," he said, before adding, "Elephants generate foreign currency by encouraging tourist visitation."¹⁶



November 7, 2017

Ntchisi, Ntchisi District, Central Region, Malawi

Two men originally from the Ntchisi district were sentenced to five years in prison with hard labour. They were taken by surprise on September 6 in the process of selling 4 kg of raw ivory.¹⁷



MOZAMBIQUE

End of December 2017

Niassa National Reserve, Niassa Province, Mozambique. Border with Tanzania

26 poached elephants. At least two of them were gestating females. It appears that the pillagers are from Burundi and Tanzania, and received help from the villagers of Mbamba. 30 tusks, three mobile phones, one solar panel, rags, provisions, 138 AK47 bullets, four claws, and the head of a lion were found in the bivouac of the poachers.

At least 356 elephants were poached in the country in 2017. Illegal ivory is branching out in Asia, to Cambodia and Viet Nam in particular, via the ports of Pemba and Nacala.¹⁸

Cf. "On the Trail" n°3 p.65, n°6 p.84 and 87, n°7 p.77, n°10 p.55, n°11 p.51 and 70, n°15 p.89, n°16 p.77, and n°18 p.84.



UGANDA

October 13, 2017

Northern Region, Uganda

One arrest. 84 kg of raw ivory. A super tusker has disappeared.¹⁹



Mid October 2017

Uganda

47 kg of ivory in a bag. Arrest of three Kenyans. New proof of cross-border traffic between Kenya and Uganda.²⁰



© Eagle

October 27, 2017

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

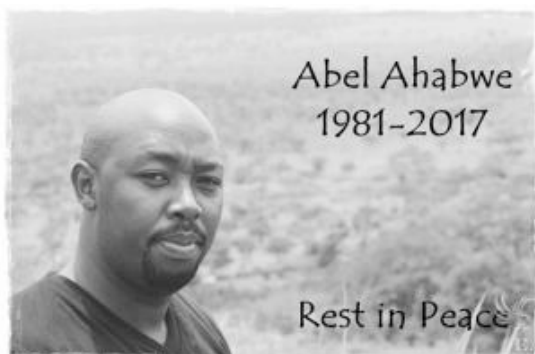
Two arrests, a woman and a man, from whom 47 kg of ivory was confiscated.²¹



October 2017

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

The police seized 20 kg of raw ivory from the trafficker. They were working with the NRCN team (Natural Resource Conservation Network). This operation is following the accidental death of Abel Ahabwe in Kampala. After 15 years with the Uganda Army Forces, Abel was headed up the investigation and intervention team of Eagle Uganda.²²



Beginning of November 2017

Uganda. Border with Democratic Republic of the Congo.

50 kg of ivory in the hands of three Congolese individuals, one woman and two men.²³



Beginning of November 2017

Uganda

120 kg seized, four large tusks.²⁴

November 2, 2017

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

Uganda continues to be a place where lawfulness and lawlessness work together.

Arrest of two civil servants and two traffickers, and seizure of four tusks.²⁵

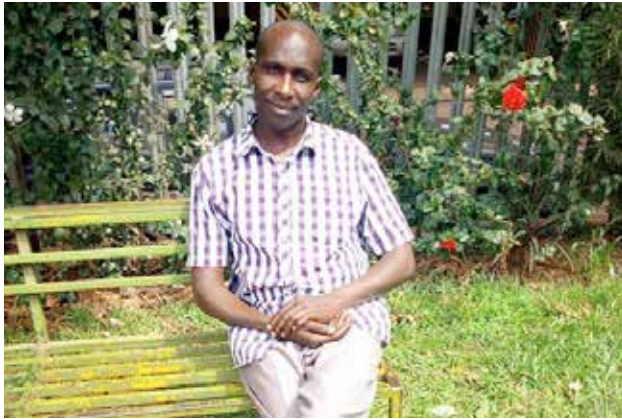
November 5, 2017

Entebbe International Airport, Kampala District, Center region, Uganda

After reading the article in the *Sunday Monitor Kampala*, it's easier to understand why the president recently charged the dog unit with the ability to intercede night and day in all parts of the Entebbe Airport, including auxiliary services and locked buildings (cf. "On the Trail" #18, p.68). In Entebbe, cocaine, precious stones, rhinoceros horns or ivory are not only found in passenger luggage. The facts are known, however the interview with Richard Okullu illumines them in a raw and bizarre way.

No one knows how five tons of ivory made their way onto airport premises and were stored at the fire station, loaded into the firemen trucks and quietly dropped off in the Asian section of the new freight terminal. Corporal Okullu discovered this deceptive manoeuver and immediately informed his superiors, thus the Commander Caleb Mwesiyege. This measure was useless, since at the highest level, the police forces of Entebbe Airport were already informed of this traffic, in full knowledge of the Pakistani owner of the cargo, and had even conspired with the clearing agents. (.../...)

After three hours of palaver, Okullu was offered cash to turn a blind eye to the immediate shipping of the merchandise. Okullu refused and, following a moment of hesitation, the man who was in charge of loading the cargo in the freight plane escaped in his handling trolley. The five tons remained on the tarmac until the police came to inspect the left out packages and verify that indeed this was raw ivory. The "merchandise" was then stored for several months in a space close to the canine brigade's kennels, before being brought to the vaults of the Uganda Wildlife Authority, from which they may have disappeared. (cf. "On the Trail" #17, p.43). These facts took place between 2012-2014.²⁶



Richard Okullu

REPEATED OFFENSE

November 15, 2017

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda



The man on the right had already been caught red-handed in possession of raw ivory, in September, and was quickly released after having paid a small fine. Two months later, it was the backsliding.²⁷

Mid November 2017

Arua and Simbili, Northern Region, Uganda. Border with Democratic Republic of the Congo.

- Arrest of Ewai Abel, 52 years old, boda-boda driver; 67 kg of raw ivory seized.
- Arrest of Ndaaba Icaku, Congolese, and Okuni James, Ugandan; 33 kg of raw ivory seized. They hid their stash in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and had brought it into Uganda after being baited by undercover policemen.²⁸

November 20, 2017

Maracha District, Central Region, Uganda

Josephine Angucia, spokesperson for the police confirmed to Xinhua, the Chinese press agency, that two men from the Democratic Republic of the Congo were about to sell 43 kg of raw ivory. Uganda is a land of transit for fauna stuff that can be moved easily across the porous borders of the Great Lakes region. Chaku Ndabah and James Aniku risk five years in prison.²⁹

November 22, 2017

Uganda

Eight tusks in the car of a man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.³⁰



FAMILY AFFAIRS

End of November 2017

Pakwach District, Northern Region, Uganda

The large tusks of super tuskers are coming out of the closet in Uganda. Opunya Edwin, 26 years old, is a veterinary assistant. He says that his job opened his eye to the good deals to be made with ivory. He has been in the business for a year. The 150 kg of ivory are estimated at \$16,150 US, or \$108 US/kg. He stored the tusks on the farm of his uncle, General Otema Awany. His uncle was apparently not aware of the trafficking.³¹



TANZANIA

October 24, 2017

Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania

Miscellaneous news item for the Court in session today.

–Jennifer, a civil servant with the tax authorities, is suspected of having a lifestyle well above her legal revenue. She owns 19 cars worth a total of \$220,000 US.

- Four citizens of Zanzibar appear in court for transportation and illegal possession of four tusks worth a total of \$15,000 US.³²

October 30, 2017

Dodoma Region, Tanzania

A tough legal blow to Alfred Nyagawa and Jumanne Mlaga, arrested in possession of a rifle and two tusk tips. Twenty years in prison for each. The district court, presided by Judge James Karayemaha, decided to make an example of them. Six witnesses were called and 9 exhibits were brought to court, during the hearing for “economic sabotage.” The State attorney, Slimu Msemo, rubbed it in by denouncing the two defendants for appropriation of national wealth for personal profit. Their advocate, Magiri Mbasha, pleaded in vain for lighter sentences that could “open the door to rehabilitation or reconversion.”³³



November 17, 2017

Kigoma, Kigoma Region, Tanzania. Border with Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Maneno Tanu is accused of having killed two elephants, three weeks ago. The police raided his house at about 5:00 a.m. Two fire arms, including a submachinegun, and ammunitions were seized. Several points of information received by the police, the Friedkin Conservation Anti-Poaching unit and the rangers in Kifura corroborate the suspect's guilt, but nothing is certain for the moment.³⁴

November 23, 2017

Manyoni, Manyoni District, Tanzania

PAMS has announced that five poachers have been sentenced to 20 years, 14 years and 6 years in prison. “Hongera sana!” (Congratulations !) says PAMS speaking to magistrates.³⁵



December 8, 9, 10 and 11, 2017

Ruvuma Region, Tanzania. Border with Mozambique and Malawi

Three arrests and seizure of munitions and 10 firearms, thanks to the collaboration of the police, PAMS, KDU (the Wildlife Division's anti-poaching unit), and local whistleblowers.³⁶

December 11, 2017

Ilala, Dar es Salaam region, Tanzania

Dominic Kombe and Helbert Machaka are sentenced to 20 years in prison for trafficking 24 sections of raw tusks. Their car was permanently seized for the benefit of the State.³⁷



December 18, 2017

Ruaha National Park, Iringa region, Tanzania

According to a London-based ITV News documentary, drawing upon a report by Colin Beale, researcher at York University, UK, a team of guards financed by the UK's Department for International Development, the United States' governmental organization Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Programme, actually turned against elephants and approached poachers by supplying them with ammunitions, strategic information on the elephant's movements and on patrol routes. Numerous elephant carcasses were discovered in close proximity to at least two ranger bases. This collusion, if proven true, would once again attest to the double-dealing of certain wildlife guards in Tanzania, just as in other countries. This particular case would help to explain the brutal decline of elephants in and around Ruaha national park.



The government has stated that the ITV allegations are worth looking into. “The presence of an unusually high number of carcasses around these posts is an issue for further investigation. This should not be taken as an institutionalized system that operated with the tacit knowledge of the authorities.”³⁸

December 20, 2017

Mpanda, Katavi Region, Tanzania

Sentencing of a 52-year old man to 30 years in prison and a fine equal to \$45,000 US Dollars. In the early evening of October 25th, he was stopped on his motorcycle and found with four entire tusks and four tusk sections weighing a total of 27 kg.

Jackison Ejule is a resident of the Katumba refugee camp. Originally from Burundi, he had just acquired Tanzanian citizenship.³⁹



ZAMBIA

November 26, 2017

Livingstone, Province Méridionale region, Zambia. Zimbabwean border.

Park agents killed an elephant after it charged or threatened a worker who was installing an electric fence around a lodge.

The villagers rushed to the site to skin the victim without impunity. The final butchering was not caught on camera.⁴⁰



December 27, 2017

Kitwe, Copperbelt Province, Zambia. Close to the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sentencing of a 42-year old man to five years in prison following his arrest in the Moba Kitwe Hotel, while negotiating a trade for an elephant tusk. News sources said that the trial was expeditious.⁴¹



ZIMBABWE

October 5-12, November 7 and 17, 2017

Victoria Falls National Park, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Cyanide has struck again. Thirteen elephants are dead. Four tusks weighing 75.7 kg were recovered in the bush near the place where the elephants fell. Two suspects from the villages of Jambezi and Jabula were arrested by the police. Their council claims they were ill-treated to extort confession. They were released for lack of proof.⁴²



October 19, 2017

Victoria Falls National Park, Matabeleland Septentrional Province, Zimbabwe.

Freeing of a young male elephant who had been caught in two leghold traps, one on his front left foot and the other on his back right foot.⁴³



Beginning of November 2017

Zimbabwe

ZimParks Progress Report

Since the beginning of the year, 51 elephants have been poached by firearms or cyanide and other poisons. 429 poachers have been taken in for questioning, most of them involved in ivory trafficking. 62 small boats or other floating devices have been seized in the upper valley of the Zambezi. Poachers from Zambia use speed boats, night-vision goggles, firearms with silencers. Others use cyanide and are guided to water holes by local informers. Since the beginning of the year, ZimParks has seen 10 cases of gunfire exchange between rangers and intruders. The latest arrest occurred last week. A Zambian citizen was chasing an elephant. His accomplice died on site in the skirmish near Chirundu. In early November, another man died of bullet wounds from the rangers near Changadzi; he was a local.⁴⁴



November 2, 2017

Chitungwisa, Harare, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

Arrest of Collen Dick, Alwisi Paundi, and Christopher Chapata. They were trying to sell six tusks weighing a total of 34.2 kg.⁴⁵

November 14, 2017

Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Two men from the village of Kamativi received the standard 9-year prison sentence regularly reserved for traders of ivory or pangolins. When they were arrested, they were transporting a tusk weighing nearly 4 kg, and were trying to sell it for \$1000 US.⁴⁶



November 17, 2017

Kennedy siding, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

At 4:00 a.m., the railway brigade, acting on information they had received, arrested a passenger on the Bulawayo Express. He was in possession of four elephant tusks from a cyanide poisoning in the Hwange park. He was sentenced in flagrante delicto to nine years in prison. An accomplice has been identified and is on the run.⁴⁷



November 17, 2017

Victoria Falls National Park, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

A new serial poisoning by fruit full of cyanide near Victoria Falls and the landing strip of Kazun Gula. 14 elephants are dead. The authorities recovered only five tusks.⁴⁸



December 7, 2017

Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Christopher Mupindi left the hospital after six months of treatment. He was immediately tried. He was imprisoned awaiting trial. With two accomplices, he had poached two elephants in Hwange park and had seized its four tusks weighing 74.3 kg. One of the accomplices died in a shoot-out with rangers at the end of June 2017. Cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p.94.⁴⁹



December 11, 2017

Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

Seizure of 200 kg of ivory. The smuggled goods were heading off to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. They were estimated to be worth \$ 500,000 US, or \$ 2,500 US/kg. The shipper was not clearly specified. It is rumoured that Grace Mugabe, the wife of the former president, owned the ivory. The same day as the seizure, it appears that the couple took off for Malaysia, where their daughter Bona lives.⁵⁰

End of December 2017

Kariba, Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe

The request to release Gumi was refused. He is suspected of poaching an elephant in the beginning of 2017, and of attempting to murder the three rangers who ordered him to surrender.⁵²



Who wants elephant skin ?

December 20, 2017

In 1997, with the support of Botswana and Namibia, Zimbabwe moved elephants from Appendix I to Appendix II in CITES. This reduced protection for African and Asian elephants has resulted in an upsurge of the international trade in skins.

Between 2007, and 2016, Zimbabwe, the top exporting country, and South Africa legally exported nearly 4,000 full skins, 56,577 m² of pieces of skin, and nine tons of fashion accessories containing skin. In 10 years, 70,000 elephants have given their skin to fulfill the needs of tanners and fashion. ZimParks auctions off elephant skins that it "had to kill". Skins of those "infamous problem elephants" accused of causing conflict with farmers and inhabitants. More and more Chinese purchasers go to auctions and compete with American purchasers. Until now, the United States has been the main importer. The skins are turned into boots, bags, briefcases, car and motorcycle seats, and gun holsters.

The Chinese purchasers say that they had something else in mind: adding small bits of untanned leather to "tone up" the soups. In Myanmar, the retail price of one m² of elephant skin is \$ 5,660 US. This is 2 to 3 times more expensive than the current price per kg of ivory on the black market.⁵¹

ZIMBABWE - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

November 14, 2017

Zimbabwe-United States of America

At the occasion of a forum in Tanzania - organized by the International Safari Club, based in Tucson, Arizona, USA - a representative of the US Fish & Wildlife Service made the official announcement that the ban on importing ivory trophies from legally hunted elephants from Zimbabwe into the United States had been lifted. The ban dated from May 2014, during the Obama administration. This announcement by the Safari Club was made the same day Robert Mugabe was put under house arrest with his wife and close guard in the presidential palace of Harare, at the moment of being removed by parliament vote after a 30-year reign characterized by corruption, the misery of his people and the inequitable redistribution of agricultural land.

