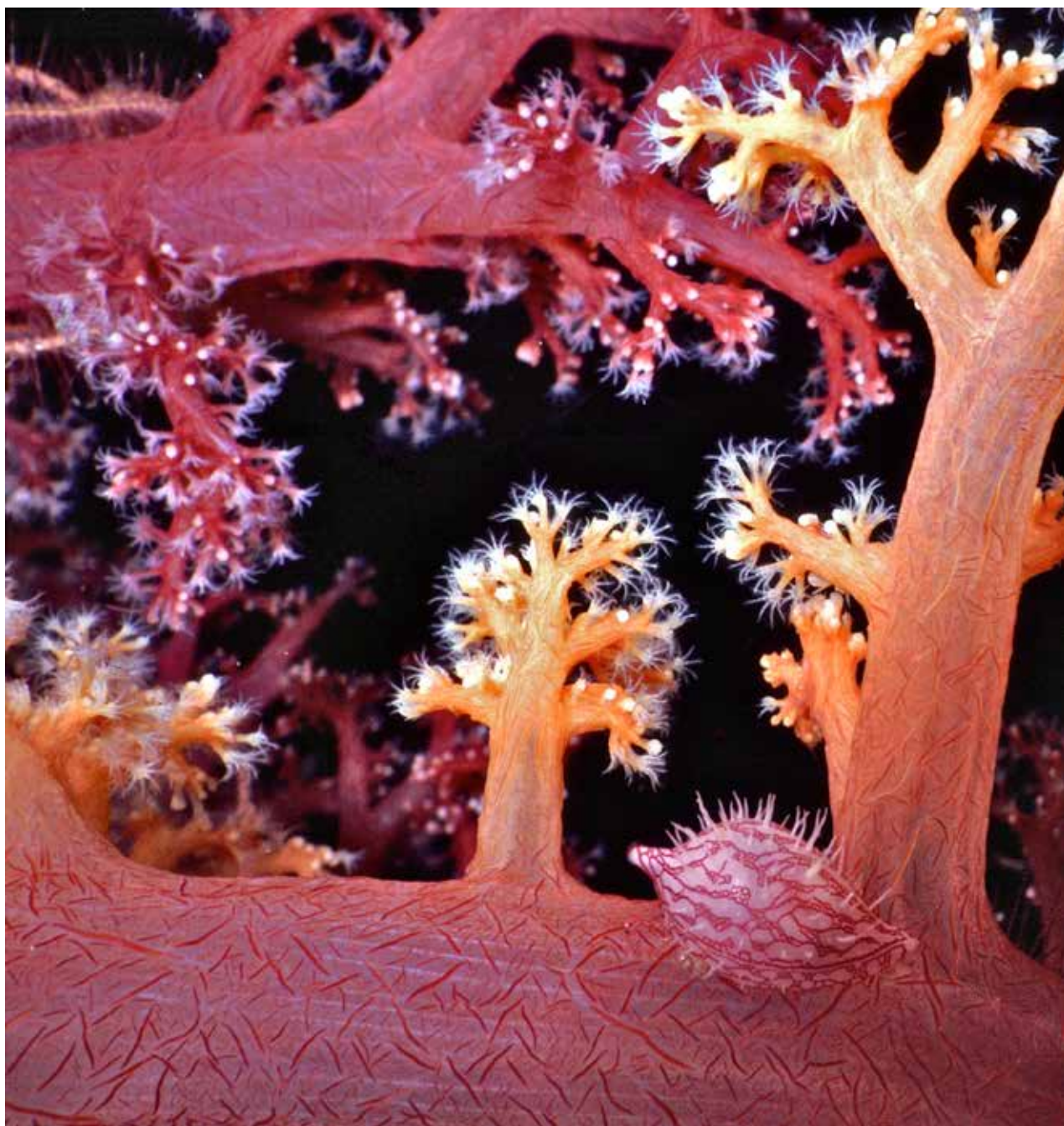


ON_{the} TRAIL

The defaunaution bulletin
Quarterly information and analysis report on animal poaching and smuggling
n°20. Events from the 1th January to the 31 of March 2018
Published on May 21, 2018

Original version in French





"On the Trail", the defauna magazine, aims to get out of the drip of daily news to draw up every three months an organized and analyzed survey of poaching, smuggling and worldwide market of animal species protected by national laws and international conventions.

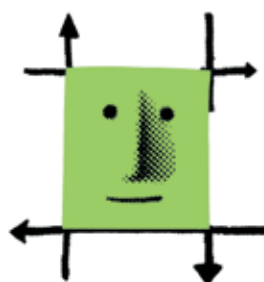
"On the Trail" highlights the new weapons of plunderers, the new modus operandi of smugglers, rumours intended to attract humans consumers of animals and their by-products. "On the Trail" gathers and disseminates feedback from institutions, individuals and NGOs that fight against poaching and smuggling. End to end, the "On the Trail" are the biological, social, ethnological, police, customs, legal and financial chronicle of poaching and other conflicts between humanity and animality.

Previous issues in English

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

Previous issues in French

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ROBIN DES BOIS

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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

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.

Seahorses

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



ASIA

CHINA

March 2018
Mohan Port, Mengla County, Yunnan Province, China. Border with Laos.

The truck had already entered China, coming from Laos. At the freight terminal, the customs officers decided to check it out. In the cab, the Chinese driver was hiding a cardboard box full of dried seahorses. There were 2395 of them, weighing 3.9 kg.¹



THAILAND

January 24, 2018
Pattaya, Bang Lamung District, Province of Chonburi, Thailand

Pictures posted on Internet by tourists attracted much more attention to Paisri Worawong's stand on the floating market than she would have wanted. She was selling for 150 baht a piece (\$4.5 US) grilled sea horses on skewers. She had bought them for 80 baht (\$2,45 US) a piece in a pharmacy in Bangkok. Her little business was mainly aimed at Chinese vacationers, among which some still believe sea horses can cure impotence. The pictures caused angered comments and led to an inspection from the market director unhappy of the bad fame given to his business. Paisri Worawong was banned from the floating market. On a legal level the seller cannot be prosecuted. Seahorses are not yet protected in Thailand.²

EUROPE

ITALY

March 17-18, 2018
Florence, Tuscany Region, Italy

A greasy spoon in all of its splendor: set up in the street, the "cook" handled food directly on the sidewalk and stored expired meat (including goose heads and necks) as well as a full box of seahorses. The municipal police intervened at night, seizing all of the equipment. The health administration was also involved. The Chinese operator had a license for itinerant activities. He was fined 169 € (\$210 US) for illegal occupation of public space and another 5,000 € (\$6,200 US) for violating trade rules. Legal proceedings were brought against him for detention of the seahorses.³

Corals

AFRICA

ALGERIA

Beginning of February 2018

Off El Kala, El Taref Province, Algeria. Border with Tunisia.

Seizure of 2 t of red coral (*Corallium rubrum*), four small boats, diving equipment, three cars, several heavy forbidden fishing gears known as "ingegno" that scrape up corals and destroy habitats. 22 arrests. The trafficking is tenacious. The pilfered branches are exfiltrated through the Algerian-Tunisian border and then sent on to Italy, a platform from which they are scattered toward other European countries, and toward the Middle East and Asia (see "On the Trail n°15 p.6).¹



Mid March 2018

Annaba, Annaba Province, Algeria

The informant was right. The Brigade de recherche et d'intervention (BRI) went close to the mouth of the Wadi Seybouse and, near the Sidi Salem cemetery, found three young people, one of whom was a minor possessing 4.15 kg of red coral (*Corallium rubrum*). They also found a motor boat, scuba tanks, nets ... The material was handed over to the coastguard while the poachers were indicted by the El Hadjar court and placed in detention, with the exception of the minor. But a new source of revenue has emerged for the mobs: according to the newspaper "L'expression" the ability of red coral to withstand high heat make them useful in Israel for the manufacture of rivets for the aeronautical industry.²

ASIA

CHINA

January 25, 2018

Shenyang, Liaoning Province, China

The package came from Japan and contained 1.34 kg of coral jewelry: bracelets, earrings, necklaces...³

Beginning of March 2018

Shanghai, China

Customs officers seized a package coming from Greece and containing 20 red coral branches. In China, four species of coral are listed in the CITES Appendix III (*Corallium elatius*, *Corallium japonicum*, *Corallium konjoi* and *Corallium secundum*). In the Mediterranean basin, catching and marketing coral are subject to restrictions.⁴

Beginning of March 2018

Kunming, Yunnan Province, China

Seizure on a Vietnamese individual of ten bracelets made of red coral, 90 g per bracelet.⁵

SINGAPORE

March 7, 2018

Singapore

Sentenced to two months in prison for having tried to import 80 branches of coral (*Scleractinia* order, Appendix II and *Alcyonacea*) from the Philippines, labelled as "decorative plastic items for aquariums." Most were chalice corals, i.e. with compartments enabling the polyps to retract.⁶



EUROPE

ITALY

March 22, 2018

Genoa Port, Liguria Region, Italy

Historic bust. Eight tons of seven different species. Never before has such a large quantity of coral been seized in the country. The customs officers at la Guardia di Finanza discovered the cargo on board a merchant ship arriving from Singapore. The anthozoans originated from the Solomon Islands. The recipient, according to the press, is "a company specializing in the processing and trade of shells and fossils for well-known collectors in the western Liguria region." The company's owner is summoned.⁷

March 22, 2018

Bari Karol Wojtyła Airport, Apulia Region, Italy

The man arrived from the Seychelles. Taking an interest in his baggage, the customs officers and agents of the airport discovered eight corals (family *Acroporidae*, Appendix II) weighing a total of 300 g, without a CITES document. The traveler left the airport without the anthozoans but with the added weight of a 5,000 € (\$6,200 US) fine.⁸

Abalones

Haliotis spp.



“Perlemoen”, mother of pearls, called abalones in English, cause an outbreak of violence, car chases and terrible stench in southern South Africa where cooking and drying workshops grow like mold. The weight of the Chinese triad is enormous in this hell but the workforce that captures the shellfish on the sea floor and smuggles them out buy the 20 to 50 kg heavy bags while eluding the anti-poaching patrols or being in turn caught are from the Métis community.

Abalones are well appreciated on Asian dining tables since the Zhou dynasty 1122-256 BC. Since then water has gone under the bridge and despite their prolific fertility, abalones with very slow growth, are on the bricks of exhaustion especially since the sea urchins that protected them from rays and octopus in their rocky habitat are also disappearing under the triple pressure of poaching, lobsters, and pollution.

Abalones are not listed in CITES and Hong Kong, main importer and re-exporter, does not have any legal means to ban their access to the border. Only sanitary criteria can we called upon and the numerous substandard and underground processing workshops uncovered in South Africa could justify more rigorous action from veterinarian services in Hong Kong. Other than bacteriological and food poisoning risks, the SANBI (South African National Biodiversity Institute) warns of the growing risk of allergic reactions and asthma attacks. “Care must be taken if ever one wants to enjoy a plate of South African abalone for the first time”.

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

GANG

January 7, 2018

Big Bay, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

One car. Three arrests: 18, 31 and 33 years old. \$19,000 US worth of abalones. The other passengers got away.¹

January 8, 2018

Goodwood, Cap, Province of Western Cape, South Africa

The vehicle aroused suspicion. Police were warned, and a flying squad managed to stop it. It contained 13 bags in which were stuffed 2585 abalones, worth around 100,000 rand (\$8100 US).²

January 11, 2018

Lwandle and Khayelitsha, Cape Town, Province of Western Cape, South Africa

Seizure of 6742 abalones in a Ford LDV parked on the corner of Pama and Kusasa Roads in Khayelitsha. One arrest. Soon after, a team of three poachers aged 24, 27 and 39 also driving a Ford LDV was stopped in the same township. Coming from Hermanus, they were carrying diving gear and would be linked to the first seizure.³

January 16, 2018

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

The police patrol was warned of a possible robbery happening in a house on Anton Frans street. When they arrived on site, police agents decided to search the house and vehicles. They found 368,000 rand (\$30,900 US) worth of abalones and arrested five suspects aged 22 to 26 years old.⁴

January 18, 2018

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

In the Monte Vista neighborhood, a police raid on yet another abalone cooking and packing workshop. An enormous quantity of abalones, gas cylinders, fans and electric power strips.⁵



January 22, 2018

Philadelphia, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Seizure in a car of 15 kg of abalones, estimated at approximately \$18,000 US, or \$1200US/kg.⁶

January 24, 2018

Khayelitsha, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Fortuitous trafficking discovery. In an abandoned Ford, 3717 abalones estimated at \$90.000 US.⁷

January 24, 2018

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

The smell is what caught the neighbors' attention. The search enabled to dismantle a cooking, drying and packaging workshop and to seize 6276 "perlemoen" valued at 2.8 million rand (\$227.000 US) on the black market. A 25-year-old woman attempted to escape, but she was caught. She will be sent before justice.⁸

January 24, 2018

Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Traffic and marine resources management violations. The Polo turned onto Glendore Road without using a turn signal. It was 8:30 p.m. The police launched a pursuit. There were three men in the car, 21, 22 and 32 years old, and 236 fresh abalones. The batch was estimated at 30,000 rand (\$2430 US).⁹

January 26, 2018

Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Fisheries reported that several container ships have been retained for inspection in the Port Elizabeth terminal, following information received concerning a massive abalone-smuggling operation. 128,223 fresh and frozen abalones were found in a container declared to be transporting "ox bones." The batch is estimated to be worth 10.1 million rand (\$810,000 US). The container was heading for China. In the past few weeks, the same clandestine business apparently fraudulently filled several other containers. The containers have been identified and recalled by the South African authorities.¹⁰

Beginning of February 2018

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

A poaching diver nearly died of hypothermia trying to escape from being arrested in Cape Point. Two of his accomplices were caught by Table Mountain National Park rangers. Their booty was 210 dried abalones.¹¹

February 6, 2018

Goodwood, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Another abalone cooking facility has been uncovered. Three arrests. The police arrived on the scene following complaints from neighbors about a foul smell.¹²



February 8, 2018

Maitland, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

An abalone bang. A house in Hely Street exploded in the early morning. One serious burn injury. Two neighboring houses destroyed. The firefighters and police discovered a destroyed abalone cooking and drying facility. Several gas burners and gas canisters were seized. Three arrests, two men and a woman, 27, 33 and 50 years old.¹³



February 16, 2018

Table View, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Three addresses, seven arrests, 23 to 38 years old. Seizure of 2225 dried abalones, 347 west coast rock lobster tails (*Jasus lalandii*), seven whole lobsters and nine heads, items made of rhinoceros horn.¹⁴



February 16, 2018

Near Hermanus, Western Cape Province, South Africa

He is spending the weekend behind bars. He had hidden 5138 abalones in bags in some thicket. Valued at \$42,000 US.¹⁵

February 21, 2018

Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

Seizure of 1.6 t of abalones in the harbor; follow-up to the seizure at the terminal for container ships in Port Elizabeth.¹⁶



February 21, 2018

Pearly Beach, Overberg District, Western Cape Province, South Africa

A case of abalone poaching was sighted and filmed by a drone. The police were informed real-time. Twenty poachers and on-land accomplices were intercepted in Eluxolweni, a sort of modular ghetto next to a beach-front where villas with swimming pools and seaside views line up one after another. The event provoked some ferocious and sick humored comments on Facebook, such as, "Where's a white shark when you need one?" or "Use a drone to drop a stun grenade on them in the water and will be the last time."

Kimon De Greef, freelance journalist in Cape Town, pointed out that in September of last year (2017), an abalone renegade from the Eastern Cape also ended up in Eluxolweni and was fatally attacked by a white shark at an abalone poaching spot. Similar comments appeared after he was killed.

In response to the partnership between the police and a start-up run by two whites, De Greef analyzes the social profile of the poachers. Their colored families were expropriated to build the beach resort. The younger generation has no livelihood other than abalone and drug trafficking. De Greef considers the pillaging of abalones to be a legacy from racial segregation. He remarks that in the 1980s, the abalone poachers were mostly white students who dove for pocket money.

"We need to be more honest about the circumstances, both historic and ongoing, that produce harmful economies, like the abalone trade — not simply turn to drones as a solution," concludes Kimon de Greef.¹⁷

February 26, 2018

Sandton, Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa

The raid involved four specialized police services, including the K9 dogs units from Benoni and West Rand. Two homes had been transformed into abalone cooking and drying facilities. They had a good blind. Sandton is the business district of Johannesburg, the richest in Africa, and the location of the last CITES meeting. But the police had information. One ton of shells were seized, worth an estimated 4.5 million rand (\$380,000 US, or \$380 US/kg), plus all of the usual clandestine cooking equipment (electric fans, scales and huge pots...). Two secondary players were arrested in the act, both Malawian nationals, 37 and 39 years old. For Captain Granville Meyer, spokesperson for the Sandton Police Station, it is easier to smuggle the abalone out of the country from the inland. "From Johannesburg, it goes over the border via Mozambique or Zimbabwe, and is then sent off to its destination by ship or by airplane."¹⁸



REPEATED OFFENSE

Beginning of March 2018

Klapmuts, Western Cape Province, South Africa

On February 28, the two vehicles were driving down R44, toward Paarl. They were stopped by Hawks, with support from the K9 unit and agents from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). The tip paid off: the three men in the vehicles were conveying 1011.8 kg of abalones, worth over 1.5 million rand (\$130,000 US, or \$130 US/kg). The vehicles and shells were seized, and the suspects appeared before the Paarl tribunal. One of them, Cheswin Isaacs (28 years old), was of particular interest to the investigators. Apparently, he has been charged in another poaching case and is a member of a gang of abalone poachers that has been pirating the shoreline in the Overberg area. His case has been linked to poaching proceedings already underway with the Cape Town court against the Overberg gang and its accomplices in the administration (see below).¹⁹

REPEATED OFFENSE

March 8, 2018

Hermanus, Western Cape Province, South Africa

This is a serious affair. The reputation of agents with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) could be severely tarnished. Nine of them have already appeared at a preliminary hearing in court, along with eight poachers, members of an abalone gang along the coast of Overberg. They had an agreement with the traffickers to resell them some of the seashells that had been seized through their own operations, and even guaranteed the protection of the clandestine cargo. But the gang had been under surveillance by the Hawks for almost two years. The dragnet was launched on March 5. Several specialized units, including some working on the fight against corruption and economic crime, stormed the DAFF offices in the little fishing harbor of Gansbaai and arrested the following agents, on the job or in their homes: Zihle Diko (38 years old), Winston Mervin Busch (36 years old), Craven Siyabulela Mxaku (42 years old), Linda Nkeleni (42 years old), John Karelse (48 years old), Allistair Maans (42 years old), Nomvuyo Concellia Motloung (43 years old), Adam Baadjies (36 years old) and Rudolph Louw (35 years old). They have been charged with theft, corruption, illegal possession and transportation of shucked abalones and obstruction of justice. The charges concern approximately 40 violations committed between September 12 and November 20, 2016. The co-accused members of the gang are: Richard George Malan (49 years old), Dennis John Swartz (37 years old), Donovan Williams (33 years old), Eugene Herandien (44 years old), Courtley May (41 years old), Solomon Sauls (45 years old), Frederick Myburgh (46 years old) and Preston Julies (48 years old). Solomon Sauls has already been indicted for similar charges before the Khayelitsha tribunal. Investigators have also linked the affair to the case of Cheswin Isaacs (28 years old), captured a few days earlier in Klapmuts (see above). Four arrest warrants have also been issued for accomplices on the run. The fall of the crooked DAFF agents in Gansbaai could explain the strange atmosphere of impunity in this little coastal village: in August 2017, residents of the neighboring town of Kleinbaai created a watchdog group to monitor poachers. According to one resident, "Poachers are so arrogant now that they are walking down the street or being dropped off in full diving gear in broad daylight..." (See "On the Trail" n°18, p. 6). There was also the case of the mysterious massive abalone poaching with guards taken hostage in September 2017, in a warehouse in Gansbaai (see "On the Trail" n°18, p. 7). The disheartened statement of the anonymous DAFF agent in August 2017 suddenly makes sense: "There are a few guys that still want to do the [anti-poaching] job and the other people just take their pay and that's all." (See "On the Trail" n°18, p. 6).²⁰

March 2018

South Africa

Former President Jacob Zuma is suspected to have accepted a million rand (\$86,000 US) from Boo and Baaitjies, two businessmen involved in the abalone industry. They are based in Gansbaai. The one million rand bribe was intended to convince Zuma to keep Senzeni Zokwana, Minister of Fisheries, in the government, who would have received 300,000 rand (\$25,000 US) from the "octopus" abalone. The opaque resell system of seized abalones is at the heart of the affair (cf. "On the Trail" n°18, p.6). The actors are unreachable or denounce a defamation campaign.²¹

March 8, 2018

Grassy Park, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

A neighborhood resident informed the police that abalones were being stored in a house on Water Crescent. The search carried out today led to the seizure of 136 kg stored in a freezer, a scale, a Toyota Conquest, a laptop, cellular phones and an undisclosed amount of money. The abalones are said to be worth 200,000 rand (\$17,200 US, or \$130 US per kilo) on the black market. Two men, aged 37 and 52 years, were present on the site and were arrested.²²

March 14, 2018

Athlone, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

The police got wind of a tip about this Cape Town suburb, and carried out a night raid on an "informal housing unit" in the Rylands neighborhood, where a 25-year-old suspect was found in possession of 2 million rand (\$172,000 US) worth of abalones.²³

March 19, 2018

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

After 11 years of investigation, rulings have finally been made on sentences for the leaders of a vast traffic involving 400 tons of abalones exported to Hong Kong in containers. Heavily armed policemen protected the Cape Town High Court throughout the trial. The heads of the gang, Adriaan Wildschutt and Tony Du Toit, got 15-year sentences, while their accomplices, Willem van Rensburg and Phillip Miller, got 8 and 4 years. A sidekick, Johannes Liebenberg, received a one-year suspended sentence. The prosecution presented evidence, collected by the coast guard, showing that the price of abalones on Hong Kong markets could go as high as \$3800 HK (\$484 US) per catty, a Chinese unit of measurement used to weigh food products and equal to 604 g. That sets the price per kilo at \$830 US. The network's sales figure in this case comes to \$332 million US. .../...



Despite opposition from the prosecutor, Wildschutt was released on bail for 30,000 rand (\$2580 US), Van Rensburg for 50,000 rand (\$4300 US) and Du Toit for 20,000 rand (\$1715 US) until their hearing before the Supreme Court of Appeals in Bloemfontein. They are required to report to a police station every day, but given the sentences that they have received, the spokesman for the prosecutor, Eric Ntabazalila, believes they could very well vanish into the wild.²⁴

Mid March 2018

Ladismith, Western Cape Province, South Africa

The police patrol was on the lookout for a load of drugs that was supposed to come through the little town. They inspected an unfamiliar “bakkie” – the South African nickname for a pick-up truck – as it drove through town, and in fact discovered 67 boxes containing dried abalones. The shellfish were estimated at 6.7 million rand (\$575,000 US). Arrested on the spot, the two men aboard will be explaining themselves to the Hermanus court.²⁵

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

January 30, 2018

Ukiah, Mendocino County, State of California, United States of America

Abalone populations are not doing well in northern California. Leisure fishing and poaching are so detrimental to the Abalone Recovery and Management Plan set up in 2005 by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) that for the first time in 2018 all captures were banned. The Mendocino County District Attorney's Office is on the frontline of trafficking repression. The following convictions support this:

- Steven Yuan Qin Liang (47 years old), owner of the Asian Buffet à Fort Bragg, would buy and sell on the black-market abalones supplied by leisure fishermen. He got 360 days of prison, 36 months suspended sentence and \$15,000 US in fine.

- Bryant Chiu Liu Lee (44 years old) received 36 months suspended sentence and \$40,000 US in fine.

The two restaurant owners were under surveillance of the Mendocino Coast squad and the CDFW Special Operations Unit since June 2015.

- For Justin Joseph Adams (44 years old) it was a close call: in April 2017 he was rescued by firefighters warned by his accomplice that he was stuck in by night in a Cuffy's Cove reef in Elk, surrounded by the high tide. Such circumstances attracted the attention of the CDFW. The next day they dived under the exact spot where the rescue took place and found 2 bags containing 38 abalones hidden in a crack. A plastic bottle half empty found in one of the bags had traces of DNA matching Adams. He was ordered to serve 210 days in the Mendocino County Jail, was placed on probation for 36 months and was ordered to pay a fine of \$15,000.

The three men are prohibited from obtaining a sport or commercial fishing license for life.²⁶



OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

January 1, 2018

Australia

6000 abalones seized, \$32,000 A (\$25,000 US) in fines, five suspended prison sentences – that was the final report for 2017. For 2018, the province has declared war on abalone traffickers. The government is concerned about domestic consumption in seafood restaurants and within Asian communities, more than export to Hong Kong.²⁷

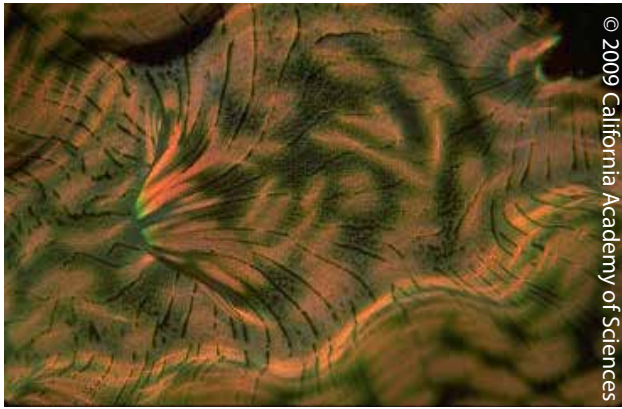


South Africa, February 6, 2018



South Africa, February 6, 2018

Giant Clams and Conches



Tridacna

ASIA

CHINA

March 20, 2018
Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport, Zhejiang Province, China

Seizure of a clam (family Tridacnidae, Appendix II). The majority of the species live nested, or even embedded, in coral reefs. One species, the horse's hoof clam, lives in the sand.¹



March 26, 2018
Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport, Zhejiang Province, China

Seizure of two clams, 800 g total.²

SRI LANKA

January 1st, 2018
Wattala, Western Province, Sri Lanka

A coast guard patrol assisted by the town's police force arrested four people trying to sell a "Titan" Valampuri conch shell weighing 750 g and 43 cm long.³

February 1st, 2018
Kalpitiya, North-West Province, Sri Lanka
 Search of a canoe close to Anawasala beach led to the discovery of 775 conch shells (genus *Strombus*) by the Northwestern Naval Command. The fishermen, his canoe and the shells were turned over to the Fisheries Directorate of Puttalam.⁴



Sea Cucumbers

Inventive, resilient, useful, universal and easy to catch, these masterpieces of underwater life are in perdition. Millions of people who eat them want to appropriate their qualities. They are subject to high intensity international traffic. On 23 March 2018, Robin des Bois wrote to 10 governments to have all sea cucumber species (holothurians) listed on Appendix II of CITES at the next plenary meeting in May 2019 in Sri Lanka.

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

AFRICA

FRANCE

February 26, 2018
Glorieuses Marine Nature Park, Scattered Islands in the Indian Ocean District, France

According to the French authorities, it is the first time that a 12-m sail boat has been used to catch illegally sea cucumbers. Around 4:15 a.m., the patrol boat *Le Malin* spotted the sailing boat on the Banc du Geyser within the Glorieuses Natural Marine Park in the Mozambique Channel. An inspection team was sent to investigate and, on board, they found 11 Madagascan fishermen, 200 kg of sea cucumbers and 150 kg of salt for preserving. The animals and the salt were thrown into the sea, the fishing equipment was seized. According to the prefecture, "The Madagascan authorities were duly informed, and following the inspection, the ship was ordered to return to its home port."¹



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AMERICA

MEXICO

January 10, 2018

Tijuana International Airport, State of Baja California, Mexico

114 kg of dried sea cucumber seized by federal police. The animals came from Merida, in Yucatan.²



January 15, 2018

Merida, State of Yucatan, Mexico

Checked on the peripheric road near km 34 the two men were transporting 106.9 kg of sea cucumber (*Isostichopus badionotus*) without any permit. They were let out on bail for 3000 and 3500 pesos (150 and 180 US\$). For 4 months, they will be obliged to present themselves monthly to the town hall of their city.³



January 25, 2018

Merida International Airport, State of Yucatan, Mexico

Seizure on a Chinese passenger of 420 g of dried sea cucumbers. The man was about to fly to Mexico.⁴

Mid February 2018

Azcapotzalco, Mexico, Mexico

Thanks to the good nose of the canine brigade, seizure in a parcel platform of 85 sea cucumbers.⁵

March 10, 2018

Maneadero, State of Baja California, Mexico

Seizure of several barrels and bags of unidentified shellfish and sea cucumbers in the vehicle driven by a 22-year-old male.⁶

=>

End of March 2018

Between Telchac and Progreso, State of Yucatan, Mexico

Seizure in a pick-up of 126 kg of Mexican four-eyed octopus (*Octopus maya*) and 118 kg of chocolate chip cucumber (*Isostichopus badionotus*). In the Yucatan peninsula, *holothuria floridana* are also over-exploited.⁷



ASIA

INDIA

March 20, 2018

Near Mandapam, Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

A customs patrol seized the 500 kg of sea cucumbers that were being loaded onto the small boat, about to be sailing across the Gulf of Mannar to the Sri Lankan shores, but the team of traffickers managed to get away. The seizure is estimated at 10 million rupees (\$150,000 US).⁸

March 21, 2018

Munaikadu, Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Seizure of 100 kg of live sea cucumbers. Released into the sea.⁹

SRI LANKA

March 17, 2018

Kalpitiya, North-West Province, Sri Lanka

Seizure of 245 sea cucumbers.¹⁰



EUROPE

ITALY

March 15, 2018

Porto Cesareo Marine Protected Area, Apulia Region, Italy

The Gallipoli coast guard seized 800 sea urchins and 20 kg of sea cucumbers. It is illegal for divers with self-contained breathing apparatuses to capture benthic animals in the bay.

A brand-new decree (February 27, 2018) by the Secretary of State for Food now forbids the fishing, transportation, transshipment and unloading of sea cucumbers in all fishing zones. Their positive contribution to the marine ecosystems is officially recognized.

The problem is that the decree is valid only until the end of December 2019. We can only hope that it will be extended and consolidated by listing sea cucumbers with CITES. The Italian NGO Marevivo is the first in Italy to have managed to raise interest with the government concerning the fate and the usefulness of sea cucumbers.¹¹

RUSSIA

February 2018

Birobidzhan, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Far Eastern Federal District, Russia

Tourists going to China in a bus had strange things in their baggage: lead and other non ferrous metals bars and 20 bags of dried sea cucumbers for a total weight of 420 kg.¹²

Sea Urchins

AMERICA

FRANCE

January 13 and 18, 2018

Le Gosier Island, Guadeloupe Department, France

A 68-year-old guy, supposedly a recreational fisherman but a real for-profit pillager, collecting hundreds of white sea urchins (*Tripneustes ventricosus*), protected by legislation and strong fishing restrictions. Caught in the act, with 500 specimens on his boat and in submerged bags. "It was for my daughter's wedding, I was going to make a dish for the entire family," explained the offender, who in reality sells the urchins to restaurants and to tourists. The boat and its engine were also seized.¹



© Brian Ratwicke

Internet ads viewed on April 13 and May 14, 2018 on espaceagro.com

N°310125: sea cucubers published by CCM...

wholesaler Customer search fish | 03/03/2018 20:13:40 | Sea shade

Good morning,

I sell sea cucumbers in large quantities. the products are of organic quality from the Mediterranean Algerian coast.