November 15

A spokesperson for the US Fish and Wildlife Service specifies that an official announcement will be published on Friday, November 17 in the Federal Register, the American equivalent of the *Journal Officiel* in France.

November 17

The Federal Register justifies lifting the embargo on the import of trophies from elephants of Zimbabwean origin, by adopting in this country a new Elephant Management Plan between 2015-2020, supposed to reinforce the anti-poaching workforce and the ability to trace revenue (.../...)

SOUTH AFRICA

October 10, 2017**Satara, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**

Bad trip for the tourists. A carcass whose genital organs had been amputated was lying in the middle of the road, 1 km from Satara. In response to the hypothesis on Muti, suggested by witnesses, the park police responded by suggesting a possible attack by predators, possibly lions. The tusks had not been cut. The postmortem investigation will tell us more.⁵⁶

October 17, 2017**Olifantshoek, Northern Cape Province, South Africa**

11 :30 p.m. on the N 14 road. Eight tusks seized. Four arrests, two people from South Africa, two from Botswana. The car was also seized.⁵⁷

November 14, 2017**Komatipoort, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Border with Mozambique.**

It was a bad idea for the panic-stricken elephants, after having been attacked by poachers in Mozambique, to come take refuge with the rest of the family in South Africa. They were greeted with rifle shots under instructions from the Mpumalanga Tourism & Park Agency (MTPA). Quickly defined as DCA (Damage Causing Animal), the two elephant calves who had gotten lost in a banana plantation, in a sugarcane field and in a tomato orchard were killed in cold blood, although they had returned to their savanna. According to the two farmers whose fields had briefly been disturbed by the two elephant calves, the damage in question was insignificant. "There was nothing to complain about," they said. This brutal operation is in stark contrast with the delicate transfer of three male elephants that wandered off the reserve at the edge of Kruger park and became interested, with much hoof-stomping and eagerness, in some mango plantations (see "On the Trail" n°18, p.87).⁵⁸

December 11, 2017**Kuruman, Northern Cape Province, South Africa**

Court appearance of Riaan Malgas, Mothusi Joel Tshibithi and Albert Mosimanyane. The three were apprehended Friday December 8 at the local airport. They had in their possession two tusks. Malgas and Tshibithi were set free with a penalty equal to \$365 US. The case of Mosimanyane was disjointed. He is a repeat offender. He had already been released on bail for another ivory case. He had been arrested with three other fellows, two of them citizens of Botswana, on the National Route 14 near Olifantshoek, also in Northern Cape Province.⁵⁹

generated from hunting permits issued to foreign hunters, notably Americans. The decision is partly based on a study financed by the European Union at the tune of 12 million € (\$14, 192,400 US), whose preliminary results are "encouraging," according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

ZimParks and other administrations strengthen their collaboration with hunting safari organizers, certain NGOs like the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and with CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources). Definitive conclusions are expected for early 2018. This astounding advocacy attests to collusion between the United States, the European Union, the former leaders of Zimbabwe and the WWF.

November 18

In his unique personal style, Donald Trump freezes his administration's decision by sending this tweet: "Put big game trophy decision on hold until such time as I review all conservation facts..."⁵³

December 12, 2017**Cecil Kop Natural Reserve, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe**

The director of the Cecil Kop Natural Reserve spills the story. It's been easier since Robert Mugabe and his wife left the government. According to a report brought to the police, Mandi Chimene, the former Minister of the province, had claimed for free an entire meat delivery after two adult elephants had been killed in particularly tragic circumstances on July 18, 2017. In a clash with poachers, a law enforcement authority was also killed.

On August 14, Zimbabwe's celebration day for the glory of heros, Mandi Chimene had given a speech within the Reserve, to the youth of the ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) majority party, putting wildlife at risk by calling for the occupation and appropriation of "wasted lands" of the Reserve covering 1,500 hectares.

Mandi Chimene, who went into exile in Mozambique or Burundi after the fall of the Mugabe government, was president of the Zimbabwe-China Friendship Association.⁵⁴

ZIMBABWE - CHINA

November 15 and December 29, 2017**Zimbabwe China**

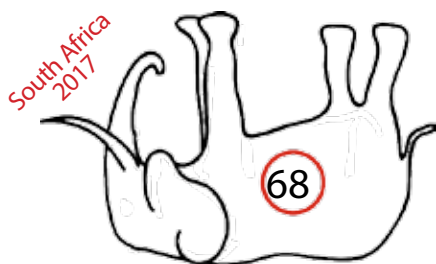
Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, Minister of the Environment, claims he has no need to justify the international trade of live elephants. "Our elephants and our people live with a huge population. We will sell them more without hesitation."

The very same day that China (except Hong Kong) confirmed the prohibition of the sale of ivory on its soil, they imported 30 young elephants between the ages of 2 to 6 years old, captured in the Hwange park in Zimbabwe in August 2017. The elephants were conveyed via Ethiopian Airlines (cf. "On the Trail" #18, p.90).⁵⁵

December 21, 2017

Malvern, Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa

The man from Zimbabwe was carrying chopsticks in illegal ivory. Other ivory items were found in his home. The estimated value of the seizure is \$ 36,500 US.⁶⁰



BOTSWANA

October 31, 2017

Near Maun, Northwest District, Botswana

Taolo Santudu and Gaone Sentle are arrested. They were in possession of 12 tusks. They put the whole case on the back of a certain Murang, who escaped at the moment of police intervention. The request for release on bail is refused for both suspects.⁶¹

NAMIBIA

October 24, 2017

Mariental, Khomas Region, Namibia

The elephants destined for Dubai were in a very difficult situation. Three of them were shut within shipping containers. They were between four and six years old. Two cowboys of sorts captured them in the Eden Game Farm private reserve near Etosha national park. They were specialized in trapping wild animals for the Golden Game brand. The situation is confusing. A trial is underway. The two companies are claiming that they own the elephants.

It's not easy to trade in elephants. In May 2017, the Environment ministry said that all the verifications and formalities between Dubai and Namibia were completed. Negotiations have been ongoing since 2015. According to the minister himself, the exporter had all the skills required, and the Dubai Zoo was to take in the elephants with a scientific and pedagogical program, as required by CITES. The deal is at a standstill now, especially for the three prisoners torn away from their families, who are melting under the sun, between the four containers. Cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p.97.⁶²



WESTERN AFRICA

BENIN

GANG

October 3, 2017

Kandi, Benin

20.9 kg of ivory = five years of prison without remission for the head of the set and a fine equal to \$1440 US. Suspended sentence for his three accomplices. Cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p.94.⁶³



October 30 and November 27, 2017

Cotonou, Littoral Department, Benin

Two ivory tips seized in a hotel in the Agontikon neighborhood. The two suspected traffickers had planned to finalize their sale there. The judicial police and forest administration have received support from program known as Aalf-Benin (Appui à l'application des lois sur la faune et la flore au Bénin) funded by the EAGLE network. The twosome are sentenced to 18 months suspended jail, a fine equal to \$177 US and damages equal to \$1770 US.⁶⁴



November 30, 2017

Djougou, Donga Department, Benin



A pair of handcuffs and a pair of tiny tusks. Will the full force of the law punish the two individuals for killing an elephant calf? They are punishable by six months to five years in prison.⁶⁵

Beginning of December 2017

Ouidah, Atlantique Department, Benin

Six suspects in possession of two tusks were arrested by the police, with the support of AALF-Benin (Project for the Application of Law for Fauna).⁶⁶



COTE D'IVOIRE

GANG

October 31, 2017

Abidjan, Autonomous District of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Dismantling of a network connected to international trafficking. The seizure is nauseating: 53 African elephant tails and over 52 kg of ivory, including two tusks 1.6 m long and approximately 100 objects made out of ivory, as well as others made out of warthog tusks (*Phacochoerus* genus). The elephant tails are used to make bracelets that are sold for up to €2000 apiece (\$2300 US). The gang was made up of two Ivoirians, including a customs sergeant working at the international airport in Abidjan, and to Guineans. After one week in custody, they appeared in court on November 2. The investigation is also looking into money transfers in West Africa. The networks shipment was destined for the Asian market. We do not know whether the 53 elephants that were killed were all poached in Côte d'Ivoire. There are barely 500 wild individuals left in the country, where the elephant is a national symbol. According to Adama Kamagate of the EAGLE network that assisted the Unit for the Fight Against Organized Transnational Crime (UCT) with this investigation, some ivory traffickers are redirecting their networks through West African countries.⁶⁷



NIGERIA

October 31, 2017

Nigeria, Border Area with Cameroon

It was bad luck for Zakari Yau. A Cameroonian citizen, he was caught in possession of two tusks during aggressive patrols being carried out in national parks by Nigerian rangers, with the help of the army and various agencies. Alhaji Ibrahim Goni, Conservator General for the Nigerian National Parks Service (NPS), used his arrest as an opportunity to give an interview to the official press agency and give a review of operations. There were 325 wildlife offenders at seven national parks across the country in the first half of the year. The Conservator General gave very few details on the sanctions. When taken to court, some of them were fined, while compensations were paid to the NPS. Nigeria is trying to improve its national parks management. The NPS is working on operational management plans for each park, as well as a national plan. It is being assisted by nearly 2000 students who were on attachment. For Ibrahim Goni, "The national parks are not only for



revenue generation, but they are also for research and training." He thanked the federal ministry of Environment, the media, military and paramilitary agencies for their support.⁶⁸

November 20, 2017

Yola, Adamawa Province, Nigeria. Border with Cameroon

Seizure of 55 large tusks.⁶⁹

TOGO

October 2, 2017

Lomé, Maritime Region, Togo

Gumedzoe Koffi Mawuli, former member of the Navy, would have been better off not getting into ivory trafficking. He was not up to it. When agents from the Central Office for the Repression of Illicit Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering (*Office Central de Répression du Trafic illicite de Drogue et du Blanchiment* or OCTRIDB) and from the ministry of the Environment and forest resources caught him, he declared, "I am your man." He was in a taxi that was inspected at the GTA intersection and contained 4 tips, 3 raw and 1 sculpted.⁷⁰

CENTRAL AFRICA

CAMEROON

October 9, 2017

Yaoundé, Centre Region, Cameroon

Trafficking continues at the Bastos intersection (see "On the Trail" n°17, p.98). A man in a bar and his accomplice, waiting in a taxi, were caught with their hands in the bag: a plastic bag containing two tusks. The operation was smoothly carried out by agents from Forests and Fauna, with help from the NGO LAGA.⁷¹

December 11, 2017

Djoum, South Region, Cameroon

Seizure of 217 tusks and 81 tails in the car of the colonel of the gendarmerie. A carbon copy of 2014, when a military vehicle was intercepted with nearly 200 tusks on board.

The driver and passenger tried to flee in vain. They had a hearing with the Djoum gendarmerie brigade. According to local sources which must be consolidated, the senior official from the gendarmerie was managing a poaching business and selling the ivory on the black market. The identity of the three suspects has not been disclosed.

600 tusks and tusk sections were seized in Cameroon in 2017. Most of the ivory was taken from poached elephants in the national parks in southeastern Cameroon, and from Gabon and Congo as well.⁷²

GABON

October 14 – 18, 2017

Makokou and Messene, Ogooué-Ivindo Province, Gabon

- Arrest of five traffickers including a teacher, a Cameroonian citizen and another Malian, seizure of about 30 kg of ivory. Teacher Jessy Andry is said to have shot the elephant two weeks earlier.
- Seizure in a hotel of 11 tusks, some whole and some cut up. Dieudonné and Arnaud Boris were arrested 10 km from Makokou.⁷³

November 22, 2017

Ndendé, Dola Department, Ngounié Province, Gabon

The Counter Intelligence and Military Security Services, known as B2, have struck once again. The three traffickers attempted violent reactions before being arrested. The 27.10 kg of ivory, spread out on the floor, were to be sold for \$3245 US. B2 has been on the watch for several months. In the area, several elephants have been killed and their tusks vanished.⁷⁴

November 23, 2017

Fougamou, Tsamba Magotsi Department, Ngounié Province, Gabon

Two traffickers arrested. They were carrying 35.67 kg of ivory. The police had been following them for several months, and they fell into the trap. Their clients were supposed to be one of them. Instead, they were police officers and legal experts from the NGO Conservation Justice.⁷⁵



December 10, 2017

Mékambo, Ogooué-Ivindo Province, Gabon

- Arrest of three nationals. Nolo and Akono had four tusks cut into eight sections in their hands. They were going to sell them to someone named Mouamouélé Landry, known as Socrate. They supposedly "picked up" the tusks by Matsiedie River.



December 18

Ovan

- Arrest of Lucien Kangala, a Gabonese man, and of Mahamat Sale, a Chadian man. They were transporting 26,5 kg of tusks cut into 10 pieces. The former poached the two elephants, and the latter was the "salesman". Officials from the Makokou water and forest department and the NGO Conservation Justice successfully completed the intervention.⁷⁶

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

November 17, 2017

Manovo-Gounda St. Floris National Park, Bamingui-Bangoran, Central African Republic. Border with Chad.

A caravan of poachers on horseback, with pack camels, were on the last leg of the trip toward the park, coming from Sudan, apparently. The expedition would be organized to pillage fauna by-products and ivory from the last remaining elephants in the cross-border region covering Chad and the Central African Republic. The few guards who were there were helpless faced with the determined men armed with AK 47s. A request for help was made to the water and forest Minister in office in Bangui. He responded that in the current state of affairs, no efforts would be made for this. The minister justified his refusal to intervene by the fact that the region was supposedly controlled by rebels. The alarming information was provided by Francis Mollet, the founder of the Elephant Anti-Poaching Patrol.



Manovo-Gounda St. Floris Park covers 17,400 km². It is next to Zakouma national park in Chad. It would be preferable for the two spaces to be merged. Red-fronted gazelles, African wild dogs, giraffes, elephants, and hippopotamuses are still there but numbers are unknown.

Three negative factors threaten the beauty and biodiversity of this transitional crossroads, where species from the Sahel, West Africa, East Africa, and Central Africa live together.

- The anti-poaching forces are lacking in resources and are poorly paid.
 - The governance of the park is fragmented and inconsistent.
 - Shepherds in search of pasture and poachers coming from Sudan are out of control.
- The insecurity and widespread impunity prevent the park from having an operational management plan.⁷⁷

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

REPEATED OFFENSE

November 11 and 30, 2017

Makoua, Cuvette Department, Republic of the Congo

"Elephants, symbol of the Republic of the Congo, continue to be taken down by the bullets of human greed," states the website Internet Portal 242. A 35-year-old man was just put behind bars. Two tusks and three firearms were found in his home after a search warrant was issued. He could have gotten five years in prison. He got three years and damages equal to \$531 US.⁷⁸



FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 18 and 30, 2017

Makoua, Cuvette Department, Republic of the Congo

Brel and Fodel Mossa were arrested in possession of two tusks cut in pieces and two elephant tails. Conviction to 3 years and 2 years in prison and \$5,310 US and \$4425 US fines and damages respectively. Ndzoli Venance, an accomplice arrested a few days later, received the same sentences as Brel Mossa.⁷⁹



November 25, 2017

Sibiti, Lékoumou Department, Republic of the Congo

Three arrests. The boss Luc Moussa's thing was hiding raw ivory tusks, cut into pieces, in bags of smoked bush meat. To get the tusks out of the forest and onto the main road, he used cars from the SOCOFOR (*Société Congo Forêt*). 24 kg of ivory were seized and put in a hopefully-safe place.⁸⁰

December 14, 2017

Ouesso, County of Sangha, Republic of Congo

Benjamin Bondo is sentenced to 5 years in prison without bail with a fine equal to \$360 US for the poaching of several elephants. He had been questioned at the end of August 2017 in Ouesso and had acknowledged the facts. The Nouabalé-Ndoki Foundation and the other NGOs in Congo appreciated the severity of the penalty, which they hope will prove to be a deterrent. Bondo is a native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁸¹



GANG

December 18, 2017

Dolisie, Niari Department, Republic of the Congo

Arrest of Georges Siombo and Mesmin Ndinga Bounda, who were carrying two big tusks. They obtained their ivory supplies in the department of Lékoumou, and sold them in Pointe Noire and Brazzaville. These two men are also involved in pangolin scale trafficking toward China.⁸²

FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 30, 2017

Owando, Cuvette Department, Republic of the Congo

The Konga brothers, poachers, and their accomplice carver were sentenced to three years in prison, fines ranging from 500,000 to 1 million CFA francs (\$ 885 to \$ 1,770 US), and 2 million CFA francs in damages (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p.96).