Price conditions: 160

Restrictions: Algeria

Packaging: Boat

Quantity: 10 tons

Price: 160

N°314549: sea cucumber published by POL...

Customer search shellfish | 03/04/2018 16:24:54 | sea cucumber

I can deliver sea cucumbers from Cameroon and regularly. I can deliver to you at best prices and regularly from 100 to 200 kilo

Price conditions: 100 euros / kg

Quantity: 200 kg

Price: 100 euros / kg

N°319601: sea cucumber empty and dry in algeria published by CONC...

wholesaler customer search shellfish | 13/05/2018 15:31:58 | sea cucumber empty and dry in algeria

Hi I am an algerian wholesaler I am looking for a customer who wants to buy a large quantity of sea cucumber empty and dry and of good quality.

Rates: 40\$ per kilo

Restrictions: infinite

Packaging: per container

Quantity: 10 tons

Price: \$40 per kilo

Fishes



AFRICA

MOROCCO

March 2018

Mohammed-V Airport in Casablanca, Morocco

Seizure of 60 kg of European glass eels (*Anguilla anguilla*, Appendix II) hidden in 10 suitcases. An annual quota of 2000 kg is authorized in the Kingdom to support traditional fishing. The captured glass eels have to be exclusively routed to eel breeding farms.¹

TANZANIA

January-February 2018

Tanzania

A Sea Shepherd coastguard, the *Ocean Warrior*, with MATT (Multi-Agency Task Team) patrol officers on board, track boats engaging in illegal fishing in the Tanzanian waters. Several interceptions and diversions have taken place.

– The Chinese *Tai Hong 1* carried shark fins in excess. The 12 Tanzanians on board had neo-slave rank.

– The Malaysian *Buah Naga 1* had shark fins without carcasses on board. The Indonesian crew says they were mistreated and threatened.

– The Tanzanian *Swabir Jamil* fished in the territorial waters without a license.²

March 9, 2018

Mtwara, Mtwara Region, Tanzania

On trial: Han Ming Chuan, captain of the Taiwanese fishing boat *Buah Naga I*, for on-board possession of 90 kg of shark fins and for having violated the Deep-Sea Fishing Authority Act, by throwing the carcasses into the sea, which amounts to a "pollution offense." When the ship was boarded and inspected in January, the captain also had ammunition and a Beretta pistol, the origin and use of which were suspicious.³

AMERICA

BRAZIL

January 27, 2018

Aliança do Tocantins, State of Tocantins, Brazil

Seizure of 53 kg of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) and 4 kg of spotted sorubim (*Pseudoplatystoma corruscans*) from the back of a pick-up. Fine equal to \$1,510 US.⁴



February 5, 2018

Santarem, State of Para, Brazil

Seizure inside a freezer and an unregistered warehouse of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) and other fish species, shrimps and crabs. All the goods were spoiled. Swarms of flies circled the parcels.⁵



CHILE

January 3-19, 2018

Providencia, Santiago Metropolitan Region, Chile

Since January 13, the Embassy of Viet Nam had started to smell. Neighbors complained. They saw the stock of shark fins drying on the rooftop grow every day, reaching up to 100 on January 19. The National Fishing and Aquaculture Service (Sernapesca) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs came to observe the situation but were unable to intervene, diplomatic buildings being off bound. The situation is complicated even more by the fact that the diplomatic delegation does not include an ambassador.⁶

COSTA RICA



February 2018

Costa Rica

Double game!

The government imposed an embargo on the export of scalloped hammerhead fins (*Sphyrna lewini*, Appendix II) in March 2015. At the same time, Incopesca, the fisheries management agency, has not reduced the capture quotas for this species, which concentrates around Cocos Island, a UNESCO site. Today, 10 to 20 tons of fins are waiting in a warehouse in Puntarenas and export to China is not excluded despite protests from the NGO CREMA (Centro Rescate de Especies Marinas Amenazadas) and the concerns of experts who predict a dark future for hammerhead sharks if the open door policy on fins marketing is going on. The final decision belongs to Incopesca. CREMA and 22 NGOs have written to President Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera urging Costa Rica to permanently protect sharks instead of protecting private interests.⁷ See "On the Trail" n°8 p. 5.

ECUADOR

January 10, 2018

Manta, Province of Manabí, Ecuador

Thousands of shark fins were drying on crates in the courtyard of a house. Others were already packaged. Agents from the Municipal Office for the Environment and the Ministry of Aquaculture and Fishing opened an inquiry after noting that no license for fishing or possession could be presented. Manta harbor is host of intensive shark fin trafficking. In May 2015 200,000 fins had been seized (see "On the Trail" n°9 p. 4).⁸

Mid-January, 2018

Province of Galápagos, Ecuador

Don Gerard V – next episode (see "On the Trail" n° 19 p. 11.) Sentencing of the captain and helmsman to three years prison and 16 crewmen to one-and-a-half-year prison. Five acquittals. The 156 sharks belonging to five species including silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*, Appendix II) and thresher sharks (*Alopias* spp., Appendix II) and 49 tunas were destroyed. The *Don Gerard V* had been boarded near Genovesa Island inside the national marine park. The ship owner will have to pay over \$ 300,000 US in compensation to the park administration.⁹



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OPERATION BROKEN GLASS

January 18, 2018

Newark, State of New Jersey, United States of America

Operation Broken Glass continues to haul its nets. Joseph Kelley and James Lewis have a seven-count indictment on their backs regarding illegal fishing and glass eel (*Anguillidae*) trafficking. They had captured them in New Jersey and Massachusetts and sold them to an export channel. Among the accomplices was Thomas Choi, a wholesaler convicted in December 2017 for contraband towards Asia of loads of glass eels for a total value of \$ 1.26 million US (see "On the Trail" 19, p. 12). Operation Broken Glass, led on a federal level by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has so far enabled indictment of 23 people in the State of Maine, Virginia, South Carolina and New Jersey. The total of their trafficking amounts to an estimated 4.5 million dollars.¹⁰

MEXICO

February 25, 2018

Tijuana, State of Baja-California, Mexico

Seizure of 87 totoaba swim bladders (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I), for a total weight of 30 kg on the road to Tijuana-Ensenada, export port. The luxurious car was carrying three adults and two children. The swim bladders were in hidden compartments.¹¹



2 m maximum

Beginning of March 2018

Mexico

The government's solution for the problem of illegal trade in totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) swim bladders is radical. The idea is to authorize the traffic and to transform poachers into honorable merchants, with the stroke of a pen. The government founds its proposal on the fact that 300,000 totoabas are said to be produced through fish farming every year. As a reminder, international totoaba trade is illegal as long as the species is listed in Appendix I of the CITES Convention.¹²

March 9, 2018

Mexicali, State of Baja- California, Mexico border to the United States

Seizure of 22 totoabas swim bladders (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) onboard a pick-up truck for a total weight of 10.83 kg.¹³

Mid Marc 2018

Port of San Felipe, State of Baja California, Mexico

27 totoabas swim bladders (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) in an orange pick-up truck running at high speed.¹⁴



ASIA

CHINA

January 21, 2018

Hong Kong International Airport, China

28 kg of totoaba swim bladders (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) in two suit cases, worth an estimated 4.5 million Hong Kong dollars (\$ 575,500 US, i.e. \$ 20,550 US per kilo). The two men aged 30 and 32 years were hoping to hit the jackpot by smuggling them into Hong Kong that afternoon. They were arriving from Hermosillo (State of Sonora, Mexico) via Monterrey (Mexico) and Seoul (South Korea). Customs wiped out their hopes. The maximum penalty they face is two years prison and 5 million Hong Kong dollars (\$ 640.000 US) in fine.¹⁵



February 10, 2018

Hong Kong, China

A demonstration by the ONG WildAid in front of the restaurant Maxim's, which continues to serve blue shark meat and soup. WildAid highlights the involvement of Spanish fishing. In 2017, Spain exported 628 tons of frozen shark toward Hong Kong. For the Chinese New Year celebrations, 80% of restaurants served dishes with shark.¹⁶



IRAN

Beginning of January 2018

Chabahar Port, Province of Sistan-and-Baluchistan, Iran

The Environmental Protection Agency of the Province announced a catch of 1600 kg of shark fins onboard a fishing boat and the arrest of the three crewmen. According to Dr Nayereh Pourmalayi, executive director of the agency, the catch comprises 1400 individuals. Iranian law prohibits any capture of sharks in the Persian Gulf and Oman sea and can impose up to 300 million Rials (\$ 8300 US) in fine per shark poached.¹⁷



MALAYSIA

February 18, 2018

Mabul Island, Semporna, State of Sabah, Malaysia

Culture shock was tough for some tourists who came to dive with Big John Scuba. They came to the island to observe its famous marine life, and watched as fishermen on the neighboring piling village killed and butchered 15 giant rays, including one giant manta ray (*Manta birostris*, Appendix II) and several eagle rays (*Mobula* spp., Appendix II). A shark was also among the victims. The animals were caught out at sea and brought back to shore

by boat. The tourists shot pictures that they then posted on Internet. Indignation spread and may help speed up the passage of the Sabah Department of Fisheries' proposal to classify two species of rays and four species of sharks as threatened, which would make catching them illegal.¹⁸



SRI LANKA

January 5, 2018

Trincomalee, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka

A thresher shark (*Alopias* spp., Appendix II) already butchered and ready to be sold was found in the port area. One arrest.¹⁹

February 9, 2018

Negombo, Western Province, Sri Lanka

A raid in the port led to the confiscation of 268 kg of thresher shark (*Alopias* spp., Appendix II) meat and the arrest of the fisherman. Agents from the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources carried out the seizure with assistance from the Western Naval Command post.²⁰



EUROPE

SPAIN

March 6, 2018

Port of Tarifa, Autonomous community of Andalusia, Spain

Seizure of 23 dead tuna linked by a rope in the harbor waters, 11 other specimens in the fish market and seven others in a van on the run. The 1400 kg of bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) were donated to the Campo food bank in Gibraltar.²¹

FRANCE

OPERATION BELUGA

January 2018

Occitanie and Guyane Regions, France

Seizure of 329 cans of sturgeon caviar (Acipenseridae family) weighing a total of 9.75 kg, worth 15,000 €. Three species of sturgeons from China, Bulgaria, Israel and France are concerned. At least in the case of the French sturgeons, the caviar came from a fish farm. A joint team from the ONCFS (National Bureau for Hunting and Wildlife) and from the Occitanie DREAL (Regional Department of the Environment, Development and Housing) has recorded 44 violations of the CITES non-removable labelling requirements and the tamper-resistant can requirements. Clearly, State services are attentive to label-switching and to the absence of seals on cans, which make fraud on quality and the origin of sturgeon eggs possible.²²



January 25, 2018

Lorient, Morbihan Department, France

Fines of 22,500 and 112,500 € to the ship-owner and captain of the Portuguese longline fishing boat *Vila do infante*, caught red-handed by the French Navy for transporting 45.5 tons of Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), 3.6 tons of porbeagles (*Lamna nasus*, Appendix II), and 242 kg of swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), caught in contradiction of the rules set in place by the ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) and European regulations (cf. "On the Trail" n°18, p.12). On European fish auctions or at wholesale markets, the Atlantic bluefin tuna alone would have been sold for between 500,000 and 1 million euros, two or three times more in Japan where the illegal catch could have been immediately directed by cargo plane if the *Vila do infante*, whose owner presented himself in court as "modest and respectful of the environment," had not been visited by a grey boat.²³



February 1st, 2018

Bordeaux, Gironde Department, France

Sentencing to 2 months in prison suspended sentence of a glass eel poaching repeated offender (*Anguilla anguilla*, Appendix II) acting in the Gironde estuary. It's almost an encouragement to continue!²⁴



February 27 – March 9, 2018
Hennebont, Morbihan Department, France

- Seizure of 3 kg of glass eels at the mouth of the Blavet river.
- Three sentences to four months in prison and one four-month suspended sentence for a poacher with no criminal record.²⁵



GREECE

March 19, 2018

Greece

2018: total ban on imports and exports of European eels (*Anguilla anguilla*) to Greece. The Greek networks are suspected to fraudulently deliver large batches of European eels to China. Cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p.10.²⁶

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

February 16-17, 2018

390 nautical miles off Broome, State of Western Australia, Australia

Interception in Australian waters of an Indonesian fishing boat with 15 crew members aboard, and over one ton of yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) in the hold.²⁷

Marine Mammals

AFRICA

NIGERIA

Mid-January 2018

Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria

The African Manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis*, Appendix I) was caught, butchered and the meat was split between the villagers. According to Mister Eniang, expert in wildlife management and professor at the Uyo University, the Sapele killing is not an isolated case. The information he has gathered leads to believe three manatees were killed in Lagos State alone between mid-December 2017 and mid-January 2018 and he recalls the recent example of the whale beached in Ondo State. "They only found it necessary to stand on top of it to take selfies." "They started butchering the whale when it was still breathing."¹



AMERICA

COLOMBIA

Beginning of February 2018

Araquita, Arauca Department, Colombia. Border with Venezuela.

A new scandal among Amazon river dolphins (*Inia geoffrensis*, Appendix II, see "On the Trail" n°7 p.119, n°17 p.13 and 115). The carcass was drifting downstream. A fin got caught on a branch. It had a long, deep wound on the rostrum that would correspond to a spear or a propeller.

Amazon river dolphins suffer from fragmentation of rivers due to dam construction. Their tiny eyes are used for black magic or "medicinal" purposes. They sometimes fish alongside of tucos (*Sotalia fluviatilis*) and giant river otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*).²

February 2018

State of Alaska, United States of America

As part of its overall policy to deter the ivory trade, the New York-based Etsy Internet site announces that it will no longer offer for sale ivory items made by Alaskan natives. Ivories of walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*, Appendix III in Canada) and woolly mammoth are involved. Alaskan Republican Senator Dan Sullivan reacted without delay to what he considers to be an attack on the millennial right and cultural expression of polar tribes. "On the Trail" has at least three times mentioned trafficking in walrus ivory in Alaska. Etsy's prevention policy extends to gloves, scarves and hats made from seaotter fur.³



ASIA

SOUTH KOREA

March 2018

South Korea

An amendment to the law on wildlife conservation forbids the importation of animals that have been caught using cruel methods, which should immediately mean a ban on importing dolphins driven into the Taiji Cove in Japan, most of which are killed on the beach, while a few are selected by experts to be spared and sold to delphinariums, especially in Taiwan. See "On the Trail" n°16 p.12-12 and n°17 p.15.⁴

JAPAN

January 2018

Japan

Will they, or won't they? Japan is still thinking about building a modern factory ship or acquiring a stern trawler that could be converted into a whaling butcher shop. The *Nisshin Maru* is 30 years old. A maritime expert says that in terms of mobility and autonomy, that corresponds to a 100-year-old human specimen. In June 2017, a new law was announced. "Scientific research" on whales is now considered a "national duty."⁵ See "On the Trail" n°4 p.12, n°9 p.6, n°11 p.9, n°17 p.14.

EUROPE

NORWAY

March 2018

Norway

Norway has instated a 28% increase in its annual quota of minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*, Appendix I with reservations from Norway) that can be caught. This is yet another attempt to relaunch the market. In 1950, there were 350 whaling ships in the country; there were only about 20 left in 2016, and 11 in 2017.⁶

FRANCE

January 10, 2018

Oye-Plage, Pas-de-Calais Department, France

A harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) killed at arm's length on a beach surrounded by marshlands. Its head was riddled with bullets. In light of the massacre of this peaceful mammal, indignation is nearly unanimous. A local hunting association pointed out that in addition to shooting a protected species, there is a second violation related to the use of lead bullets near a wetland zone.⁷



Xray of the marine mammal's head



March 18, 2018

Colleville-Montgomery, Calvados Department, Normandy, France

On Sunday, March 18, 2018, a female porpoise washed up on Colleville-Montgomery beach. The freshness of the carcass and the viscera overflowing from a laceration of about fifteen centimetres suggests that the catch and the gutting of the marine mammal were recent and dated from the night of Saturday to Sunday. The drift to the beach of the carcass was brief and suggests that the catch in a fishing gear occurred very near the shoreline.

The autopsy report carried out by an agent of the ONCFS (Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage) in the presence of a representative of the Groupe Mammalogique Normand concludes according to articles published in the local press that the porpoise did not die by drowning and that he was gutted on board a ship to be killed. The tail amputation would be explained by the need to get the porpoise out of the fishing gear as quickly as possible.



The harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*, Appendix II) is rare along the French coast. And however in 2016, the National Stranding Network recorded a hundred beachings of porpoises in the Bay of the Seine. Most of them show signs of traumatic death - mesh marks, fractures, amputations and rips.

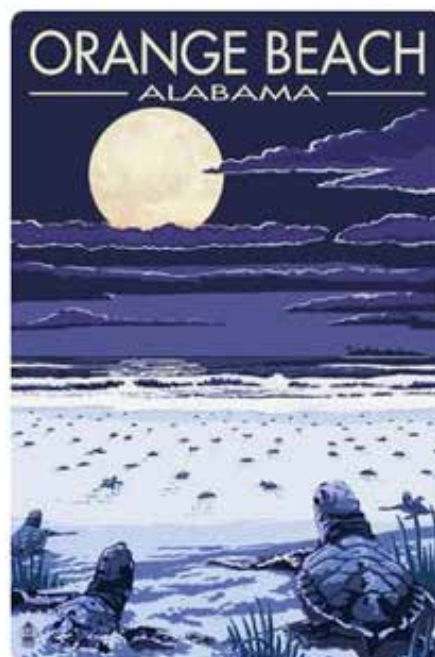
If the harbour porpoise slaughter in Baie de Seine is not effectively tackled, the population will disappear and suffer the same fate as the Gulf of California harbor porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*, Appendix I), better known as vaquita, which because of so-called unintentional catches in fishing gear have fallen in 10 years from 600 to less than 30 individuals.

Robin des Bois filed a complaint to the Ouistreham gendarmerie for destruction and mutilation of a protected species at national, European and international level, punishable by 2 years' imprisonment and 150,000 € fine or 7 years' imprisonment and 750,000 € if the acts were committed in conspiracy.



The female was pregnant. Pregnancy lasts between 10 and 11 months. Birth takes place between April and September. Breastfeeding lasts 8 months. Females have on average 3 to 4 young between 4 year-old, age of sexual maturity and 16 year-old, the average life expectancy.⁸

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

MOZAMBIQUE

March 11, 2018

Quirimbas National Park, Province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

The management of the park is concerned about the massive arrival in its waters of Tanzanian fishermen who are engaged in the catch of marine turtles. In the context of reinforced monitoring, more than 20 fishermen were arrested.¹

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

January 31, 2018

West Palm Beach, State of Florida, United States of America

Identical sentencing for Carl Lawrence Cobb (60 years old) and Raymond Saunders (50 years old), two turtle egg poachers arrested on May 24, 2017: 7 months in prison followed by 2 years of supervised release, and \$ 227 US each in restitution to the State of Florida. Cobb had first been signaled to authorities on 5 May by witnesses as he was pillaging nests on North Hutchinson Island. .../...



The investigation by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) had proved he had stolen more than 200 eggs. Placed under surveillance he had been seen with his partner in crime Saunders on 24 May digging up 469 eggs, still on the beaches of the same island. FWC agents had then stopped them on the road towards Palm Beach county. The eggs were replaced in the sand by marine biologists with the hope than some will still hatch.²

MEXICO

January 15, 2018

Santa María Tonameca, State of Oaxaca, Mexico



© Profepa

A PROFEPA patrol inspecting a sanctuary of Playa de Escobilla stumbled on 2750 Olive Ridley turtle eggs (*Lepidochelys olivacea*, Appendix I) already packaged in 3 nylon bags close to a forsaken quad. The poachers had seen the patrol approach-

ing. The eggs were returned to the sand.³

March 21, 2018

Between Santiago Pinotepa Nacional and Salina Cruz, State of Oaxaca, Mexico



© Policía Federal

Seizure in a bus of 600 eggs and 19.17 kg of sea turtles' fins and meat. Three arrests, including a woman and a female minor.⁴

NICARAGUA

Mid February 2018

Tasbapauni, South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region, Nicaragua

Nine green turtles seized on 15 February. Release at sea of the survivors off Barra de Rio Grande. Catching sea turtles is permitted between 1 September and 31 March each year for some local fishermen and specified buyers. The licence holder had exceeded his quota by 15 turtles. "Con Patriotismo y Dedicación, Trabajamos por la Nación" (With Patriotism and Dedication, We Work for the Nation) concludes the statement of the naval forces of Nicaragua.⁵

ASIA

SRI LANKA

January 3, 2018

Pallikuda, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

After a tip-off, Northern Naval Command agents and policemen arrested an individual in possession of a 15 kg turtles. She and the suspect were transferred to the Pooneryn police station.⁶

January 14, 2018

Erakkandi, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka

67 eggs seized and one person arrested on the beach by men of the Eastern Naval Command assisted by agents from the Special Task Force.⁷

January 25, 2018

Negombo, Western Province, Sri Lanka

A targeted operation in the Pitipana neighborhood led to the arrest of a man in possession of 22 kg of turtle meat and 5.4 kg of turtle eggs ready to be sold. The suspect, the seized goods and a motorcycle were transferred to the Negombo Fisheries Inspection office in charge of the legal proceedings.⁸

February 8, 2018

Vankalai, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

The North Central Naval Command apprehended two individuals in possession of 3 kg of turtle meat. They were turned over to the police. Vankalai village is a small fishing port by the side of the Gulf of Mannar.⁹



© Sri Lanka Navy

Mid-March 2018

Silavathurai, Province of Silavathurai, Sri Lanka

Seizure of a marine turtle (30 kg) and 2.5 kg of meat.¹⁰

VIET NAM

Beginning of January 2018

Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa Province, Viet Nam

Another adjournment of the trial of Hoang Tuan Hai, at the head of the trafficking of several thousand sea turtle shells soaked in formaldehyde. The man has been out on bail for four years. The court requested more information to better assess the severity of the facts, their impacts on biodiversity and Viet Nam's reputation. See "On the Trail" n°15 p. 14 and n°7 p. 11.¹¹

January 19, 2018

Province of Phu Yen and Hué, Province of Thua Thien, Viet Nam

Two Hawksbill turtles were set free into the South China Sea.¹²

End of February 2018

Cà Mau, Province of Cà Mau, Viet Nam

Seizure of a green turtle. She was for sale on Facebook.¹³

facebook



Various Marine Species

AFRICA

SENEGAL

OPERATION SENEGAL

Wildlife Enforcement

March 28, 2018

Mbour, Thiès Region, Senegal

Seizure in the tourist souvenir shop held by Fall Birahim of 41 green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*, Appendix I) shells and 3.5 kg of seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp., Appendix II). The operation was carried out by local police and the Department of Water and Forests, with the help of the NGO WARA.¹



AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

February 2, 2018

San Diego, State of California, United States of America

The owner of two Chinese restaurants in New York was sentenced to 10 months in prison and fined \$1,500 US and \$16,000 US in compensation for having tried to fraudulently import 225 kg of dried or frozen sea cucumbers and abalone from Mexico in February 2016.²

MEXICO

February 18, 2018

Heroica Guaymas de Zaragoza, State of Sonora, Mexico

Seizure from a house of 41 kg of chocolate chip cucumber (*Isostichopus badionotus*) and more than 30 totoaba swim bladders (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I).³

Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles

Cumulative quarterly seizures: Examples

792 Indian star tortoises
(*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I)
662 Madagascar radiated turtles
(*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I)
205 Indian softshell turtles
(*Nilssonina gangetica*, Appendix I)
87 six-tubercled river turtles
(*Podocnemis sextuberculata*, Appendix II)
44 yellow-headed sidenecks
(*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II)

AFRICA

MADAGASCAR



January 10 and 18, 2018

Morondava, Menabe Region, Madagascar

Seizure of 460 radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I). Three arrests. The 217 survivors are scheduled to be released in the South-West forests. A boat coming from Toliara and heading for Majunga ran aground due to mechanical difficulties. The nauseating smell alerted the local population. It is often stated that 10 to 15,000 radiated tortoises are poached and illegally exported every year.¹

January 12, 2018

Ivato International Airport, Analamanga Region, Madagascar

Seizure of 126 radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I) in two suitcases belonging to the attaché of a member of parliament from Toliara. In an attempt to mislead the border police, the man had a so-called mission order from the president of the National Assembly. His final destination was Viet Nam, via a transit in Nairobi on a Kenya Airways flight.²

January 24, 2018

Tuléar, Atsimo-Andrefana Region, Madagascar

In the home of a 70-year-old joint-smoker, seizure of 3.5 kg of cannabis and 76 young radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I). Three arrests.³

COFFIN NETWORK

February 4-5, 2018

Alakamisy Ambohimaha, Haute Matsiatra Region, Madagascar

The coffin on the roof of the Mercedes bush taxi was covered with a national flag, but that was the only thing official about it. Neither a license to transport a body, the identity of the deceased nor the destination was available in the occasional hearse, which fled after the first road block inspection near Fianarantsoa and was forced to stop at the second road block because police reinforcements put down a tire shredder on RN7. In addition to 245 turtles on the roof, the bush taxi, coming from Toliara and heading toward Antananarivo, was transporting 100 kg of cannabis on the back seats. The driver was paid 700,000 ariary (\$220 US) to transport the turtles and 600,000 ariary (\$185 US) to transport the hashish.⁴



February 14, 2018

Ivato International Airport, Analamanga Region, Madagascar

Return trip on an Air Madagascar flight for 60 radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I) that were intercepted in Moroni, in the Comoros archipelago, as they were about to fly off to Asia. "The repatriation was made possible through cooperation with the consulate of Madagascar in the Comoros archipelago, as both countries are in agreement in regards to the fight against trafficking and smuggling," according to the local press.⁵

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

February 14, 2018

Alta Gracia, Santa María Department, Province of Córdoba, Argentina

New wildlife vandalism in a UNESCO site. An aquatic turtle emerging from the waters of the Tajamar had laid five eggs on the bank. A signalling had been put in place with the approval of the highest authorities and the local community in order not to disrupt the hatching. Unfortunately, the eggs were stolen.⁶

BOLIVIA

March 3-4, 2018

El Alto, La Paz Department, Bolivia

The two ruffians tried to sell in the city the 39 yellow-spotted river turtle (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II) locally known as "peta de Rio". They were spotted and managed to escape by beating the police with sticks. The "petas" are in the hands of the Policía Forestal y Preservación del Medio Ambiente (Pofoma).⁷

BRAZIL

January 18, 2018

Parintins, State of Amazonas, Brazil

Seizure of five yellow-spotted river turtles (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II), 2 kg of marijuana and four motorcycles.

Two men, 31 and 34 years old, arrested. Intervention by the military police.⁸

March 14, 2018

Monte Alegre, State of Pará, Brazil

After a tip-off from an anonymous source, the units of the 18th Battalion of the military police surrounded an abandoned house in the commune of Bom Sucesso in the morning. They found 66 six-tubercled river turtles (*Podocnemis sextuberculata*, Appendix II) trying to survive in various containers and pans. They were entrusted to the Institute of Forest Development and Biodiversity (Ideflor-Bio).⁹

March 24, 2018

Praíha, State of Pará, Brazil

New seizure of six-tubercled river turtles (*Podocnemis sextuberculata*, Appendix II) by the 18th Battalion of the military police, which proves itself to be a friend of the turtles. Another tip-off led this time to the arrest of a 51-year-old man who tried to sell 21 specimens of "pitiú," the local name of the species. The trafficker was taken to the police station in Painha and charged with wildlife crime. The turtles were handed over to the Municipal Secretariat for the Environment (Semma) and will be freed.¹⁰

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

GANG

March 7, 2018

State of South Carolina, United States of America

Three residents of South Carolina and one resident of North Carolina were charged with trafficking in a criminal organization to export and import turtles, most often shipped by US Postal and FedEx. The packages were labelled "snacks." The turtles were wrapped up in socks. They were covered with food products. "Collectors in the U.S. will pay thousands of dollars for exotic Chinese turtles, and collectors in China will pay thousands for U.S. turtles," according to the prosecutor in charge of the case. Matthew Harrison Kail was caught in the act of capturing and transporting two spotted turtles (*Clemmys guttata*, Appendix II) and two diamondback terrapins (*Malaclemys terrapin*, Appendix II). When he was arrested, he was also carrying \$17,000 US in cash. The four arrests are related to the arrest of Jason Hsu in 2016. The man lived in New York and received packages from China and South America containing a total of 48 turtles protected by CITES. The packages were intercepted by customs at John F. Kennedy Airport. Hsu cooperated with the federal investigation, leading to the gang's demise.¹¹

ASIA

BANGLADESH

January 13, 2018

Khulna, Khulna District, Khulna Division, Bangladesh

The forest rangers, assisted by soldiers from the Rapid Action Battalion, were waiting at dawn at the edge of town, near the Zero Point round-about on the road that leads to the border, fifty kilometers away. Prodic Kumar Baroi, Shuvadev Roy and Masum Mollah were denounced. They were planning to sell the turtles in India for meat or as pets. There were 494 of them, piled into 8 cases that the men were transporting in a pick-up. Masum Mollah was driving. He had gotten the turtles near Agailjhara, in the Barisal district. They were brought before the courts. As for the turtles, they were handed over to the Dhaka Zoo.¹²

February 23, 2018

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Seizure of 80 turtles, dead and alive, at the Shakhari bazaar. Three people sentenced to nine months in prison.¹³



CHINA

February 2018

Zhakou, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of four yellow pond turtles (*Mauremys mutica*, Appendix II) in the belongings of two passengers.¹⁴

INDIA

January 15, 2018

Udhna, Surat District, State of Gujarat, India

Seizure of 65 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix II) and 155 red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*). Location: Hindustan Aquarium. Arrest of a woman. Special intervention by forest authorities and police during Vastu rituals aiming improve balance and well-being in homes. "The Singaporean turtles [red-eared slider] are high in demand since some Vastu or Feng Shui advisers recommend their clients to keep one of them in their home in shallow waters in a bowl". Indian star tortoises: \$ 15 US per pair. Red-eared slider: \$ 31 US per pair. This species in India and Europe is considered invasive.¹⁵



January 24, 2018

Patna, Patna District, State of Bihar, India

Seizure of 286 turtles of various and not detailed species. A couple: Rahul and Mamta Kumari. Route: Sultanpur - Kolkata, 900 km. Intervention of the Railway Protection Force.¹⁶

January 25, 2018

Tiruchirappalli International Airport, State of Tamil Nadu, India

80 Indian star turtles (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix II) hidden in cardboard boxes in two travel bags flying to Bangkok. It was a risky job. But, around midnight, Zahir Hussain tried to board a Thai AirAsia flight. He was stopped at the x-ray baggage check. The Forest Department took him in at dawn, along with the turtles. During the interrogation, Zahir Hussain stated that a certain "Jamal" had paid him 8000 rupees (\$125 US) to deliver the turtles to a contact in Bangkok. The agents at the Forest Department are not very convinced by his version of the story.¹⁷



January 31, 2018

Sagar, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Arrest in Chennai, State of Tamil Nadu and transfer to Sagar of a certain Manivannan Murugesan. In the ranking of the kingpins of international turtle trafficking, it would be the 3rd. Ajay Singh's chatter ("On the Trail" n°16 p. 19) revealed the large scale of the figure. He was wanted by the Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh Special Task Forces, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau and Interpol. This former Singapore businessman became an expert in turtle smuggling and has links with Thailand, Malaysia, Macao, Hong Kong, China and of course Madagascar.¹⁸



February 6, 2018

New Delhi, National Capital Territory of Delhi, India

Breaking news: turtles can cure tuberculosis! A routine road patrol pulled over a Honda Civic on Simon Bolivar Marg, at the edge of the Central Ridge Reserve Forest. The driver obeyed, but as soon as the vehicle had parked, the three occupants got out and ran away. The police caught two of them. In the car, they found five Indian softshell turtles (*Nilssonia gangetica*, Appendix I) in a gunny bag. The man who got away, a certain Aman, was arrested a little later in the day. He said he had bought the turtles to cook for his father-in-law, because he had tuberculosis.¹⁹

February 7, 2018

Howrah, Howrah District, State of West Bengal, India

Seizure of 200 Indian softshell turtle (*Nilssonia gangetica*, Appendix I). Two young men. Trip: Varanasi - Kolkata, 680 km. Intervention : Railway Protection Force." The bags were moving under the seats and the smell alerted us..." Final destination: Habra, Barrackpore and Gaighata food markets.²⁰

February 20, 2018

Vijayawada, Krishna District, State of Andhra Pradesh, India

Seizure of 406 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix II). Two women. Trip: Kadiri-Bhubaneswar, 1250 km. Final destination: Bangladesh. Intervention: Directorate of Revenue Intelligence.²¹



REPEATED OFFENSE

March 7, 2018

Indore, Indore District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Deepak Surwade sold on WhatsApp two Indian tent turtles (*Pangshura tentoria*, Appendix II) and corals. He was arrested in his aquarium shop.²²



REPEATED OFFENSE

March 22, 2018

Kolkata, State of West Bengal, India

Seizure of 241 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix II) from a hotel, ready to be sent to Bangkok. Mohamed Yaseen is not on his first mischief.²³



March 30, 2018

Kanpur, Kanpur Nagar District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Seizure of 27 kg of dried calipee, a mucus that covers the lower part of the shells of Indian softshell turtles (*Nilssonia gangetica*, Appendix I) and peacock softshell turtles (*Nilssonia hurum*, Appendix I). It is considered a culinary delicacy and is also used in "medicine" and cosmetics. Calipee sells for \$115 US per kg on the international market, in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Bangladesh.