- Mossa Bref, Mossa Fodel, and Ndzoli Venance received the same sentence.

- Oksikabondzo Antonin as well.

The local press says that the court has just sent a strong message regarding the criminals.⁸³



GANG / FAMILY AFFAIRS

December 10, 2017

Ngombé-Ouesso, Sangha Department, Republic of the Congo

Fearing God but not law.

Yet again, religious officials are involved in ivory trafficking. Assafi Doutoum is a preacher at the mosque of Ouesso. Moumoune and Abdouraman are imams in Ngombe. The trio from Cameroon and two fellows were intercepted on the road, with the two tusks cut into four sections in the trunk of the car. A few months ago in Mossaka in the department of La Cuvette, Bodzenga, a Protestant pastor, committed the ivory sin with his brother as well. Cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p.80.⁸⁴

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 19, 2017

Manhattan, State of New York, United States of America

Alexander Sakhai has pleaded guilty. In his shop, Alexander's Antiques, the police seized 130 carved objects in ivory, last July. The compromise reached with the New York County District Attorney Cyrus Vance stipulates that \$60,000 US shall be given by Alexander Sakhai to the Wildlife Conservation Society and that the ivory shall be turned over to the State of New York. Someday, the ivory objects will be destroyed, along with others, in public (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.97). As a reminder, in 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo introduced a law banning the sale of ivory, with a few exceptions, such as antiques over 100 years old and containing less than 20% ivory.⁸⁵

December 2016 – December 6, 2017

San Francisco, State of California, United States of America

A raid, dating back to December 2016 in Chinatown with the confiscation at Lovell's Antique Gallery of 32 carved ivory objects. The price and characteristics of the articles on the tags had been written in coded language. The owner, Abraham Magadish, the manager, Yesika Becerra, and the sales person, Vivian Wei Zhao, have now been charged with ivory trafficking.⁸⁶

ASIA



Khao Yai National Park, Thailand

CAMBODIA

December 2017

Sihanoukville, Province of Sihanoukville, Cambodia

The hollow log network is back (see "On the Trail" n°15 p.98). After a year waiting on the docks, the container from Côte d'Ivoire was opened by customs and judicial authorities. Inside they found 1 ton of raw ivory. Most of the tusks were hidden in "logs."⁸⁷

CHINA

October 3, 2017

Zhangjiagang, Province of Jiangsu, China

Carved ivory confiscated from tea boxes and other things belonging to two members of the Chinese crew of a cargo ship flying the flag of Panama and coming from Equatorial Guinea.⁸⁸

November 7 and 10, 2017

Hong Kong international Airport, China

Seizure in a postal package of 14 kg of presumed raw and semi-raw ivory, coming from Portugal. The package had been declared to contain "wooden dolls." A 70-year-old man was arrested. The seizure was estimated at \$280,000 HK, or \$36,000 US, i.e. \$2570 US/kilo.⁸⁹



December 2017

Pingxiang, Jiangxi Province, China

Seizure of 165 sections of small tusks weighing a total of 368.5 kg. They were from African elephants.⁹⁰

Beginning of December 2017

Shenyang Taoxian International Airport, Liaoning Province, China

An ivory sculpture "of very fine workmanship" was seized in a passenger's belongings. The origin of the statue was not specified. It could be Japanese. It weighs 980 g. The Japanese ministry of Environment disclosed that between 2011 and 2016, Chinese customs officials seized more than 100 ivory from Japan. "There is a need to strengthen collaboration between customs authorities."⁹¹

December 12, 2017

Qingdao, Shandong Province, China

A fine for the person who received an ivory carving sent from the United Kingdom.⁹²



The end of December 2017

Gongbei, Guangdong Province, China

A report little known to the public has just been handed to the Prosecutor General of the Province, after a long investigation. Last June, 130 kg of raw ivory was seized by customs as part of the National Sword Operation of 2017.

Seven people are arrested. Three cars and 116,400 yuan (\$17,800 US) of illegal origin are also seized.⁹³



INDIA

Beginning of October 2017

Thane, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, State of Maharashtra, India

Two daily wage laborers from the village of Manchar (Pune district) were stopped by police at the main entrance of the residential neighborhood called Unnathi Greens Society. Nilesh Nanavare and Ajinkya Bagal were transporting two ivory statuettes weighing a total of 2.9 kg. One of the figurines represented an African woman. They allegedly purchased the carved ivories in their village from a stranger for 35,000 rupees (\$535 US), approximately five years ago, and had kept them in their home until one of their neighbors advised them to sell them. They decided to try to find a buyer in Bombay. They were denounced. The two items are estimated to be worth 1 million rupees (\$15,300 US, or \$5300 US/kilo).⁹⁴

October 2017

Chhidakudar, Sundargarh District, State of Odisha, India

A dead elephant was found, covered with bruises and blood on its mouth, ears, and tusks. The animal had been electrocuted. The culprits were not identified. The number of police seizures of electric cable spools in the district is increasing.⁹⁵

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 2017

Betla, Palamu Tiger Reserve, Palamu District, State of Jharkhand, India

The elephant was found dead in waterhole on the reserve, on October 12. According to the conclusions of the autopsy, it was killed by a bullet shot from near range into the right ear and the brain. "We did not find any evidence of any attempt to sever the tusk." The poaching theory appears

groundless. However, another veterinarian, on the condition of anonymity, does not exclude that possibility. "The place where the bullet hit is the temporal bone area... It looks like the job of a professional shooter... Poaching cannot be ruled out, as an elephant can be shot and its carcass hidden for its tusks to be severed later on."

It turns out that the tusker murderers are the Khalkhos, father and son, who farm 15 ha of rice and corn fields on the reserve. They could not stand to see the elephant passing by their fields and supposedly going into the fields, and decided to kill it but did not even think, so they say, to take the single 18 kg tusk. They rented a muzzleloader rifle from an acquaintance for 300 rupees (\$4.70 US), and with another similar rifle as backup, they shot the elephant during the night of October 10-11. The victim died on October 12 at 1:20 p.m. The father and son are in pre-trial custody. Another member of the Khalkho family, the rifle renter, and his brother were brought in for questioning and released on bail. The rifles have been confiscated. The reserve manager went to see the poachers' fields and could find absolutely nothing that resembled damage from an animal intrusion, even from an antelope.

Following these news, the Chief Conservator of Forests launched a restitution campaign, in an attempt to recover all muzzleloader guns held in the 168 villages that are located within the reserve. If necessary, searches will be carried out every six months. Local blacksmiths can make these guns in two or three days, and sell them for 700 to 1000 rupees (\$11 to \$15.50 US), depending on how well finished they are. The purchasers are also being targeted by the authorities. People say they use these guns to scare away hyenas, wild boar and flocks of birds over their fields. The conservator pointed out that the use of firearms within a protected area, a reserve, a park or sanctuary must be authorized ahead of time by local authorities. As of today, 9 rifles have been confiscated.

Nine elephants have been killed since the beginning of the year in the reserve. That is a heavy toll. There were 238 elephants in 2012, but today, the reserve has only 180. Poaching, presumed anthrax, reprisals, collusion and corruption – the reasons for the decline are multiple, and include an elephant that stepped on a mine in September (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.101).^{96 and 97}

October 15, 2017

State of West Bengal, India

One arrest by the 17th battalion of the SSB and seizure of 14.96 kg elephant bones.⁹⁸

October 15, 2017

Tura, South West Garo Hills District, State of Meghalaya, India

Two male elephants were found dead near the border with Bangladesh. The autopsy revealed that they had been electrocuted. All four tusks had been severed. Two of them were found nearby.⁹⁹



October 16, 2017

Phulbadia, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India

She had fallen into a hole and was riddled with arrows. She was about 20 years old. A local pro-elephant activist, Vanoomitra Acharya, supposes that the poachers were looking for tusks of a male, and that a female ended up getting the arrows. The initial statement from the authorities suggested a case of anthrax.¹⁰⁰

October 21, 2017

Dolopa, Dhemaji District, State of Assam, India

Trunk, tail and tusks were severed and large chunks of flesh cut out. The rest of the adult male elephant's carcass had been buried. Once again, the deceitfulness of the rural and neo-rural population is suspected. They point out elephant intrusions to justify poaching, and they give no explanation for the disappearance of tusks and other elephant parts.¹⁰²



October 23, 2017

Devikulam, Idukki District, State of Kerala, India

The pregnant elephant was electrocuted by a fence completely put together by a farm worker on the Kanan Devan Hills Plantations Company. He wanted to protect his food garden. The dead body was discovered Monday morning. Later that night, 14 elephants came to the area and destroyed everything agricultural there. In July, another farm worker distinguished himself for killing an elephant with a bulldozer in a plantation further north (see "On the Trail" n°18, p99).¹⁰³

An elephant's life in Kerala

October 2017

State of Kerala, India

- Of the 228 elephants that officially died in 2016 in Kerala, 86 were electrocuted. The people who come and settle on the elephants' ancestral territory, thanks to the *laissez-faire* policy, put up electrified fences, which is against federal law. Moreover, of the total of 228 elephants that died, 68 were victims of explosives commonly used to clear forests.

In 2014, the Kerala High Court ordered the government to recover all of the illegally occupied forest areas, but in September 2016, when the deadline expired, the government asked for an extension. And for good reason: it had only managed to recover 2% of the territory that had been stolen, in a way, from wild animals and elephants.

- In religious places, the elephants are mistreated, despite appearances. Government veterinarians carefully examined the health of the elephants that march in the annual Hindu Pooram parade. In their report, they said that forbidden accessories were used on the elephants, that they suffered from painful abscesses, from wounds on their legs due to chains, from eyesight problems, from pulled-out nails and other wounds that are deliberately hidden by black substances. Because they always walk on the tiled or tarred surfaces of temples and roads, the elephants' feet are covered with blisters and cuts.

- The president of the Heritage Animal Task Force (HATF) did not mince her words when speaking about the refuges, which appear to be prisons. "I've been to some of these camps, like the one outside Thiruvananthapuram," Ms Iyer said. "It's only masquerading as a shelter. All these elephants are kept in chains, even the babies."

Another voice can be heard defending elephants of Ketala, that of Chitra Iyer, founder of Society for Elephant Welfare. According to statistics, there are 700 domesticated elephants in the State, but Ms. Chitra believes there are more. "Many elephants are unregistered. We call them "dupes," short for duplicates. If the main temple elephant isn't able to perform in a parade, the dupe stands in and, really, no one knows the difference." Apparently, there is a very active trade in elephant calves captured in the forests and destined for domestication.¹⁰¹

October 24, 2017

Peechi, District of Thrissur, State of Kerala, India

Seizure of 23 ivory sculptures and 7 sculptures made of ivory and wood, in a State-owned residency run by the Department of Irrigation. The residency is about fifty years old, the historical ivories had always been there. The problem is that they were never declared and according to the information that the police received, from time to time some of them disappeared and, one way or another, made their way onto the black market for white gold.¹⁰⁴

October 25, 2017

Periya Thadagam, Coimbatore District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Three young men were fined 5000 rupees (\$76 US). They had taken a family photo with elephants in the background. The troublemakers were freed after receiving a warning. It was not the first time in India that selfies with wild animals, or supposedly wild animals, have triggered procedures and controversies (see "On the Trail" n°13 p.63). Getting too close to elephants contaminates them, in a way, and leads to a form of dependency and curiosity, if repetitive and regular, that can turn into conflicts between people and elephants.

"We will take stringent action against the people who disturb wild animals," said a ranger. The wild animal selfie fad is all the rage with celebrities and young people.¹⁰⁵



October 27, 2017

Wayanad District, State of Kerala, India

The famous and cheerful tusker that had been named Maniyan by the villages neighboring the Wayanad animal sanctuary got caught in a metal trap. He had to be anesthetized to remove the metal wire that had dug deeply into his front left leg. Maniyan is going to be all right. It seems he signed a pact with the farmers: "If you feed me, I won't touch your corn." Maniyan may not have been clearly informed that last year alone (2006), the sanctuary lost 1740 hectares of forest to farming.¹⁰⁶



October 27, 2017

Ramnagar, Nainital District, State of Uttarakhand, India

An early-morning seizure of two large tusks, 1.25 m and 1.15 m long.

Mohammad Qasim is a man of the woods. He lives in the heart of a dense forest. He says that he happened upon a dead elephant, that he buried the carcass and came back later to extract the tusks and burn the bones.

The investigators do not believe his story. Qasim could not have buried the animal by himself; he undoubtedly got help from locals, either friends or members of his family.

It is true that burying a 3-ton elephants whose tusks originally measured 30 cm in circumference at the base would be nearly impossible. The general suspicion is that the Indian super tusker was poached. Many carcasses of elephants have been found in the area without their tusks, and tusks have been rediscovered without carcasses. Qasim will remain in custody for 14 days.¹⁰⁷



October 31, 2017

Patasahi, Sundergarh District, State of Odisha, India

A female, 5 or 6 years old, died from the numerous wounds caused by arrows shots by local villagers. The young pachyderm apparently tried to feed in the crops but was chased until she fell into a hole and was slaughtered. The Banki forest guards are looking for the guilty parties.¹⁰⁸



November 2, 2017

Kokrajhar or Dhubri District, State of Assam, India

A group of five or six elephants left the Kachugaon forest last night. They were looking for food in the paddy crops. They were scared by villagers beating drums and were able to run away, but one of them got bogged down. Some hours later he was found still alive but his body pieced by four gun shots. Despite the efforts of forest guards and vets from the International Fund for Animal Welfare – Wildlife Trust of India (IFAW – WTI) the animal died of his wounds in the early hours of November 3.¹⁰⁹

November 2017

Shivamogga, Shimoga District, State of Karnataka, India

An archived photo from 2007 which was not shared shows that there was a pair of tusks in the office of the police captain. They were towering above his armchair, on the wall. Twenty years ago, the forest department had entrusted the tusks to the police station for decorative and educational purposes – as per a custom that enables authorities, schools, and military institutions to display ivory from seizures or from elephants that have died naturally. These in-kind donations must not ever be sold or embezzled. The disappearance of the tusks from the police station was noted and made official the same day that stone sculptures were delivered to the archeology museum of Kuvempu University. These sculptures were also meant to decorate the police station. This police station has had at least 5 police superintendents since 2007. An investigation is under way.¹¹⁰

November 2017

Mumbai, State of Maharashtra, India

The Sanctuary Asia magazine gave its 2017 “Wildlife” prize to the photo by Biplab Hazra, entitled “Here Is Hell,” taken in Bankura, West Bengal.



This is not a demonstration. It is not a circus. These are not reprisals. It is a game that has become a fad in Western Bengali and other parts of India – chasing peaceful elephants, including this mother and her calf, with balls of flaming tar. A combination of cruelty and pollution.

November 5, 2017

Panidihing Wildlife Sanctuary, Sivasagar District, State of Assam, India



An adult elephant was shot and killed by a stray bullet when a patrol of rangers tried to move the troop away from the fields of a village near the sanctuary. An autopsy was done and, according to directives, the body was buried in situ.¹¹¹

November 10, 2017

GANG

Nadugani, Nilgiris District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The case had been opened over a year ago when divisional Forest Officers had discovered in the forest reserve the corpse of an elephant whose tusks had been removed. An autopsy had revealed that the animal died of natural causes, but the ivory theft was flagrant. Information received some days ago enabled the arrest of Dharmalingam, Manoj and Mani, three men suspected of having appropriated the tusks they stumbled on while hunting mongooses. During questioning they named three accomplices who were to take care of selling the ivory in Kerala. Two of them are already behind bars in Karnataka for drug dealing.¹¹³

GANG

November 15, 2017

Anayara, Thiruvananthapuram District, State of Kerala, India

A snitch rated on them to the Forest Intelligence Wing and flying squad. Aaron Rajesh (26), R. Chudalamani (24), E. Vigneswaran (24) and Mohammed Ismail (47) were arriving from Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu in a luxury car transporting a pair of tusks for a total weight of 20 kg. Their value is estimated at 75,000 rupees (\$1156 US) per kilo. Investigations are underway to identify the tusks' origin and the links between the four men and the local ivory mafia.¹¹⁵

Anand Bora is co-prizewinner for this photograph of forest rangers and villagers from Nashik in Maharashtra rescuing a leopard that had been struggling at the bottom of a well for 30 hours. A combination of ingenuity and cool headedness.¹¹²



November 15, 2017

Satabari, Goalpara District, State of Assam, India

A procedure has been opened against Sofikur Rahman, suspected of being accountable for the death by electrocution of a 15 year old female in the paddy crop he cultivates near the village. The animal's trunk had also been cut off. By following the electrical wire the forest guards were led to a makeshift hookup at Ashwini Rabha's home, who turned in Rahman. The local population illegally cultivates 50 ha of wetland right across a corridor used by elephants. Gul Bahadur, appointed by police as a local village defense volunteer secretary, is suspected to have a decisive role in local deforestation. He is accused of accused of tree felling and timber smuggling, and to have encouraged or enabled illegal crops. Authorities appear determined to take the situation back in hand.¹¹⁶

November 25, 2017

State of Uttar Pradesh, India

The brave female elephant had been in captivity for 40 years. She was about 44 years old. She suffered from polyrheumatism and wounds on her feet. Her eyesight was dwindling. The forest services had been watching her for nearly a year, in the hopes of accumulating the proof of her illegal exploitation. She was transferred with the help of the Wildlife SOS Elephant Care Conservation Center (ECCC), and taken to a specialized retirement center, where she will receive the care and food she needs for the rest of her life.¹¹⁹

November 19, 2017

**Thakur Kuchi, State of Assam, India
'Plan bee' to keep elephants away**

After electric fences and pepper bombs, the Indian railroad company has launched its Plan Bee. Electronic "buzzers" installed near the tracks puts out the amplified sound of a beehive when necessary. Bee stings on or inside the trunks are a nightmare for elephants. The first device was installed between the Kamakhya and Azara stations. Results are encouraging, but yet to be confirmed. The two elephants that died on November 19 after a collision with a train near Guwahati are the latest of a long series. Between 2006 and 2016, 225 elephants died on the train tracks in Assam.¹¹⁷

November 24, 2017

Thattekkad, Ernakulam District, State of Kerala, India

Elephant calf rescued after falling in an abandoned well. His family stayed 50 m away, on the other side of the river in a teak forest. A bulldozer was called in to help the elephant calf make its way out. Once it had been freed, the elephant lifted its trunk up three times, as if to thank its rescuers. An expert contradicted that interpretation. According to him that sort of posture can generally be explained by the need to detect odors that could represent a threat.¹¹⁸



November 27, 2017

Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, State of Assam, India

Domesticated elephants and public works engines were used by the police to evacuate a slum. Months before this intervention, the residents were encouraged to move several times, and new locations and housing had been offered. This was refused by most of the squatters who had settled down in Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary (50 km²).¹²⁰



December 2, 2017
Nilgiris District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

He claims that he "retrieved" the tusks from a dead elephant near Gudalur. He had buried them in a farm 80 km from there. The 28-year-old man is in custody.¹²¹



December 2, 2017
Gudalur, Nilgiris District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

A new job: watcher of drifting elephants. 28-year-old Manikandan approached them due to the nauseous odor. He was lucky - it was a three-year-old male who had been carried off by the floods three weeks earlier. He cut his tusks and tried to sell them. Forest officials caught him. - In November, three other people were arrested for using the same method. The local police, the NSD (Naxal Special Division), and the forestry administration say they are ready to work together to identify the elephant bodies as early as possible, regardless of how they died, to cut off the tusks and "destroy them".¹²²

December 3, 2017
Rani Forest Kamrup Metropolitan District (Guwahati), State of Assam, India

It was a female. She didn't have tusks, but she did have a trunk. She had been sucked down into the Dipor Bil, a former branch of the Brahmaputra River which became a natural lake listed in the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. She managed to get out, but she died shortly after for unknown reasons. The trunk disappeared from its cadaver. A few days before this discovery, villagers had spotted a wandering elephant cub and informed the guards of this. It was probably the victim's calf.¹²³

Mid December 2017
State of Assam, India

In 100 days in Assam, 40 elephants died due to collisions, electrocution, poisoning, and other types of traps.¹²⁴



FAMILY AFFAIRS
GANG
Keonjhar District, State of Odisha, India

The poachers came from Arunachal Pradesh. The poaching of the adult male of 35 to 40 years old carries the signs. The practise is to decapitate the elephants and to uproot the tusks. The poachers in the other States are satisfied with cutting the tusks. The poaching took place about 2-3 weeks prior. The guards had been alerted by the odor. Six arrests, two of which are "professional" poachers from Arunachal Pradesh. Phugoyoha Yobin and Saniya Yoba, together with local fellows, were responsible for the death of 11 elephants in Odisha, West Bengal, in Jharkhand and in Assam. These sharpshooters use poison arrows, launched by handmade guns which are crafted by local black-smiths. At the time of their arrest, they were wearing women's clothing to avoid recognition. According to the head of Forestry, they were preparing to poach two males in the Jangira forest. They had already successfully separated them from a herd of 11 elephants to facilitate their task.¹²⁵



December 19, 2017
Thadagam, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The trunks and palm leaves which are used for the brickyard ovens attract elephants. At least one of the workers pestered an adult female until she was trapped in the storage areas of the factory, making her aggressive and dangerous for herself, and for the process. This behavior is becoming widespread in the entire country. The Coimbatore forest management is organizing a meeting with the brickyard management and staff, to inform them of the legal and physical risks of pestering elephants and other wild animals.¹²⁶

December 2017
State of Kerala, India

Violence and torture are suspected towards Aji Bright, himself suspected of poaching in the forests of Idamalayar. The local prison refused to incarcerate the accused in view of his judicial custody and sent him to the hospital. Several fractured at the ribs and shoulder were discovered, confirming Bright's words that he had been beaten with an iron bar covered with a cloth in order to extort a confession. Three forest agents are being prosecuted for torture.¹²⁷

December 22, 2017
Digi, Ganjam District, State of Odisha, India

A male elephant was electrocuted at will. Three arrests. The outcome of the tusks is not specified.¹²⁸

December 28, 2017

Guwahati, Kamrup Metropolitan District, State of Assam, India

Sentencing of Mahat Chandra Talukdar to five years in prison and to a fine equal to \$70,000 US. In his various homes, the anti-corruption police found 20 million rupees (\$312,000 US), gold jewelry, a tiger skin, a little elephant tusk and investment plans in Nepalese and Bhutanese currencies.

Talukdar was head of the park rangers in the Bargori and Agoratoli districts inside Kaziranga national park. He was caught in the act of passive corruption in his office in July 2016. He claims to be the victim of a plot and plans to appeal for justice at the earliest opportunity. (cf. *On the Trail* #13, p.73).¹²⁹



December 28, 2017

Thrissur, Thrissur District, State of Kerala, India

The three mahouts were not content with driving and maintaining their three domesticated elephants. They also indulged in the sale of ivory, after having carved the tusks. In conformity with the Wildlife Protection Act, the sections of the shortened tusks should have been handed over without delay to the local authorities.¹³⁰

End of the year festivities 2017

Bijnor District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Warning in the district forests. During the end of the year festivities and amongst the mists of winter, the poachers double their efforts up. So there will be no end of year holidays for the forest rangers. The district forests are home to elephants, tigers, deer, bears and rare trees, which are also illegally felled.¹³¹

INDONESIA

December 22, 2017

Seuneubok Bayu, Aceh Province, Sumatra, Indonesia

A deliberate poisoning is suspected. The 25 year old elephant was pregnant. Her male fetus of 13 months would never see this low world. His mother died amongst the oil palms. News agency Agence France Presse quotes Sapto Aji Prabowo, the head of forest conservation, as saying, "At least 11 elephants died in the Aceh Province in the year 2017. The majority were poached."¹³²



JAPAN

November 28, 2017

Tokyo Port, Kantō Region, Japan

A Chinese seaman of a container ship crew heading for China has been accused of hiding, in his personal belongings in his cabin, 605 small carved ivory objects weighing a total of 7 kg. Mr. Chen Tian Biao had gone out to do some shopping in the Japanese metropolis. The police nabbed him after he got back. Mr. Chen gave two versions of the story: 1- Someone put those ivory objects in my cabin while I was out, and 2- a friend gave them to me.¹³³

MALAYSIA

November 14, 2017

Merotai-Kalabakan Road, State of Sabah, Malaysia. Border with Indonesia.

The Bornean pygmy elephant (*Elephas maximus borneensis*) was found dead on an oil palm plantation belonging to Sabah Sotfwoods Erhad, a subsidiary of Innoprise Corporation—which became very rich from logging, producing woodchips, palm oil, and biofuels. The oil palms of the company cover over 25,000 hectares in the district of Tanau alone. In August, three other pygmy elephants were found dead on the edge of the plantations. Pygmy elephants are in grave danger. It is said that there are less than 1,500 of them left. They are endangered by logging, massive farming operations, disturbances to their migration paths, and food shortage. Cf. *"On the Trail"* n°6 p.93, n°18 p. 102-104.¹³⁴

November 27, 2017

Ulu Segama Reserve, State of Sabah, Malaysia

One named Liningkung died on November 27, 2017, according to satellite data which his tracking collar transmitted to the director of the Danau Girang Field Center (DGFC). His body was found on December 12 in the Reserve, 5 km from the administrative buildings for the State forests. The tusks were not torn out. The 12-year old elephant must certainly have fled after having been hit by gunfire. The autopsy confirmed the case. A metal detector aided the forensic veterinarians. The remaining carcass only contained bones and skin. Liningkung had been transferred to the Reserve 18 months earlier to spare him conflicts from human activity in the Telupid sector. This marks the third elephant victim in the protected forests of Sabah. Benoit Goossens, the director of DGFC and Datuk Sam Mannan, the head of forest conservation urgently called for armed forces to be put in place day and night. "Or else we will lose all our charismatic species... elephants, bantengs, pangolins, etc."¹³⁵

**Early December 2017
Ladang, Pertama, State of Sabah, Malaysia**

This bullet slug was found lodged in the elephant's front leg, the third pygmy elephant killed in the Sabah within a few weeks. About six years old, wounded also in the tongue by a spray of bullets. It was impossible for him to eat. He had been wandering for several days amongst the oil palm trees rows. Captured by a rescue team, he did not survive after emergency care.¹³⁶



MYANMAR

**October 2017
Taikkyi, Yagon Region, Myanmar**

Seizure of 32 kg of smoked elephant meat. In Myanmar, there is an upsurge in meat, skin, and ivory trafficking. Near the border with Laos and Thailand, elephant soup is a popular dish.¹³⁷

NEPAL

**November 15, 2017
Bardibas, Mahottari District, Nepal**

Arrest of Bisraj Tiwari and Laxmi Koirala at the Sishmahal hotel after they were denounced. They were in possession of 9.4 kg of silver ornaments and thousands of elephant hairs.¹³⁸

SRI LANKA

**October 5, 2017
Gampaha, Western Province, Sri Lanka**

Arrest of two people trying to sell eight elephant pearls. Elephant pearls, or gajamukta, are calcifications that grow at the base of the trunk after a bacterial infection. Gajamuktas supposedly bring good luck and prosperity. The only ones who really get rich are the poachers.¹³⁹



**October 21, 2017
Sri Lanka - Myanmar**

New revelations have been made on the fraudulent and abusive use of domestic elephants, thanks to the national newspaper the Sunday Times, which solicited the Right to Information Act (RTI) to get a copy of an official report that was sent to Parliament at the beginning of this year and kept secret up until now. The report was written starting in 2015, headed by a member of the supreme court of justice, on request from the Minister for Sustainable Development and Wildlife, Gamini Jayawickrema Perera. The main scandal was unexpected.

The Dalada Maligawa, the "Temple of the Tooth," in Kandy imported an elephant from Myanmar ten years ago to the tune of \$1,615,000 US, although the average value of an elephant at that time was \$80,000 US. Thus over \$1.5 million US fraudulently left the country in exchange for a falsified invoice. The report calls for charges to be pressed against everyone who participated in this case of financial and tax evasion.

In addition, the report confirmed that the registry of domestic elephants had been falsified several times between 2011 and 2014, in order to enable well-known businessmen, temples and elite politicians to purchase wild elephant calves. The report listed the names and positions of all of those who contributed to these shady dealings within the ministries. The ever-increasing demand for domesticated elephants for use in polo games, Buddhist celebrations and for the pleasure of tourists has been severely criticized. Cruelty to many elephants that are exploited and their exhaustion have been highlighted by the eminent judge. The general conclusion was that all domestic use of elephants should be monitored, reduced or even eliminated (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.104 and 17 p.103).¹⁴⁰

**November 24 and December 3, 2017
Galgamuwa, North Western Province, Sri Lanka**
What happened to Dala Puttuwa, the super tusker of Sri Lanka?



- He can't go unnoticed, but he hasn't been seen in two months. Each day, worry steps up a notch. Two suspects have just been arrested in possession of a pair of tusks. One of them lives in Herathgama. He is a Grama Niladhari, an administrative agent appointed by the government. It's around this village that the iconic animal was last seen, and the seized tusks have the same curvature as those of Dala Puttuwa.

- He is dead. His corpse was found close to the Pallekale Reserve, in a yam plantation.

- The investigation continues. Five to 10 suspects are in police custody, two of them are Grama Niladhari and one is a Buddhist monk. The gang wanted to sell the pair of tusks for two million rupees, or \$31,200 US.¹⁴¹

November 29 – December 8, 2017

Karuwalagaswewa, North Western Province, Sri Lanka

The corpse of another tusker is found close to the flood waters of a dam. He was killed by gunfire. His tusks are still in him. He must certainly have taken flight after having been chased by the poachers. According to the locals, he was a discrete animal, who rarely ventured out of the forest. It's a dark story. Special protection measures are put in place for Wijayab, another tusker from the Minneriya national park, who is seen rummaging through a communal landfill on a regular basis. He has already been the target of gunfire.

Sri Lanka is home to about 15% of Asian elephants. The population, estimated at 3500, would need two times more preserved area, amounting to 17,500 km². At the current time, the elephants only have access to 8200 km². They are crowded in, and conflicts with humans are part of the culture and history of Sri Lanka. According to official data, between 1991-2010, 2844 elephants were killed by farmers and other shooters. 1138 people were killed by elephants. Between 2004-2007, 3000 cabins or other shelters were destroyed by elephants. A MER – Managed Elephant Reserve – has been projected under the auspices of the former government by local communities, naturalists and the NGO Gaja Mithuro, in the Hambantota region, traversed by 10% of Sri Lankan elephants. Unfortunately, this MER is made of paper and regularly gets eaten away – not to say devoured – by an airport, a large stadium, interminable fields of solar panels and – latest threat to date – a refinery held by Chinese interests. As a result, the deceased MER has become the zone with the highest amount of elephant-human conflicts in Sri Lanka.