The peacock softshell turtles have four to five ocelluses on their shells that resemble those of a peacock. They fade as the turtles grow.²⁴



INDONESIA

January 31, 2018

Makassar, Province of South, Indonesia

Seizure at the home of two Chinese expats of 200 kg of turtle shells valued at \$ 13,200 US. They say they bought them in Papua and carried them by boat to Makassar. Their project was to smuggle them to China where they would have been made into trinkets or fashion accessories. Pig-nosed turtles (*Carettochelys insculpta* Appendix II) are subjected to intense poaching in Papua. See "On the Trail" n°12 p.20.²⁵

VIET NAM

January 19, 2018

Vi Thuy District, Hau Giang Province, Viet Nam

11 kg. The yellow-headed temple turtle (*Heosemys annandalii*, Appendix II) was wandering through a garden. It was released in the Lung Ngoc Hoang National Park.²⁶



EUROPE

NETHERLANDS

February 15, 2018

Amsterdam-Schiphol Airport, North Holland Province, Netherlands

A Brazilian giant tortoise (*Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II) shell was seized in the baggage of a traveler coming from Surinam.²⁷

Snakes

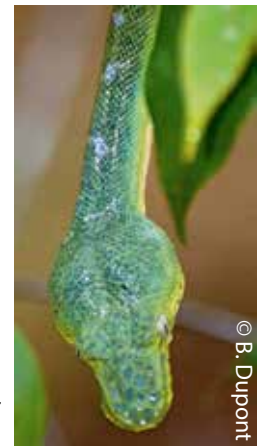
AMERICA

ARGENTINA

February 20, 2018

Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina

A clandestine breeding center in an individual's home was raided by the police. Seizure of 219 snakes, including ball pythons (*Python regius*, Appendix II) and emerald tree boas (*Corallus caninus*, Appendix II), as well as 19 eggs. One arrest. Specialists from the Malbrán Institute are working on identifying all of the species in order to sort out which are indigenous and which are exotic.¹



ASIA

INDIA

January 25, 2018

Bahraich District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Shree Niwash (42 years old) was coming from Nepal not far away with 2 kg of "Charas" - hashish obtained by manual friction of cannabis flowers- and two sand boas (*Eryx* spp., Appendix II). The border control police stopped him at 4:30 pm and handed him over to the Murtiha police station with the narcotics and snakes.²

Mid February 2018

Daryapur, Amravati District, State of Maharashtra, India

The price of Indian sand boas (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) continues to rise. The police and agents from the Melghat Tiger Reserve arrested five men who were trying to sell a nice 4.5-kg-specimen for 25 million rupees (\$393,000 US). Following a tip, the phony buyers began negotiations with Abdul Hanif Abdul Habib, Gawarshah Kadar Shah, Afzal Hussain Ali Niyaz Ali, Taslim Shah Lukman Shah and Shaikh Nasir. The starting price for the snake had been set at 30 million rupees (\$471,000 US), but the investigators were able to bring it down. This is the third Indian sand boa since the beginning of the year in the region. For poachers, it is an ideal species since the very high black market price makes the trade even more profitable than smuggling tiger parts. Individuals weighing over 3 kg are sold for a bonus due to scarcity.³

February 28, 2018

Shamshabad, Ranga Reddy District, State of Telangana, India

Uday Kumar and Radesh put an ad on Internet. They were selling an Indian sand boa (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) or “two-headed snake,” reputed to bring good luck to its owner. Apparently that is a misleading myth: members of the Wildlife Protection Society spotted the ad and denounced them. Agents from the Telangana forest department posed as buyers and went to pick up Uday Kumar and Radesh one evening at a hotel where the transaction was scheduled to take place. The two men supposedly captured the snake near Bandagonda village. This is the 5th seizure of the same species in one month in the sector.⁴



March 2018

Aurangabad District, State of Maharashtra, India

All in all, in the district, 1500 snakes have been taken from public and private locations following calls from residents or customers. Professional snake catchers, not to be confused with snake charmers, have been looking glum since the local forest service withdrew their professional licenses. They complain about being taken for traffickers when the police find them with a snake that they have caught and are about to release. There are 20 professional snake catchers in the Aurangabad district and the neighboring district. Perhaps the forest services are afraid that some of them could also be part-time traffickers. Nitesh Jadhav, speaking on behalf of his colleagues, denies the rumor. They are sometimes called in to save sand boas.⁵

March 17, 2018

Thane District, State of Maharashtra, India

Suresh Nikam (32 years old) and Sanjay Pawar (47 years old) had two Indian sand boas (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) in a bag. They were arrested in a closed mill. According to the police, one of the snakes could be worth 500,000 rupees (\$7700 US) and the other 700,000 (\$10,800 US). Investigators are now trying to identify the buyers.⁶

MALAYSIA

January 12 and 17, 2018

Larkin, State of Johor, (border to Singapore) and Shah Alam, State of Selangor, Malaysia

In the parcel sent from Taiwan, the “toys” were pythons (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II).⁷

EUROPE

GERMANY

Beginning of March 2018

Garching bei München, Free State of Bavaria, Germany

Two women were carrying two packages full of boxes of “Cobratoxan,” a cream that is supposedly effective for rheumatism and contains king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*, Appendix II) venom. Since they had no CITES documents, the customs officers seized the products. Garching-bei-München is a town in the northern suburb of Munich, on the road to the international airport.⁸



OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

January 5, 2018

East Brisbane, Queensland State, Australia

While executing a search warrant on a Lytton Road address, officers from the Dutton Park police station and the Department of Environment and Science stumbled on an olive python (*Liasis olivaceus*, Appendix II) 3 m long and 15kg and an albinos python (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II) 2 m long. They were taken to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). The search also led to finding a knocked Taser, one knuckleduster, drugs and accessories to use them. The 41-year-old man found on site will be summoned by justice to answer to accounts of possession of protected species, narcotics and forbidden weapons.⁹

Sauria

AMERICA

BRAZIL

February 8, 2018

Juiz de Fora, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Another discovery of a baby iguana (*Iguana* spp., Appendix II) in quite a stich. (see "On the Trail" n°19 p. 27). This one was inside a cardboard box slipped into a plastic pipe. He was found in the storage room for abandoned packages at the bus station. Veterinarians are now at his side.¹



COLOMBIA

End of January 2018

On the road between Calamar, Bolívar Department and Sincelejo, Sucre Department, Colombia

National Route 25 is a favorite route for wildlife traffickers because it avoids certain itineraries that are under heavier police surveillance. That is why Victor Hugo Gómez Arias, the Bolívar police commander, decided to step up inspections there. His two seizures show that he has good intuition. First, his agents stopped two men, 31 and 49 years old, at a road block. They were driving a truck carrying 550 Colombian sliders (*Trachemys callirostris*) in several bags. The reptiles are estimated to be worth 27.5 million Colombian pesos (\$9280 US). The turtles were still alive and should be released into the wild after a veterinary exam. Then on a bus from Carmen de Bolívar to Cartagena, a 47-year-old woman, carrying 5600 iguana eggs (*Iguana* spp., Appendix II) that she planned to sell in the town of Gambote was also arrested. Victor Hugo Gómez Arias took the opportunity to remind the general public that they should not buy iguana eggs, turtles, boas or other wild animals destined for human consumption.²



February 20, 2018

Cartagena, Bolívar Department, Colombia

Festivities are beginning. Easter week is coming up soon. Seizure of over 2000 nice fresh iguana eggs (*Iguana* spp., Appendix II). Three arrests. They were selling the eggs door-to-door.³



GANG

Beginning of March 2018

Magangué, Bolívar Department, Colombia

The speedboat sailed on the Magdalena River coming from the city of Tiquisio. The municipal police of Magangué were on patrol there. Their meeting resulted in the seizure of more than 3,000 iguana eggs (*Iguana* spp., Appendix II) stored under fish in polystyrene compartments. The eggs were destined for resale in coastal towns on the occasion of the Easter holiday. Their value was 10 million pesos (\$3,500 US). Investigators suspect the man to be a part of a network of traffickers operating from southern Bolívar, Córdoba, and Sucre departments, but they were not arrested. The eggs were given to the Autonomous Regional Corporation in the south of Bolívar.⁴



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LOUDSPEAKER NETWORK FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 29, 2018

**Los Angeles, State of California,
United States of America**

Gayle Simpson (See "On the Trail" n°19 p. 123) was sentenced to six months house arrest and three years probation. The Solomon Islands spiny monitor (*Varanus spinulosus*, Appendix II), Palawan water monitor lizard (*Varanus palawanensis*, Appendix II) and Samar water monitor lizard (*Varanus cumingi*, Appendix II) were shipped from the Philippines as "audio speakers". The official recipient was Simpson's son.⁵



EL SALVADOR

January 17, 2018

San Pedro Nonualco, La Paz Department, El Salvador

Seizure by the Policia Nacional Civil of 38 reptiles including green iguanas (Iguana Iguana, Appendix II). 20 were already dead. The others were mistreated.⁶



ASIA

CAMBODIA

March 21, 2018

Mondulkiri Province, Cambodia

Two seizures of poached meat to the credit of the provincial Department of the Environment. First, 100 kg transported by four men on two motorcycles, coming out of the Phnom Prich wildlife sanctuary. Moch Tuch is the only one who was arrested, in possession of a homemade rifle. His accomplices got away. Then, at the market in Sen Monorom, the provincial capital, a merchant was arrested by agents from the Forest Administration, seconded by members of the NGO Wildlife Alliance. He had a stock of 116 kg of meat from various poached species, and two live monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp, Appendix I or II). Som Kimsang was fined 20 million riels (\$4970 US) and was released after signing a pledge not to trade in wildlife again.⁷



CHINA

March 26, 2018

Haikou, Hainan Province, China

Seizure of 547 dried geckos (Gekkonidae family). The customs office put out a reminder that imports and exports are subject to authorization.⁸

INDIA

January 14, 2018

Banarhat, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India

Border control agents and forest guards were waiting for Suresh Toppo (49 years old) near the rail gate: he had been denounced. He appeared at about 4:30 pm, transporting 5 tokay geckos (*Gekko gecko*). He and the lizards were turned over to the Moraghat forest division.⁹

January 16, 2018

Bhutnirghat, Parangarpar, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India

Two people arrested around 4 pm on the bridge crossing the Mujnai. Sadhan Mandal (aged 37) and Akash Gabur (aged 18) were transporting by motorcycle 4 tokay geckos (*Gekko gecko*). The seized animals, the motorcycle and the suspects are in police hands now.¹⁰

January 2018

India

Gecko lizards are skyrocketing

Prices on the black market are astronomical. A 28-50 cm gecko, weighing a little over 300 g goes for many thousands US\$ internationally. To increase their weight, traffickers sometimes inject mercury in the lizard's stomach, which kills it after a few hours or days. The practice is also hazardous for those who are going to cut it up and eat it. Dried gecko is popular in China as an aphrodisiac, a cancer treatment and a cure for respiratory disease. The trade is profitable. The financial and criminal risks are minor. No CITES listing, no dissuasive sanctions. Agreements between gecko networks in India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh facilitate capturing and trading. The SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal) is a major player in the fight against trafficking along the northern borders.¹¹

March 8, 2018

Kishanganj, Kishanganj District, State of Bihar, India

Seizure of two live tokay geckos (*Gekko gecko*). They were to be delivered to China, via Nepal.¹²

FRANCE

January 26, 2018

Nouméa, South Province, New Caledonia, France

A Japanese tourist sentenced to pay a fine equivalent to \$ 8000 US, plus damages of \$ 59,000 US to the Southern Province and \$ 20,000 US to the Northern Province. The man was caught before he boarded at the Vao airfield, Ile des Pins, with 18 adult geckos and 61 juveniles in his baggage. It was not his first try. His trackers on the island are still in hiding.

The 9 genus of geckos present in the archipelago are protected by the environmental code.¹³

*Rhacodactylus ciliatus*

NETHERLANDS

January 16, 2018

Netherlands

Seizure of an iguana (*Iguana* spp., Appendix II) without papers.¹⁴

*Iguana iguana*

Crocodilians

AFRICA

EGYPT

End of February 2018

In the southern city of Aswan, Governorate of Aswan, Egypt

Seized from a small boat on Lake Nasser: 10 Nile crocodile skins (*Crocodylus niloticus*, Appendix II) from 2 to 4 m long and four other skins of unidentified animals. Skins of the young crocodiles are still sold in certain Egyptian markets, particularly the Tunisian market south of Cairo.¹



AMERICA

BRAZIL

January 29, 2018

Boa Vista, State of Roraima, Brazil

Agents from the federal road police on a routine patrol on BR-401 had real flair in the night from Sunday to Monday. They stopped a vehicle towards midnight, whose 28-year-old driver was wanted for the rape of a vulnerable person since November 2014. During the search, they found a caiman (family Alligatoridae, Appendix I or II), 1 meter long, hidden in a bag under the backseat. The pick-up truck was seized. The two men were taken to the 5th district central police station while the reptile was set free by police officers.²



ASIA

CAMBODIA

March 3, 2018

Kaoh Daet District, Takeo Province, Cambodia. Border with Viet Nam.

Seizure at 3:30 a.m. by the military police of 3.9 t of dried crocodile hides (Crocodylidae, Appendix I or II) smuggled in from the nearby Vietnamese province of An Yang. They are estimated at \$24,000 US. The smuggler managed to get away, but the recipient of the hides has been identified: he is a Cambodian "businessman" and crocodile farmer in Kampong Chhnang province. The police will be questioning him. He may get a fine. Yet another crocodile farm that conceals the low captive reproduction rate by purchasing eggs or hides.³

EUROPE

NETHERLANDS

February 26, 2018

Amsterdam-Schiphol Airport, North Holland Province, Netherlands

Seizure on a passenger coming from Hong Kong of five pieces of reptile hide, one of which has already been identified as a salt-water crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*, Appendix I).⁴

March 27, 2018

Amsterdam-Schiphol Airport, North Holland Province, Netherlands

Interrogation of a passenger in possession of a spectacled caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*, Appendix II), freshly slain and with no CITES certificate.⁵

Various Reptile Species

AMERICA

MEXICO

February 8, 2018

San Luis Potosí, State of San Luis Potosí, Mexico

Seizures on the Estafeta parcel platform inside the airport territory of 9 ball pythons (*Python regius*, Appendix II), an Egyptian sand boa (*Gongylophis colubrinus*, Appendix II), Cook's tree Boa (*Corallus cookii*, Appenix II), a Meller's chameleon (*Trioceros melleri*, Appendix II), two tarantulas (family Theraphosidae), a Guichenot's giant gecko (*Correlophus ciliatus*), a red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), an alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*, Appendix III in the United States of America) and a spiny lizard from the *Sceloporus olivaceus* species. The packages came from Monterrey and Nuevo Leon and were addressed to Queretaro, Guanajuato, Sinaloa, Mexico City, Quintana Roo, Jalisco and Hidalgo. The survivors were at first turned over to the Autonomous Agronomy University of the city. The Meller's chameleon originates from East Africa. The Cook's tree boa lives in trees exclusively on Saint-Vincent Island.

The Egyptian sand boa lives in the arid and semi-arid regions of Africa, of the Near East, Asia and sometimes Europe.¹

March 13, 2018

Oaxaca de Juárez, State of Oaxaca, Mexico

Seizure on a market place of three boa constrictors (*Boa constrictor*, Annexe II), two neotropical whip Snakes (*Coluber mentovarius*), a yellowbelly snake (*Coniophanes fissidens*), a western lyre snake (*Trimorphodon biscutatus*), a ridgehead snake (*Manolepis putnami*), a blood snake (*Stenorrhina freminvillei*), a whiptail lizard (genus *Aspidoscelis*), three spiny lizards (genus *Sceloporus*), two common iguanas (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II), two tarantulas (*Brachypelma* spp., Appendix II) and a tarantula from the genus *Aphonopelma*. The reptiles, saurian and spiders were trapped in mescal bottles.²



March 16, 2018

San Luis Potosí, State of San Luis Potosí, Mexico

Random control by the federal police of a package picked up by the agency of the courier company Estafeta, which was installed in the city's industrial logistics park sheds light on the trafficking of reptiles out of Monterrey (State of Nuevo León). Three packages contained seven veiled chameleons (*Chamaeleo calyptratus*, Appendix II), two alligator snapping turtles (*Macrochelys temminckii*, Appendix III in the United States of America) and a frog (genus *Rana*) packed in plastic boxes inside cardboard boxes. No legal documents accompanied the animals who were addressed to the cities of San Luis Potosí, Pachuca (State of Hidalgo), and Aguascalientes (State of Aguascalientes). They were handed over to the Faculty of Agronomy at the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí.³



End of March 2018

Mexico, Mexico

Writ of sequestration of a Cranwell's horned frog (*Ceratophrys cranwelli*) and 62 reptiles including 12 Duméril's boas (*Acrantophis dumerili*, Appendix I), four boas constrictors (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II), one emerald tree boa (*Corallus caninus*, Appendix II), one garden tree boa (*Corallus hortulanus*, Appendix II), two rainbow boas (*Epicrates cenchria*, Appendix II), two Egyptian sand boas (*Gongylophis colubrinus*, Appendix II), two carpet pythons (*Morelia spilota*, Appendix II), three blood pythons (*Python brongersmai*, Appendix II), three Burmese pythons (*Python bivittatus*, Appendix II), one middle American gopher snake (*Pituophis lineaticollis*), three ball pythons (*Python regius*, Appendix II), five reticulated pythons (*Python reticulatus*, Appendix II), one Ramsay's python (*Aspidites ramsayi*, Appendix II) and two black-headed pythons (*Aspidites melanocephalus*, Appendix II), one white-throated monitor (*Varanus albigularis*, Appendix II), two Nile monitors (*Varanus niloticus*, Appendix II), one two-banded monitor (*Varanus salvator*, Appendix II), four beaded lizards (*Heloderma horridum*, Appendix II), one common tegu (*Tupinambis teguixin*, Appendix II) and one Belize crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*, Appendix II).

Until the end of the administrative procedure, the animals are under the responsibility of the Bitis Ecosystem herpetarium inside the "Six Flags" fun park. During the surprise inspection of PROFEPA, those in charge did not prove the legal origin of the animals whose housing and watering conditions appear questionable. Bitis Ecosystem has 5 working days to prove its good faith. Otherwise, the animals will be seized.⁴

EUROPE

SPAIN

OPERATION JUNGLE V

Beginning of March 2018

Community of Madrid and Province of Castellon, Valencian Community, Spain

Seizure of 600 wild animals, varans (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), spiny-tailed lizards (*Uromastyx* spp., Appendix II), Sonoran desert tortoises (*Gopherus morafkai*) and iguanas. The Sonoran desert tortoises measure up to 38 cm. They live in Arizona in the United States and in Sonora in Mexico.



Nine arrests. The network crumbled thanks to information coming from The Netherlands. Cf. "On the Trail" n°14 p. 25. The animals were introduced to Spain from Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Oman, and South Africa by "tourists" benefitting from complicity on the "hunting grounds".⁵



Amphibians

Is the international frog trade supported by the chemical insecticide cartel? In the year 1025, Chinese populations were called not to eat frogs to control pest. In 1985, Indian scientists gave sound at the resurgence of mosquitoes and the increase in the sale of chemical insecticides due to the overexploitation of frogs. Today the European Union imports 4000 tons of legs per year from Indonesia, i.e. the sacrifice of 100 to 200 million frogs. Most come from «gathering» in natural wetland and rice fields. Inclusion of the *Rana macrodon* and *Fejervarya cancrivora* species in CITES Appendix II might save them from extinction by imposing a control of the international trade. French frogs and Asiatic frogs, same dangers, same battle.

EUROPE

GERMANY

March 16, 2018

Franz Josef Strauss International Airport, Munich, Free State of Bavaria, Germany

Seizure of 1.1 kg of dried frogs, hidden among a jumble of skin-whitening creams and other "medications" that fall under an importation ban, in 17 bags accompanying a passenger coming from Nigeria. "Some of the animals already had fly eggs and therefore had to be destroyed immediately..." said Marie Müller, press spokeswoman for the main customs office in Munich.¹



FRANCE-BELGIUM

March 2018

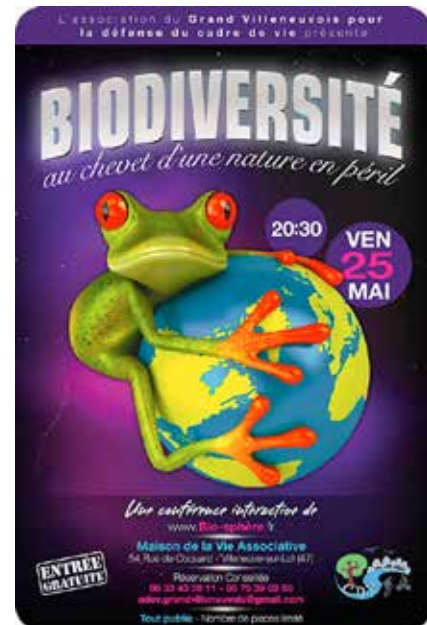
France-Belgium

The pillage of European common frogs (*Rana temporaria*) continues and escalates (cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p. 25-26). Mosquitos are rejoicing.

- Seizure by the ONCFS of 300 specimens from a 70 year-old poacher near Citers, Department of Haute-Saône, France.

- Seizure by the ONCFS of several thousand European common frogs in Baume-les-Dames, Department of Doubs, France.

- The French restaurant, Edgar et Madeleine, in Chimay, Province of Hainaut, Wallonia Region, was found to be at the center of a European common frog poaching network in the Virelles ponds. The European common frog is listed in Appendix V of the European Flora and Fauna Habitats Directory and in Appendix III of the Convention of Berne on the conservation of wildlife and natural habitats in Europe.²



Arachnids

ASIA

SINGAPORE

January 4, 2018

Tuas Checkpoint, Singapore. Border to Malaysia

The 33-year-old man of Singapore Nationality was stopped near 2 pm at the wheel of a car wanting to cross over to Malaysia. Agents from the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority quickly found in his bag 6 tarantulas trapped in individual plastic pots. The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) carried out a

search at his home where 92 other tarantulas were seized. An investigation is opened. The animals were given to the Wildlife Reserves Singapore, a private company that runs four zoos and amusement parks in the city-State. AVA reminds that tarantulas are not welcome in Singapore and that some of the species are listed in Appendix II of CITES.¹



Birds

Almost 4000 birds seized in three month in Brazil alone. The actual traffic is probably over 40,000 birds. The main victims are songbirds, some of whose species are already considered vulnerable or endangered. Other species on the grounds that they have a wide range in South America are recklessly considered common even though they are already wiped from two-thirds of Brazil. "On the Trail" will continue to explore this birdy world full of colour and melodies. Sporophiles from South America and goldfinches from Europe and North Africa, same dangers, same battle.

AFRICA

LIBERIA

February 2018
Bomi County, Liberia

Seizure of a live crowned eagle (*Stephanoaetus coronatus*, Appendix II) by a ranger at the Saw Mill inspection point. Edward Gbeintor, wildlife director at the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), took it as an opportunity to motivate his teams to increase the number of inspections "until the habit of hunting and smuggling endangered species in the country is narrowed, if not totally eradicated." Two men were arrested. The bird was handed over to the Libassa Ecolodge, a tourist complex near Monrovia, located in a preserved forest that is used as a refuge for animals seized by the FDA. He remained there under observation for 10 days, before being released in the forest. Before the civil war, the Authority had its own refuge, but it was destroyed during fighting and the animals were killed.¹



MOROCCO

January 8, 2018
Ain Bni Mathar, Oriental Region, Morocco

Seizure of 400 European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*). The birds were held in 9 cages, transported by car. They were going to be smuggled into Algeria.²

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

January 16, 2018

General Guemes, Province of Salta, Argentina

Seizure of fifteen birds including a Darwin's rhea (*Pterocnemia pennata*, Appendix I), a black-backed gros beak (*Pheucticus aureoventris*), a red-crested cardinal (*Paroaria coronata*), a cowbird (genus *Molothrus*), a toucan (family Ramphastidae) and a chaco chachalaca (*Ortalis canicollis*).³



January 22, 2018

Los Molles, Malargüe Department, Province of Mendoza, Argentina

34 Andean condors (*Vultur gryphus*, Annexe I) poisoned with carbofuran found next to a dead puma and sheep, the toxic bait that had trapped the scavengers. A shepherd is suspected. Examined by a psychiatrist, he evaded prison.