Immediately following the series of deaths of the most beautiful ivory tuskers of the country, a forum stated in the Sri Lankan Guardian, that, "Time has come to introduce birth control laws to all Sri Lankans irrespective of race, religion or anything else. Otherwise, within soon future, Sri Lanka will become a land without wildlife or forests."¹⁴²

December 9, 2017

Sellankandal Forest Reserve, Puttalam, Northwest Province, Sri Lanka

It's no longer about the human-elephant conflict. It's sheer human greed. Another ivory bearer, 30 years of age, is found dead at the hands of a peasant who brought his cow to graze in the forest. The body riddled with bullets. The death of Thani Dalaya, as the victim was known, puts pressure on the new Wildlife Minister et his government. In response to this catastrophe, a Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance was issued to allow life imprisonment for those found guilty of killing wild elephants.¹⁴³

December 19, 2017

Peradeniya, Central Province, Sri Lanka

Two arrests. Seven elephant pearls were seized.¹⁴⁴



December 29, 2017

Silavatura, Mannar, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Three arrests. They were planning to sell two tusks, 1.2 m in length and 35 cm in diameter. The sale was by photograph. The two tusks were found later. They were buried near Thanthirimale.¹⁴⁵

THAILAND

December 13, 2017

In the center of Thailand

After 55 years of chains and other deprivations of freedom, Thong Ma is heading to a comfortable enclosure. During her last job, she would eat bananas held out by tourists, allowing each time for a 20 baht (\$6 US) profit by her mahout.¹⁴⁶



VIET NAM

November 16, 2017

Hanoi, Hoan Kiem District, Viet Nam

Duy Khoa, Ba Chien, Van Chuong, and Van Dung were sentenced to 14, 15, and 20 months in prison for being in possession of, transporting, and the attempted sale of 423 kg of raw ivory of African origin. The judgment recommends that the seized ivory be destroyed.¹⁴⁷



December 31, 2017

Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi, Viet Nam

The last catch of the year. At the end of the evening, customs unearthed raw sliced ivory and four pieces of worked ivory from Africa, in the belongings of a Thai Lion Air passenger, embarking for Bangkok.¹⁴⁸

EUROPE

SPAIN

Octobre 2017

Torre-Pacheco, Communauté autonome de Murcie, SPAIN

Saisie de 37 ivoires travaillés dont des pièces de jeux d'échecs et d'un masque en ébène (*Diospyros* spp., Annexe II à Madagascar). Le vendeur a été incapable de produire le moindre document prouvant l'origine légale, la date et le lieu de fabrication des objets.¹⁴⁹

Other Mammals

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

Beginning of November 2017

Barkly West, Northern Cape Province, South Africa

When they took their dogs to go hunting in the Mattanu Private Game Reserve, the three young men, including a minor, were not aware that they were heading for a hornets' nest. During the night, the dogs chased an "antelope" to exhaustion. The poachers then stoned it to death, butchered it and divided the meat among themselves. It turned out, that the ungulate was the only black gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*) in South Africa, and worth 8 million rand, or \$585,000 US.

Black gemsboks are the product of selective breeding and are not considered to be a species or subspecies in animal classification. The Kriek family apparently "invented" the black gemsbok. Johann Kriek Junior spotted a few coal-black specimens during a wildlife census in the province, caught them and initiated captive breeding.

The gemsbok distribution range is shrinking. It has completely disappeared in Angola. In Botswana, the wild population is reduced to Kalahari. It has adapted to life and now survives in the mountains and arid dunes. But captive populations are growing in Namibia and in South Africa, where their magnificent 1-meter-long horns make them considerably appealing for hunters and trophy-lovers.

The trio left behind the animal's head. They should know their fate at the beginning of 2018. Johann Kriek, the owner of the reserve, has even deplored that the threesome cannot be whipped.¹



Oryx gazella

KENYA

November 10, 2017

Tsavo Conservation Area, Kenya

Two hyraxes (*Dendrohyrax* genus) were seized. Their natural enemy is the eagle. These small primitive herbivorous ungulates are also victims of trapping and of the insatiable search of bush meat. Their upper incisive teeth are shaped like tusks, which makes them related to elephants in the classification of species.²



REPEATED OFFENSE

December 3, 2017

Dhoda, Wajir County, Kenya

The village chief notified the KWS of the giraffe poacher's actions. Yusuf Bulbale Ibrahim had been picked up briefly in 2008 for similar offenses.

Nine years later, he was flushed out of the savannah by a KWS patrol, carrying bones and fragments of skin, a rifle and 14 bullets. The county chief ranger had been tracking him for several months. "This guy is a real danger for wildlife. It only takes him one bullet kill a giraffe," he said. Mr. Kanda wants Parliament to reinforce the protection of giraffes by amending the law and including them in the list of species threatened by extinction.³



December 18, 2017

Tsavo Conservation Area, Kenya

- Seizure of 26 dik-diks (genus *Madoqua*), a dwarf antelope that "dik diks" when it is in danger. These bad luck creatures are very popular at Christmas feasts and parties. Hundreds of them are poached and sold for less than two dollars on the black market. Merry Christmas.⁴

\$2US

MOROCCO

End of December 2017

Inezgane, Inezgane-Aït Melloul Prefecture, Souss-Massa-Draa Region, Morocco

Fine of five million dihrams, or \$5,300 US for two gazelle poachers. The carcass was in the trunk of a car.

Three species of gazelles listed in CITES are present in Morocco: the cuvier's gazelle (*Gazella cuvieri*, Appendix I), the dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*, Appendix III in Tunisia and in Algeria) and the dama gazelle (*Nanger dama*, Appendix I).⁵



Nanger dama



NAMIBIA

REPEATED OFFENSE

November 12 and 14, 2017

Kalumba, Zambezi Region, Namibia

The Katima Mulilo Hospital ambulance driver is no beginner. For him, it is a means of transportation like any other, and it works well as camouflage. On Sunday, in Kalumba, as he was driving at emergency speed, his ambulance was stopped at a roadblock. In the back of the rescue vehicle, the police found a half-carcass of an impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) and some hunting rifles. In 2015, it was buffalo meat that he was transporting in his ambulance, and just two months ago he was caught again transporting impala meat, but that time in his own personal vehicle. Chris Lizazi, 38 years old, despite the repeat offenses, has been freed on bail for \$5000 Namibian, or \$350 US.⁶



ZAMBIA

October 19, 2017

South Luangwa National Park, eastern Zambia

Back luck one day, good luck another day.

The spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*) dragged itself into the pasture, it was clamped around the neck by a metal collar. It was spotted in the middle of a pasture by officers of the Zambia Carnivore Program then released and treated by veterinarians.⁷



AMERICA

BRAZIL

October 18, 2017

São João do Paraíso, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Five pacas (*Cuniculus paca*, Appendix III in Honduras) and a wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) were prisoners in a house haunted by a revolver, ammunition, traps and other poaching accessories. One arrest.⁸



November 22, 2017

Igarauçu do Tietê, State of São Paulo, Brazil

A senior poacher was reported to the police. In his home, they discovered a veritable arsenal: no less than five rifles, plus two pampas deer's (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*, Appendix I) paws.⁹



CANADA

Mid December 2017

Charlotte County, Province of New Brunswick, Canada

Seizure of 500 kg of deer and elk meat (*Alces alces*), firearms, hunting equipment, narcotics, and a vehicle. Ten arrests.¹⁰

MEXICO

December 26, 2017

Anáhuac, State of Nuevo León, Mexico

One interrogation. He was transporting the body of a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*, *Odocoileus virginianus mayensis*, Appendix III in Guatemala). The deer was poached in a UMA (Unidad de Manejo para la Conservacion de la Vida).¹¹

PERU

October 2017

Peru

Poaching is not limited to wild animals. It is also detrimental to wild plants. And in many cases, both at the same time. The story of this brown-throated three-toed sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*), listed in CITES Appendix II, is a symbolic example. It was snuggled at the top of a 30-meter tree that was downed by illegal lumberjacks. The sloth fell with the tree and survived. The tree-cutters put it in a bag and sold it at the Iquitos market, for the equivalent of \$13 US. The NGO World Animal Protection has noted that 80% of the wood exported from Peru comes from illegal forestry exploitation, and that, while they are at it, the lumberjacks also bag tree-dwelling animals and sell them on markets and in pet shops.¹²

ASIA

CHINA

October 15, 2017

Henan Province, China

66 giraffes, 22 males and 44 females (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), all around two years old, arrived from Johannesburg, South Africa. According to the provincial quarantine office, since 2015, nearly 10,000 exotic animals, including giraffes and zebras from South Africa, polar bears from Russia, alpagas from Chile and dolphins from Japan, have been in transit through the Zhengzhou International Airport, before been dispatched to various Chinese zoos.¹³



December 6, 2017

Erenhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. Border with Mongolia.

300 marmot pelts were seized. Two marmot species are listed in CITES:

- Long-tailed marmot (*Marmota caudata*, Appendix III in India)
- Himalayan marmot (*Marmota himalayana*, Appendix III in India)¹⁴



Marmota himalayana

INDIA

October 19, 2017

Anthiyur and Sennampatty Forest, Erode District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

A band of eight poachers was arrested by district forest agents while they were about to go hunting in the forest. They were turned in by a witness. A makeshift rifle was seized, and they each saddled with a 25,000 rupees (\$380 US) fine. In a separate case a resident of the small village Anthiyur was given the same fine for having possession a deer body with the intention of eating it. He claimed to have "found" it in the forest.¹⁵



October 2017

Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer Districts, State of Rajasthan, India. Border with Pakistan.

On paper, the Wildlife Protection Act gives the highest level of protection to Indian gazelles (*Gazella bennettii*, Appendix III in Pakistan). On the field, they are hunted and supply the wild meat market. Most poachers are members of the Bawaria tribe. They do not use of rifles, which would attract the attention of vegetarian villagers in the Bishnoi community. Instead, they play recordings of fawns during the night, deep in the forest. When the adult Indian gazelles arrive, they jump out of their hiding places and blind them with flashlights, catch them and kill them in a just few seconds. They cut off their heads and feet, and then flee with the torsos. The Bishnoi are left to find the gory remains of 5, 10 or even 20 animals.



The Bawarias hunt Indian gazelles on behalf of the Rajputs, the dominant cast in Rajasthan. The Bawarias are paid 500 rupees, or \$8 US for each gazelle. In the winter, tourists are apparently also behind the demand. Gazelle meat is sold in luxury hotels. Complaints are rarely followed through with, and when there is a trial the Bawarias are invariably acquitted. "How else would a man who owns two pairs of clothes get the district's best lawyers to defend him," wonders Mokhram Dharniya, an Indian gazelle defense activist in the Bikaner district.¹⁶

October 26, 2017

Gurgaon District, State of Haryana, India

The head and one foot of a Nilgaut antelope (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) were discovered this morning by a ranger, near a housing complex. The site was soaked with blood, undoubtedly because the animal had been butchered.¹⁷

Beginning of November 2017

Chennai, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The residual forest surrounding the Indian Institute of Technology, used as a campus for students, is covered with trash (see "On the Trail" n°17, p.110). The spotted deer (*Axis axis*), bonnet macaques (*Macaca radiata*, Appendix II) and blackbucks (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Pakistan and Nepal) are attacked by stray dogs, run over during parties and music festivals or intoxicated after eating food packaging. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered the school management to clean up the park within a week, and to reduce the sound volume and usage of plastic dishes during events.¹⁸

November 2017

Keibul Lamjao National Park, State of Manipur, India

Lake Loktak has been in the news lately (see page 42). The "deer who dance" live on its shores. Brow-antlered deer, or sangai (*Rucervus eldii*, Appendix I), were nearly extinct in 1950; there were 14 in 1975, and there are approximately 260 today. The brow-antlered deer have not been spared from poaching. 26 forest rangers watch over them and their antlers, which can span 1m. The Manipur ministry of Forests wants to move part of the population to avoid the eradication of the species due to an epidemic, a forest fire or some other natural disaster, or through poaching. The Pumlun Pat Lake in the Thoubal district matches the species' feeding needs. The brow-antlered deer eat a lot of aquatic plants. Local fishermen are reluctant to support the delocalization project.¹⁹

November 8, 2017

Near Bhitarkanika National Park, Kendrapara District, State of Odisha, India

A poacher was arrested. He caught chitals, or axis deer (*Axis axis*), using nylon nets hung in the forest, despite the 1972 Wildlife Protection Act. Balai Bhakta, 55 years old, sold the meat and skins.²⁰



November 24, 2017

Keibul Lamjao National Park, Bishnupur District, State of Manipur, India

A hog deer from Thailand (*Axis porcinus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) was poached, and one person was arrested.²¹



December 12, 2017

Kishangarh, Ajmer District, State of Rajasthan, India

Right in the middle of the street, they were selling the skin and other parts of an Indian gazelle (*Gazella bennettii*, Appendix III in Pakistan). They two men are 60 and 77 years old.²²

From October to December 2017

Mumbai, State of Maharashtra, India

The star has not yet paid his debt to justice. The Rajasthan public prosecutor has appealed the acquittal of Salman Khan, accused of hunting blackbucks (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Nepal and Pakistan) in 1998, on the sidelines of a film shooting (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 110). The State of Maharashtra has turned to the Supreme Court to appeal the Bombay court's decision to acquit Salman Khan, after an accident in which he ran over five people who were sleeping on the side of the road, and then drove off in his Toyota Land Cruiser. That was in 2002.²³



IRAN

November 12, 2017

Bardsir, Kerman Province, Iran

Environmental forces caught a poacher in the act. He was transporting a dead wild goat (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) and was in possession of illegal weapons. He was sentenced to 7 months in prison for poaching, and a fine of 18 million rials (\$500 US) for carrying firearms. He also must pay for the installation of a fence 1 km long and 2 m high to safeguard the Bidoieh protected area, and supply the forest rangers with 3 t of fodder for the wild animals.²⁴



End of November 2017

Sarigol Protected Area, North Khorasan Province, Iran

Rough interception of a large car. The five hunters managed to get away in the night by spraying tear gas on the police officers. From the car, the police confiscated a hunting arsenal and carving knives, four cell phones, three cameras, quarters of meat and an entire wild goat (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) carcass.²⁵

December 2, 2017

Mahdi Shahr, Semnan Province, Iran

Seizure of meat, offal, horns, the carcasses of two mouflons (*Ovis aries*, Appendix II), a weapon, ammunition, carving knives and binoculars. Two arrests. Caught red-handed poaching in the park, the main offender will probably get a fine of 200 million rial (\$780 US) and up to 3 months in prison. His accomplice played a secondary role, carrying the carcasses.²⁶



End of December 2017

Khojir National Park and Firuzkuh, Tehran Province, Iran

- Poaching of one urial (*Ovis aries*, Appendix II) by four men and four firearms. Four arrests.

- Poaching of one urial (*Ovis aries*, Appendix II). The search resulting in the seizure of several flashlights and photos in which the suspect poses with the head of his trophy on his knees. The man was fined 50 million rials, or \$1,387 US and faces three months to three years in prison.²⁷



PAKISTAN

December 29, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Territory, Pakistan

Three two-year prison sentences for poaching three markhors (*Capra falconeri*, Appendix I). Apparently each person was sentenced to pay a fine of 13 million rupees. The markhor hunting licenses are sparingly granted to luxury hunters for approximately \$ 68,000 US.²⁸



THAILAND

October 29, 2017

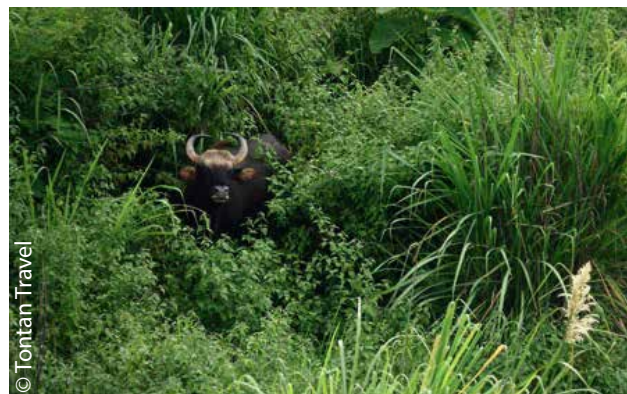
Don Muang International Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

A Japanese student was arrested after attempting to board the AirAsia flight to Narita (Japan) with a suitcase containing 10 otters hidden at the bottom of a basket. Kaede Yamaguchi (22 years old) explained that she found so cute the little animals sold on the Chatuckak market in Bangkok and had bought them for 1000Baht a piece (\$30 US). She intended on raising them herself in Japan. She was charged with unauthorised possession of protected wildlife.²⁹

November 8-11, 2017

Kao Phang Ma, Wang Nam Khiao District, Thailand

Rough time for gaurs (*Bos gaurus*, Appendix I) in the Khao Phang Ma forest area. Within a few days 3 corpses of this rare bovine were discovered, killed by a shot gun. There would be about 300 spread over the 800 ha in the region, the largest population in the country. Poaching is increasing. The horns are sold as trophies for a minimum 30,000 bahts a piece (\$900 US) and the meat used for food. On Wednesday the 8th, a 10-year-old gaur's body weighing 1.2 tons was found in a manioc field near the Wat Pa Wang Sai village. He was shot dead. Having not been de-horned nor his flesh taken suspicion is aimed at the field owner. A tapioca producer, who was arrested. The recent extension of cultivated land around the forest area attracts the gaurs who come feed off the corn and manioc. On Saturday the 11th two new more gaurs killed by gunshot were discovered at the bottom of the Khao Phang Ma mountain. A male of more than one ton who tried to escape after being hit by a bullet in the lungs died without his corpse being found by the poachers. On the other hand a female of 500 kg had been stripped of her flesh and her head and bowels disappeared. Police are looking for a gang of poachers, who do not exclude the possibility that prominent individuals be involved. Pressure on the local gaur population is such that authorities are now mentioning the possibility of relocating the 300 individuals to the Phu Luang forest, 8 km away.³⁰



EUROPE

FRANCE

November 2, 2017

Etrechy, Essonne Department, France

13 European hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) at the bottom of a garbage can on board a vehicle. Their squeals attracted the attention of the gendarmes. Hedgehogs are "niglos" for gypsies, who eat them. They are not concerned about the species becoming extinct, or about their regulatory protection in France and Europe. If nothing stops the hedgehogs from being poached and crushed on the streets, and if the scattered use of pesticides does not end, they will become extinct by 2025. Two interrogations.³¹



FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 28, 2017

Villefranche-sur-Saône, Rhône Department, France

They had two European hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) in the glove compartment of the car. The two young men explained to the court that poaching and eating hedgehogs was a tradition for the travelling community. Hedgehogs are protected by French law, and by laws in the other European Union countries. They did not have time to give the judge the recipe; he gave them a one-month suspended sentence, 105 hours of community work and a fine of 4000€ (\$4730 US) to be paid to the Brigitte Bardot Foundation and to the Hedgehog Sanctuary.³²



ITALY

October 2017

Sesto Fiorentino, Tuscany Region, Italy

Target operation led by the CITES Carabinieri Group in Rome, assisted by the CITES Florence Carabinieri Group against fur trafficking. Alerted by the import of a large quantity of raccoon skins (*Procyon lotor*) of dubious origin, agents raided the buildings of an importer in the industrial zone. They found there 5500 than 5,500 clothing made in fur coming from China including hats, scarves and gloves. There are no raccoon breeding farm registered in China and China is not recognized by the European Union as meeting the regulation CEE N° 3254/91 requiring that fur be exclusively from countries implementing a ban on jaw-traps or conforming to "agreed international rules regarding cruelty free trapping". The fur pieces were seized, and the company owner was sent before Justice.³³



UNITED KINGDOM

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 2017

Portsmouth, Hampshire County, England, United Kingdom

Paul (42 years old) and Ronald (70 years old) Floyd were hit with the full-fledged rigor of British law. They were charged with destroying a breeding site of a wild animal listed as a European protected species. The offense goes back to work that they did on their property between February 9 and 27. The building that was destroyed was the habitat of pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*). Both have since appeared at Portsmouth Magistrates' Court and were each fined £200 (\$270 US) with a £30 (\$40 US) victim surcharge and £85 costs (\$114 US). Bats are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.³⁴



Multi-Species

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

October 2017

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

The NGO Tusk, headed by the Duke of Cambridge, gave its 2017 "Tusk Conservation Award" to Solomon Chidunuka (50 years old) who has been defending wildlife in the national parks of Zambia since 1987. Under his authority, the North Luangwa national park has not lost a single black rhinoceros. The elephants, felines and other animals of the forests and the savannah can be grateful to him for the arrest of 200 poachers.



The other recipient of the annual Tusk award is the South African Sergeant Lucky Ndlovu (55 years old) to whom the rhinoceroses in Kruger's Intensive Protection Zone are indebted for the arrest of 70 poachers. It is true that, like his colleague in Zambia, Lucky does not work alone. He is assisted in particular by a Belgian malinois named Ngwenya and a foxhound named Chico. Their nose provokes terror in poachers. As evidence of his unbending loyalty and his independent spirit, in June 2016, Lucky devised a trap to catch his own boss and one of the park veterinarians in the act of rhinoceros poaching (see "On the Trail" n°14, p.62).¹



October 30, 2017

Johannesburg, Province of Gauteng, South Africa

The man used to advocate for living animals about to be tortured, dismembered, or cut into pieces for use in black magic of medical charlatanism in the Muthi market.

In his final and perilous mission, he rescued two great dukes (genus *Bubo*) and two Home's hinged-backed tortoises (*Kinixys homeana*, Appendix II) before releasing them back into the wild. These tortoises are dependent on the countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea. In South Africa, it is an exotic specimen or a breeding one. This is unlikely as the Home's hinged-backed is restive to terrariums and human manipulation.²



November 22, 2017

**Oliver Reginald Tambo
International Airport,
Johannesburg, Gauteng
Province, South Africa**

51 lion's claws, 19 lion's teeth and one rhinoceros horn were discovered in a package destined for Nigeria.³



CAMEROON

**Douala, Littoral Region,
Cameroon**

The Agence France-Presse reported that a truck full of bags of chili peppers heading to Nigeria was also transporting 160 tusks or pieces of tusks, parrot feathers, 100 parrot heads and 19 bags of pangolin scales.⁴



REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

October 25, 2017

Ouesso, Sangha Department, Republic of the Congo. Border with Cameroon.

It was tempting. A run-down prison wall separated Césaire Mikazoe, Jean Zidou, Jean Bassia, Eric Mbemba and Gildas Bendi from their freedom. They were serving sentences ranging from 3 to 5 years, coupled with heavy fines for poaching. Along with nine other prisoners, they dug through the wall and escaped around 1 a.m. They may have headed for neighboring Cameroon, about 10 km away.⁵

TANZANIA

November 12, 2017

Loliondo Game Reserve, Ngorongoro, Arusha Province, Tanzania

The affair had been brewing for several years already. The new minister of natural resources, Mamisi Kigwangalla, sorted out the problems. The concession will not be renewed. He is accusing Isaac Mollel of corruption. Isaac Mollel is the executive director of Ortelo Business Corporation (OBC), a safari hunting company operated by a member of the royal family of the United Arab Emirates. The majority party Chama cha Mapinduzi and the Natural resources ministry received several millions of dollars of donations from OBC. This generosity may have resulted in the authorities turning a blind eye to the uncontrolled hunting of baboons, buffaloes, hyenas, lions and leopards, without even talking to members of the Massai tribe or sharing profits with them. Apparently, the main clients of the hunting reserve are from the United States. They pay between \$ 14,000 to \$ 20,000 US for safaris lasting 10 to 21 days. The concession has been granted to Emirati interests since 1992. The domestic herds that were authorized to graze in the reserve had to clear off when members of the Emirates royal family were on a hunt—at least that's what the elders in the surrounding villages say. Associations of hunters and professional guides are staunchly opposed to the ministerial decision. They consider that the parliament should validate the revocation or suspension of the hunting concessions. They recall that 90% of the revenue of the Tanzania Wildlife Authority comes from a levy on profits from legal hunting.⁶

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

November 8, 2017

Villa Cañas, General López Department, Santa Fe Province, Argentina

Impressive seizure in the home of an underground taxidermist: heads and skins of deer, brockets (genus *Mazama*), peccaries (family *Tayassuidae*), pumas (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II), oncillas (*Leopardus tigrinus*, Appendix I), rheas (*Rhea* spp., Appendix I or II), capybaras (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), otters, Argentine boa constrictors (*Boa constrictor occidentalis*, Appendix I), anteaters, antelopes, lions (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), zebras, and porcupines. The initial estimated worth of all of this is 3 million pesos (\$ 163,600 US). Part of the loot was in the freezers, awaiting processing.⁷

BRAZIL

October 9, 2017

Santarém, State of Pará, Brazil

Seized by the federal police in a truck intercepted on route 163: ammunitions, rifle powder, a red brocket (*Mazama americana*), two armadillos (*Dasypodidae*), an agouti (*Dasyprocta* genus), four dead birds wrapped up inside Styrofoam boxes and a live tortoise (*Chelonoidis* spp., Appendix I or II). Four people were arrested.⁸



October 11, 2017

Araguatins, State of Tocantins, Brazil

A trafficker was caught red-handed on a night bus, transporting two armadillos (*Dasypodidae* family) and approximately 1 kg of deer meat. The Environmental Battalion of the Military Police (BPMA) confiscated the meat and the animals. The man was fined 1500 reais (\$470 US).⁹



October 25, 2017

Pederneiras, State of São Paulo, Brazil

A 25-year-old delinquent was taken into custody after police raided his home and seized several firearms, dozens of rounds of munitions, eight caged wild birds and a frozen, gutted armadillo (*Dasypodidae* family). The value of the animals was estimated at nearly \$2000 US.¹⁰



OPERATION MALACAFITA

November 16, 2017

Fortaleza, State of Ceará, Brazil

Two search warrants in the Aldeota and Papicu neighborhoods led to the discovery of seven representatives of a snake family that is unknown in Brazil and on the South American continent. A blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) was also seized.¹¹

November 21, 2017

Sete Lagoas, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of six toco toucan chicks (*Ramphastos toco*, Annex II) in a bucket, a curl-crested jay (*Cyanocorax cristatellus*) and a sagui monkey (*Callithrix* genus, Appendix I or II) in a cage. The bucket and the cage were in the trunk of a car that was stopped by the federal police. The driver and passenger were charged with environmental crime, illegal trade and mistreatment of wild animals. The little toucans were allegedly purchased from a chick collector for 1.4 million reais, or \$430 US. They were going to be sold in Caratinga for 500 reais, or \$153 US, each.¹²

November 21, 2017

Itatira, State of Ceará, Brazil

Seizure of three caimans (*Caiman* spp., Appendix I or II) from a water tank and two collared peccaries (*Pecari tajacu*, Appendix II) from a cement confine in the Fazenda do Alemão.

In their natural state, caimans live in backwaters of rivers or in waters with slow currents. In their natural state, collared peccaries are prey for pumas and jaguars. But the predators that led them to be listed in CITES Appendix II are humans. According to Bernhard Grzimek, the Iquitos harbour in Peru exported 129,000 collared peccary skins in the year of 1925 alone.¹³

November 22, 2017

Londrina, State of Paraná, Brazil

The police intervened for a suspected case of drug trafficking. They happened on a true wildlife traffic. They seized six tufted capuchins (*Cebus apella*, Appendix II), including one adult and five babies, two marmosets (*Callithrix* genus, Appendix I or II), a parrot (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II), a toucan (*Ramphastidae* family) and a ferret, worth a total of \$6145 US. A woman was brought in for questioning, and her statement recorded. The animals are being kept temporarily at the municipal botanical garden.¹⁴

December 7, 2017

Capitão de Campos, State of Piauí, Brazil

It had been going on for a long time. The neighbors knew that, but the police found out about it quite late. Red-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II), yellow-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II), a margay (*Leopardus wiedii*, Appendix I), birds, and foxes were released from two hovels. One of them was truly a garbage dump for live animals. The owner



of the premises, a former police officer, had torn out the fangs of a puma (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II). He and a helper are accused of illegally capturing wild animals and aggravated abuse of protected species.¹⁵

COLOMBIA

October 13, 2017

Buga, Valle del Cauca Department, Colombia

Employees at a courier service discovered a young boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II) in a registered package coming from Piedecuesta (in the department of Santander). It had been declared as an "object of value". It was handed over to the local bureau of the Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca (CVC). The snake appears to be in good condition and was transferred to a CVC center in Palmira, where it is under observation to ascertain whether it can be released into the wild. Then, a person came to the Buga CVC with a yellow-headed caracara (*Milvago chimachima*, Appendix II) that had been sedated. The small raptor had scars at the end of its wings, indicating that they had been cut to keep it from flying away. And finally, a person carrying a blue-headed parrot (*Pionus menstruus*, Appendix II) was spotted by a municipal police officer. The bird was turned over to the CDC, where the veterinary team noted that it, too, had had its wings cut.¹⁶

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

2017

Los Angeles, State of California, United States of America

Jungle Book closed on 16 international traffickers in abused exotic wild animals, most of which died in smuggling scenarios that were sometimes inventive, and always traumatic. Operation Jungle Book is a USFWS initiative, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Custom Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. A few survivors of the trade are now housed in zoos in San Diego, Los Angeles and at the Turtle Conservancy.

- Nicholas Bishop, known as "Nick the Wrangler," was tangled up in some nasty business involving a tiger (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I) illegally taken from Indiana to California that he claimed he had bought from the rapper Tyga (see "On the Trail" n°5, p.59-60). Bishop first appeared in court on October 20. He is facing five years in prison.

- Gayle Simpson pleaded guilty on September 27 to smuggling varans (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), that had been captured in the Philippines and arrived in the US, either dead or injured, and labeled "audio speakers."

- Bryan Cho from Long Beach was in the habit of getting varans shipped to him from the Philippines labeled as "toys."



- Kevin Duc Vu received compromising packages from his wife containing Asian arowanas (*Scleropages formosus* and *Scleropages inscriptus*, Appendix I), four-eyed turtles (*Sacalia quadriocellata*, Appendix II), Asian box turtles (*Cuora* spp., Appendix II) black-breasted leaf turtles (*Geoemyda spengleri*, Appendix II), half of which were dead. The ruling is scheduled for February 2018.

- Shawn Naolu Lee ordered lucky-charm Asian arowanas from Mickey Tanadi, in Indonesia. They arrived by mail in porcelain herbal pots filled with water. A customs officer noticed a leak. The eight lucky-charm fish were all dead. Lee and Tanadi face 30 years in prison. They are being charged with smuggling in conspiracy, importing a protected species and forging import declarations.

- Asian arowanas are fad in the United States. Cory Pham imported five, hidden in black bags inside a plastic box. He was nabbed at the Los Angeles airport, coming from Viet Nam, on October 5. He faces one year in prison.

- Kurtis Law was just sentenced to one year in prison and six months under house arrest for having attempted to import 93 birds from Viet Nam. The birds were found at the Los Angeles airport, but were nearly all dead (see page 39 and "On the Trail" n°17, p.32).

- In a similar case, Sonny Dong admitted to having hired a carrier to bring songbirds into the United States, hidden under clothes or in accompanied baggage. Dong is facing five years in prison.

- Tyler Rene Vela is charged with trafficking feathers from bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Appendix II), red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II) and turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*). He may get up to 18 months in prison.