Condors are magnificent. 34 dead condors, that's 100 m of black feathers on the ground, a funereal ribbon in the mountain plains. Contrary to rumor, condors are strictly necrophagous. The massacre of these mountain hygienists follow in Argentina and Chile. At the rate of one egg every two years, the females in this state of widespread adversity will have trouble assuring the survival of the species after a few decades. Cf. "On the Trail" n°1 p. 4 and n°4 p.32, n°5 p.117, n°17 p.118).⁴



End of January 2018

Huaco, Belén Department, Province of Catamarca, Argentina

Seizure of 54 wild songbirds including an ultramarine grosbeak (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), a black-backed grosbeak (*Pheucticus aureoventris*) and a red tanager (*Piranga flava*) in two houses.⁵

BRAZIL



January 3, 2018

São João da Boa Vista, Vargem Grande do Sul and Pirassununga, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 57 birds including ultramarine grosbeak (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), a saffron finch (*Sicalis flaveola*), a rufous-collared sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*), two lined seedeaters (*Sporophila lineola*) and two double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*). Fines of \$ 14,460 US.⁷



January 4, 2018

Apucarana, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of a parrot chick (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II) sold for \$ 181 US. Four others had already been bought.⁸

January 7, 2018

Araxá, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of 65 wild birds. Fines of \$18,325 US.⁹



January 7, 2018

Apucarana, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of two parrots (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II) and one chopi blackbird (*Gnorimopsar chopi*).¹⁰

January 7, 2018

São José de Ubá, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of 29 double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*) and one green-winged saltator (*Saltator similis*).¹¹

January 8, 2018

Pacajus, State of Ceará, Brazil

Seizure of 278 wild birds of 15 different species.¹²

January 8, 2018

Bauru, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 244 wild birds. Fines of \$ 245,350 US.¹³



January 8, 2018

Atalaia, State of Alagoas, Brazil

Seizure of 13 double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*).¹⁴

January 9, 2018

Antonina, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of four buffy-fronted seedeaters (*Sporophila frontalis*), two double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), one plumbeous seedeater (*Sporophila plumbea*) and two chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*).¹⁵

January 9, 2018

Petrópolis, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of 12 birds, double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), buffy-fronted seedeaters (*Sporophila frontalis*), rufous-collared sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*) and green-winged saltator (*Saltator similis*). Release of birds in the Guapimirim reserve.¹⁶

January 12, 2018

Presidente Prudente, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of four green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*) and one double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulescens*). Fine of \$ 755 US.¹⁷



January 16, 2018

Duque de Caxias, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of a capped seedeater (*Sporophila bouvreuil*) and a green-winged saltator (*Saltator similis*).¹⁸

January 17, 2018

Espinosa, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of 86 wild birds including green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), true thrushes (genus *Turdus*) and saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*).¹⁹

January 21, 2018

Jaboticabal, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of a green-winged saltator (*Saltator similis*), a white-bellied seedeater (*Sporophila leucoptera*), a lined seedeater (*Sporophila lineola*), a double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulea*) and a black-faced tanager (*Schistochlamys melanopsis*). Fine amounting to \$ 2220 US.²⁰



OPERATION SETE LAGOAS WITHOUT CAGE

January 21, 2018

Sete Lagoas, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of 90 wild birds. 18 arrests. Fines amounting to \$ 18,700 US.²¹



January 24, 2018

Serra Talhada, State of Pernambuco, Brazil

Seizure of nearly 50 wild birds of 14 different species.²²

FAMILY AFFAIRS

January 24, 2018

Cariri do Tocantins, State of Tocantins, Brazil

Seizure of 42 chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*), five parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), 10 golden conures (*Guarouba guarouba*, Appendix I), 22 red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), one double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulea*). Value: \$ 260,000 US.²³



January 25, 2018

Maceió, State of Alagoas, Brazil

Seizure of 5 double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), one copper seedeater (*Sporophila bouvreuil*), one bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*), one red-cowled cardinal (*Paroaria dominicana*), three saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), three jandaya conures (*Aratinga jandaya*, Appendix II), one tanager (genus *Thraupis*) and two green-headed tanager (*Tangara seledon*).²⁴

January 26, 2018

Bauru, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of three saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) and a double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulea*) on sale on Facebook. Fine amounting to \$ 604 US.²⁵



January 27, 2018

Pindamonhangaba, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 29 wild birds including four green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*). Fine amounting to \$ 12,086 US.²⁶



January 27–28, 2018

Recife, State of Pernambuco, Brazil

Seizure of 551 birds including red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), bananaquits (*Coereba flaveola*), red-headed cardinals (genus *Paroaria*), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*) and chestnut-capped blackbirds (*Chrysomus ruficapillus*).²⁷

January 28, 2018

Duque de Caxias, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of 56 birds including channel-billed toucans (*Ramphastos vitellinus*, Appendix II), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), great-billed seed finches (*Oryzoborus maximiliani*) and rufous-collared sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*).²⁸

FAMILY AFFAIRS

January 28, 2018

Santa Bárbara d'Oeste, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 69 songbirds, 22 double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulea*), 13 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), four shiny cowbirds (*Molothrus bonariensis*), one parrot (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), three chopi blackbirds (*Gnorimopsar chopi*), two lined Seedeaters (*Sporophila lineola*), four chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*), one green-winged saltator (*Saltator similis*), three thrushes (family Turdidae), six andean sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*), five blue-black grassquits (*Volatinia jacarina*) and five chestnut-capped blackbirds (*Chrysomus ruficapillus*). The two brothers were poaching near the Sao Luis dam.²⁹



January 30, 2018
Rio de Janeiro, State of
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of a blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II).³⁰ =>



January 31, 2018
Araguatins, State of Tocantins, Brazil

Seizure of two parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) and one chestnut-bellied seed finch (*Oryzoborus angolensis*). Fine of \$ 450 US.³¹



REPEATED OFFENSE

Beginning of February 2018
Elisiário, State of São Paulo, Brazil
 Seizure of 39 wild birds including 35 red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*) and release. Fine = 58,500 reais (\$ 6800 US). Poaching with callers.³²



Beginning of February 2018
Umuarama, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of two parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II). Fine of 1000 reais (\$ 320 US).³³



February 1, 2018
Teófilo Otoni, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Roadside check. Seizure of three red-headed cardinals (genus *Paroaria*) and five double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*). One arrest.³⁴

February 3, 2018
Conceição das Alagoas, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of 24 birds, double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), lined seedeaters (*Sporophila lineola*), buff-throated saltators (*Saltator maximus*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), copper seedeaters (*Sporophila bouvreuil*), red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*). Arrest of the housekeeper and release after pledging her word to answer summonses. Fines amounting to 21,530 reais (\$ 6800 US).³⁵



February 3, 2018
Conselheiro Lafaiete, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of 17 birds, five green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), four double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), three lined seedeaters (*Sporophila lineola*), a rufous-collared sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*), a red-crested finch (*Coryphospingus cucullatus*), a yellow-bellied seedeater (*Sporophila nigricollis*), cages and traps. Handover of birds to the Centro de Triagem de Animais Silvestres do Instituto Estadual de Florestas (Cetas/IEF) in Belo Horizonte.³⁶

February 3, 2018
Morretes and Antonina, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of 21 birds, double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), lined seedeaters (*Sporophila lineola*), hooded siskins (*Spinus magellanicus*), buffy-throated seedeaters (*Sporophila frontalis*), chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*), as well as a rifle and cartridges.³⁷

February 3, 2018
Marques de Souza, State of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Seizure of 59 wild birds, cages and traps. Partial release of birds into the wild. A man on the run.³⁸

February 3-4, 2018
Recife, State of Pernambuco, Brazil

Seizure on the markets by the Companhia Independente de Policiamento do Meio Ambiente (Cipoma) of 362 birds, 73 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), seedeaters (genus *Sporophila*), chestnut-capped blackbirds (*Chrysomus ruficapillus*), rufous-collared sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*) and seven-colored tanagers (*Tangara fastuosa*, Appendix II). After examination on a case-by-case basis, the birds will be released.³⁹

February 4, 2018
Bananal, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Poaching party in the mountains of Bocaina. Seizure of 17 birds, six cages, knives, traps. Three arrests, 34, 39 and 43. They can be released on bail of 5000 reais each.⁴⁰

February 5, 2018
Dois Vizinhos, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of six green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), four ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), three red-headed cardinals (genus *Paroaria*), a double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulescens*), a chopi blackbird (*Gnorimopsar chopi*), a saffron finch (*Sicalis flaveola*), an armadillo (family Dasypodidae), as well as two rifles and their ammunition. On-site destruction of cages and traps.⁴¹

February 6, 2018

Adamantina, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of three saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), a chopi blackbird (*Gnorimopsar chopi*), and a double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulescens*). A fine of 2500 reais (\$ 790 US).⁴²



February 7, 2018

Dourados, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

Seizure of 13 birds, two saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), six chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*) and five green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*). Fine of 6500 reais (\$ 2055 US). Handover of birds to the CRAS (Centro de Reabilitação de Animais Silvestres).⁴³

February 7, 2018

Neópolis, State of Sergipe, Brazil

Seizure of some sixty birds, tanagers (genus *Thraupis*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*), bananaquits (*Coereba flaveola*), white-throated seedeaters (*Sporophila albogularis*) and true thrushes (genus *Turdus*). An arrest. Cages and traps destroyed.⁴⁴

February 7, 2018

Apucarana, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of eight birds, green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) and double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*) and cages.⁴⁵

February 12, 2018

Luís Correia, State of Piauí, Brazil

Seizure of 34 birds, 41 cages, a handgun and a stolen motorcycle.⁴⁶

Mid February 2018

Uberaba, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure and release of 26 birds, saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) and ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*). Arrest of a 60-year-old man.⁴⁷

Mid February 2018

Crato, State of Ceará, Brazil

Seizure of birds by the dozen, saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) and parakeets (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) and two rifles. Three arrests.⁴⁸

February 16, 2018

Matinhos, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of 28 birds including a toucan chick (Ramphastidae family), green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*) and traps and traffickers' accounts.⁴⁹

February 17, 2018

Patos de Minas, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of 31 birds. Fine of 30,000 reais (\$ 9400 US).⁵⁰

February 18, 2018

Mossoró, State of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil

Seizure of 28 parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) and 40 yellow-rumped caciques (*Cacicus cela*). Road check on the BR 304. Departure: Fortaleza. Destination: Caruaru (700 km). One arrest.⁵¹



February 18, 2018

Recife, State of Pernambuco, Brazil

Seizure on the market of 79 birds, saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), red-headed cardinals (genus *Paroaria*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), chopi blackbirds (*Gnorimopsar chopi*), andean sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*), lined seedeaters (*Sporophila lineola*), white-bellied seedeaters (*Sporophila leucoptera*). Three arrests. "A good bird is a free bird," says Major Sergio Souza.⁵²

February 19, 2018

Quixeramobim and Banabuiú, State of Ceará, Brazil

Seizure of 75 birds, three armadillos (Dasypodidae family), rifles and ammunition.⁵³

February 22, 2018

Ponta Grossa, State of Paraná, Brazil

Seizure of six birds, firearms and contraband cigarettes. One arrest. 55 years old.⁵⁴

February 23, 2018

Carmo do Paranaíba, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure in two traffickers aged 74 and 76 of 182 birds, 115 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), 17 green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), eight ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), andean sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), plumbeous seedeaters (*Sporophila plumbea*), red-headed cardinals (genus *Paroaria*), a great-billed seed finch (*Oryzoborus maximiliani*), a chestnut-bellied seed finch (*Oryzoborus angolensis*), a lined seedeater (*Sporophila lineola*) and true thrushes (genus *Turdus*). They claim to "keep the birds of the elderly". They sold birds in Bahia.⁵⁵

February 23, 2018

Espinosa, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure in three houses of 27 birds, red-headed cardinals (genus *Paroaria*), ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), campo troupials (*Icterus jamacaii*) and double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*). Two arrests.⁵⁶



January 8, 2018, Atalaia, Brazil



January 16, Duque de Caxias, Brazil



January 26, 2018, Bauru, Brazil



Jan. 27, Pindamonhangaba, Brazil



Feb. 3, Conceição das Alagoas, Brazil



February 5, Dois Vizinhos, Brazil



Feb. 6, Adamantina, Brazil



February 7, 2018, Neópolis, Brazil



February 16, 2018, Matinhos, Brazil



February 17, Patos de Minas, Brazil



February 26, Bauru, Brazil



March 4, 2018, Centralina, Brazil



March 13, 2018, Limeira, Brazil



March 16, Ourinhos and Santa Cruz, Brazil



March 20, 2018, Maceió, Brazil

February 24-25, 2018

São Lourenço da Mata and Jaboatão dos Guararapes, State of Pernambuco, Brazil

Saisie sur les marchés de 108 oiseaux dont un colibri (famille Trochilidae), 12 jacarins noirs (*Volatinia jacarina*), deux paroaras dominicains (*Paroaria dominicana*), neuf bruants chingolos (*Zonotrichia capensis*), trois astrilds ondulés (*Estrilda astrild*), un sucrier à ventre jaune (*Coereba flaveola*), six sporophiles gris-de-plomb (*Sporophila plumbea*), un sporophile bouveron (*Sporophila lineola*), un tangara (genre *Thraupis*), neuf sicales bouton-d'or (*Sicalis flaveola*) et quatre carouges à calotte rousse (*Chrysomus ruficapillus*). Fuite des trafiquants avant l'arrivée de la police.⁵⁷

February 26, 2018

Bauru, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 14 birds used as callers in trap cages attached to concrete posts. Fine equal to \$ 2845 US.⁵⁸



February 26, 2018

Trajano de Moraes, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of 25 buffy-throated seedeaters (*Sporophila frontalis*), four green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), four traps and 25 cages in a 50-year-old woman. Fine of 500 reais per bird.⁵⁹

February 28, 2018

Mimoso do Sul, State of Espírito Santo, Brazil

Two double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*) in two cages covered with a white sheet. Vehicle check.⁶⁰

February 28, 2018

Ribeirão Preto, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 45 passerines and traps from a 70-year-old poacher-trafficker. Fine equal to \$ 3800 US.⁶¹



March 2, 2018

Ilha Comprida, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 10 birds, great kiskadees (*Pitangus sulphuratus*), true thrushes (genus *Turdus*), doves (genus *Columbina*) and 240 kg of rotten meat in a freezer. The roaster was selling "chicken" skewers on the beaches.⁶²

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 2, 2018

Cantagalo, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of 11 birds, six double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), one buffy-fronted seedeater (*Sporophila frontalis*), three green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*) and one red-cowled cardinal (*Paroaria dominicana*). Fine equal to \$ 154 US per bird for father and son.⁶³



March 4, 2018

Centralina, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of a double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulea*) and 14 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*). Call 181, toll-free, anonymous tip line. Fine equal to \$ 2310 US.⁶⁴



March 6, 2018

Arco-Íris, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of three parrots (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II) and one white-eyed conure (*Aratinga leucophthalma*, Appendix II). Wings cut. Handover to the refuge of Assis.⁶⁵

March 9, 2018

São Vicente, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 95 birds. 24 double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), six plumbeous seedeaters (*Sporophila plumbea*), five yellow-bellied seedeaters (*Sporophila nigricollis*), four chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*), three lined seedeaters (*Sporophila lineola*), 12 green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), five red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*), four andean sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*), three black-throated grosbeaks (*Saltator fuliginosus*), two rufous-bellied thrushes (*Turdus rufiventris*), 13 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), two blue-black grassquits (*Volatinia jacarina*), one ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), two brazilian tanagers (*Ramphocelus bresilius*), one tanager (genus *Thraupis*), four grey pileated finches (*Coryphospingus pileatus*), one red-capped cardinal (*Paroaria gularis*) and three red siskins (*Carduelis cucullata*, Appendix I). Arrest of two said to be ornithologists. They are liabilities to a fine equivalent to \$ 71,520 US. Transfer of birds to the Centro de Pesquisa e Triagem de Animais Selvagens (Ceptas) of Cubatao.⁶⁶



Amphocelus bresilius dorsalis

March 13, 2018

Santa Maria Madalena, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of five double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), two saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) and a blue-black grassquit (*Volatinia jacarina*).⁶⁷

REPEATED OFFENSE

March 13, 2018

Limeira, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 29 birds, green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), chopis blackbirds (*Gnorimopsar chopi*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*) and finches (genus *Carduelis*) by a 53-year-old repeat offender.⁶⁸

Mid March 2018

Patos de Minas, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of two parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) in an 80-year-old male. "They have been in the family for 40 years," he says. Parrots can live up to 60 years. Both specimens are left on site. However, the holder is liable to a fine of \$ 1300 US.⁶⁹

March 16, 2018

Ourinhos and Santa Cruz do Rio Pardo, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 45 birds in illegal captivity, one white-eyed conure (*Aratinga leucophthalma*, Appendix II), 10 green-winged saltators (*Saltator similis*), 10 double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), one great-billed seed finch (*Oryzoborus maximiliani*), one lined seedeater (*Sporophila lineola*), nine saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), four ultramarine grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*), three rufous-bellied thrushes (*Turdus rufiventris*), two white-necked thrushes (*Turdus albicollis*), one creamy-bellied thrush (*Turdus amaurochalinus*), a red pileated finch (*Coryphospingus cucullatus*), a thick-billed euphonia (*Euphonia lanirostris*) and a passerine (genus *Spinus*). The man is liable to a fine of 44,500 reais (or \$ 13,800 US) and from 6 months to one year in prison.⁷⁰

March 19, 2018

Ilha Solteira, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 12 birds, chopis blackbirds (*Gnorimopsar chopi*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) and 20 kg of wild meat, weapons and ammunition. Fine equal to 16,000 reais (\$ 4940 US). Release on 1000 reais (\$ 308 US) bail.⁷¹



March 20, 2018

Maceió, State of Alagoas, Brazil

Seizure of 15 birds, Java sparrows (*Lonchura oryzivora*, Appendix II), chopis blackbirds (*Gnorimopsar chopi*), tanagers (genus *Thraupis*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) and 257 doses of cocaine. One arrest.⁷²



March 21, 2018

Andradina, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of 41 wild birds. Fine of 29,500 reais (\$ 9110 US).⁷³



March 22, 2018

Iguape, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of two blue-and-gold macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II). Pitiful condition. Fine of 22,000 reais or nearly \$ 6800 US.⁷⁴



March 23, 2018

Iporanga, State of São Paulo, Brazil



Seizure of 6 dead birds, a toucan (Ramphastidae family), a bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*), three green-headed tanagers (*Tangara seledon*), a parrotlet (*Forpus* spp., Appendix II), a rifle, bird traps and a motorcycle. One arrest.⁷⁵



March 23, 2018

Arealva, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure thanks to a tip of 13 blue-fronted amazons (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II), five blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), and one toucan (Ramphastidae family).⁷⁶

March 24, 2018

Regente Feijó, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of a blue-fronted amazon (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II) and three double-collared seedeater (*Sporophila caerulea*). Fine of 2000 reais (\$ 617 US).⁷⁷



March 25, 2018

Jaboatão dos Guararapes, State of Pernambuco, Brazil

Seizure on a market of 42 birds, four red-cowled cardinals (*Paroaria dominicana*), 11 plumbeous seedeaters (*Sporophila plumbea*), two double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), seven grassland yellow finches (*Sicalis luteola*), two saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), six blue-black grassquits (*Volatinia jacarina*), two chestnut-capped blackbirds (*Chrysomus ruficapillus*), three andean sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis*), three passerines (genus *Spinus*), one grey pileated finch (*Coryphospingus pileatus*), and one ultramarine grosbeak (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*). Sellers runaway.⁷⁸

March 28, 2018

Iguape, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seizure of three chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*), several cages and one unregistered firearm. Fine of 24,000 reais (\$ 7410 US).⁷⁹



March 28, 2018

Cangaíba, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Searching of an underground dog farm. Seizure of five parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) and one jandaya conure (*Aratinga jandaya*, Appendix II). The 117 dogs and six birds were abused.⁸⁰



End of March 2018

Patrocínio, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Road check. Home search. Seizure of 10 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*). Fine of 20,000 reais (\$ 6180 US).⁸¹



March 31, 2018

Marechal Deodoro, State of Alagoas, Brazil

Tip-off on alert number 190. Seizure of two red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II) at a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts.⁸²



BOLIVIA

January 9, 2018

Sacaba, Cochabamba Department, Bolivia

Seizure of an eagle (Accipitridae, Appendix I or II). Since the beginning of the year, 20 wild animals have been seized in Cochabamba Department: two eagles, a monkey and marine turtles and tortoises.⁸³

February 26, 2018

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Santa Cruz Department, Bolivia

Seizure of 150 birds, severe macaws (*Ara severus*, Appendix II), blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), toucans (Ramphastidae family), parrots (Psittacidae spp., Appendix I or II) from an illegal trader. At home, he always played very loud music to cover up the singing and the screaming.⁸⁴



CHILE

February 28, 2018

Puente Alto and La Florida, Santiago Metropolitan Region, Chile

Seizure of 20 slender-billed conure chicks (*Enicognathus leptorhynchus*, Appendix II). The man was selling to "bird breeders" via Facebook.⁸⁵



COLOMBIA

January 16, 2018

Neiva, Huila Department, Colombia

Seizure of 15 red-billed whistling-ducks (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*, A. III in Honduras).⁸⁶

End of March 2018

Honda, Tolima Department, Colombia

Seizure of 12 woodpecker chicks (family Picidae), orange-chinned parakeets (*Brotogeris jugularis*, Appendix II) and collared araçari (*Pteroglossus torquatus*) as well as three yellow-fronted amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II) and three tropical mockingbirds (*Mimus gilvus*).⁸⁷



ECUADOR

January 24, 2018

Nueva Loja, Sucumbios Province, Ecuador. Border with Colombia.

Seizure of a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II).⁸⁸



March 1, 2018

El Limo, Loja Province, Ecuador

Road check. Female driver's U-turn. Dumping into the ditch of a cardboard box. 17 red-masked conures (*Aratinga erythrogenys*, Appendix II) inside. Immediate release of the birds after notification by the prosecutor.⁸⁹

March 27, 2018

Portoviejo, Manabi Province, Ecuador

Seizure and quarantine of a red-lored amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II), a blue-headed parrot (*Pionus menstruus*, Appendix II) and an orange-winged amazon (*Amazona amazonica*, Appendix II). All three birds are parasite infested, dehydrated and suffering from respiratory diseases.⁹⁰

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 3, 2018

John F. Kennedy International Airport, State of New York, United States of America

No information on species. Only the import risks of psittacosis, avian influenza and Newcastle disease are mentioned. Fine of \$ 300 US. Return trip for birds.⁹¹



MEXICO

January 14, 2018

State of Jalisco, Mexico

Traffic control. The beak of one of the two keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*, Appendix II) is closed with adhesive tape. The howler monkey (*Alouatta* spp., Appendix I or II) is thirsting.⁹²

Mid January 2018

Palenque, State of Chiapas, Mexico

Seizure in a bus of 244 white-fronted amazons (*Amazona albifrons*, Appendix II). An 18-year-old young man was arrested. He was meant to deliver them in Villahermosa, 150 km away. According to his statement, the final destination was the United States. The birds may be released after a quarantine period and assessment of their flying capacities and feeding autonomy.⁹³

January 16, 2018

Santiago Ixcuintla, State of Nayarit, Mexico

Following a call from an individual who reported parrot and parakeets vendors along the road from Santiago to Los Corchos, PROFEPA agents and municipal police went to investigate.

On the edge of town, they found two men with six young orange-fronted conures (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II) in metal cages. They had a motorcycle and bird food. Because they were unable to show documents proving the legal origin of the animals, they were arrested and turned over to the Tepic prosecutor. The six orange-fronted conures were entrusted to the Umballi forest wildlife management organization, until a decision is made on their future.⁹⁴

January 19, 2018

Mexico, Mexico

Problems for urban "owners" of wild animals come from neighbors, and visits from false friends. Thus complaints to PROFEPA from residents led to a raid at the homes of two individuals in the Ampliación and Estrella neighborhoods. At the first address, investigators found an adult orange-fronted conure (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II) of undetermined gender, with no ringing or legal documents. The bird seemed to be in good physical condition. It was confiscated from its holder. In the second house, two keel-billed toucans (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*, Appendix II) were languishing in a cage. They had no papers either and were also seized by PROFEPA.⁹⁵



February 21, 2018

On the road between Atlacomulco, State of Mexico and Maravatío, State of Michoacán, Mexico

Seizure near Mexico City in the baggage compartment of a bus coming from Mazatlán: 10 military macaws (*Ara militaris*, Appendix I).⁹⁶

February 26, 2018

Huimanguillo, State of Tabasco, Mexico

Crammed into the trunk of a car, 44 white-fronted amazons (*Amazona albifrons*, Appendix II) and 11 olive-throated conures (*Aratinga nana*, Appendix II) were very thirsty. Two arrests.⁹⁷

March 15, 2018

State of Jalisco, Mexico

Seizure from the luggage compartment of a Línea Estrella Blanca bus: five Mexican parrotlets (*Forpus cyanopygius*, Appendix II), 90 painted buntings (*Passerina ciris*), two white-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila torqueola*), seven blue grosbeaks (*Passerina caerulea*), 56 indigo buntings (*Passerina cyanea*), four varied buntings (*Passerina versicolor*), six lazuli buntings (*Passerina amoena*) and two black-headed grosbeaks (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*).⁹⁸



P. versicolor



Passerina cyanea

PERU

Mid January 2018

Bongará Province, Amazonas Region, Peru

Seizure of 38 canary-winged parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolurus*, Appendix II).⁹⁹

End of January 2018

Puno, Puno Province, Peru. Border with Bolivia.

Seizure of 581 saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*) on a bus from Arequipa.¹⁰⁰

ASIA

CHINA

March 9, 2018

Shenyang, Liaoning Province, China

Seizure of swallow nests.¹⁰¹



INDIA

January 10, 2018

Kokrajhar District, State of Assam, India

Freed by agents from the Assam Forest Department, assisted by a mobile veterinary unit from the IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) and the WTI (Wildlife Trust for India), two Himalayan griffon vultures (*Gyps himalayensis*, Appendix II) were allowed to go back to the peaks and plateaus and join their likes. They were among a group of four Himalayan griffon vultures found at the end of 2017 in very poor condition, near the Panbari Range, which culminates at 6905 m, in the Manas National Park. They were suffering from a strange form of anorexia, the cause of which remains undetermined but could be related to a case of poisoning. They were taken to the Wildlife Transit Home in Charaikhola, but one died before he arrived. The fourth one is still recovering, but the veterinarians have hope that it will be released soon.¹⁰²



Gyps himalayensis

January 13, 2018

Nayagram, Pashchim Medinipur District, State of West Bengal, India

Seizure from two pick-up trucks going toward Kolkata: 2,754 birds including rose-ringed parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*), plum-headed parakeets (*Psittacula cyanocephala*, Appendix II), and common hill myna (*Gracula religiosa*, Appendix II). They were released in the forest. The cargo had been tracked by the police since its arrival at the Bardhaman train station. The birds had been captured in the north, in Uttar Pradesh, near the border of Nepal. Five arrests.



Winter is the ideal season for trafficking. The birds are quiet and eat little. They can withstand long, split-up trips. Thousands of tribal families—the Mishrikars, Pathamies, Baheliyas, or Chirimars—make their living of bird trapping and trafficking. Kolkata is the summit of the market. Since 1972, capturing wild birds has been banned throughout the entire country, except for a raven considered to be a pest. The release of these thousands of birds was like a remake of the famous film “Shelter of the Wings” (1994), in which a Baheliya trapper played by Rajat Kapur frees his catch in the forest.¹⁰³

February 4, 2018

Morbi District, State of Gujarat, India

It was the sarpanch – equivalent to the mayor – of the village of Juna Ghatila who informed the Department of Forests. Ten Indian peafowls (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) had been found dead that Sunday morning. The carcasses of the two males, three females and five chicks were sent to the Morbi Wildlife Conservation Centre for autopsy. Grains of wheat were found in their stomachs. The substance that caused the poisoning will be determined by a forensic science laboratory.¹⁰⁴



GANG / FAMILY AFFAIRS

February 21, 2018

Pipli forest, Rampur District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Four poachers arrested, including one woman. They were members of a gang specialized in capturing parrots (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II). Acting on information received, the police and forest rangers reinforced surveillance at road blocks and carried out a raid in the Pipli forest zone. They came across a team, made up of two brothers, Abdulla and Rizwan Ahmad, along with Tauqeer and Kusum, who were about to leave in a Maruti van loaded with 250 parrots locked up in cages and cardboard boxes. They said that they wanted to sell the birds in various parts of Uttar Pradesh, including the Sitapur district. According to forest ranger Ashraf Khan “Birds are caught here and transported to Swar and Bilaspur tehsils [administrative division]. From there, these birds are sent to different parts of the State.” Bird vendors can often be found on roadsides, where they sell couples for around 400 to 500 rupees (between \$6 and \$7.50 US). The four suspects have been taken into custody. The forest authorities have asked the court to authorize the release of the parrots.¹⁰⁵

February 2018

Near Chintamani, District of Chikkaballapur, State of Karnataka, India

Seizure of three Indian eagle-owls (*Bubo bengalensis*, Appendix II) in a Hakki-Pikki camp. “These owls are unfortunately classified under Schedule 4 of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 which attracts among the lowest quantum of punishment in wildlife crimes. This, combined with the fact that there are several misconceptions about the use of owls in black magic and other occult practices, invites people into this trade,” says the director of the Humane Society International campaign. The Hakki-Pikkis have an ancient culture of hunting and capturing animals.¹⁰⁶

March 1, 2018

Pune District, State of Maharashtra, India

Aditya Patil, president of the Wildlife Welfare Association, not only reported information to the criminal police about two students who were trying to sell Alexandrine parakeets (*Psittacula eupatria*, Appendix II), he also pressed charges against them. Nihal Chavan and Aslam Sheikh – both 19 years old – were arrested and four Alexandrine parakeets were confiscated. They were asking 8500 rupees each (\$130 US).¹⁰⁷

March 21, 2018

Tambaram, State of Tamil Nadu, India



The young Tamil (24 years old) is a man of his time. He uses a WhatsApp group for his rose-ringed parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) trade. Unfortunately for him, one of his messages was shared with another group, and he was spotted by the Department of Forests. A team led by the deputy conservator of forests Arun Kumar dropped by to see him in a Chennai suburb. They seized seven adult couples that he claims to have purchased at a market in Pallavaram, another suburban town. The birds are estimated at 11,000 rupees (\$170 US) per pair. After being caught in the wild, rose-ringed parakeets are taken to Tiruchirappalli, the third largest town in Tamil Nadu and a hub for bird trafficking. From there, they are sent out in batches to shops or to any of the 250 markets held weekly in the State.¹⁰⁸

March 25, 2018

Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary, Nagaon District, State of Assam, India



Poisoning of 26 Himalayan griffon vultures (*Gyps himalayensis*, Appendix II). A sheep carcass covered in pesticides was found next to the mass grave. According to investigators, it was intended to poison tigers or leopards. Sixteen vultures died. Ten are in intensive care at the CWRC (Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation) near Kazinranga Park. They are in critical condition. The survival rate is of about 50% according to experience gathered from 225 cases treated by the CWRC within a few years regarding Himalayan griffon vultures, slender-billed vultures (*Gyps tenuirostris* Appendix II), white-rumped vultures (*Gyps bengalensis* Appendix II) and cinereous vultures (*Aegypius monachus* Appendix II). The CWRC is headed by the veterinarian doctor Panjit Basumatary.¹⁰⁹



IRAN

January 2, 2018

Zahak, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Iran. Border with Afghanistan.

Poaching in a wetland zone, seizure of a falcon (*Falco* spp., Appendix I or II).¹¹⁰

January 8, 2018

Near Iranshahr, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Iran

Release after several weeks of care, of the houbara bustards (*Chlamydotis undulata*, Appendix I) seized in December (see "On the Trail" n°19 p. 44).¹¹¹



February 24, 2018

Lamard, Fars Province, Iran

Two Qatari nationals were arrested. In collusion with locals, they were hunting houbara bustards (*Chlamydotis undulata*, Appendix I) with two saker falcons (*Falco cherrug*, Appendix II). The two poachers were required to pay a fine of 1,2 billion rial (\$32,000 US) and then appear before judicial authorities. They could get an additional fine of \$5400 US and up to three years in prison.¹¹²

MALAYSIA

January 16, 2018

5 nautical miles from Tanjung Gabang, State of Selangor, Malaysia

Three Indonesians in a boat inside Malaysian territorial waters were intercepted by a MMEA (Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency) patrol as they try to reach Sumatra Island. As they approached, the traffickers threw all the cages at sea. They contained 300 birds including Java sparrows (*Lonchura oryzivora*, Appendix II). Three birds were saved. The others were all drowned.¹¹³



PAKISTAN

End of January 2018

Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, Province of Sindh, Pakistan

Controversy over five falcons, including four peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*, Appendix I) seized in Karachi after the arrival of a flight from Dubai. They were intended to hunt bustards in Baloutchistan. According to the information obtained by the Daily Times, the province Department of Wildlife tried to sell them. They are worth 5 million rupees, or \$45,500 US.

The administration denies it. Until the validity of the raptor imports is cleared up, they are being held in a room with a double lock. One key was given to the birds' owner, the other is held by the head of the department. "No one can open the door alone."¹¹⁴

February 19, 2018

Quetta International Airport, Province of Balochistan, Pakistan

Seizure of four falcons in a wooden box inside a suitcase belonging to a Pakistani national arriving from Sharjah (United Arab Emirates). The four raptors are estimated at 10 million rupees (\$91,000 US).¹¹⁵

PHILIPPINES

GANG

REPEATED OFFENSE

March 12, 2018

Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines

Seizure of two marsupials, sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*), and more than 300 birds including Desmarest's fig-parrots (*Psittaculirostris desmarestii*, Appendix II), red birds of paradise (*Paradisaea rubra*, Appendix II), black-capped lorises (*Lorius lory*, Appendix II), sulphur-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*, Appendix II), salmon-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*, Appendix I), and black palm cockatoos (*Probosciger aterrimus*, Appendix I). Four arrests: Abraham Bernales, Joner Bawente, Nestor Turion, and Jose Sandigan. The gang was arrested after trying to sell a black palm cockatoo for 100,000 pesos (\$1,900 US). The buyer was an investigator. The majority of the birds had been imported from Indonesia. Bernales, the leader, is a repeat offender involved in the trafficking of skinks and Palawan forest turtles (*Siebenrockiella leytensis*, Appendix II). In 2015, he was in the middle of the trafficking of mynahs, parrots, crocodiles and red-vented cockatoos (*Cacatua haematuropygia*, Appendix I). The animals were then captured on Palawan Island and destined for sale at the Cartimar Pet Center in Pasay City. The web-site OLX offers the sale of birds from Pasay, like a salmon-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*, Appendix I) for 95,000 pesos (\$1,800 US).¹¹⁶



Paradisaea rubra

SINGAPORE

February 26, 2018

Woodlands Checkpoint, Singapore. Border with Malaysia.

Seizure from a tourist bus registered in Malaysia and entering Singapore: 221 living birds, including Fischer's lovebirds (*Agapornis fischeri*, Appendix II) and 4,500 bags of chewing tobacco in two different compartments. The driver is in the hands of justice.¹¹⁷



TURKEY

January 9, 2018

Istanbul, Marmara Region, Turkey

341 gray parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I) were seized in a customs-bonded warehouse, locked up in cases. 10 were already dead. The birds were from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The DRC is one of the three countries that put a reservation on the CITES Appendix I listing for the gray parrot. The surviving parrots were sent to the Celal Acar Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Center in Bursa province, the only facility of the kind in Turkey.¹¹⁸

March 3, 2018

Near Sultan, Edirne Province, Turkey. Border with Greece.

Seizure of 150 cockatiel parakeets (*Nymphicus hollandicus*), 120 parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), two snowy owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*, Appendix II), 42 pigeons, one lion cub (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II) and 24 pygmy goats (*Capra hircus*).



The Anadolu press agency also mentions 123 paradise parrots (*Psephotus pulcherrimus*, Appendix I), which is incredible because the species was endemic to Australia. It has been considered extinct since 1988. The last documented observations (Queensland province) date back to 1927. The paradise parrot nested at ground level in prairies and was victim to annual slash-and-burn operations and over-grazing. Without any doubt, they were mistaken for look-alike species in the seizure. There are over 60 species of parrots and parakeets, excluding extinct species. The birds and 25 mammals were entrusted to the Polonezköy Nature Park in Istanbul. The Turkish customs office regularly intercepts wildlife in trucks coming from Greece or Bulgaria, or going there.¹¹⁹

VIET NAM

March 6, 2018

Viet Nam

Voluntary surrender of two eagles (Accipitridae, Appendix I or II) held in captivity for 2 years. A medical examination preceded their flight. Except it's inappropriate to talk about flight. The two disabled raptors run through the leaves as if the very idea of flying was foreign to them. Lack of re-learning about wildlife. Premature initiative. Almost no hope of survival against predators.¹²⁰



EUROPE

SPAIN

**Beginning of March 2018
Province of Valladolid, Autonomous community of Castile and León, Spain**

Arrest of a farmer. He possessed 4 kg of Aldicarb, a pesticide banned since 1987. Several dozen red kites (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II), other birds of prey, foxes, and other animals, were recently killed by poisoning. They had eaten poultry meat bait ridden with Aldicarb or a similar substance in the surrounding area of the suspected farm. Cf. "On the Trail" n°15 p.36.¹²¹



FRANCE

January 15, 2018

Châteauroux, Indre Department, France

The man presents himself as a bird-lover. He told the court, "It's my passion. When you love something, you don't see limits!" But he is a poacher, pillaging the nests of protected species to hatch the eggs in his home and sell the birds on line. European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*), European siskins (*Spinus spinus*), bullfinches (genre *Pyrrhula*) have all passed through his hands. When the National Office for Hunting and Wildlife (ONCFS) spotted him, he had posted 160 for-sale ads on one site and 80 on another. It was not possible to evaluate the extent of his trafficking. He was only fined 1800 € (\$2200 US).¹²²

January 26, 2018

Vergies, Somme Department, France

The hunter thought he was alone and enjoyed killing. A Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II) resting on a branch was his victim. Once the bird was dead, he simply dumped it under a bush. The crime would have been perfect if officers from the ONCFS had not witnessed it. They immediately confiscated his rifle and pressed charges against the licensed hunter with the Amiens courts. He could get as much as two years in prison and a fine of 150,000 € (\$186,000 US), with permanent withdrawal of his weapon and hunting license.¹²³

February 8, 2018

Moselle Department, France

Seizure in a private home of 56 live birds, belonging to twenty different species. Most are protected by CITES. Seventeen dead birds were also found on the breeder's premises. The man did not have the necessary authorizations.¹²⁴



ITALY

January 2018

Cesena, Province of Forlì-Cesena, Emilia-Romagna Region, Italy

Seizure at the 66th ornithological world championship of 42 birds, including cardinal lories (*Chalcopsitta cardinalis*, Appendix II) from the Solomon Islands, bohemian waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*), Eurasian siskins (*Spinus spinus*), European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*), chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) and Corsican finches (*Carduelis corsicana*).¹²⁵

Mid January 2018

Port of Pozzallo, Province of Ragusa, Sicily Region, Italy

A gang of 12 Maltese poachers raided on Sicily, taking advantage of the cold wave in northern Europe that had pushed many birds to migrate toward warmer regions. The men were about to board a boat to return to Malta when customs officers from the Guardia dei Finanza blocked their way. Their baggage contained numerous carcasses of protected birds, both seabirds and shorebirds, along with all of the usual poaching equipment: birdcallers, laser lights and 12 rifles, including some that had not been registered. Everything was confiscated; the investigation is underway.¹²⁶

Beginning of February 2018

Naples and Brusciano, Campania Region, Italy

- Seizure in two different operations, in two different places, of 30 European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*).

- Seizure in the middle of a village of 50 European goldfinches, highly sought-after as caged songbirds in Naples and the vicinity.¹²⁷

March 1, 2018

Rome, Lazio Region, Italy

A difficult seizure in a shop, a yellow-fronted amazon (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II) in poor condition, locked outside in the winter cold in an open cage. The remiges on the left wing had been cut. The owner came to the headquarters of the association for the protection and temporary accommodation of abused animals, yelling and demanding the animal be returned to him.¹²⁸

Mid March 2018

Palermo, Sicily Region, Italy

The Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (LIPU) congratulates the Carabinieri and the CITES Center Unit against environmental crimes for the recent raid on the Ballarò market, which resulted in the seizure of 30 birds, including European goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) and European greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*) from three vendors. After examinations by veterinarians, all of them were released into the Parco della Favorita. The LIPU highlights the importance of these operations on the most important wild animal market in Italy (cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p.36, n°17 p.39, n°18 p.36). It calls on the authorities to intervene more regularly and frequently and to research the site where the birds are kept and where the dealers obtain supplies.¹²⁹

OPERATION GHEPPIO

Mid March 2018

Naples, Campania Region, Italy

Matching information received by the Carabinieri and members of the National Association for the Protection of Animals (ENPA) launched a joint operation named "Gheppio" ("Kestrel"). A search in the shop of a certain N.G., Via delle Murelle, resulted in the discovery of a Eurasian kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*, Appendix II), without a tag or CITES documentation, locked in a cage. The animal was transported to the veterinary hospital ASL NA/1 for examination. The man was charged by the public prosecutor.¹³⁰

March 30, 2018

Torri di Quartesolo, Province of Vicenza, Veneto Region, Italy

380 tree pipits (*Anthus trivialis*) on the roasting spit of an 80 year-old roaster. He is only liable to a fine from 774 to 2,065 €. The origin of the pipits, which are locally called "tordina", is unknown.¹³¹



PORTUGAL

February 4, 2018

Porto, Norte Region, Portugal

Seizure at a bird show of several dozen European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) and Eurasian siskins (*Spinus spinus*). They were all released in the Gaia Park.¹³²

UNITED KINGDOM

February 19, 2018

Inverness, Highland council area, Scotland, United Kingdom

Gordon Taylor was sentenced to pay a fine of £750 (\$980 US) for having posted a for-sale ad on line, under the heading "Wild Wizard Crafts," for parts of common barn owls (*Tyto alba*, Appendix II), tawny owls (*Strix aluco*, Appendix II) and common buzzards (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II), meant to be used in shamanic rituals.¹³³



Birds of prey threatened

- February 10, 2018. Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, Powys County, Wales, United Kingdom.

A common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II) riddled with eight pellets, in violation of the law that has protected them since 1981. Powys County is known for its persecution of raptors. Twenty-two victims between 2012 and 2016. The offenders risk up to 6 months in prison. The problem is that they are never caught.¹³⁴



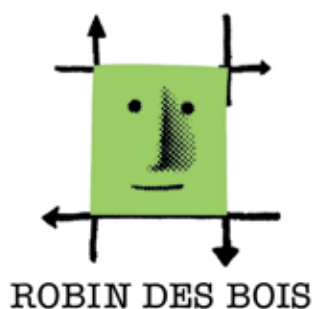
- February 25, 2018. Nidd, North Yorkshire County, England, United Kingdom

A sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II) with a blood stain, a bullet in the neck and a fractured wing. The county of North Yorkshire holds the record for the most raptors killed by traps, poison and hunting rifles. A public awareness campaign, known as "Operation Owl," has been launched by the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), the North York Moors, the Yorkshire Dales National Parks and the North York Moors Park. Posters and flyers are distributed in public places and shops. A Raptor Crime Hotline is available by dialing 0300 999 0101. The county police can also be contacted on the subject. Dial 101, option 01, ref 12180034821.¹³⁵



- February 26, 2018. Near Hoxne, Suffolk County, England, United Kingdom

One dead common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II). The x-ray shows that it was shot. The police and the 400 ornithologists in the county are worried. Raptor poaching is becoming more frequent. The police have asked public cooperation in reporting raptor carcass sightings. A photograph and identification of location are essential. Never touch a dead bird without gloves: it could have been poisoned and contact would be toxic.¹³⁶



Pangolins

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°20

Value of 1kg of pangolin scales on the black market, according to media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Réf.
Africa	Nigeria	680	5
		675	2*
	Uganda	38	6
Asia	China	200	8
		150	13
	India	770	19
	Viet Nam	176	34

* Chapter pangolins and elephants

"On the Trail" n°20

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

Continent	Country	US\$/animal	Réf.
Africa	South Africa	6,900	2

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

January 11, 2018

Gumbu, Vhembe District, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

Rescue of a pangolin about to be sold, arrest of two men aged 37 and 42. They should be presented before the Thohoyandou Magistrate's Court. The police's nature conservation unit is missioned to find a safe place for the animal to be released.¹

January 16, 2018

Pietermaritzburg, Umgungundlovu District, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

Squashed in a backpack, the 8.9 kg adult pangolin was exhausted and dehydrated, covered with ticks and other parasites. Isaac Mutero (42 years old), a Zimbabwean national, was trying to sell it for 85,000 rand (\$6,900 US) to customers in a shopping center. Members of KZN crime intelligence, the provincial rhino task team and Pietermaritzburg's K9 dogs unit got him. They arrested him, and he appeared before the municipal court the next day for a preliminary hearing. Isaac Mutero appears to have some money: he stated that he wanted to apply for bail, and to hire a private attorney.



He also demanded a Shona translator. The origin of the pangolin is unclear. The species has disappeared from KwaZulu-Natal.

He was entrusted to a veterinarian in Johannesburg. After several days of care and false hope, he died. He did not survive the 1000 km journey between Zimbabwe, where he was captured, and the parking lot of the shopping center in South Africa where he was rescued.²

BENIN

March 19, 2018

Cotonou, Littoral Department, Benin

513 kg of scales seized by the CAAT (Anti Traffic Airport Cell). 2000 pangolins were caught in the sub-region and ended up in scales in 23 bags. Three arrests, one Chinese. Release for all after payment of bail.³

CAMEROON

FAMILY AFFAIRS

February 13, 2018

East of Cameroon

Seizure of 40 kg of pangolin scales and six hippopotamus teeth. Under the cover of his bar, the man was trafficking wildlife and ores. He would be in contact with representatives of the Chinese community and would work closely with his brother.⁴

NIGERIA

March 5, 2018

Ikeja, State of Lagos, Nigeria

Following up on "credible intelligence," the customs officials raided the apartment of Li Chaomin, a Chinese citizen residing at 64 Opebi Road. They found 407 bags of scales, weighing a total of 10,263 kg, estimated to be worth over 2.1 billion nairas (\$9.6 million US, or \$680 US/kg). Li and the scales were taken in for additional investigation by the Nigeria Environment Standards and Regulatory Enforcement Agency, a department of the Federal Ministry of Environment.⁵

UGANDA

March 2018

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

Ivan Tuhairwe and Davis Kateregga were arrested on a Nabweru playground as they tried to sell a batch of 50 kg of scales, estimated at 7 million Ugandan shillings (\$1900 US, or \$38 US/kg) on the local market. They were taken to police headquarters in Kampala, and could get up to 5 years in prison or a minimum fine of 1 million shillings (\$272 US).⁶

ZIMBABWE

March 19, 2018

Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Ntandoyenkosi Ndlovu has been arrested and charged with transporting and attempting to sell a live pangolin. The informer received a reward; the nature of that reward was not communicated.⁷

ASIA

CHINA

PLASTIC RECYCLING NETWORK

January 5, 2018

Kwai Chung, Hong Kong, China

The Nigeria-Hong Kong network is standing strong ("On the Trail" n°5, p.50, n°8, p.32, n°14, p.33, n°17, p.41). Custom officers at the Kwai Chung container terminal took interest in a 40-foot container (12 m) declared to contain "plastic materials". A classic. Loads of plastic intended to recycling offer a frequently used cover for pangolin scale and ivory traffickers coming from Africa. There was about 1800 kg of scales, valued at 2.8 million bahts (\$ 360.000 US, i.e. \$ 200 US/kg). That corresponds to nearly 5400 pangolins trapped in their forests.⁸

January 12, 2018

Province of Zhejiang, China

Seizure of over 160 kg of scales by the Hangzhou customs.⁹

January 2018

Futian Port of entry, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China

Seized in two so-called "children's treat" bags of about 100 pangolin scales.¹⁰

January 2018

Dongguan, Guangdong Province, China

Pangolins are not defense secrets.

Following the forest administration's refusal to provide the exact address of a certified pangolin farm and the number of pangolins at the establishment, the Environmental Public Interest Law Center NGO, based in Peking, took the matter to court. The administration had based its refusal to communicate upon the imperative need to ensure the security of the employees and to avoid theft, blackmail, and other misdemeanors. According to the administration of the province, the management of the pangolin farms must be kept a secret in the same manner as the management of nuclear missiles.

Li Enze, director of the NGO, reveals that the people's court of Dongguan assembled and ordered at the Qingfengyuan Institute, which specializes in Chinese animal medicine, to make the requested information public. To be continued.¹¹



WASTE NETWORK

March 7, 2018

Hong Kong, China

Seizure in a 40-foot container of 2800 kg of presumed pangolin scales. The container had come from Nigeria. According to the accompanying documents, it contained exclusively "metal scrap materials." The scales are estimated to be worth the equivalent of \$422,000 US, or \$150 US/kg.¹³



March 2018

Zhongshan, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure by customs officers of 1010 g of African pangolin scales.¹⁴



March 2018

Kunming Changshui International Airport, Yunnan Province, China

Seizure by customs officers of 430 g of pangolin scales hidden in tea bags.¹⁵



March 14 and 25, 2018

Huanggang Port of Entry, Shenzhen, Province of Guangdong, China

- Seizure of around 2 kg of scales from two bags, which according to the prior declaration of the passenger, contained "tea flowers".¹⁶
- Seizure of 12.56 kg of scales from the baggage of four passengers.¹⁷

March 26, 2018

Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China

Near the Vietnamese border, seizure by customs officers of 14 live pangolins on a tampered motorcycle speeding through pedestrian streets and streets closed to traffic, part of what the locals call a "flying motorcycle party."¹⁸



INDIA

January 22, February 2 and 7, 2018

Balaghat District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

- Seizure of 2 kg of scales.
- Seizure of a pangolin jailed in Lanji village.
- Seizure of 5 kg of scales for sale 50,000 rupees per kg (\$ 770 US). Arrest of a civil servant who is also a driver for the Mahendra Sonwane family, father, wife and son, who are behind the traffic and who have disappeared from the radar and their homes for the time being.¹⁹

February 8-9, 2018

Malbazar, Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal, India

Seizure of 6kg of pangolin scales. Four arrests.²⁰

February 10, 2018

Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India

Four arrests. Seizure of a few kilos of scales from Bhutan to Nepal.²¹

February 23, 2018

Thane, Thane District, State of Maharashtra, India

Crime Branch's Unit V was staked out near a temple in the Wagle Estate industrial zone. A tip had led the police to Ashok Jadhav (29 years old) and Santosh Butala (30 years old), who were trying to sell a live pangolin. The inspectors did not wait for the client. They are now trying to identify him. The pangolin was entrusted to the Department of Forests.²²

INDONESIA

March 7, 2018

Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia

Three years in prison and a fine for each. The ruling was made against two young men, 22 and 25 years old, arrested on a fishing boat on October 24, 2017 by the Indonesian navy as they tried to cross the Strait of Malacca to deliver 101 live pangolins to a Malaysian boat (see "On the Trail" n°19 p. 52).²³



March 9, 2018

Cikembang, Sukabumi Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia

Seizure of 1.6 kg of scales and three live pangolins, averaging 8 kg in weight.²⁴

MALAYSIA

GANG

January 6, 2018

Shah Alam, State of Selangor, Malaysia

The three men had just unloaded the 57 live pangolins from the trunk of their car for storage in a house in the Bandar Pinggiran Subang neighborhood. The Perhilitan (Peninsular Malaysia Wildlife and National Parks Department) raid came just at the right time. The animals would have been poached in forests in the states of Johor, Malacca and Negeri Sembilan on the south-west and south coasts of Malaysia. The vehicle had been tampered so that the air conditioning would flow to the trunk to keep the pangolins cool. The house was a passing point before export, probably towards Thailand. The three men are in jail, while Perhilitan continues investigations.²⁵

NEPAL

March 29, 2018

Tribhuvan International Airport of Kathmandu, Central Development Region, Nepal

Seizure of 162 kg of scales from a Turkish Airlines flight. The batch came from the Congo. Two Chinese citizens arrested. Nepal requests Interpol's cooperation.²⁶

SRI LANKA

February 5, 2018

Colombo, Western Province, Sri Lanka

Discovery by police of a pangolin in the freezer of a Chinese restaurant not far from the Walukaramaya temple, in the posh Kollupitiya neighborhood. The restaurant operator, a Chinese national, was to be seen before court on the same day.²⁷

TAIWAN

February 1st, 2018

Kaohsiung Port, Taiwan

Custom services led an intervention on dock 66. Its owner has still not claimed a refrigerated container that arrived in December 2017. It came from Malaysia. The documents are odd.

At the back of the container, 13 tons, i.e. about 4000 pangolins disemboweled and flaked off. In the front, there were frozen sardines yet unlisted in CITES. Final destination for the lot was Viet Nam or China.

The guilty party risks six months to five years in prison and a maximum fine of \$ 51,400 US. On the Chinese market, the profits expected for the retail sale of this seizure, holding a place on the podium of the largest ones yet, would have mounted to nearly \$ 900,000 US for 13 t of meat, not counting the scales. Police think that the gang was trying to find a way to empty the container of its illegal load since the end of the year and swap it with either nothing or a usual product. "It is believed that the group was unable to find a good opportunity to make the swap."²⁸

THAILAND

February 16, 2018

Mueang Sukhothai District, Sukhothai Province, Thailand

The pick-up was driving through the night when it suddenly went off the road and into a ditch. The police arrived on the scene and saw that the driver did not need assistance: he had disappeared, abandoning his vehicle, loaded with 24 live pangolins, one dead pangolin and 5 kg of scales. But he will not run very far. In his panic, he forgot to take the vehicle registration with his name on it. The police are also examining video surveillance recordings from the cameras along the road, to determine the origin of the animals. They suspect that they came from Phetchabun province.



The pangolins – including some females with their young – were transferred to the Tham Chao Ram wildlife sanctuary.²⁹

Seizure of 120 pangolins and 200 kg of scales following a car crash in Thailand, see "On the Trail" n°6, p.38.

VIET NAM

January 2, 2018

Quang Ninh Province, Viet Nam. Border to China.

11 frozen pangolins in Styrofoam boxes, that is 27 kg. The bus was stopped at a police road block.³⁰



January 19, 2018

Tan Thanh, Van Lang District, Province of Lang Son, Viet Nam. Border to China.

The car was driving towards the border. The customs-police mixed patrol check it around 8:30 pm near the Na Lau village. Truong Lam Tung was coming from the Noi Bai International Airport, north-west of Hanoi, and was heading to Tan Thanh to meet with a buyer. With a partner he was transporting 100 kg of pangolin scales in three plastic barrels.³¹



January 20, 2018

Dat Mui, Ngoc Hien District, Province of Ca Mau, Viet Nam

A border control patrol stopped a boat around 8:45 am on the Ô Rô Channel. It was transporting 114 live pangolins (780 kg) in cages and over 300 kg of scales in Styrofoam boxes. This is the largest pangolin seizure ever to take place in this province. The captain and six crew members admitted they were loaded by a man named Bầy Rầu from a vessel anchored on Hòn Khoai Island, about 8 nautical miles from the coast. They were on their way to ship the animals and scales to Trần Quý, director of Hải Đăng Co Ltd. It seems they couldn't stop talking and admitted that this was not their first time to do such job.³²



January 24, 2018

Ho-Chi-Minh-City, Viet Nam

Confiscation of two pangolin cadavers soaking in alcohol. The infamous mixture was for sale on Facebook. Given away by an informant, the NGO Education for Nature- Viet Nam mobilized an Economy and Environment police brigade.³³

facebook

End of January, 2018

Mong Cai, Province of Quang Ninh, Viet Nam. Border to China.

Seizure inside a farm of 316 kg of scales in storage before export to China. With its many daily markets and intense commercial flows, Mong Cai city is perfectly located for smugglers. Pangolin scale seizures are recurrent (see previous issues). The situation risks getting worst: Viet Nam and China have decided to increase trade. In 2017 over 9 million travelers crossed this border. On December 2 a new crossing point was inaugurated between the bordering market places of Pò Hen (Viet Nam) and Tan San (Chine).³⁴

Pangolins and elephants



AFRICA

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

HOLLOW LOG NETWORK

January 18, 2018

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

The network had been under surveillance for several days. The Ivoirian police's anti-smuggling unit carried out a raid, interrupting preparations for the export of 578 kg of ivory and 600 kg of pangolin scales. An international team of six suspects was arrested: two Vietnamese, one Chinese, two Ivoirians and one Guinean. The ivory was from Gabon, Nigeria, Mozambique and Uganda. The tusks are worth an estimated \$450,000 US and the scales \$350,000 US on the black market. According to Bonaventure Adomo, head of the anti-smuggling unit, the ivory was to be sent to Viet Nam and the scales were for the Asian market, with no further specifics. One of the Vietnamese arrested named Tran Van Su is also suspected of being linked to a seizure of 619 kg of ivory in Viet Nam (see "On the Trail" n°15 p.98) and a seizure of 941 kg in Cambodia (see "On the Trail" n°19 p.104). The organization was particularly fond of the hollow-log trick. San Pedro port would have been used for smuggling.¹

NIGERIA

January 15, 2018

Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria

Seizure by the Federal Operations Unit of 2001 kg of pangolin scales estimated at \$1.35 million US, or \$675 US/kg, and 343 kg of raw ivory estimated at \$280,000 US, or \$816 US/kg, in the home of a Chinese national. Kio Sui-Ying or Ko Sin Ying, depending on the sources, claims that he was the victim of a plot.²

UGANDA

January 11, 2018

Uganda

Seizure of 25 kg of raw ivory, 100 hippopotamus teeth and pangolin scales.³

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

March 8, 2018

Sibiti, Lékoumou Department, Republic of the Congo

Arrested red-handed in possession of three ivory tips and a bag full of giant pangolin scales, Jitel Otika is described by the press as the "head of a well-organized network of wildlife traffickers at the Gabon-Congo border." For a price, he would have profit by collusion with the border authorities. The town of Sibiti is known to be a smuggling hub.⁴

Primates

It's war on orangutans in Indonesia and Malaysia. The scientific report published in February in *Current Biology* established that between 1999 and 2015 nearly 150,000 specimens «disappeared» under pressure from palm oil, the rubber industry, the paper industry, mining, forest devastation, clearing fires and poaching. Violence and cruelty against orangutans are at the height. A young male was screened with 130 bullets and 19 machete blows. The autopsy revealed three oil palm seeds in his digestive tract.

Gorilla (*Gorilla* spp.), chimpanzee (*Pan* spp.), orangutan (*Pongo* spp.) are listed in CITES Appendix I. Macaques (*Macaca* spp.) are in Appendix II except the lion-tailed macaque (*Macaca silenus*) and the Barbary macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*) listed in Appendix I.

AFRICA

GUINEA

January 30, 2018

Mamou, Mamou Region, Guinea

Follow-up on "On the Trail" n°19 p. 56. Lancinet Kourouma and Momo Mansaré were sentenced to one year in prison, fined the equivalent to approximately ten dollars, required to pay \$17.000 US in damages to the Ministry of the Environment and \$28.000 US to the Center for Chimpanzee Conservation (CCC). The two men were found guilty of slaughtering, capturing, possessing and transporting adult and baby chimpanzees.¹

KENYA

March 12, 2018

Likoni, Mombasa County, Kenya

Feisal Salim and Mbarak Feiswal have been charged with transporting a vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*, Appendix II) on a motorcycle and trying to sell it on Facebook for 6000 shillings, or \$60 US. The two traffickers were freed on bail for 100,000 shillings, or \$1000 US. The monkey did not appear in court as evidence: it is going through a medical exam before being released in the forest.²

facebook



MADAGASCAR

February 2018

Toamasina Province, Madagascar

When protectors become predators!

Jean Yves Ratovoson is vice-president of the forest community and supposed to work hand-in-hand with the NGO Conservation International to protect the Iaroka forest, and especially its famous and endangered "babakotos," a species of lemurs better known as indris (*Indri indri*, Appendix I). Instead, he poached them at night, along with two accomplices, and hid the bodies until the time was right to take them to Chinese restaurants in Tamatave. The cat was let out of the bag two weeks ago. The 10 dead indris were accompanied by a "simpona," better known as a diademed sifaka (*Propithecus diadema*, Appendix I). The Mongabay newspaper reports that to order lemur in a Chinese restaurant, the code dish is called "Mily Clement," the name of a popular musician on the island.³



Indri indri

Propithecus diadema

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

February 2, 2018

Lwiro, Democratic Republic of the Congo

New arrival at the shelter. Pale and thin from a long period in detention without daylight, this young male is currently in convalescence.⁴



AMERICA

BRAZIL

March 23, 2018

Cascavel, State of Paraná, Brazil

The bill is likely to be stiff for a woman who assaulted a controller at the Terminal bus station south of the city. The affair started when the controller wanted to make her pay for a new ticket after she left the station to buy a drink. The altercation escalated. The agent was reportedly hit and the woman fled. But she was found in the Santa Cruz neighborhood, and a search of her house was carried out at dawn by the police. That's where this news takes on another dimension. Ammunition, marijuana, and a tufted capuchin (*Cebus apella*, Appendix II) were discovered. According to the woman, she found the little monkey "abandoned" and decided to adopt it. She is now charged with environmental crime, possession of ammunition, use of narcotics, and aggression.⁵



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MEXICO

January 14, 2018

State of Jalisco, Mexico

Seizure of a dying of thirst howler monkey (*Alouatta* spp., Appendix I or II).⁶



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ASIA

INDONESIA - ORANGUTANS

Beginning of January 2018

West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia

Lulup's sweet tooth was almost the end of him. At over 25 years old, he started getting a little too interested in the fruit growing in



the Riam Berasap village garden. He was not the only one of his species to visit the garden, but his forays had become more and more frequent since he was seen for the first time in July 2017. The village inhabitants notified the BKS-DA (Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam), who, with help from veterinarians at International Animal Rescue (IAR), found Lulup and anesthetized him, before moving him to the Gunung Palung National Park. When they examined him, the specialists found an open wound on his right cheek, most probably a bullet wound from an air rifle. The wound was sutured on-site and the primate was carried by four porters for two hours to a location where he was freed in the late afternoon.⁷



© IAR

Beginning of January 2018

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

Four orangutans, two males and two females, 13 to 15 years old, ex prisoners in villages, are returned to the forest after a long period of resocialization and reappropriation of survival instincts by BOSF specialists and after 12 hours of walking and canoeing between Nyaru Menteng and the selected spot.⁸

January 3, 2018

Pontianak, Province of West Kalimantan, Indonesia

Asep Leman has a lot of nerve. Arrested on August 21, 2017 ("On the Trail" n°18, p. 43) for having sold two very young orangutans to an Internet correspondent, he presented himself to the court as a protector of animals who had saved the two primates by purchasing them for 500,000 and 1,500,000 rupees (\$37 and 110 US) from residents of the Melawi district. He made quite a profit when he sold them for 1.5 million and 2.5 million rupees (\$110 and 184 US). He did not fool the judges. They sentenced him to 8 months in prison and a fine of 5 million rupees (\$370 US).⁹



Mid January 2018

Gunung Tarak Protection Forest, Province of West Kalimantan, Indonesia

Melky took his time, but finally went back to the jungle, after spending eight years at the Orangutan Conservation Center in Ketapang. He was taken in when he was two years old, in 2009, after having been confiscated from a private individual. Melky went through the entire rehabilitation program, from "baby school" to "forest school," along with over 100 peers at the Center. The last step is "data island," where the individuals' behavior is scrupulously observed in order to validate their ability to be released. Melky passed all of his tests and was taken into the heart of the Gunung Tarak Protection Forest, in the same convoy as 5 slow lorises, all carried in cages on people's backs, several hours' walk into the forest. He will be monitored for one or two years, just like the other orangutans that have been released in the forest.¹⁰



January 15-30, 2018

Buntok, South Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan Province, Indonesia

The decapitated corpse was found floating in the Barito river on January 15. The local police were under pressure on this case because the cruelty of the incident and the conditions of the inquiry caused controversy with orangutan protectors. The victim was tortured: its body was hairless, covered in lacerations and its arms were also nearly severed. After making a few observations, the authorities quickly burned the body out of fear that diseases could spread. Their haste was harshly criticized by wildlife protection associations, who said that a necropsy should have been done. M. Ramadhani, director of the Centre for Orangutan Protection, denounced the method, saying, "Wildlife deaths must not be taken lightly. We must follow procedures first before we bury the body."

Two rubber tree growers were questioned. They claim – in the usual strategy – that they did not know that orangutans have been protected by law for the past 28 years. They were in possession of an air rifle and a machete. After they had buried the head, the criminals dug it up again because of foul odors, and threw it in a water hole.