- A hearing is scheduled in November for traffickers and importers of live corals coming from Puerto Rico (see "On the Trail" n°18 pp. 4-5).

- Luis Eudoro Valencia, 18 years old, tried to export an undocumented tiger across the California-Mexico border. He was part of the Jungle Book roundup (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.53).

All of these cases are being handled by five prosecutors who are specialized in environmental crimes.¹⁷

GUATEMALA

Beginning of December, 2017

Santa Rosa de Lima, Department of Santa Rosa, Guatemala

Three caimans (*Crocodylia* spp., Appendix I or II), a mud turtle of the genus *Kinosternon*, two raccoons (genus *Procyon*), 24 armadillo shells (family *Dasypodidae*), two raccoon skins (genus *Procyon*), and a coati skin (genus *Nasua*) were seized from the residence of a 76-year-old man. He is in the hands of justice.¹⁸

HONDURAS

OPERATION FIRE STORM X

Beginning of November 2017

Siguatepeque, Comayagua Department, Honduras

Ten white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), a white-faced capuchin (*Cebus capucinus*, Appendix II), 12 scarlet ibises (*Eudocimus ruber*, Appendix II), five parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), three toucans (Ramphastidae), five dwarf armadillos (*Zaedyus pichiy*), 38 turtles, a black spiny-tailed iguana (*Ctenosaura similis*) and an iguana (*Iguana* spp., Appendix II) were taken in alive, thanks to Operation



Tormenta de Fuego X (Tempest of Fire X). Most of the animals were held and exhibited at a restaurant called "Granja D'Elia". The white-tailed deer has been the national emblem of Honduras since 1933. The species is endangered in the wild in Honduras. Until a better solution is found, the animals are being kept in two zoological gardens in Copán and in Santa Cruz de Yojoa.¹⁹

MEXICO

October 1, 2017

Tlajomulco, State of Jalisco, Mexico



The Unidad de Rescate de Fauna Silvestre de Tlajomulco released an entire menagerie in a place called El Pocito de Agua, in the protected natural zone of Cerro Viejo. The 31 feathered, scaled and furry creatures included a great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*, Appendix II), 10 turtles (Kinosternon genus), four marsupials (Didelphimorphia order), a skunk (Mephitidae family), five garter snakes (*Coluber flagellum*), three milk snakes (*Lampropeltis triangulum*), five snakes of the *Pituophis* genus, a rattlesnake (*Crotalus* genus) and a tarantula.²⁰

October 3, 2017

Insurgente Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla National Park, State of Mexico, Mexico

The national park is riddled with illegal forest exploitations and undeclared activities. In an attempt to curb the damages, the PROFEPA launched a general inspection of the 1750-ha protected zone and its buffer zone. 53 site visits and surveillance patrols led to the closing of 16 installations and worksites, 9 of which were closed for violation of an environmental site and 7 for unauthorized activity in a forest zone. During the operations, PROFEPA agents also seized five

ostriches (*Struthio camelus*), two lionesses (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), 10 taxidermy items, a fallow deer (*Dama dama*), two collared peccaries (*Pecari tajacu*, Appendix II), five white-nosed coatis (*Nasua narica*, Appendix III in Honduras), two common raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), an American jackal (*Canis latrans*), a red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II), a great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*, Appendix II), a common caracara (*Caracara plancus*, Appendix II), a monkey parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*, Appendix II) and two gray foxes (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*).²¹

October 11, 2017

Acapulco de Juárez, State of Guerrero, Mexico



24 armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), a skunk (*Mephitis macroura*), four common raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), a stuffed opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*), a Mexican spiny-tailed iguana skin (*Ctenosaura pectinata*), a jaguar skin (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I), a jaguarundi skin (*Puma yagouaroundi*, Appendix I), two ostrich skins (*Struthio camelus*, Appendix I), an American crocodile skin (*Crocodylus acutus*, Appendix I), a boa constrictor skin (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II), 233 Pacific Ridley turtle eggs (*Lepidochelys olivacea*, Appendix I), a bag containing a crocodile head, a bear paw with resin claws (Ursidae, Appendix I or II), eight boa-skin wallets, a crocodile skin bag, bracelets made of feline skin, crocodile skin and boa skin – all where irremediably destroyed in the industrial furnace at the airport. All of these hides and objects had been seized or confiscated through search warrants related to criminal cases.²²

October 12, 2017

State of Campeche, Mexico

Three animals seized by the PROFEPA, three destinies rerouted.

A young Morelet's crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*, Appendix II) gallivanting around among the frightened swimmers at the Ejido Paraiso beach, in the town of Champoton. When the crocodile was arrested, he was suffering from an eye infection. He was taken to the Las Potrancas farm where veterinarians are caring for him.

The common iguana (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II) liked to stroll around the property of a private home. The owner captured it and handed it over to the PROFEPA. The saurian was in good health and was quickly freed near Hampolo, close to the Petenes - Ría Celestún Natural Park..../...

The third case is more problematic. An adult male peacock (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) was found wandering through the streets of Campeche. Because the species is originally from Asia, it is considered an exotic animal and will have to live the rest of its life in detention.²³



October 2017
Guadalupe and Sabinas Hidalgo, State of Nuevo Leon, Mexico

- Seizure of a female tiger cub (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), approximately 5 months old and confined in a back courtyard. She was transferred to the La Pastora park. She had been treated disgracefully, with no respect for animal well-being.



- Seizure from a ranch of a female black bear (*Ursus americanus eremicus*, Appendix II) approximately 2 years old. She had apparently been "collected" by her master when she was just a cub. She was cramped in a wire cage. She had been treated disgracefully, with no respect for animal well-being. She was transferred to the La Pastora park.²⁴

October 20, 2017
Tepic, State of Nayarit, Mexico

A boa (*Boidae spp.*, Appendix II) infiltrated the Ojo de Agua neighborhood. Social networks announced that it was near Copal and López Mateos Streets. The reptile was captured by the Civil Defense services and handed over to the PROFEPA. It was released in the forest near the city of Compostela. As for the puma (*Puma concolor*, Appendix I) captured a few days ago, wandering through the Colonia Moctezuma housing development, the PROFEPA assessed that its behavior indicated strong human influence. Although it was in good health and had all of its claws and teeth, the animal was considered inapt for release in the wild. It will live out the rest of its life at the El Tigre UMA.²⁵

October 24, 2017
Acapulco, State of Guerrero, Mexico

Three wild animals on vacation in Acapulco deemed undesirable for tourists and residents, and promptly removed by the PROFEPA. The first was a male green iguana (*Iguana Iguana*, Appendix II), about 1.2 m long and very interested in events at the Convention Center. He was picked up by the tourism police and released in the Tres Palos lagoon. Then a brown pelican (*Pelecanus Occidentalis*) was captured on the touristic beach at Pichilingue, visibly disoriented by the mood. When released in the Boca Chica lagoon, he came back to his senses quickly and started looking for food.

Lastly, a male boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II), about 1.2 m long, was identified by residents in the Las Playas neighborhood of Cerro de los Cañones. Action was taken to remove it, and then immediately release it.²⁶

November 19, 2017
tláhuac, Ciudad of Mexico, Mexico

The deer educational park (Venadario de las niñas y los niños) is home to 47 wild animals of suspicious origin: white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), ostriches (*Struthio camelus*), a red-lore Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II), and a white-tailed hawk (*Buteo albicaudatus*, Appendix II). They were all put under sequestration, under the park's responsibility, awaiting the provision of compliant documents.²⁷

November 23, 2017
Apatzingán, State of Michoacán, Mexico

Three Harris' hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*, Appendix II), three southern caracaras (*Caracara plancus*, Appendix II), two orange-fronted conures (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II), three lions (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), seven northern coatis (*Nasua narica*, Appendix III in Honduras), a patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*, Appendix II), three gray foxes (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), four common raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), two fallow deer (*Dama dama*), 17 collared peccaries (*Pecari tajacu*) and four west Mexican chachalacas (*Ortalis poliocephala*) were the object of emergency seizure by the PROFEPA. The children's park in Nuevo Amanecer was evacuated on court order. The animals of unknown origin were being kept in disgraceful conditions, in violation of the law on wildlife. Penned up in dirty cages, malnourished and without veterinary care, the menagerie was temporarily transferred to a zoo and to a more hospitable accredited shelter.²⁸



December 6, 2017
Tonalá, State of Jalisco, Mexico

A tiger (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), three military macaws (*Ara militaris*, Appendix I), a keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*, Appendix II), a Harris's hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*, Appendix II), and two northern crested caracaras (*Caracara cheriway*, Appendix II) were seized on "La Esperanza" ranch.²⁹



December 12, 2017

Charco Cercado, Guadalcázar Municipality, State of San Luis Potosí, Mexico

PROFEPA seized 42 rattlesnakes (genus *Crotalus*), two snakes of the *Pituophis deppei* species, one American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*, Appendix II), and one coyote (*Canis latrans*). Plants were also seized: nine peyotes (*Lophophora williamsi*, Appendix II), a cactus of the species *Mammilloidya candida* (Appendix II), and 24 bishop's cap cactuses (*Astrophytum myriostigma*, Appendix II).³⁰

December 23, 2017

Valle de Chalco, State of Mexico, Mexico

Seizure of a Geoffroy's spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*, Appendix II) and a red-lore amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II).³¹

PANAMA

October 12, 2017

Los Santos, Los Santos Province, Panama

Four poachers of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and pacas (*Cuniculus paca*, Appendix III in Honduras) caught red-handed and sentenced to 48 months in prison commutable to a fine.³²



PERU

October 17, 2017

Iquitos and Punchana Urban Districts, Maynas Province, Loreto Region, Peru

In the restaurants for tourists Don Andres and El Mijano: seizure of several jaguar skins (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I) and other felines, preserved insects, saurians, and 11 live yellow-headed sidenecks (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II).³³

ASIA

CAMBODIA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 20, 2017

Kampong Trabaek District, Prey Veng Province, Cambodia

The truck on its way to Viet Nam did not get very far. It left the border province of Prey Veng, but was stopped by military police, tipped off by the NGO Wildlife Alliance, before it got out of the country. On board were Chea Phoeng and Nguyen Thigim, a Vietnamese couple living in Cambodia, as well as a Mandarin duck (*Aix galericulata*), three wild ducks, 60 doves and 221 kg of snakes. The couple's trip ended with a fine. According to a member of the NGO, the animals will be taken to the Tamao zoo in the province of Takeo, or released in the forest or in Tonle Sap Lake, depending on their condition and species.³⁴



October 23, 2017

Angkor Borei, Takeo Province, Cambodia

The livestock truck was transporting no less than 1 ton of live wild animals, snakes that included Indochinese spitting cobras (*Naja siamensis*, Appendix II) and checkered keel back reticulated pythons (*Xenochrophis piscator*, Appendix III in India), turtles and a few birds. It was on its way to Viet Nam. The poisonous snakes were taken to the zoo in Phnom Tamao. Most of the other animals were freed near a lake. The driver and passenger of the truck were taken in by the military police and are in custody.³⁵

December 18 and 19, 2017

Province of Stoeng Treng and Phnom Srouch District, Province of Kampong Speu, Cambodia

- Seizure from market butchers stalls of three turtles, five lorises (*Nycticebus* spp., Appendix I), and three varans (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II) all still alive, and of three dried porcupine stomachs.

- Seizure of eight turtles, including four softshell turtles (family Trionychidae), five pangolins dead and alive, and of 100 kg of green-necked peafowl adornments (*Pavo muticus*, Annex II) from two individuals.³⁶



CHINA

November 1, 2017

China

How much are they worth?

It turns out that according to a new document issued by the State Forestry Administration—which has been applied since the 15 December—a seized Asian elephant, or all of its parts, is worth 2,000,000 yuan, or \$ 302,844 US, an African elephant half as much. Asian rhinoceroses are worth as much as Asian elephants. White rhinoceroses are worth as much as African elephants.

According to this same scale, a pangolin is worth \$ 6,056 US, a wild tiger is worth \$ 151,422 US, a bred tiger is worth half as much, a leopard is worth \$ 75,711 US, a snow leopard is worth \$ 75,711 US, and a clouded leopard is worth 45,426 US.

We would like to thank EIA for sending us the translation of this document which "On the Trail" will mention again.³⁷

INDIA

Beginning of October 2017

Biswanath Chariali, State of Assam, India

Jahir Ali and Nader Ali are notorious and multitargets poachers. The Chatia and Gingiya police caught them with their rudimentary rifle and five bullets. They have been placed in detention for interrogation.³⁸

October 14, 2017

Kumbla, Kasaragod District, State of Kerala, India

Seizure by 11 forest rangers of 11 turtles and 3 Sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*) antlers from a convoy of two vehicles that were difficult to stop on the road from Mogral to Peral. Four arrests.³⁹

REPEATED OFFENSE / GANG

October 16, 2017

State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Four years in prison and a fine of 10,000 rupees (\$150 US) – that was the penalty given to Shamim, Badrilal Sapera, Mansingh, Prahlad and Raghuvir, a particularly efficient gang of multi-species poachers that was dismantled last February (see “On the trail” n°16 p.103). If they do not pay their fines, an additional 10 months in prison will be added. They were caught, this time, with pangolin scales and a spotted sand boa. Their track record is much longer: Shamim has been arrested at least twice in the past and admitted to being involved in trafficking 120 tiger hides and 1200 leopard hides. Raghuvir, alias Kalicharan, managed to escape in 1988 after having been arrested in possession of 129 animals hides. The five men also poached cobras, hyenas, jackals... The gang was dealing in Madhya Pradesh in the Narsinghgarh, Sehore and Guna districts, extending its activities as far as the State of Rajasthan and around Delhi, and was linked to international trafficking through Nepal and Tibet.⁴⁰



October 18, 2017

Pasighat, East Siang District, State of Arunachal Pradesh, India

A WASE team (Women Against Social Evils) and the police seized two elephant tusks weighing 720 g, worth an estimated 200,000 rupees, or \$ 3,055 US (\$ 4,243 US/kg); four live tokay geckos (*Gekko gecko*); and 235 bottles “of odd spirits made in India”. One arrest.⁴¹



October 22, 2017

Harmoti, on the borderline of the Assam and the Arunachal Pradesh States, India

Major seizure of 45 bear gallbladders, five leopard claws and three tiger bones by the Assam Forest Department, assisted by the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department. The two poachers were trying to cross the border between the two States. Authorities estimate that the items are worth 2 million rupees (\$305,500 US) on the international market.⁴²



October 25, 2017

Tiliki, State of Odisha, India

Rangers in the forest arrested two men suspected of poaching, after they were denounced. A homemade rifle, a motorcycle and a cell phone were confiscated. Silama Siba and Pitabash Naik allegedly admitted to hunting in the forest. Wildlife in the region is more and more threatened. A joint patrol program was kicked off mid-October by the forest personnel and engineers of Southco, a power distribution company, in view of the increasing number of cases of poaching with live wires. Two poachers were arrested on October 22 after having electrocuted a boar.⁴³

November 3, 2017

Chilika Lake and its area, State of Odisha, India

During the month of Kartika, most Hindus follow a vegetarian diet, and eat meat only after Purnima, the full moon on November 3.

At that time, the demand for wild meat becomes very high in the neighboring cities of Balugaon, Berhampur, Khurda and Bhubaneswar.

As a precaution, all wildlife protection personnel reinforce surveillance around Lake Chilika in order to prevent poaching.