In the years after 2000, the rubber and palm oil industry offered a reward equivalent to \$10 US for the execution of an orangutan.¹¹

February 6, 2018

Teluk Pandan, East Kutai Regency, Province of East Kalimantan, Indonesia

A young male, aged between 5 and 7 years old, holds the gruesome record of the most bullet wounds ever observed on an orangutan. The primate was at the point of death. He was found by villagers and taken to the Pupuk Kaltim Hospital in Bontang. Despite the care he received, he died at 1:55 a.m. The autopsy is horrifying. His executioner(s) slashed him 19 times with a machete and shot him with 130 bullets from an air rifle, including 74 in the head. The explanation for such criminal fury lies in his stomach, which contained pineapple, and in his colon, where 3 seeds from palm oil fruits were found...¹²

February 15, 2018

Suka Rimbun, Southeast Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia

Rescue of an orphan baby orangutan, approximately two years old, malnourished and under considerable stress. The manager of the outreach program for local children spotted him in a private home.¹³



March 2018
Muara Baru, Kubu Raya Regency, Province of West Kalimantan, Indonesia



Another one rescued from captivity. This one is 15 months old. His “master” claims to have saved him. He got him in an uncultivated field that was going to be converted into an industrial palm oil plantation. A wooden cage, two meters high and covered with a piece of bent sheet metal, was his home. He was fed concentrated milk and leftovers. After a 24-hour journey by road and by ferry, and a stop at a BKSDA relay point to pick up a slow loris who had also been rescued, the IAR team admitted him to the Ketapang refuge.¹⁴

March 5, 2018
Sei Serdang, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

A female lost in a plantation and hit by two airgun bullets in a cheek was deemed healthy enough to be transferred to Leuser National Park.¹⁵



March 6, 2018
Sei Musam, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

She's in poor health. Two rifle bullets in the body, broken and infected fingers. She went into quarantine in the good care of the SOCP (Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme).¹⁶

March 12, 2018
Benawai Agung, North Kayong Regency, Province of West Kalimantan, Indonesia

Reported by villagers: an adult orangutan came onto a plantation and was eating jackfruit and rubber tree bark. Before the conflict got out of hand, the 20-year-old, fifty-kilo male was anesthetized, caught in a net and transported by road, by river and on foot to the Gunung Palung National Park.

The IAR spokesperson is insistent: “The time for taking action is now long overdue. If we are to find a solution, we urgently need to work with all stakeholders, not just citizens and governments, but also companies that have plantation land in or around precious areas of orangutan habitat.”¹⁷

March 12, 2018
East Kalimantan Province, Borneo, Indonesia

The report from the Centre for Orangutan Protection (COP) is downright depressing. A young primate was rescued near a palm oil plantation in the eastern part of the island and brought to their rescue center. The NGO affirms that for every young orangutan saved, 2 to 10 others die anonymously in the forest. A recent study assessed the number of orangutans that have died in the past 16 years at 100,000. That is nearly 9500 every year. The figure is much higher than the COP's own evaluation: in 2007, they denounced the death of 1500 individuals a year. The main cause of the massacre is massive deforestation on the island to convert surface area into palm oil or rubber tree plantations.¹⁸

March 16, 2018
Peunaron, East Aceh Regency, Province of Aceh, Indonesia

Orphan, two years old, wandering through the fields, taken in by the HOCRU (Human Orangutan Conflict Response Unit)¹⁹



March 19, 2018
Simpang Hulu, Ketapang Regency, Province of West Kalimantan, Indonesia

Who else besides an orangutan orphan could be locked up in a cage, measuring 1.50 m wide and 1 meter high, for 5 years? His master also had a loris that died after being attacked by ants.

The orangutan was taken out of its cell. Another one, about the same age, had also been held as a pet for several years and was freed from his cage the same day.

Both will be housed at the center for resocialization and rehabilitation to life in the wild. They will stay there for several years before being released into the forest. In the wild, young orangutans remain dependent on their mothers for 6 to 8 years. “The worst-case scenario is when they are already too old and have spent too long in captivity to be rehabilitated and cannot be returned to their home in the forest,” says Karnele Sanchez, director of the orangutan program at IAR (International Animal Rescue).²⁰

INDONESIA - FOLLOWED

Mid January 2018 Gunung Tarak Pro- tection Forest, Prov- ince of West Kaliman- tan, Indonesia

International Animal Rescue spared no effort to free five slow lorises (*Nycticebus* spp., Appendix I) in a protected forest. After a 4-hour car journey, followed by a 5 hour walk that involved 12 local porters for the cages, they finally got back to the grove that they love. Maybe they will cross paths with Melky, the orangutan that was released along with them. Lorises are nocturnal animals, and these five will be monitored for several nights by a team that stayed on site with them.²¹



Mid February 2018 Mount Sawal, Province of West Java, Indonesia

15 Sunda slow lorises (*Nycticebus coucang*, Appendix I) – 5 males and 10 females – are back in the forest after having spent two years readjusting to life in the wild at the Bogor center for primate rehabilitation, the only one in Indonesia. They were originally seized during police operations in Bandung and Tasikmalaya in 2016. It is a long process because, according to Wendi Prameswari, Animal Care Manager, “The condition of slow lorises that have been victims of the illegal pet trade is generally very poor. They are stressed and malnourished after being stowed away in dirty, confined spaces and transported over long distances in airless containers with no access to food or water.”

The lorises will spend another two to four weeks in a forest zone surrounded by a net, so that they can be monitored during their nocturnal activities. If they show no abnormal behavior, they will go and join the 39 other lorises that have been released since 2014 in the Mount Sawal Protected Forest (see “On the Trail” n°18 p. 44).²²



Mid March 2018

Lubuk Basung, Agam Regency, West Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Two traffickers were arrested on September 20 and 21, 2017 in possession of nine Sunda slow lorises (*Nycticebus coucang*, Appendix I) that they were trying to sell on Facebook (see “On the Trail” n°18 p. 44). They have inaugurated the reinforced Indonesian criminal policy on wildlife crime. Such crime is now classified in the “extraordinary crime” category. The judges at the Lubuk Basung district court went over-and-above the prosecutor’s requests when they made their ruling on “JE” and “HN.” The two were sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison, plus 100 million rupees (\$7300 US) in fines, commutable to 6 additional months in prison if the fine is not paid. These are the harshest sentences given to slow loris traffickers in the past 5 years. Up until now, sentences never exceeded 3 to 12 months in prison, even when smugglers were arrested in possession of dozens of animals.²³



THAILAND

Beginning of February 2018 Thayang, Province of Phetchaburi, Thailand

Two Bengal slow lorises (*Nycticebus bengalensis*, Appendix I) arrived at the Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT) Wildlife Rescue Centre.



Ling-Ling and La-La seem to be doing well, in fact maybe even a little too well. They are the two fattest lorises the foundation veterinarians have ever seen. They were pets for a couple of expats until they went back to Russia, after which they moved from one friend to another, until they were finally turned over to the WFFT. The father loris had abandoned the Russians’ garden long ago. Ling-Ling and La-La are now in a forest enclosure where they will have to relearn how to feed on insects, fruit, birds’ eggs and small vertebrates.²⁴

VIET NAM

Mid January 2018 Dong Nai Province, Viet Nam

Once again, two pygmy lorises (*Nycticebus pygmaeus*, Appendix I) were exhibited in a small cage in a restaurant. They were released in the forest.²⁵



January 20, 2018 Da Nang, Viet Nam

Once again, a stump-tailed macaque (*Macaca arctoides*, Appendix II), weighing 7 kg, was exhibited in a tiny cage in a coffee-shop. It is now at the Son Tra animal reserve.²⁶

March 20, 2018 Da Nang, Viet Nam

The hotline for the NGO Education for Nature – Viet Nam (ENV), created to enable reporting of wildlife offenses, is starting to be well-known in the country. This time, it was a pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II) locked in a cage sitting on the sidewalk that was rescued. A passerby noticed it and called the ENV, which got the Da Nang City Forest Protection Department involved. The agents confiscated the primate and released it into the wild today.²⁷



EUROPE

SPAIN

OPERATION PARUM

Mid-February 2018 Province of Malaga, Autonomous community of Andalusia, Spain

Dismantling of an illegal monkey farm. Seizure of five common marmosets (*Callithrix jacchus*, Appendix II) and one negro tamarin (*Saguinus midas*, Appendix II). Eleven arrests. The sales offers were made on social networks. The survivors were handed over to the APP Primadomu Foundation, which runs a shelter in Alicante.²⁸

Vicuñas and Guanacos

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

Mid January 2018 Zonda Department, Province of San Juan, Argentina

Still life: an ex-guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*, Appendix II), a .308 rifle, an axe, knives.¹



January 28, 2018 General Roca, General Roca Department, Río Negro Province, Argentina

Road check. Seizure of two guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*, Appendix II), two Darwin's rheas (*Rhea pennata*, Appendix II) and two rifles. Three arrests.²



PERU

January 10, 2018 Chipao District, Lucanas Province, Ayacucho Region, Peru

Poachers took advantage of the dense fog and the absence of surveillance patrollers to kill and shear 20 vicuñas (*Vicugna vicugna*, Appendix II) in the hills of Asabamba. "We have no weapons or anyone to assist us keeping watch over the 3500 vicuñas under our responsibility," regrets the president of the community. As is often the case, the Servicio Nacional Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (SERFOR) arrived too late. The special prosecutor for environmental affairs is investigating, but poachers are never arrested unless they are caught in the act.³

Felines

"On the Trail" n°20

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



Continent	Country	Animal/part	Price US\$	Ref.
Africa	Zimbabwe	Leopard skin	1,500 -20,000	3
Asia	India (Uttarakhand)		7,800-11,000	7
			4,000	8
			a) 4,500-6,000 b) 12,000-15,000 c) 60,000-75,000	10
Africa	Tanzania	2 lion teeth	4,900	38
Asia	India (West Bengal)	Clouded leopard skin	11,800	45
America	United States	Living leopard or jaguar	8,000	46
		Living lion	6,000	46
		Living tiger	6,000-10,000	46

LEOPARDS

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

AFRICA

KENYA

February 26, 2018

Kapnyagitare, Kericho County, Kenya

Two marauding leopards disturbed by the extension of sugar cane fields on their territory were voluntarily killed by the KWS (Kenya Wildlife Service). At least one goat and one calf would have been eaten by the felines. No human victims. People are called not to arm themselves to settle their accounts with big cats and other wild animals." It is up to us to intervene" repeats the KWS.¹



ZAMBIA

February 22, 2018

Nyimba, Eastern Province, Zambia

Two five-year prison sentences with hard labour for the illegal detention of two leopard skins. They had been arrested two days earlier at the Luangwa market.²



ZIMBABWE

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 22, 2018

Harare, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

Charging the Madzamba brother and sister, 24 and 36. They are from the village of Matigu. They were selling off a leopard skin for \$ 1500 US in the streets. According to the prosecutor, a leopard's skin is sold on the local market for \$ 20,000 US.³

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

January 11, 2018

Oakland, State of California, United States of America

Adam Thatcher Lawrence, 38, admits to hunting and killing a leopard in South Africa in 2011 without the trophy's export permit, returning to South Africa in 2012, smuggling the leopard's skin and skull to Mozambique and importing the trophies into the United States with forged and backdated certificates. Lawrence agrees to dispose of the two trophies, the rifle with which he killed the leopard and the puma skull, the carved hippopotamus tooth, the whale bones and seal skin seized at his home in Mendocino County by US Fish and Wildlife agents, for the benefit of the federal State.⁴

ASIA

INDIA

January 21, 2018**Solan, Solan District, State of Himachal Pradesh, India**

No less than 30 agents divided into five teams were mobilized to catch Manish (49 years old) and Sanjay (36 years old), who were trying to sell an 8-foot long hide. They tried to escape, but found themselves trapped after a brief pursuit. The forest rangers had received a tip: the deal was to take place at the hotel where the two were staying.⁵

GANG**January 23, 2018****Palia, Lakhimpur Kheri District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India**

Mahaveer Kaujalgi, deputy director at the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, is skating on thin ice. His men have revealed a case with ramifications in several Indian states and abroad. He has stated, "Many influential people are involved in this case, but their names cannot be revealed at present." It all started in the town of Palia, on the night of the 23rd, when Dhiraj Bhasin was arrested, following a tip-off. Bhasin was on his way to Nepal with two leopard skins. During his interrogation, he gave the name of his supplier, Gopal Singh Negi, who was, in turn, arrested on a farm belonging to Bhasin, on the outskirts of New Delhi. He apparently got his skins in Uttarakhand from a poacher from Bageshwar and also has connections in the Almora District. The two suspects are talkative, or else the police are very convincing. According to Mahaveer Kaujalgi, "We have got information about several poachers and smugglers of animal parts active in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. We are now searching for other members of this gang." Until the investigation is complete, Dhiraj Basin and Gopal Singh Negi are being held in the Lakhimpur district jail.⁶

January 27, 2018**Champawat District, State of Uttarakhand, India. Border with Nepal.**

Tej Jagri is just a hired hand in the traffic, tasked with transporting a 2.2-m long and 1.35-m wide leopard skin from Nepal to the city of Champawat for 10,000 rupees (\$150 US) in wages. To do the job, a certain Khan gave him the skin, estimated between 500,000 and 700,000 rupees (\$7,800-11,000 US), along with two SIM cards – one Nepalese and one Indian. Tej Jagri was arrested at border post n°7. The police are now working on identifying his contacts in Nepal and in Uttarakhand. The team of police officers, forest rangers and semi-military agents that intercepted him received a bonus.⁷

January 30, 2018**Near Maharajke Park, Pithoragarh, State of Uttarakhand, India**

The Special Operations Group (SOG) caught Dammer Rana and the 2-foot long skin that he planned to sell for a good price in Tanakpur, in the neighboring district. The police estimated the seizure at 250,000 rupees (\$4000 US). A Nepalese citizen, Dammer Rama apparently smuggled the skin in from his own country, which shares a border with the Pithoragarh District.⁸

India**Leopards – death toll for January 2018:**

40 killed in 31 days. 15 were poached, two were lynched, three died in collisions with cars or trains and 20 died from unidentified causes. It is in that last category that we find the leopards that have been poisoned or electrocuted, like the five- or six-year-old leopard that touched a high voltage clandestine line set up by a farmer in Madhya Pradesh. Rolls of cable and bamboo poles were seized on his property. The 20 mystery deaths are not all "natural."

Ten States are involved. The lead trio includes Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. There are the ones that die, and then there are the ones that survive thanks to the goodwill of human beings. The principal of a school for tribal children called in a team from the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. After several hours, they were able to capture an approximately 7-year-old adult male leopard without anesthetizing it, and free it from a metal cable several meters long.⁹

January-February 2018**State of Uttarakhand, India****Leopards are in the red zone**

94 poached or killed accidentally (road or train collisions) in two months. The deadliest states are Uttarakhand, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The price of a skin rises as it moves farther and farther away from the poaching location.

=>The poacher sells it to a middleman for 300,00 to 400,000 rupees (\$4500-6000 US).

=> The middleman sells it to a broker in Nepal or in Bhutan for 800,000 to 1 million rupees (\$12,000-15,000 US).

=> In China, the zero default skin of an adult sells for 4 to 5 million rupees (\$60,000-75,000 US).¹⁰

February 3, 2018**Birpara, Alipurduar District, State of West Bengal, India**

Subol Kujur (35 years old) was transporting a leopard skin and a bone. He was apprehended around 12:15 p.m. by the Wildlife Squad Binnaguri and the border guards near Telipara Choupatti, on national highway NH-31. His silver chain (20 g) and his mobile phone were also seized. The city of Birpara is located approximately thirty kilometers from the Bhutan border.¹¹

LEOPARDS - FOLLOWED

February 4, 2018

Warud, Amravati District, State of Maharashtra, India

Seizure of a real leopard skin and a fake tiger skin. The leopard was killed with two bullets in the forest of Chirapatla, Madhya Pradesh. The tiger skin is in fact a dog or calf skin that was cleverly disguised. One arrest.¹²

February 5, 2018

Tekadi, Nagpur District, State of Maharashtra, India

Although the forest service says that the number of deaths by electrocution is dropping thanks to more frequent patrols, an adult leopard got caught in the electrified fence of a farm very close to the Mansinghdeo wildlife sanctuary. The carcass was found and reported by a shepherd. The district veterinarian disagrees with the authorities' reassuring claims: "In January 2017, a tigress and two sambars were electrocuted in the same range."¹³



February 7, 2018

Ballabgarh, Faridabad District, State of Haryana, India

Ram Das, a Hindu priest, was arrested around 10:30 p.m. as he hid a leopard skin rug, measuring 73 inches in length and 36 inches in width. The police went to his house following a tip sent to the NGO Wildlife SOS. The skin was under the priest's bed and under several layers of blankets. His statements were unclear. He bought the trophy from a middleman, or else he inherited it from his predecessor... An investigation is underway to determine the origin of the skin. The hide was handed over to the Wildlife Institute of India, where the gender and age of the animal will be determined. Ram Das was taken to the Neemka jail.¹⁴



February 11, 2018

Panchmahal District, State of Gujarat, India

"Some miscreants had made a trap with motorcycle clutch cable and set it up outside the cave where the cub was probably going to enter," according to the outraged local forest service director. However, the cub survived with the help of a team of rescuers, as a crowd gathered at the scene of the crime.¹⁵



February 12, 2018

Divale, Pune District, State of Maharashtra, India

Three fatalities. A five-year-old mother and two cubs, a male and a female, aged one and a half years. Fifteen forest rangers were called to the scene. They took prints on the scene of the crime and viscera samples for autopsy. Probably a poisoning.¹⁶

February 17, 2018

Lucknow, Lucknow District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India



Right before the fatal shooting, after a three-hour hunt. The forest ranger's mission is to save leopards, not shoot them at arm's length. An investigation is underway. Apparently, the crowd that had gathered prevented the usual protocol which consists of anesthesia, netting and sheltering from the angry mob.¹⁷

February 18, 2018

Palampur, Kangra District, State of Himachal Pradesh, India

Two dead. The leopards left the snowy mountains and came down into the plain. The two young males were caught in metal traps that snap on anything that comes along, stray dogs, livestock, boars or other animals. The harder they struggle, the tighter the trap holds them. One of the leopards was almost cut in two. The second one was in very serious condition and was sent to the Gopalpur zoo, where he died.

There are two types of farmers' traps:

1- The metal ones, made of clutch cables that torture the animals to death.

2- The explosives, made with firecrackers hidden in bait that explode in the animal's mouth.

Both are classified as cruelty to animals.¹⁸



LEOPARDS - FOLLOWED

February 18, 2018

Maharajakadai, Krishnagiri District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

A 63-year-old man wanted to protect his cows and himself from a leopard that had entered his field. He killed it with a sickle.¹⁹

February 21, 2018

Kumharbedi, Khargone District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Billor Singh and Kailash Solanki had poached two leopards and were trying to sell the hides in the village. The State Special Task Force got them on Wednesday evening. Their helpers are still on the run.²⁰

February 25, 2018

Nagrakata, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India

A tip led to the arrest of two Bhutanese nationals in a house in this little town less than 10 km from the border. They were in possession of a nine-foot-long leopard skin. They had planned to cross the Siliguri Corridor from east to west (40 km wide at the widest) to sell the hide in Nepal.²¹

February 25, 2018

Devidhura, Champawat District, State of Uttarakhand, India

Another middleman arrested on his way to Nepal with a 2.45-m-long skin. Manoj Singh Bisht had stopped in a village and was given away. The police caught him. According to the forest rangers, the skin comes from a freshly killed adult.²²

February 25 and March 1, 2018
Khapri and Chowki, Nagpur District, State of Maharashtra, India

- The female leopard cub and her mother died from poisoning near the pond where they had come to drink.

- A leopard fell into a water reservoir and was saved by a major rescue operation organized by villagers and forest rangers.²³



February 26, 2018

Jadrangal, State of Himachal Pradesh, India

Dead, caught in a trap, its teeth and claws had been torn out.²⁴



GANG

January 10 – March 8 2018

Palghar District, State of Maharashtra, India

Five arrests after a dead leopard was found in January 2018. Several limbs and organs were missing. They were found on a chikoo farm. The head of the gang is alleged to be a certain Babu Navsha Sambar.²⁵

March 11, 2018

Uttarkashi District, State of Uttarakhand, India. Border with China.

Seizure of two skins. Kedar Panwar was arrested. He was going to sell them in Dehradun. He got them from Nepalese day laborers working on an orchid plantation near the Radi Top forests. They had planned to share the revenue from the sale. Panwar was arrested in the Haryana last November with 600 g of Afeem (opium). The two skins have bullet marks on them.²⁶

March 19, 2018

Guwahati, State of Assam, India

Seizure of a 2.34-m-long skin and 5 kg of bones at a bus stop. Lusai Johnny was arrested.²⁷

March 22, 2018

Rajaji Tiger Reserve, State of Uttarakhand, India

- Exhumation of leopard skins and bones. The bags were buried in four holes dug into the sand near a river. Members of the Sapera Basti clan are suspected. Sapera Basti is a neighborhood to the east of Delhi known for its community of serpent charmers. Sonu, a shopkeeper, was arrested and questioned by the police. He's a two-faced character, both an informant for the forest service and for poachers.

The remains were found at a site planned for the introduction of five tigers and the creating of a new core of "big cats".²⁸

IRAN

Beginning of January 2018

Famor, Fars Province, Iran

A leopard carcass was discovered a few days ago in the hills above the village and examined by agents from the Kazerun Bureau for Environmental Services. The cause of death has not yet been determined, but the investigation is ongoing because many signs of human presence were identified at the scene. Famor is situated within the Arjan-Parishan protected zone, which covers 60,000 ha of mountains and forests, as well as two precious wetlands at altitudes between 2000 m and 850 m.²⁹

January 31, 2018

Shabjare, Kerman Province, Iran

Seizure of a freshly killed leopard, gutted and stuffed with straw. One arrest.³⁰

March 18, 2018

Akojan, Qazvin Province, Iran

The body of a female leopard cub was found 1 km from the village. No cuts, no bullets wounds. A suspected case of poisoning.³¹

LEOPARDS - FOLLOWED

NEPAL

January 18, 2018

Kathmandu, Central Development Region, Nepal

They were arrested in Bhugol Park by agents from the Metropolitan Crime Division acting on a tip. Maheshram Auji (25 years old), Janak Mahara (34 years old) and Surendra Dayal (25 years old) were in possession of a bag containing a leopard skin that they planned to sell.³²



March 27, 2018

Ghorahi, Mid-Western Development Region, Nepal

Sunil Sunar (20 years old) arrested in possession of eight teeth and a skin measuring 1.56 m long and 1.31 m wide. The police caught him in house that he was renting in Chaughera, south of the city. He was handed over, along with the seizure, to the District Forest Office in charge of the investigation.³³

THAILAND

March 6, 2018

Ban Si Ngam, San Sai District, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand

Nittaya Issarasilp (46 years old) was starting to get annoyed with certain residents in the village. They blamed her two 3-year-old leopards for the recent disappearance of some domestic animals. Her habit of walking through the village every day with her felines did not help sooth fears and tensions. Someone finally reported her to the Wildlife Conservation Office. Representatives came with the police to search the house where she was living with a couple of friends. Nittaya Issarasilp claims that she "inherited" the leopards from her father and produced a vague transportation certificate issued by the "Tiger Farm" in Sriracha, a zoo with widely criticized practices. None of the other documents that she showed had official signatures. The two leopards, a male and a female, were confiscated and will be taken to the Wildlife Conservation Centre in Chiang Mai for care and DNA analysis.³⁴



DESERT LYNX

ASIA

IRAN

March 21, 2018

Garmabdar, Tehran Province, Iran

A female desert lynx (*Caracal caracal*, Appendix I) was lapidated by Persian New Year's revellers. Her two young cubs managed to flee, but their future is uncertain. The mother died at the clinic; she succumbed to her many broken bones, teeth and jaws, and to an internal hemorrhage.³⁵



LIONS

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

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

February 15, 2018

Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Two two-year-old lionesses were beheaded in Kudu's Rus Game Reserve after being shot or poisoned. A reward of 50,000 rand or \$ 4270 US is offered to those who provide decisive information on poachers.³⁶

TANZANIA

February 14, 2018

At the edge of the Ruaha National Park, Tanzania

The team from the Ruaha Carnivore Project did not expect to come across a massacre. Informed by a "mortality alert" from an emitter collar on a lioness, the members of the NGO went to investigate and found six dead lions (four females and two males) that had been poisoned by a nearby carcass. 74 dead vultures were also present. Four vultures were still alive and were treated by the veterinarians at the Wildlife Conservation Society, but one of the birds did not survive. Apparently, a neighboring livestock farmer took revenge for an attack on his herd. The Ruaha Carnivore Project has been working for years to support cohabitation between pastoralists and felines by setting up predator-proofing enclosures and engaging local communities. But it is a difficult task. The NGO points out that predator-breeder cohabitation requires a combination of technical measures (protecting enclosures with lights, or using dogs...) and financial compensation for livestock losses, but the real key is that local inhabitants have to gain some sort of actual advantage from protecting wildlife.³⁷

Poisoning in Ruaha see "On the Trail" n°13 p.103.



LIONS - FOLLOWED

March 2, 2018

Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania

Liu Xiu Feng, 40, is sentenced to 20 years in prison for illegal possession of two lion claws worth \$4900 US or a fine of \$40,000 US.

The Chinese citizen had the means to opt for the second solution. He was caught at the international airport on 7 February 2018 about to fly away with the lion trophies.³⁸



AMERICA

February 2018

Tucson, State of Arizona, United States of America

The Safari Club International (SCI) made an announcement through the press:

"In considering that the practice of the captive breeding of lions for the purpose of hunting has doubtful value to the conservation of lions in the wild, and considering that such hunting is not consistent with SCI's criteria for estate hunting, the SCI Board has adopted the following policy:

- SCI opposes the hunting of African lions bred in captivity.
- This policy takes effect on February 4, 2018 and applies to hunts taking place after adoption of this policy (...).
- SCI will not accept advertising from any operator for any such hunts, nor will SCI allow operators to sell hunts for lions bred in captivity at the SCI Annual Hunters' Convention.

Linda Park, spokesperson for CACH (Campaign Against Canned Hunting), said, "I was over the moon when I read the SCI statement." She may have to come back down to Earth if Dries Van Coller, president of PHASA (Professional Hunters' Association of South Africa) succeeds in pulling off his plan. He hopes to get the Safari Club to partially rescind its spectacular decision by convincing the board of directors that eight lion-breeders are accredited by his association and have acceptable hunting practices.

Since 2016, the USFWS has forbidden American hunters from importing captive-bred lion trophies. They justify their position as follows, "Captive-bred lions are managed for financial gain, with genetics and population demographics manipulated for this purpose. This could (...) make these lions not suitable for reintroduction purposes."³⁹

ASIA

UZBEKISTAN

January 2018

Near Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Border with Kazakhstan.

Seizure of a lion "skinny, hungry, and held under terrible conditions" according to a witness. "There was simply no room for movement in the half-meter-long cage". He was taken to Tashkent Zoo.⁴⁰

EUROPE

SPAIN

Beginning of January 2018

Autonomous community La Rioja, Spain

In early January, the 30-year-old man posted an ad "on a well-known Internet site," according to the press: he had two stuffed African lions for sale, a male and a female. The Environmental Protection Service of the Guardia Civil (Seprona) was able to spot him and carry out a raid. The vendor was unable to produce any document justifying the origins of the remains. They were seized and their owner was charged with violating the law on the prevention of contraband. The maximum that he may be fined is 6000 €.⁴¹

ASIAN GOLDEN CAT AND BENGAL LEOPARD CAT

VIET NAM

ASIA

January 4, 2018

Hoa Binh Province, Viet Nam

Seizure of three Asian golden cats (*Catopuma temminckii*, Appendix I). These medium-sized felines are between 90 and 130 cm long. Their distribution range extends from China to Viet Nam. They live in forests at altitudes up to 3700 m. They feed on birds, rodents, reptiles and mammals bigger than themselves, such as sambar deer, wild pigs and young water buffalo. Their bones are used in traditional medicine. Their hide is sought after for the fur industry. They are golden brown, dark brown, rust-colored or gray. There is a superstition claiming that wearing a tuft of their hair or burning a piece of their skin keeps tigers away, and this also contributes to their decline.⁴²

ASIAN GOLDEN CAT AND BENGAL LEOPARD CAT - FOLLOWED

January 22, 2018
Cao Bang, Cao Bang Province, Viet Nam. Border with China.

For sale: a Bengal leopard cat. He was in a cage on the back of a motorcycle. One arrest.⁴³



CLOUDED LEOPARD

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

ASIA

INDIA

January 17, 2018
Near Ziro, Lower Subansiri District, State of Arunachal Pradesh, India

Members of the All Tajang Youth Association (ATYA) were doing a night patrol near the Swkhe-bo forest when they came across three men. Two of them managed to disappear in the dark, but Rakhe Pumbo was caught with the carcass of a male clouded leopard. The young patrollers turned the poacher over to the police and the Hapoli Forest Division. The panther carcass was incinerated in the presence of forest rangers and members of the association.⁴⁴

February 8-9, 2018
Malbazar, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India

Surya Kumar Rai and Mahesh Rai were arrested just as they were about to sell a clouded leopard skin for Rs 7.5 lakh (\$11,800 US). The purchaser, a Bhutanese national, was not intercepted.⁴⁵



TIGERS

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

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

February 22, 2018
San Diego, State of California, United States of America

Eighteen-year-old Luis Eudoro Valencia's trial revealed that he was not just a naïve young man trying to cross the Mexican-United States border with an anesthetized 6-week-old tiger cub on the floor of his car (see "On the Trail" n°18, p. 53). His lawyer presented him as an animal-lover whose passion had deprived him of all common sense. But inspection of the text messages stored in his cell phone showed that he had bragged in many messages about having smuggled in monkeys, jaguars and lions. His prices went from \$2500 US for a monkey, to \$5000 US for a lion, \$6000 US for a tiger, \$8000 US for a jaguar or a leopard, and \$10,000 US for a white tiger. The court sentenced him to six months in prison. The cub was given to the San Diego zoo.⁴⁶

MEXICO

February 7, 2018
State of Jalisco, Mexico

Seizure and rescue in a plastic crate from Jalisco to the town of Queretaro, 350 km away of a dehydrated and sedated tiger. A canine brigade helped locate the little feline.⁴⁷

February 10, 2018
Tepic, State of Nayarit, Mexico

Seizure in a garden of a Bengal tiger about a month and a half old. It was given to an PIMVS (Predio o Instalación que Maneja Vida Silvestre) in Jalisco.⁴⁸



March 4, 2018
Salina Cruz, State of Oaxaca, Mexico

Pending the provision by the owner of stud documents and the ability to hold wild animals, a tiger is put under writ of sequestration. His owner was walking him around town on a leash.⁴⁹

INDIA

January 14, 2018**Pandari, Pilibhit District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India**

A hunt for a four- or five-year-old tiger accused of attacking a 45-year-old woman. The villager tracked the suspect all day long. They finally managed to corner it in a sugar cane field that they set on fire to burn the offender. Alerted by witnesses, a team of forest rangers succeeded in calming the rioters, and the tiger escaped through the smoke into the forest. Pandari and the neighboring villages remain on watch.⁵⁰

Mid January 2018**State of Madhya Pradesh, India**

The Madhya Pradesh STF (Special Task Force) is tracking Jayi Tamang. He is a specialist in tiger skins and pangolin scales, who was arrested in October 2015 and immediately released on bail by a local court. Since then, he has been on the run. Madhya Pradesh is looking to cooperate with Nepal, and the Tamang case has been turned over to the Indian Interpol office and Interpol headquarters in Lyon, France. Despite the red notice that has been assigned to him, Tamang continues to slip through police nets and across borders. For a better idea of the tricks of the "Wanted Man" and the diversity of his trafficking and connections, see "On the Trail" n°15 p.45.⁵¹

FAMILY AFFAIRS**January 15, 2018****Asifabad District, State of Telangana, India**

A tiger skin seized last year by agents at the district forest office, which had mysteriously disappeared from their office six months ago, was finally found in the possessions of the wife of an agent suspended for negligence. She had taken it one day when she stopped by the office and hidden it at home, in the hopes of selling it. Her brother was involved in the ploy.⁵²

**GANG****January 22 and 27, 2018****Bangalore, State of Karnataka, India**

Arrested by the police as they attempted to sell a skin at the Yeshwantpura flower market, Balakrishna (28 years old), Mahesha (23 years old) and Rangaraju (36 years old) gave the forest rangers the run-around. At first, they said that the animal had been poached in the Satyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) and that they had an accomplice. The Karnataka forest department agents sent out patrols to recover the carcass and catch the so-called Siddappa, but he fled. He was finally arrested a few days later, and declared that the tigress was not from the reserve. Yet forest rangers had indeed found a carcass there. To try to get to the bottom of the case, agents with search warrants searched the homes of the suspects in custody and their accomplices, including some who had fled. They seized tiger bones and teeth at the home of a peasant named Sitharaj (38 years old), eight deer antlers and eight bundles of snare wires at Rangaraju's home, and four tiger bones at Balakrishna's home. At least four other suspects are on the run.⁵³

January 25, 2018**Bandipur Tiger Reserve, State of Karnataka, India**

It is a sad day for staff on the reserve. First, around 11:00 a.m., a patrol came across two dead tigers, lying side-by-side in the Hirikere forest area. The female was 2 years old and the male was 3. When they explored the vicinity, they also found the carcass of an 18-month-old female about 500 m away. The three animals show no signs of injury. They appear to have died 2 or 3 days earlier. Locals mentioned a possible Hirikere Lake poisoning. Samples of the animals' organs and nearby ground water were taken and sent for analysis at the National Centre for Biological Sciences in Bengaluru and at the forensic lab in Madiwala. The carcasses were incinerated after the autopsy.

The first post-mortem exams have not detected any poison. But Chief Wildlife Warden and a Wildlife Institute of India spokesman stress that forensic labs in Karnataka are not equipped to detect traces of all poisonous substances. "Poachers nowadays use highly advanced poisons, mostly herbal-based, which are difficult to detect. Usually phytochemicals, like datura seeds, are used to poison tigers". Endly, from a new expertise made by a Tamil Nadu lab, it emerges that the cats were killed by a mix of pesticides dropped in a water point.⁵⁵

TIGERS - FOLLOWED

January 2018

State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Tigers – results for January 2018 in Madhya Pradesh:

- 6 in one month.

Once again, the main culprit is the increased number of traps and electrified fences powered by illegal connections to 440,000 V lines. Farmers are mainly after herbivores that could come feed in their fields, but unintentionally – so they say – they kill leopards and tigers, whose paws, claws and whiskers, while they are at it, are cut off and used in black magic, and sometimes the entire hide disappears only to reappear sooner or later in a tacky living room or the bathroom of a rich businessman. Discussions with the electric companies who are supposed to put a stop to the problem of illegal connections are frequent and fruitless. The most recent January case of an electrocuted tiger occurred on January 26 in Devhara, in the Shahdol district.⁵⁴



Beginning of February 2018

Talavadi, Erode District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Seizure of two tiger claws, tiger's teeth and bones in the homes of Anand and of Siddharaj. They admitted to having poached the tiger in the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve.⁵⁶

February 14, 2018

Kukrar, Gariaband District, State of Chhattisgarh, India

Controversy about where a magnificent adult tiger was poached. Its hide, about 11 feet long (8.2 feet excluding the tail) and 3 feet wide, was seized in the night. The police believe that the animal



was killed in the neighboring State of Odisha, but an ecological activist thinks that it more probably came from the Udanti and Sitanadi Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh. On February 16, Nitin Singhvi wrote to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), and included photos with his letter. Comparing the image of the seized skin to those taken by camera traps in the reserve, he argues that he recognizes a male that has been missing since July 2017. He has requested that the NTCA carry out a meticulous investigation on this case. But the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, RK Singh, has dismissed the "speculations." Two poachers were arrested trying to sell the skin to police officers of the crime branch posing as buyers.⁵⁷

February 24-25, 2018

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Chandrapur District and Pench Tiger Reserve, Nagpur District, State of Maharashtra, India

- Yeda Anna has disappeared. "Twisted Tail" was a dominant male at the 150 km² Tadoba-Andhari Tiger sanctuary. The father of 30 tiger cubs, he was 14 years old. He was very old and weakened by a fight with a young adult male. He got his name from his tail that was cut during a territorial fight. He began to decline in 2010 when, after a fight with another dominant male, he was expelled from his territory and relegated to the buffer zone of the reserve.

The controversy continues. Yeda Anna was wounded on his face and thorax, and suffered for several days before dying. Nothing was done to either treat him or put him out of his misery. Administrative complications between the various services and the absence of personnel over the weekend are the explanations that have been put forth by the District Deputy Conservator of Forests.

- A dead tiger floating on the Pench River. It has been dead for three days. No trace of bullets, sign of poisoning or amputation by a poacher. But nothing is certain. It is difficult to see anything very clearly in the decomposing carcass. The hypothesis of a combat lost to a crocodile has been suggested.⁵⁸

March 13, 2018

Salai, State of Maharashtra, India

Parteti, one of the 13 "tiger fishermen" from the Pench reserve who was released on bail at first instance has been taken back by the police while he was taking a nap at the edge of a village. The trial judgment was set aside by the Bombay High Court. All 13 suspects are under a search warrant. Parteti at the beginning of the case in summer 2017 had been arrested in possession of 4 tiger canines. See "On the Trail" n°19 p. 69.⁵⁹

March 15, 2018

Mandla and Balaghat Districts, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Seizure of tiger parts from an animal that died of electrocution in the Kanha Tiger Reserve. Two arrests and two suspects on the run.⁶⁰



March 19-20, 2018

Ranthambore and Sariska Tiger Reserves, State of Rajasthan, India

- The 13 year-old male was too close to the village of Khandar. Surrounded by people, he was anesthetized by the specialized services and directed toward the forest. In the meantime, he died.

70 adult tigers and cubs are said to be in the reserve, two times more than the acceptable population for its 392 km².

- The 4 year-old male died from strangulation by a metal trap near a farm at the edge of the reserve. Poaching or crop protection? The investigation is open.⁶¹



TIGERS - FOLLOWED

March 21, 2018

Hyderabad, State of Telangana, India

Seizure of a fake tiger skin. Four arrests.⁶²

March 29, 2018

Obaidullahganj, Raisen District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

2-3 day-old carcass of 183 cm in length. Partial decomposition of the tigress, claws torn out.⁶³

INDONESIA

January 4, 2018

Medan, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

In August 2017, Ismail Sembiring Pelawi trapped a Sumatran tiger in Mount Leuser National Park and was trying to sell its skin. He offered it to a potential purchaser who turned out to be a park officer in civilian clothes. He tried to defend himself by stating, "I only meant to catch wild boars, but one of my snares caught the tiger." The district court sentenced him to 2 years in prison and a fine of 100 million rupees (\$7400 US). If he does not pay the fine, he will have to serve an additional 3 months in prison.⁶⁴



February 5, 2018

Deli Serdang Kapubantan, Province of North Sumatra, Indonesia

Seizure of a Sumatran tiger fleece (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*, Appendix I), a necklace of claws, four tiger claws, one bag, a purse and two belts made of tiger skin, four decorations mounted with claws, five sun bear teeth (*Helarctos malayanus*, Appendix I). One arrest. The 32 year old man sold them on Facebook.⁶⁵



March 4, 2018

Hatupangan, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

A male tiger was resting near a village house. The villagers worked together to spear him to death. The noble animal was suspected of being a "siluman," a potentially malevolent ghost. The tiger had been near the village for a month. Its carcass was put on display on a beam in the covered market, above the heads of the villagers.

The Sumatra tiger population is in decline. There are currently an estimated 400 to 500. A few days before the murder, the BKSDA had informed the village residents that the tiger would be captured and transferred to the forest.⁶⁶



Muhammad Agusssalim

Superstition says that there are also benevolent silumans

LAOS

Mid January 2018

Khammouane Province, Laos. Border with Thailand.

Seizure in an off-road vehicle of three dead adult male tigers from a non-identified breeding farm.

Tiger breeding is prospering in Laos, despite commitments on the international scene to close "tiger farms." According to the most recent census, there are 700 tigers in captivity. There are plenty of end-uses: meat, bones, tiger wine and live tigers for hotels and tourist complexes, as well as public and private zoos. In the wild, there are no more than 20 to 25 tigers left in what remains of devastated forests that have been replaced by industrial plantations.⁶⁷



© Laos Wildlife Rescue Center

NEPAL

March 5, 2018

Kathmandu, Central Development Region, Nepal

The police had been after the "notorious" trafficker Lodu Dime, alias Jimi, since 2013. In January of that year, a vehicle on the road to the Rasuwa district, on the Chinese border, was stopped by police in Nuwakot and found to be in possession of 5 tiger skins and 7 bags full of animal parts, including bones. The investigation revealed that the load was on its way to China and that Lodu Dime was up to his ears in trafficking. He is on the run, but was first sentenced to a fine of 100,000 rupees (\$965 US) by the District Forest Office, then to five years in prison in March 2015 by the Patan Appellate Court. Having received notice that the trafficker is now operating from India, the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) turned to Interpol. A "red notice" was issued by the General Secretariat last February. Lodu Dime was arrested by the Indian police and put on an Air India flight to Kathmandu accompanied by agents of the Nepalese Interpol office. He should be turned over to the Nuwakot district police.⁶⁸

TIGERS - FOLLOWED

February 2018

Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand

The coming back of the Tiger Temple. See "On the Trail" n°15 p. 63, n°14 p. 51, n° 13 p. 60, n° 12 p. 60, n°9 p.50, n°8 p.46 and n° 5 p.50.

Two years ago, 147 drugged and leashed tigers were forcibly evacuated from the religious business despite resistance from the monks.

Tiger skins, tiger wine and cubs preserved in jars had been found in the sheds and annexes of the Buddhist temple. The superior monk has not so far had to answer before the courts for the ill-treatment inflicted on the animals and the origin of his tiger livestock.

Since 2016, visitors have deserted the temple and about 100 deer, peacocks and other jungle birds survive on public charity.

It's the rebound! In April, 24 new tigers purchased from Bangkok Zoo are expected to be housed in a "zoo" adjacent to the temple and controlled by the National Park Authority. Tour operators will be able to re-enter the Temple of the Tigers in their tours and attract tourists from all over the world delighted to make paying selfies with the big cats. The captive tiger is in vogue in Thailand. There are 50 tourist tiger traps in the country. 1500 specimens would be in captivity against 700 in 2007. What will happen to them when vogue will be out? They will be eaten under "wild tiger" vintage. Captive tigers don't save wild ones. Edwin Wiek on behalf of the Wildlife Friends Foundation says, "Chinese and Vietnamese consumers who believe that tiger penises and bones make you sexually stronger believe that wild tigers are better for it."⁶⁹

EUROPE

RUSSIA

January 28, 2018

Olginsky District, Primorsky Region, Far Eastern Federal District, Russia

The outlandish story of an unrelenting hunter who says he was attacked by an Amur tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*) and shot it point-blank in a reflex response. The wounded hunter and dying tiger then fought for several minutes, according to the hunter. In the survivor's account of the event, the tiger was already wounded when it attacked. There was a pool of blood at the foot of a pine tree where the tiger had taken refuge.

The experts are skeptical about the story. What was the guy doing there?

The post-mortem examination will reveal its share of the truth. "If the tiger attacks first, then the human has practically no chance of escaping, and there is no time to shoot. We'll have a clearer picture of what happened after Hunting Control and police officials study the site."⁷⁰



March 13, 2018

Yuzhny, Khabarovsk Krai, Far Eastern Federal District, Russia. Border with China.

Another Amur tiger poaching. She was shot. She is limping on three paws. She is now in the care of a veterinary clinic.⁷¹

GOEFFROY'S CAT

Goffroy's cat (*Leopardus geoffroyi*) are listed under CITES Appendix I.

AMERICA

URUGUAY

January 31, 2018

Dolores, Soriano Department, Uruguay. Border with Argentina.

A woman posted pictures of a Goffroy's cat for a Facebook group. The cat was on a chain in her courtyard. She wanted to sell it, but Internet users reported her in to the Mvotma denunciation platform, set up by the Ministry of Housing, Territorial Development and the Environment. The



feline was seized by the National Department of the Environment (Dinama), with assistance from the police, and handed over to the Dr. Rodolfo Tálce wildlife reserve.⁷²

facebook

JAGUAR

Jaguars (*Panthera onca*) are listed under CITES Appendix I.

AMERICA

BRAZIL

January 11, 2018

Amaturá, State of Amazonas, Brazil

According to the residents of the little town, the jaguar was sighted for the first time at the beginning of the year, in the cemetery. It then became bolder and started attacking dogs and chickens on people's property. Unfortunately, on Thursday, he came across a man with a rifle. The man killed it without hesitation, supposedly to protect himself from a potential attack. A police enquiry has been opened. The IBAMA (Instituto brasileiro do meio ambiente e dos recursos naturais renováveis) classifies this as a case of environmental crime and has issued a reminder that the legal procedure requires people to inform the environmental battalion of the military police, who can capture animals without hurting them. The jaguar meat was distributed to the town inhabitants.⁷³



PUMAS

AMERICA

CANADA

February 21, 2018

Cochrane, Rocky View County, Alberta Province, Canada

A cougar (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II) killed outside of hunting season was found near Ghost River. It weighed 45 kg. Gloves and a camp fire make the picture complete. The poacher must have fled when the patrol approached.⁷⁴



VARIOUS SPECIES FELINES

AFRICA

SENEGAL

FAMILY AFFAIRS

February 28 and March 1, 2018

Tambacounda, Tambacounda Region, Senegal

Seizure of a leopard head, two lion masks, about ten meters of lion skin in blood-stained strips. Two arrests. There are less than 400 wild lions left in West Africa.

- Seizure of a leopard skin and four marshbuck skins (*Tragelaphus speki*). The marshbuck is an amphibious antelope native to the swampy areas of equatorial Africa.

The value of the whole as far as one can fix the value of ribbons from skins of lions and these with eyes off masks, would be of \$ 7000 US on the national market and \$ 28.000 US on the international market.⁷⁵

AMERICA

MEXICO

February 17, 2018

Casas Grandes Guerrero, State of Chihuahua, Mexico

- A young puma (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II), about three months old, wandering around the fringes of the city, was taken in charge by the federal police and handed over to a PIMVS.

- One female jaguar (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I), approximately 2 years old, was extracted from a discarded cage. Claws and fangs torn off, she can not be released.⁷⁶

March 20, 2018

Tijuana International Airport, State of Baja California, Mexico

A tiger and a baby jaguar are seized in the airport parcel warehouse, each in a wooden box pierced with holes. They had been packed and shipped by a logistics platform near Mexico City airport. Four hours flight.⁷⁷



Felines and elephants

AFRICA

GABON

January 2018

Gabon –2017 toll

The seals in the courts disappear and the wildlife traffickers very quickly come out from behind bars. Gabon's justice is not severe with elephant and panther killers.



1- In Estuaire, 13 arrests, 10 sentences of 99 days in prison on average.

2 – In Ngounié, 17 arrests, 13 sentences of 78 days in prison on average.

3 – In Ogooué-Ivindo, 26 arrest, seven sentences of 107 days in prison on average, two acquittals, and 17 trials under investigation.

4- In Haut-Ogooué, 22 arrests, 19 sentences of 180 days in prison on average.

5 – In Moyen-Ogooué, eight arrests, seven sentences of 180 days in prison on average.

6- In Ogooué-Lolo, one arrest and a sentence of 180 days in prison.

7- In Woleu-Ntem, 12 arrests, 11 sentences of 185 days in prison on average.

371 kg of ivory and 31 skins were seized.¹

ASIA

INDIA

January 9, 2018

Kukidolong, Dimapur District, State of Nagaland, India

The Assam Rifles battalion were tipped off. They set up a road block at Kukidolong. Sum John Ngaihte was nabbed on his way from Dimapur to the Churachandpur district, where he planned to sell 13 kg of tiger and elephant bones. He was also carrying 61,455 rupees (\$960 US) in cash and a bank transfer slip for 40,000 rupees (\$624 US). In his vehicle, the soldiers found a full skull with teeth, the bones of all four legs, a complete set of vertebrae and the ribs of a tiger, as well as bones from an elephant skull.²

Wolves

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



Jean de Clamorgan. La chasse du loup, nécessaire à la maison rustique, 1574. Source gallica.bnf.fr / BnF

ASIA

IRAN

January 29, 2018

Garmeh County, North Khorasan Province, Iran

Two experienced and armed poachers are arrested. On board their motorcycle, they had two grey wolf heads (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II). They were about to sell them to shepherds who were responsible for presenting the trophies to the authorities and receiving compensation for alleged attacks on the herds.¹

EUROPE

GERMANY

February 19, 2018

Garching bei München, Free State of Bavaria, Germany

Seizure by the postal customs bureau of a package sent from Florida containing a polar wolf (*Canis lupus arctos*, Appendix II) skin. The addressee wanted to use it for decoration, but forgot to complete the necessary import formalities.²

BELGIUM

January 2018

Beringen, Flemish Region, Belgium

Coming from Germany, the she-wolf has been on Flemish soil for a few weeks. She's covered 500 km in 10 days. After enjoying deer and wild boars in the military camp Leopoldburg Beringen, she came out and, unfortunate coincidence, two sheep were killed in the night from Saturday to Sunday and another was seriously injured. The attacks bear the signature of the she-wolf: surgical precision with which victims were eaten, prints on the banks of the nearby river.

But it's not panic. The Flemish government will compensate the farmer who nevertheless considers the wolf's return very positive.

The Landschap association behind the Welkom Wolf project is keeping its cool. "This attack in Flanders is the first of its kind. We can only hope that the frequency of such incidents will be limited and that the few wolves present in Flanders are only forerunners. In Wallonia, the Minister of Nature is not overly moved while remaining vigilant." Our territory a priori has the capacity to meet the food needs of one or more wolves in view of the large game populations present in our forests. As a precaution, the wolf is being included on the list of animals whose attacks on domestic animals are compensated.³

FRANCE

Mid March 2018

Ballons des Vosges Nature Park, Ban-de-Laveline, Vosges Department, France

Instead of a wolf or a lynx, a cat was caught in a leg-hold trap. The placement of this type of equipment has been banned since January 1, 1995.⁴



Esther Tyson/ Nature in Art

Red Pandas

Red Pandas (*Ailurus fulgens*) are listed under CITES Appendix I.

ASIA

LAOS

January 18, 2018

Northern Laos. Border with China.

This could be the largest global seizure of live red pandas ever made and is being made in Laos where the distribution of the species is uncertain. Usually, red pandas are seized in the form of skins used to make toques, hats, scarves, or gloves. Some charlatans also attribute certain medicinal virtues to parts of their bodies. New trend: live red pandas are intended for the pet or prestige pet market and for public or private zoos. Pandas are very profitable and in jail.



A routine check on a van led to the discovery of the six red pandas about 15 kilometers from the border with China from where they originated. They were in individual cages. Three of them were in pitiful condition, shaken by tremors. The Laotian driver claimed that he was only responsible for delivering them to another vehicle at a bus station in Luang Namtha. The final destination would have been Thailand. The animals were transported to the wildlife sanctuary of the NGO Free the Bears in Luang Prabang. The three sick died a few days later. The future of the three survivors is not settled.¹

NEPAL

January 7 and 21, 2018

Kathmandu, Central Development Region, Nepal

The year is off to a bad start for red pandas, “habre” in the local dialect. There have already been two hide seizures since the beginning of the month.

- First, on January 7th, the Kathmandu Metropolitan Crime Division, who had received a tip, arrested four traffickers in possession of a hide. Uddav Basnet (25 years old), Bishnu Bahadur Basnet (27 years old), Rajendra Tamang (30 years old) and Dhurba Kumar Khatri (26 years old) had gotten it in the village of Thoka. They were turned over to the District Forest Office, who will be pursuing the investigation.

- On the 21st, four other people looking for a customer to buy two red panda skins came across a plain-clothes policeman from the Central Investigation Bureau of Nepal Police. Binod Kumar Rana (32 years old), Harka Bahadur Ale (45 years old), Raj Kumar Tamang (35 years old) and Dhyan Bahadur Rai (43 years old) apparently got the skins in Budhanilkanta, north of the Kathmandu valley.²



Bears

ASIA

ARMENIA

March 2, 2018

Armenia

Release of a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) adult living in a sordid cage since the age of 2 to 3 months.¹

CHINA

January 22, 2018

Manzhouli, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. Border with Russia.

Customs officers at this border town made their first seizure of the year of a protected animal part. Around 9:30 a.m., a man coming from Russia arrived at the highway border control with no baggage. He had his hands in his pockets and a protruding belly, which attracted the customs officers' attention and they decided to search him. He had a bear's foot wrapped in plastic hidden around his paunch.²



March 16, 2018

Cangzhou, Hebei Province, China

Seizure in a package coming from Indonesia of 20 presumed gallbladders, weighing a total of 705.3 g.³

IRAN

Mid January 2018

Shahrud, Semnan Province, Iran

Confirmation in the court of appeal of the 2 years sentence and fine of 20 million rials (\$555 US) for a poacher who shot to death a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II). The man was reported to Iran's Environment and Wildlife Watch by residents who saw him shoot the animal and recognized him. He ran off when the witnesses protested, but lived in a neighbouring village. Despite his denials, the Shahrud court considered that there was evidence and the witnesses accounts were concordant. The rifle was not found, but was considered to be illegal since the accused did not have a permit to own a gun. In fact, the court of appeal added a supplementary fine that corresponds to recent changes in the sanctions applicable for environmental crimes.⁴

LAOS

Beginning of March 2018

Bokeo Province, Laos

Seizure of three Asian black bears (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I), 5 and 7 years old, at the home of some villagers. The Australian NGO Free the Bears Fund took them in at their Tat Kuangxi refuge. The refuge is over-crowded. There are plans to replace it next year with new facilities extending over a 30-hectares area, capable of taking in 150 bears.

In Laos, there are approximately 130 bears in captivity: 100 in the Bokeo province free zone, the famous Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone at the border between Myanmar and Thailand (see. p.87) and 30 scattered among the other provinces.⁵

NEPAL

March 2018

Kathmandu, Central Development Region, Nepal

From one nightmare to another.

Thanks to the Jane Goodall Institute and the NGO World Animal Protection, in 2017, they were confiscated from animal tamers who were exploiting them in the streets and at café terraces, because they were supposedly good dancers. The couple of sloth bears (*Melursus ursinus*, Appendix I), aged 17 and 19, ended up wasting away and perishing in a zoo in Katmandu. The female just died. Because of an administrative headache, the couple could not be transferred to the Agra specialized center in the State of Uttar Pradesh, in India. The tradition of dancing bears goes back to at least the XIIIth century when the Qalendar Muslim ethnic group benefited from special royal protection and organized shows that travelled from palace to palace.⁶

THAILAND

February 17, 2018

Tambon Moo See, Pak Chong District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand

Following a tip, the police showed up at a plantation and surprised Apiwat Nilsonthi cutting up an Asian black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I). He had already prepared packages of 1 kg of raw meat to be sold for 400 to 500 bhat (\$13-16 US) and packages of grilled meat. Apiwat said that he and two friends had found the bear dead in a trap, in the middle of a wheat field 4 km from the Khao Yai National Park. When they saw that no one was going to claim the bear and that the meat was still good, the three partners decided to take the carcass and bring it back in their pick-up to Tambon Moo See for their own personal consumption and to sell it.⁷



March 17, 2018

Kui Buri National Park, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province, Thailand

On Saturday, a ranger patrol came across two men acting suspicious, one of whom fled into the forest as they approached. Somjit Boonkong (52 years old) was not quick enough. In his backpack, the rangers found the head, paws and meat of an Asian Black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I) and a gutted civet. He was also carrying a long-barreled shotgun and ammunition, two hunting headlamps, a hammock and various accessories. The forest rangers believe that the second poacher was carrying the rest of the bear, and perhaps other animal carcasses. He has been identified and an arrest warrant has been issued for him.⁸

VIET NAM

January 15, 2018

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Possessing an Asian black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I) in the city is crazy, and a resident finally realized it. He contacted Education for Nature – Viet Nam (ENV) in order to get rid of it. The bear, named Misa, is an 80-kg female who appears to be in good condition and does not have any scars that would attest to an attempt to extract her bile. Misa is going to be sent to the Ninh Binh bear sanctuary in Tonkin, with the help of the NGO Four Paws International.⁹

Beginning of March 2018

Ninh Binh, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam

End of the quarantine of an adult bear who has spent most of her life in a cage in Ho Chi Minh City. She is now in a large green enclosure that will seem immense. Releasing her in a national park would expose her to fatal dangers.¹⁰

EUROPE

FRANCE

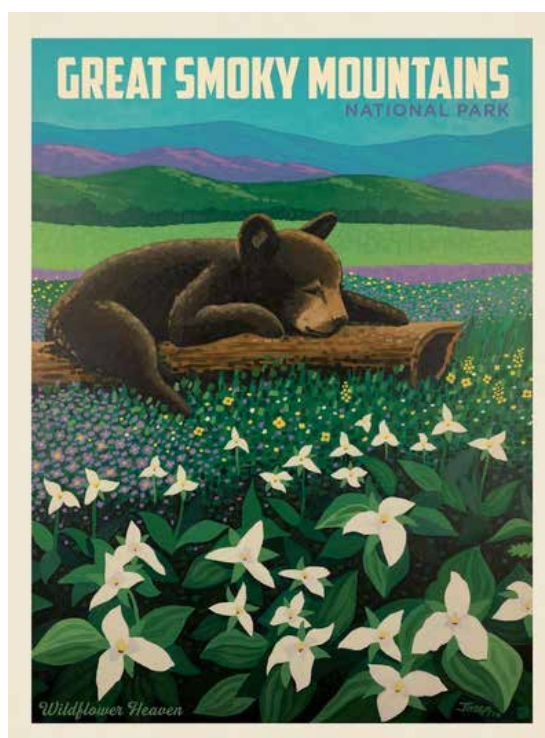
March 6, 2018

Toulouse, Haute-Garonne Department, France

The administrative tribunal of Toulouse recognizes that insufficient means have been allocated to guarantee the sustainable presence of bears (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) in the Pyrenees. The court noted that a report by the Museum of Natural History published in 2013 recommended that 13 bears be urgently introduced in the western part of the mountain range and 4 in the central zone, and that the report was not taken into account by the French government. The ruling underlines the fact that the current numbers are insufficient to ensure the long-term survival of the species, and that the very existence of the western group was endangered by accumulated delays in introducing new specimens. According to the court, genetic risks compromise the positive dynamics of the population, given the frequent interbreeding among the bears. The court found the State guilty of inefficiency. It ruled that the actions implemented “cannot be considered sufficient.” The State has been sentenced to pay a fine of 8000€ (\$10,000 US) to the NGOs Ferus and Pays de l’Ours.¹¹

March 26, 2018

Mr. Nicolas Hulot, Minister of Ecology, announces his firm intention to introduce two female bears in the western part of the mountain range. “We cannot teach lessons to countries that have endangered species on their territory if we ourselves hesitate to protect the species that are endangered in France.”¹²



Hippopotamuses

Hippopotamuses (*Hippopotamus amphibius*), are listed under CITES Appendix II.



AFRICA

KENYA

February 11, 2018

Masai Mara National Reserve, Narok County, Kenya. Border with Tanzania.

Seven poachers arrested as they cut up a hippopotamus. Half of the group fled. Knives, spears and traps were also seized at the site.¹

March 17-19, 2018

Masai Mara National Reserve, Narok County, Kenya

The anti-poaching teams on the reserve had their work cut out for them. Several arrests were made, both by night and by day. Exhibits include several wire snares, spears and hunting dogs. The nocturnal seizure involved the meat of three hippopotamuses being transported by the poachers.²

UGANDA

March 2018

Katunguru, Western Region, Uganda

Job Bwebale and Swalik Kakuru had 29 kg of hippopotamus teeth, estimated at 6 million Ugandan shillings (\$1640 US, or \$56 US/kg). The two men were taken to the Kasese police station. The animals may have been poached in the Queen Elizabeth National Park, which surrounds Katunguru.³

TANZANIA

January 24, 2018

Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania
12,467 hippopotamus teeth were auctioned off. Total weight 3.58 tons. The teeth represented approximately 1560 hippopotamuses. Tanzania Wildlife Authority says that most of the teeth came from hippos that died naturally or that were slain legally following conflicts with human activities. A few teeth may have been seized from poachers or smugglers. The revenue will be turned over to wildlife protection organizations.

A certain "Ontour Tanzania United" apparently bought the batch for \$13,600 US, or \$3.80 US per kilo.

Specialists in wildlife trafficking are afraid that this single sale will contribute to Hong Kong workshops in addition to or as a replacement for elephant ivory. The auction was reserved for holders of a first-class license issued in 2017.

The Tanzanian hippopotamus population is the largest in eastern Africa. The most recent census dates back to 2001 and reported 20,000 individuals.⁴

TOGO



March 8-9, 2018

Canton of Tométy-Kondji, Maritime Region, Togo. Border with Benin.

Robert and René, two Beninese partners in crime, were chasing a hippopotamus through the night in Mono, in Togo. The night watchmen for the Association for the Conservation of Hippopotamus Pools were alerted. They turned Robert and René over to the police, but were not able to get their hands on two or three other poachers who disappeared in the night.⁵

Hippos and elephants

AFRICA

UGANDA

January 2018

Seizure of three tusks and hippopotamus 124 teeth.¹

EUROPE

SPAIN

March 23, 2018

Valence, Valencia Community, Spain

Seizure at an antique shop of 94 objects carved in elephant and hippo (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) ivory of an unknown origin and age.²

Rhinoceroses



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°20
The value of horn on the black market, according to media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref.
Asia	China (Hong Kong)	25,088	35
		25,370	
		27,407	

EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA

March 19, 2018

Ol Pejeta, Laikipia County, Kenya

Soudan is dead, at 45 years old. Veterinarians put him to sleep after several weeks of age-related complications. He was catapulted into stardom when a social network launched a fundraising campaign naming him "The Most Eligible Bachelor in the World." Soudan was considered the last male individual of the northern African sub-species of white rhinoceroses (*Ceratotherium simum* ssp. *cottoni*). He was born in the wild in Sudan.