Lake Chilika, with a surface area of approximately 1000 km², is part of the RAMSAR network. It is an essential wetland for migratory birds coming from Iran, Central Asia and Siberia. From white-bellied eagles (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*, Appendix II) to flamingos, 160 species are concentrated around the lake and breed there between November and February.⁴⁴



Limosa limosa

November 10, 2017

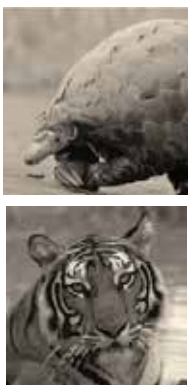
Simlabari, State of West Bengal, India

The 53th battalion seized a gecko, four deer antlers and a Maruti vehicle. One arrest. The trafficker is from Bhutan.⁴⁵

**Beginning of December 2017
Kabirdham District, State of
Chhattisgarh, India**

The canine unit was on the scene to investigate the poaching of an Indian bison (*Bos gaurus*, Appendix I). The dogs extricated pangolin bones, monkey skulls, tiger skins, and a sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*, Appendix I) from a hut in the village. Next door, people were cooking sambar deer meat (*Rusa unicolor*). It is in this same area that hundreds of dead and cut up monkeys were found (cf. "On the Trail" n°5 p.54).

Prabhat Mishra, the forest division manager, says that people eat the wild meat and keep the remains for black magic.⁴⁶



IRAN

**October 14, 2017
Saqqez County, Kurdistan Province, Iran**

Two teams of poachers were arrested by gamekeepers.

First, two men tried to escape by motorcycle when they saw the gatekeepers. During the chase, they dumped a blue bag containing an eagle. They were caught.

Next, three unarmed men with greyhounds were caught in an ambush. They were carrying wild goat (*Capra aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) carcasses. The carcasses, the vehicles, the dogs and the men were turned over to officials in charge of the environment.⁴⁷

**October, November 2017
Protected area of the Alborz mountain range,
Iran
Tumult at the peaks**

The protected zone extends from the hills on the shores of the Caspian Sea to the hills of Tehran, 4540 m above the sea. Up there, the snow is everlasting. The "poaching" of cypress and juniper is aggravated by illegal hunting and collisions with wolves, with *Ursus arctos*, with *Panthera pardus* and with wild goats (see "On the Trail" n°7, p.53 and n°14 p.56). After hunting the "predators" day and night, the environmental police of Chaloos and the mountain rangers were able to capture five armed poachers who were hiding several unidentified animal carcasses in their bivouac. In any case, they cannot be domestic animals at this altitude. In accordance with the new criminal code, each of the "predators" faces three years in prison.⁴⁸

**November 29, 2017
Khojir National Park, Tehran Province, Iran**

The two poachers abandoned their rifle and ammunition, and fled. The Khojir national park is home to wolves, leopards and eagles.⁴⁹

**December 1, 2017
Qom, Qom Province, Iran**

Seizure in a ready-to-wear shop of several hats made of lynx (*Lynx lynx*, Appendix II), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) and wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) fur.⁵⁰

**December 1, 2017
Golestan Province, Tehran, Tehran Province, Iran**

Coordinated seizure in two rural houses of two red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and five pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*), and in a house in the capital city of a red deer skull, antlers and 20 kg of meat. The three hunters should get a fine totaling 702 million rials (\$20,000 US) and face between three months and three years in prison for poaching, and three to six months for possession of illegal weapons.⁵¹

MALAYSIA

**November 13, 2017
State of Sabah, Malaysia. Border
with Indonesia.**

In a freezer, seizure of Bornean bearded pig (*Sus barbatus*) meat, civet, pangolin (*Manis* spp., Appendix I), fruit bat (*Pteropus* spp.), two monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), and seizure of two reticulated pythons (*Python reticulatus*, Appendix II) that were still alive. The restaurant owner is being grilled.⁵²



NEPAL

**REPEATED OFFENSE
October 18 and 25, 2017
Central Development Region, Nepal
Stupor in Kathmandu.**

Seizure of two chimpanzees (*Pan* spp., Appendix I) and seven monkeys (Primates spp., Appendix I or II) of an unidentified species.

Acting on a tip, the CIB (Central Investigation Bureau) raided a house and found the caged monkeys. According to the preliminary investigation, they came from Nigeria by plane and were destined for India, transiting through Nepal. Seven golden pheasants (*Chrysolophus pictus*), two ringneck pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) and 65 parakeets (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) were making this improbable voyage with the monkeys. But in the world of wildlife smuggling, anything can happen..../...

Six people were arrested. Among them, Mohammad Usman, an Indian citizen, contraband manager. It is the fourth time that he has been caught red-handed in the capital of Nepal (see "On the Trail" n°6 p.114 and n°13 p.111).

A few days later, three customs agents at the Tribhuvan international airport were suspended. Fifteen years ago, four gorillas coming from Nigeria and destined for Malaysia transited through Nepal.⁵³

THAILAND

October 5, 2017

Aranyaprathet District, Province of Sa Kaeo, Thailand. Border with Cambodia.

The pick-up truck loaded with 52 bags of "fertilizer" was stopped at a roadside checkpoint. Inside the bags, there were 369 animals, 45 varans (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), 105 turtles, 9 soft shell-turtles (family Trionychidae), 180 wild ducks, and 30 cobras still living for the most part. The driver said to have been paid 4,000 bath, or \$120 US, by a certain Cambodian named "Jim" who supplied restaurants in his country. It was the second time that Mr. Anuwat worked for "Jim."⁵⁴

VIET NAM

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 26, 2017

Loc Dien, Binh Phước Province, Viet Nam

The registered breeding farm for snakes, turtles, varans, minks and porcupines had gotten off track.

An environmental police raid led to the discovery of 27 king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*, Appendix II), 23 pangolins (*Manis* spp., Appendix I), over 100 long-tailed monkeys (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II), civets (Viverridae family) and a dozen water monitors (*Varanus salvator*, Appendix II). They were apparently being stored for an up-coming delivery. A man called Hanh, owner of the breeding farm in the south of the country, says that he gets his supplies from a variety of sources in the north of Viet Nam. His son, however, stated that the pangolins and cobras had been purchased a few days earlier from a city resident who had just moved.⁵⁵



December 18, 2017

Go Vap Urban District, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

12 macaques (*Macaca* spp., Appendix I or II) and 7 otters crammed into a balcony on the 2nd floor. Freed.⁵⁶



EUROPE

GERMANY

October 15, 2017

Amberg, Bavaria State, Germany

7000 in the little truck with license plates from the Czech Republic. Rats, mice, rabbits, guinea pigs, chameleons (*Chamaeleonidae* family, Appendix I or II) and axolotls (*Ambystoma mexicanum*, Appendix II). The driver, who was on his way to Belgium, was taken in by the police for questioning and released on bail for €500 (\$590 US). He continued on his way. The German police is very discreet about the matter, and in the eyes of the German judicial system, the lives of each of the animals seized are worth no more than 10 euro cents.

Several dozen or hundreds of animals had already died of suffocation and cold when the van was inspected on a highway parking lot. The survivors were taken for the time being to animal shelters in Bavaria, Hesse and Bade-Wurtemberg. It's probable that the shipment was destined to feed snakes breeding.⁵⁷

December 6, 2017

Hannover-Langenhagen international airport, Lower Saxony State, Germany

Seizure in the baggage of a Congolese traveler coming from Kinshasa, with transit through Paris, of 5.4 kg of unfrozen porcupine and addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*, Appendix I) meat. He claimed to be carrying "vegetables", brought back as souvenirs.⁵⁸

ITALY

October 24, 2017

Province of Brescia, Region of Lombardy, Italy

The tattoo shop was decorated with a monkey skull and an owl, a little crocodile, and several dozens of other animals and stuffed animal parts of unknown origin. In less than a year in the province, anti-smuggling services have seized 500 live and preserved animals of protected species. Most of them were turtles.⁵⁹



NETHERLANDS

September 1-November 5, 2017
Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, Province of North Holland, port of Rotterdam, Province of South Holland, Zwolle, Province of Overijssel and Netherlands Antilles, Netherlands

Customs and other services were kept busy between September and November. They pulled a lot of items off the black market: 14,000 dried seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp., Appendix II), three elephant legs, a polar bear skin (*Ursus maritimus*, Appendix II), 77 kg of pangolin scales (*Manis* spp. Appendix I), seven wild animal pelts, some monkey skulls (*Primates* spp., Appendix I or II) and crocodile skulls (*Crocodylia* spp., Appendix I or II), a green turtle shell (*Chelonia mydas*, Appendix I), six butterflies, 10 shipments of live coral and 120 arapaimas (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) whose 110 were already dead.



Reports were drawn up on several smugglers, and several have already been sentenced. The seahorse transporter got six months in prison, including a three-month suspension.



At the bird market in Zwolle, several merchants were sentenced to fines of 5000 € (\$5900 US). Their birds had forged bands or certificates.⁶⁰

CZECH REPUBLIC

Mi-october 2017
Prague-Václav-Havel International Airport, Province of Bohemia, Czech Republic

Full count of the summer's seizures was made by Sarka Miskovska, spokesperson for the airport customs service: from Mai to September 35 cases of illegal import of "souvenirs" and protected animal by-products were detected. 273 coral fragments were seized, as well as 384 mixtures for "traditional Chinese medicine" containing Siberian musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*, Appendix II), python fat, turtle shells and Saiga antelope's horns (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II).⁶¹



RUSSIA

December 6, 2017
Primorsky Kari, Far Eastern Federal District, Russia

A 31-year-old Chinese man held 133 Amur tiger bones (*Panthera tigris altaica*, Appendix I) preserved in alcohol, 20 bear paws, and dried sea cucumbers at his home. He was sentenced to three years and eight months in prison.⁶²



Donkeys

Pressure's getting worse. Australia enters into conversations with China to export thousands of donkeys once again wild. In China, since 1 January 2018, the import tax on donkey skins has been reduced from 5% to 2%.



The African wild ass *Equus africanus* is listed under CITES Appendix I. The domesticated form *Equus asinus* is excluded from this listing. The Indian wild ass *Equus hemionus khur* and the Mongolian wild ass *Equus hemionus hemionus* are listed under CITES Appendix I. The kiang *Equus kiang* and the Asian wild ass *Equus hemionus* are listed under CITES Appendix II.

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

December 10, 2017

Ga-Rankuwa, Gauteng Province, South Africa

The three men were arrested after a road inspection they tried to avoid. In a car, they were transporting garbage bags and buckets full of donkeys meat that had been cut up in illegal slaughterhouses. The men were released on bail amounting to \$ 36.5 and \$ 73 US. The head inspector Mishack Matlou is also considering prosecuting Dube, Sepeng, and Molapo for animal cruelty as well. The donkeys are often killed with pangas [machetes]. Street vendors sell donkey meat as "bush meat". Since 2015, over 300 donkeys have been stolen and slaughtered in the province. The heads, paws, and skins of about thirty donkeys were



found in the bush recently. Six of these donkeys belong to a small local transporter. The pack donkeys were transporting water and firewood. He has three donkeys left, which he protects 24 hours a day, especially in the nighttime.¹

KENYA

October 12, 2017

Kenya

The government has put a freeze on permits for new donkey abattoirs (see "On the Trail" n°13 p.97, n°16 p.111, n°17 p.125 and n°18 p.121). Petitions demanding that slaughterhouses be closed are flooding authorities' desks, and complaints of stolen donkeys are inundating police stations. Neighboring Tanzania would have already suspended operations in donkey abattoirs.²

ZIMBABWE

October 2017

Zimbabwe

Tension is mounting regarding the Bulawayo "model" abattoir that Battlefront Investments is about to open. The veterinary doctor Keith Dutlow, manager of the NGO Aware Trust, devoted to promoting animal well-being, is multiplying his calls for reason: "The small population of donkeys that Zimbabwe has cannot sustain the removal of 2,000 donkeys a month from the national herd... The proposed opening of a donkey abattoir in Bulawayo will lead to the extinction of donkeys in Zimbabwe, within five to ten years."

On the contrary, Gwanda Rural District Council is overjoyed. Some Chinese are very interested in the next donkey auction.

A high-level official from the health and veterinary services says that he cannot forbid the abattoir from functioning, as long as it complies with general regulations on the protection of public health.

The ministry of Agriculture, mechanization and irrigation has turned its attention to the subject. "Donkey are a major source of draught power in the agriculture sector and decapitating them will be a major blow for the smallholder farmer and agriculture sector... The Government will not stand by and allow that to happen, as donkeys' economic, social and political importance far outweigh the interest of meat and skins." Minister Joseph Made also stresses the capital role that donkeys play in the local transportation sector.

Battlefront Investments, which already runs a cattle abattoir and two butcher shops in Bulawayo and in Victoria Falls, plans to open its new establishment before the end of the year.³

CHINA

December 31, 2017

China

After the confirmed closure of the domestic ivory market and the simultaneous import of about 30 elephants from Zimbabwe, China is giving the whole world a new proof of its ambiguity and its cruelty toward wild and domestic animals: a new boost is given to the unbelievable ejiao industry. The import tax on donkey skins passed from 5 to 2%.⁴

IRAN

October 6 2017

Semnan Province, Iran

Donkeys at the threat of bikers

A gang of poachers on dirt bikes runs onagers (*Equus hemionus onager*, Appendix II), a subspecies of Asian wild ass, to exhaustion. The motorcycles are fast. The onagers are, too, but after a few hours they collapse.

Gestation lasts one year before the foal is born. The young foal remains dependent on its mother for two years. Onagers are crepuscular and eat desert plants when temperatures are not too hot, at dusk and dawn. Like all Asian wild asses, they are endangered. Hunters use motorized vehicles as weapons to hunt them for their meat. (Chasing wild donkeys by car in Tibet, see "On the Trail" n°6, p.99.) Three poachers on motorcycles, including one soldier, were arrested by the police after a difficult investigation which led to an onager carcass that had not yet been butchered. They face a fine of 100 to 500 million rials, or \$2900 to \$14,500 US, which is very little if you take into consideration both the cruelty involved and the loss for biodiversity. There are only 100 to 300 onagers left in Asia. The poachers could also get three months to one year in prison.

Soon, if rangers and the Iranian authorities do not change the course of events, we will have to say that the Khar Turan park, a UNESCO biosphere reserve, was one of the last places on Earth where you could see or hope to see wild donkeys.⁵

AUSTRALIA

October 2017

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, State of South Australia, Australia

Tex McGrath saw a good deal. Chinese demand to make ejiao never ceases to rise and feral donkeys are estimated by the ministry of the Environment to be at least 5 million individuals, with strong proportions of the population being in the arid central regions of the country. McGrath claims to have passed an agreement with Donald Fraser from the Anangu tribe, famous militant for aboriginal rights to the land. He buys donkeys captured by the aboriginals in the APY territories and fences them in, in waiting to receive authorizations to export the males to Asia, in Singapore he says. The females would be kept in Australia for reproduction. But this is no simple business. McGrath count a multitude of problems caused by the fierce nature of the animals. They would be difficult to gather, manipulate, sort, and reticent to climb into the trucks.

At present, 200 donkeys are prisoners. They are for the moment stuck in a pen rendered inaccessible to the trucks because of heavy rain.

A second contract covers 1200 more animals but McGrath hopes to acquire thousands more.

Donkeys- and horses- were imported by the settlers during the XIXth century as draft and pack animals. Those that escaped reproduced in absence of any predators and populations grew all along the XXth century, limited only by drought and bush fires. Deemed an invasive species donkeys and horses are regularly slaughtered in groups by exterminators using motorcycles and helicopters. The country's law does not yet allow export of live equines, but the perspective of the Chinese market changes things. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources declared that an agreement had already been signed on 24 March 2017 between the two governments, which "opens the door for Australia to start the process to trade edible donkey meat and skins". Greed is tickled. Northern Territory Minister for Primary Industries and Resources, Ken Vowles, neighbor State of the APY territories, was in China in 2017 where he met with the most important donkey breeder in the country. According to him, over thirty Chinese businessmen visited the Northern Territory over the last year and a half to evaluate business opportunities regarding donkeys.⁶



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V2

The logo features the word "ON" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. To its right, the word "the" is written in a smaller, lowercase, italicized sans-serif font. Further right, the word "TRAIL" is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font, matching the style of "ON".