After a long exile in a Czech zoo in Dvur Kralove, he was transferred to Kenya in 2009, along with two northern white rhino females considered fertile and the last representatives of the sub-species. Protected from poachers 24/7 and despite having mated many times, the three zoo rhinoceroses never managed to produce an offspring susceptible of carrying on the line of the sub-species (see "On the Trail" n°17 p. 86). The northern white rhinoceros' natural range covered the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, and probably extended into Uganda and the Central African Republic. They were exterminated by colonial and post-colonial poaching and following armed conflicts.¹

March 30, 2018

Solio Ranch, Nyeri County, Kenya

Death of a poacher. The rangers plead self-defense.

On the scene of the drama, a bow, two arrows, a veterinary anesthetic, and a knife were found. The KWS also claims to have found an identity card and personal documents at the scene. An accomplice escaped.²



MOZAMBIQUE

March 6, 2018

Maputo International Airport, Mozambique

Seizure of four rhinoceros horns with a total weight of 7.2 kg. Arrest of a 28 year-old Vietnamese suspect, Nguyen Van Tinh, who claimed to be a photographer in Angola and an amateur casino gambler in Mozambique. He asserts that he was contacted just before flying to Asia by a taxi driver who convinced him to take charge of a suitcase said to be full of women's shoes and clothes in exchange for a commission of 50,000 meticaïs (\$800 US).³

TANZANIA

March 2018

Tanga Region, Tanzania

TANAPA (Tanzania National Parks) announces that it arrested in cooperation with the police four suspected poachers of a rhino last December in Serengeti Park.⁴

ZIMBABWE

Beginning of January 2018

Savé Valley Conservancy, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe

Five poachers arrested. They had just shot a black rhinoceros several times. His prognosis looks good. The guards followed the rhinoceros' trail of blood as it fled, as well as the poachers' trail, and were able to arrest the poachers and rescue the animal. Evidence includes a .303 hunting rifle, a silencer and 11 cartridges.⁵



January 17, 2018

Beitbridge, Matabeleland South Province, Zimbabwe

Betrayed by his Nokia which he lost in the heat of the moment as he poached two female black rhinoceroses worth \$240,000 US, on Christmas night 2017. At Godknows Mashame's residence, officials discovered three guns, a hunting flashlight, ammunition, explosives and two antelope horns. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison. See "On the Trail" n°15 p. 76.⁶



February 4, 2018

Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe. Border with Zambia.

A skirmish between a gang of poachers from Zambia and ZimParks rangers, in the Upper Zambezi valley. A suspect from Lusaka was seriously injured. He is under surveillance at the Victoria Falls hospital. The rest of the group fled. Food supplies, cooking utensils, shoes, mosquito nets, seven mobile phones, backpacks and ammunition were found on the site.⁷

March 5, 2018

Harare, Province of Harare, Zimbabwe

The former director of ZimParks, Edson Chidziya, and three colleagues were acquitted of charges of collusion, negligence and theft in a case involving the stock of horns belonging to the State. They were accused, in particular, of having concealed an audit statement that reported the disappearance of 56 horns, worth \$3 million US (see "On the Trail" n°19 p. 84). Among other arguments, the court ruled that the horns had been stored since 1960 and that no audits had been carried out until 2015 to verify the authenticity and the inventory in the vault, and consequently, the 56 missing horns could have disappeared before 2013 when Edson Chidziya and his three close collaborators began in their positions.⁸



SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

January 10, 2018

Northern Cape Province and Vryburg, North West Province, South Africa

Seven people arrested in two vehicles, four men and three women, aged between 27 and 50 years; seizure of two horns. A transaction was underway. The mobile phones of three of the suspects contained photos of the horns.⁹

January 13 and 15, 2018

Hoedspruit, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Two suspected poachers were arrested while trespassing on a hunting reserve, after guards sighted them. One of the suspects led the police to their cache of weapons. Two knives, an ax, a .375 rifle and ammunition were seized and will be used as evidence.¹⁰

January 23, 2018

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Seizure of firearms, cartridges, a silencer and knives in two vehicles. The VW Polo and the Toyota minibus were inspected by the canine brigade on duty at the MAJOC (Missions Area Joint Operations Centre) headquarters. Four arrests, including a taxi driver and a garage mechanic.¹¹

**January 28 and 30, 2018
Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa**

Two men suspected of poaching are dead. A third is on the run. According to the South African Police Service news release, the rangers shot in self-defense. The incident took place at 11 p.m. The bodies were found the next morning. Two axes and a large-caliber rifle with a silencer were also on site.

The third man was caught after a two-day manhunt. He was taken to the hospital and charged two days later.¹²



**January 30, 2018
Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa**

Four people received prison sentences of 3, 6 and 12 years for poaching and illegal possession of horns, firearms and ammunition.¹³



FAMILY AFFAIRS

January 29, 2018

Pretoria, Gauteng Province, South Africa

The trial of the Groenewald brothers and others will last several months or even a year but we do not know when it will be held. The investigation has lasted 7 years (cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p. 78 and 79, n°9 p. 64, n°8 p. 65, n°7 p. 71-72 and p.75 and n°6 p. 62). The Groenewald gang is the same size as the Ras gang. It uses the same procedural devices to lighten the charges and postpone the final trial. The gang members are out on bail except for Nardus Rossouw, who has been locked again for various offenses after having being release on bail.¹⁴

January-February 2018

Ngwelezane, Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

The trial of Dumisani Gwala will indeed take place in May (cf. "On the Trail" n°19 p. 86). It will be on May 22, unless a new bombshell and in Mtubatuba court. Gwala and two accomplices are accused of multiple transports, detentions and horn sales. Gwala was also charged with rebellion at the time of his arrest. The investigation has been ongoing for 4 years. The case has been withdrawn from the Ngwelezane court.¹⁵

**February 5, 2018
Tshokwane Section, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**

Two poachers, apparently originally from Mozambique, have died. They began firing when the rangers approached. They were armed with a semi-automatic AK47 rifle and a 458 rifle. The rangers' response was fatal. A rhinoceros horn was seized from one of the men's backpacks. An ax and some knives were also seized. The rhinoceros carcass was not found immediately. The incident occurred in one of the most heavily monitored sectors of Kruger.¹⁶



Beginning of February 2018

Tonga, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Four horns were seized from an ice chest on the passenger seat of a Mercedes Benz at a routine road check near a shopping center.¹⁷



February 12, 2018

Namakgale, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Four people arrested and two horns seized. Four people freed on bail for 300 rand (\$26 US) nine days later!

Will Solly Kubayi, Jafta Sekgobela, Andrew Mathebula and Moses Mashito be present at their trial?¹⁸

**Mid February 2018
South Africa**

Release of Hugo Ras on a 25,000 rand (\$ 2150 US) bail (cf. "On the Trail" n°19, p.82). Ras and consorts are responsible for the poaching of several dozen rhinos and the export of a hundred horns to Asia. Thanks to the complicity of veterinary circles, Ras disposed of M99, a morphine derivative to put his victims to sleep and to death. Ras spent three and a half years in pre-trial detention. The other nine suspects, including a Hawks officer -an elite corps- are already on bail. The trial is constantly being postponed. Counsel for two of the accused filed a preliminary constitutionality question. The manoeuvre aims to bring down as many charges as possible by relying on the lifting (after the alleged acts) of the embargo on the transport and trade of rhino horns within South African territory.¹⁹

February 16, 2018

Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, South Africa

A female rhinoceros was poached. Her calf, only a few weeks old, panicked and sounded the alarm with his cries. Authorities had to approach him very slowly so that he would not run off, and put him to sleep with a syringe shot before moving him to safety. He was taken to an orphanage. The exact location of the orphanage is not made public for security reasons.²⁰

February 21, 2018

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

Vultures flying overhead led to the discovery of five dead rhinoceroses. The carcasses were fresh, and lying a few hundred meters apart from each other. Two other carcasses in a state of advanced decay were found a little later in the same sector.

The reserve rangers justify such late discoveries as best they can. "The rhinoceroses that were killed two weeks ago were hidden under the shrubs and it was difficult for the vultures to see them."

For Gordon Bailey, former senior ranger on the reserve, "For far too long, Ezemvelo [State agency in charge of the management of the reserve] has played the blame game with all sorts of excuses and their inability to get this situation under control carries very nasty undertones... It's clear that the leadership at various levels has failed, the job has not been done and the mess has to be cleaned up with immediate effect. We can't have a perception that the poachers are just too smart to be beaten." The Ezemvelo executive director replied that Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park has been hit with an avalanche of poaching in the past two years, and Cedric Coetzee, rhino security general manager, said there were now up to five gangs of armed poachers entering the park on a daily basis.²¹

February 2018

Near Cradock, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

The weekend poaching took place sometime during the night, between Saturday and Sunday. Only one of the two rhinos was dehorned. The rhinoceros bulletin was bad. There was a red alert in all reserve sectors. Despite reinforced patrols, the gang managed to break in using wire cutters. The rifle undoubtedly had a silencer. The end-result, in this reserve which prefers to remain anonymous, is five dead rhinoceroses in two years.²²

End of February 2018

Hoedspruit, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

1659 young volunteers qualified as Environmental Monitors (EMs) or Maeba ("turtledove" in the Sotho dialect) to participate in surveillance rounds in the eight national parks and 25 private reserves, or to do educational presentations in schools. A press visit gave journalists the opportunity to see them at work and witness their motivation. The journalists were asked not to take pictures of the EMs who participate in the surveillance missions on the field. "Poachers are ruthless to animals and human beings alike," explained one manager.

On the other hand, the heads of rhinoceroses who have had their horns removed, with their gruesome holes, were shown. The EMs are with the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, as part of the Expanded Public Works Programme.²³

March 5, 2018

South Africa

The Private Rhino Owners Association (PROA) is promoting legal horn trade. "The website of Rhino Horn Trade Africa (RHTA), aims to provide a managed, efficient platform from which genuine buyers and sellers can trade "cleanly" in every way," the South Africa-based PROA said in a statement emailed to the Chinese agency Xinhua. RHTA works with the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory and the University of Pretoria. All of the horns sold must be registered in the Rhino DNA Index System, known as RhODIS® (Rhino DNA Index System). The mechanism is meant to keep "bloody" horns from entering the legal market.

In South Africa, private ranches own over 7000 black and white rhinoceroses, representing 37% of the national population and more than all of the other rhinoceroses on the African continent.²⁴

March 12, 2018

Near Mossel Bay, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Theft of 12 rhinoceros horns due to breaking and entering into a luxury lodge. According to the director, the horns were taken from rhinos who had died naturally. The local value of the loot would be 1.3 million rand (\$111,500 US).²⁵

Mid March 2018

South Africa

Saving the Survivors rescued a female who was shot in the back. Passing a metal detector allowed for the bullet's localization and extraction. After anesthesia, Micaela was back on her feet, still with her horns that the poachers did not succeed in stealing.²⁶



March 25, 2018

Lephalale, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Charged with theft, burglary, unlawful possession of weapons and ammunition, and unlawful possession of horns, two men aged 35 and 34 were each sentenced to a cumulative prison term of 58 years. It is not said if the sentences run concurrently.²⁷



BOTSWANA

January 2018

Francistown, North-East District, Botswana

Continuation of "On the Trail" n° 19 p. 84 and n°16 p.73.

Dumisani Moyo is grouchy. He was just extradited from Zimbabwe. Botswana accuses him of rhinoceros poaching and transporting horns in October 2012. Moyo, wanted in bordering states for other acts of poaching, complains of receiving food in prison that was unsuited to his health. At his first trial, he grieves his difficulties in getting a local attorney on his side, especially since he cannot contact his family and counsel in Zimbabwe. Prisoners are not allowed to telephone abroad. The prosecutor specifies that the arrangements have already been made with the prison management so that he can call Harare.²⁸

NAMIBIA

January-February 2018

Namibia

New complication for the guards. Poachers enter into private parks on horseback. The smell of the horses masks the smell of the poachers and the canine brigades get lost. Since the beginning of the year, three rhinoceroses have been killed in private parks, and five in Etosha National Park. Minister Pohamba Shifeta acknowledges that there is a lot of work to do to eradicate elephant and rhinoceros poaching.

Justice does not follow in the same direction. Charges against Lu and Chen for trafficking two horns (5.5 kg) (cf. "On the Trail" n°19 p.87-n°16 p.69), have been dropped for the time being. The police officer in charge of the investigation was just appointed to the United Nations force in Darfur (Sudan). Chen has already fled, taking advantage of his bail. Lu will be called back in by the court if the investigation is one day carried through.²⁹

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 6, 2018

State of Vermont, United States of America

The black rhinoceros horn stolen in April 2017 from a room at the University of Vermont was found at the house of an individual residing in Connecticut. His or her identity is not revealed. The value of the trophy is estimated at more than \$200,000 US.³⁰ Cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p. 81.

March 23, 2018

Las Vegas, State of Nevada, United States of America

Edward N. Levine is sentenced to 27 months in prison followed by 3 years on probation. He was accused of having illegally purchased two horns in California with an accomplice, for having transported them to Nevada and for having attempted to sell them to undercover US Fish and Wildlife buyers. Cf. n°18 p.77.³¹



ASIA

CHINA

TAILOR AND ELECTRIC KETTLE NETWORK

January 4, February 10 and 11, 2018

Hong Kong International Airport

- 2.04 kg of slices and slabs of presumed horn, painted black and red, estimated at \$400,000 HK, or \$51,180 US, or \$25,088 US/kg were seized, found in the pockets of the lining of a tailor-made jacket and in the socks of a 38-year-old passenger coming from Maputo, Mozambique, via Addis-Abeba, Ethiopia.



- 12.1 kg of presumed horn estimated at \$307,000 US, or \$25,370 US/kg seized on two passengers, aged 26 and 42, coming from Johannesburg, South Africa, via Doha, Qatar. They face up to two years in prison and over \$600,000 US (\$5 million HK) in fines.



- Europe has confirmed its role as an outsider in the race for horns. The 25-year-old female passenger was coming from Madrid. The presumed horns weigh 1.4 kg and are estimated at \$38,370 US or \$ 27,407US/kg. They are semi-worked and were hidden in an electric kettle.³²



INDIA

January 6, 2018

Manas National Park, State of Assam, India

Three little survivors of the last monsoon (see "On the Trail" n°18, p.71) were transferred from one UNESCO World



Heritage site to another, from the Kaziranga Park to the Manas Park. After a 350-km trip in a truck, through cold and fog, they arrived at dawn and were set free in a temporary enclosure. They will get used to the environment of this new site, before the gate opens up to 391 km² of forests and marshes that were troubled for twenty years by fighting between the regular army and autonomist groups.

An impressive crowd was waiting for the young ladies when they arrived, including the General Prosecutor of the Gauhati High Court, the Chief Conservator of the Assam forests, the park director and representatives of IFAW and the Wildlife Trust of India, co-organizers of the transfer.³³

January 14, 2018

Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India

The year began sadly for the jewel of the UNESCO world heritage. The adult female was killed Sunday night. A patrol reacted immediately and the killers left without the horn.

2016: 18 lost

2017: 50 lost³⁴

February 5, 2018

Jaldapara, Alipurduar District, State of West Bengal, India

One more adult rhino lost. The horn was removed. The rhino was buried on site. 24 hours later, the horn was recovered and six people were arrested. According to Animesh Basu, spokesperson for the Himalayan Nature and Adventure Foundation, the park is short one third of the rangers assigned to it. "Whenever we ask the forest department to fill the posts, officials only give us assurances. But nothing happens." Since 1951, 70 rhinoceroses have been poached in the park.³⁵

GANG

February 11- 17, 2018

Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India

The 2017 respite in Kaziranga is over.

– Two down since the beginning of the year. The horn is gone. Five cartridges found on the site. Five bullets in the carcass. This one was a 20-year-old male.

– Six days later, the horn was found in Nur Haque's home. Following his confession, police found firearms, ammunition and a silencer in a neighboring rice paddy. Haque appears to have been involved in three other cases of poaching. His accomplices have not been taken in for the moment. By continuously going for the rhinos in the area, the gang was hoping to get the head forest ranger dismissed and the Polokata Tapu anti-poaching camp shut down.³⁶

GANG

February 19, 2018

Cachar District, State of Assam, India

The Assam Rifles and the local police attempted to arrest four poachers. They got three of them, but the fourth one, Habib Hussain, escaped with the horn. The gang is well-known. Its favorite hunting ground is the Kaziranga Park, in the Barak Valley sector.³⁷



February 24, 2018

Biswanath District, State of Assam, India

Jabidur Rahman, alias Bhujel, arrested. He appears to have a track record of three rhinos.³⁸

GANG

February 26, 2018

Sivasagar District, State of Assam, India

The gang worked between Assam and Nagaland. The home of one of the members, Kapil Kahar, was searched. Money-forging machines, gold bars and a horn weighing 1.5 kg were seized.³⁹

March 4, 2018

Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India

The adult female had moved toward a sandbank on the edge of the Brahmaputra River. That is where she was taken by surprise and killed by poachers. Nine large-caliber cartridges were found on the site.⁴⁰



GANG

March 9, 2018

Nalbari, Nalbari District, State of Assam, India

A good catch for the Dalgaoon police and forest services: a team of poachers about to enter the Orang National Park to hunt rhinoceros. Three of them were arrested, while the others managed to get away. A manhunt was launched to find them, as well as their rifles and ammunition. Two of the suspects that were arrested were identified as Fazar Ali and Asmat Ali. The Orang National Park covers a surface area of 78.81 km², and is home to populations of Indian one-horned rhinoceros, tigers, elephants, wild buffalo and pygmy hogs. Poaching is a chronic problem.⁴¹

INDONESIA

January 8, 2018

Medan, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Suharto, retired former captain of the Army Special Forces, found guilty of trying to sell a Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, Appendix I) horn in August 2017 ("On the Trail n°18, p.119). Partially carved, the little horn is 15 cm long, weighs 400 g and is worth around \$9600 US. Suharto claims to have bought it for \$150 US from an acquaintance. Herman, the middleman who was arrested at the same time, was also sentenced to 2 years in prison. They were fined 100 million rupees (\$7000 US) each. There are fewer than 30 Sumatran rhinos remaining in the wild.⁴²



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NEPAL

February 10, 2018

Kathmandu, Central Development Region, Nepal

What a blow! Two members of the army! Along with a third man, they were trying to sell two horns weighing 1180 g and 640 g.⁴³

February 27-28, 2018

Lalitpur (Patan), Central Development Region, Nepal

Found guilty of poaching in the Chitwan National Park, Ram Sharan BK, Santa Bahadur Chepang and Ramesh Tamang were sentenced to 15 and 14 years. Seven other poachers were given sentences ranging from five to eight years.⁴⁴



SINGAPORE

February 26, 2018

Singapore

Nguyen Vinh Hai, 29 years old, sentenced to 15 month in prison for horn trafficking. He was arrested at the international airport in August 2017 (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 80).⁴⁵



VIET NAM

January 5, 2018

Hong Mai District, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Follow-up to "On the Trail" n°17 p. 84. Nguyen Anh Son was sentenced to 18 months in prison. A light sentence for a traffic worth \$300,000 US. Yet, ENV believes the sentence marks a breakthrough.⁴⁶



EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

February 2018

Warnham, West Sussex County, England, United Kingdom

The auction hammer sold off two drinking cups for the price of 22,000 £ (\$31,000 US) and 20,000 £ (\$28,250 US). Born Free considers that this sale promotes the horns and wishes alongside other NGOs that rhino horns in all of their forms and ages be banned from sale in the UK.

The spokesman for the Denhams auction house describes the cups as "exceptional lots" and does not imagine for a second that they are fake. It is not known if carbon-14 dating was performed. The identity of the buyers and final recipients are also unknown. The cups measure 8 cm high.⁴⁷

Rhinos and elephants

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

FAMILY AFFAIRS / GANG

January 4 - 15 and 26, 2018

Buffelskloof and Middelburg, Mpumalanga Province and Bloemfontein, Free State Province, South Africa



Five arrests, two Chinese nationals, a man and a woman, and three South Africans, including one woman. Four found guilty.

- Yansen Fenc was sentenced by the Middleburg court to a fine of 60,000 rand (\$5200 US) or six months in prison. He is also required to pay one million rand (\$86,000 US) in compensation to Stop Rhino Poaching Trust. The court ordered his passport to be confiscated until the end of February, the deadline for paying the fines. Fenc was already found guilty in 2015 of illegally transporting horns.

- Liu Li Hong was sentenced to a fine of 60,000 rand (\$5200 US) and a three-month suspended prison sentence. During the investigation on rhinoceros horn smuggling, sections of fresh horns were found in the room she was renting in Mabopane.

- Albertus du Plessis, 71 years old, and his wife Johanna, 55 years old, Free State residents, were fined 20,000 rand (\$1800 US) each or two months in prison if the fines are not paid.

- Deon Cornelius' trial, the fifth suspect, has been disassociated from the others. .../...



A Hawks patrol surprised the two Chinese traffickers coming out of Cornelius' ranch in a Toyota Lexus. A white rhinoceros horn was detected by the Middleburg canine brigade, who were called in for support. The horn was attached to the car chassis with metal cables. A batch of methamphetamines and 24,000 rand (\$1950 US) in cash were also seized from the car. The criminal trafficking organization included a rhinoceros breeder, Cornelius, with a license to stock horns, a couple who claimed to have an authorization to sell them and two Chinese smugglers with ways of illegally exporting the horns. The operation demonstrates the complexity and the loopholes of the South African control system. On January 3, the five accomplices had already finalized the sale of five horns for a total of 500,000 rand (\$43,000 US). The horns have not been found. Cash totaling 675,000 rand (\$57,680 US) was also seized from Cornelius' home.¹

ZIMBABWE

January-February-March 2018

Zimbabwe

Light and shade in Zimbabwe

Elephant and rhinoceros poaching is officially on the decline.

January and February 2017: 12 elephants, five black rhinoceroses, two white rhinoceroses.

January to March 2018: one elephant and four black rhinoceroses. That's not counting the cyanide poisonings.

The spokesman for Zimparks attributes this official record to the decisions and positions of the new president and his government. M. Farawo, spokesman of Zimparks, says that in 2017, 640 people were arrested for poaching, of whom 590 were nationals and 50 were foreigners, and that more than half of the poachers were sentenced to firm and mandatory sentences. He also says that last year, ten poachers were killed in exchange of fire with rangers, including seven nationals and three foreigners.

The ex-first lady in white ivory

Mrs. Mugabe led a luxurious lifestyle and has accumulated property assets of 10 million pounds (12.3 millions US\$), without having any official income. She is now suspected of having taken advantage of her influence and diplomatic immunity to export, with or without her husband's complicity, large quantities of raw ivory diverted from government stocks, as well as worked ivory. One of the smuggling tactics was to qualify the exported ivory as gifts for the heads of State on official visits. Diplomacy of worked ivory was also reportedly employed during the visits of distinguished guests, thanks to CITES certificates extorted overnight from the director of Zimparks. The carved ivories were bought from Fariken Madzinga, a craftsman now implicated in an aborted attempt of selling six tusks on February 15, 2018.²

ASIA

CHINA

January 11, 2018

Shanghai Pudong International Airport, China

Seizure by customs officers of 46 pieces of ivory, weighing a total of 2.57 kg, plus one rhino horn weighing 4.29 kg. The suspect, nicknamed Feng, was taken into custody. Since January 2017, Shanghai customs has confiscated 370 ivory items, 3 complete tusks and 38 wildlife products, including rhinoceros horns.³

INDIA

February 2018

State of West Bengal, India
Cyanide and Gucci

Homemade syringe guns locally called "Gucci" administer cyanide in the flesh of rhinoceroses or elephants. The Guccis are made by gunsmiths and used by poachers in Arunachal Pradesh. This modus operandi was brought to the police's knowledge after the arrest in a bus of a certain Marato Riba, known in the north of India for his skills as a pachyderm beheader. Riba's testimony led to the arrest of two accomplices, Gandhe Singh and Raja Pao, a schoolteacher. The cyanide experiment is being carried out in Jadalpara National Park.⁴



LAOS

GANG

January 30, 2018

Laos

Esmond Martin's final survey looked at the marketing of ivory in Laos, 236,000 km² of deforested mountains, savannas and industrial plantations, 7 million inhabitants and 400 wild elephants. Laos is landlocked in five wildlife consuming and trafficking countries, China, Viet Nam, Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia. Five countries federated or separated by the Mekong, 4180 km long.

The Mekong is also a royal route for smuggling. The report by Esmond Martin and Lucy Vigne is a royal way to learn about the ivory trade and more generally the elephant trade in the country.

Overviews :

- The value of a domestic elephant is about \$50,000 US. A domestic elephant excursion is charged to tourists \$19 US per half hour.

- A dead elephant can be bought by a Chinese knacker for around \$ 2800 US depending on the quality of the tail, skin, trunk, ears and feet. Tusks are the subject of a separate contract.

- A few craftsmen persist in carving domestic elephant ivory with hand tools and producing miniatures of Nam Kwak, goddess of rice, bearer of good fortune and especially of money.

- Luang Prabang, 400 km north of Vientiane, with 75,000 inhabitants, has at least 21 retail ivory outlets with 5,000 items for sale in display cases and 80% on shelves made with recent ivory. Fifteen shops are run by Chinese. For 3 years, Chinese tourists have been flocking. An antiquarian expert in the Laotian inheritance deplores the growing influence of China which is denaturing the city listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

- In 2007, Hong Kong-based Kings Romans Casino signed a 99-year lease agreement with the government for 100 square kilometers in Bokeo province, about 100 kilometers northwest of China. A Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone (GT SEZ) already covers 30 km², a free zone dedicated among other playful, futile and lucrative activities to gambling and the sale of ivory and attracting female and male "nouveau riche" Chinese tourists.

- At the end of January, the United States declares financial war on Zhao Wei and his wife Quiqin Su. The couple run the Kings Romans. The Treasury Department freezes their assets in the United States and prohibits U.S. citizens and companies from cooperating with the couple and two partners or with companies they manage.

Kings Romans Casino is accused of being a transnational criminal organization involved in drug and wildlife trafficking -including ivory and rhino horn-, corruption, money laundering and human trafficking in Thailand, Myanmar and Laos.⁵

"The Ivory Trade in Laos : Now the Fastest Growing in the World ". Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin. Save the Elephants. September 2017.

Hard blow. Esmond Bradley Martin, 76, died in his Nairobi home on Sunday, 4 February 2018, stabbed by unknown persons. He was a super-tusker, carrying an elephant's memory on raw and worked ivories. From Senegal in 1999 to Laos in 2018, he delivered extraordinarily detailed reports on ivory markets with a certain tenderness for authentic ivory artists and a plain speaking on traffickers, industrial processors and white gold magnates.



THAILAND

GANG / FAMILY AFFAIRS

January 18, 2018

Nakhon Phanom Province, Thailand. Border with Laos.

It is difficult to figure out the Bach family. This time, it is Boonchai Bach's turn to be arrested. He appears to be involved in an attempt to smuggle 14 to 15 rhinoceros horns (see "On the Trail" n°19 p.89). The Bach clan is allegedly one of the suppliers for Vixay Keosavang, wanted all the way to the United States for trafficking live and dead CITES-protected animals. The man lives in Laos and runs Xaysavang Trading. He is considered untouchable and untakable.



The Bach clan also appears to be in contact with Chumlong Lemthongtai, who is serving a prison sentence in South Africa. He had recruited Asian prostitutes who pretended to be rhinoceros hunters in order to facilitate horn exports. See "On the Trail" n°2 p. 47.⁶

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

March 3, 2018

Melbourne, State of Victoria, Australia

First great crush in Australia.

Cutlery, grandmothers' jewelry, ivory napkin holders, raw ivory, and cuts of horn are crushed in the concrete crusher. ⁷ Cf. "On the Trail" n°9 p. 89.

Elephants



Sanctions for poaching the last elephants are unequal. In West Africa they are usually limited to prison sentences of a few weeks and fines of less than \$ 100 US, in East Africa they reach life imprisonment and a fine of \$ 150,000 US. Adjustments of penalties, release on parole or bail are common. Kenya's tourism minister, well known for saying anything, wants the death penalty for poachers reinstated. There is already enough violence and death on the ground among rangers, poachers and elephants !

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°20 Black market raw ivory quotation from media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref.
Africa	Côte d'Ivoire	960	1*
	Nigeria	816	4*
	Malawi	2080	11
	Mozambique	85	16
	Tanzania	3000	20
	Zimbabwe	169	29
		170	32
Asia	Angola	3500	52
	Singapore	715	127
	Thailand	3106	131

* Cf. Chapter Pangolins and Elephants

EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA

Beginning of January 2018

Loisaba Conservancy, Laikipia County, Kenya

Near the Loisaba reserve, a male with a spear injury in his back was saved. A mobile veterinary unit with the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (DSWT) intervened. Once the animal had been put to sleep with a tranquilizer dart, the spear was removed and the wound was treated. A second wound on the head was also disinfected. The veterinarians gave him a shot of long-lasting antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs, then waited for him to get back on his feet. They have given a positive prognosis for a full recovery.¹



January 18, 2018

Amboseli National Park, Kajiado County, Kenya. Border with Tanzania.

Another elephant calf has been saved from a snare by DSWT veterinarians. This one was caught in a winch cable that had nearly cut off one leg, and his distraught mother was helpless to get him out. After tranquilizing them both, the calf was freed and his wound treated. He should be alright, but the deceitful snares will always be a threat to him.²



January 25, 2018

Narok, Narok County, Kenya

The situation does not look good for them. The sentence is stiff. Ndare Ole Koshal and Julius Kituber Sopia, two members of the Maasai ethnic group, were fined 20 million shillings (\$195,000 US) each, commutable to life in prison if they fail to pay. They were arrested on January 7, 2015 by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) in the village of Impiro, where they were hiding two 5-kg tusks estimated at 1 million shillings (\$9800 US) each. Village residents reported to the KWS that an elephant had been killed and led the agents from the carcass to the suspects' den. When the agents arrived, Ndare Ole Koshal came out and threw a spear at them, but did not injure anyone. Julius Kituber Sopia was inside with 3 bows, 10 arrows, 2 spears, 2 Maasai swords and the tusks. They claimed, despite the obvious, that the hut was not theirs. Julius' wife stated the opposite. At the hearing, three people testified in their favor, but three other witnesses testified against them. They requested leniency, pointing out that they had very large families with young children to feed. The judge, Wilbroda Juma, chose to disregard their plea, as well as the fact that they had no criminal record. She applied the law strictly to the letter.³



January 2018

Kenya

Duel in the Star.

"The KWS well on the path to recovery."

In response to a cut published in the Star on Friday 26 January accusing the Kenyan administration of a kind of paralysis caused by Richard Leakey's presence on the board of directors, the KWS management replies by giving some positive information:

The acquisition in progress of several tens of Land Cruiser and a truck to move the animals.

The reopening of accommodation in the parks of Nasolot, Marsabit, Kora and Tsavo.

Training rangers from Laikipia, Turkana, and Kajiado counties to resolve wildlife conflicts-human activities.

The availability of a Cessna 206, four Aviate Huskies and two helicopters and partners that allow a sufficient number of air patrols. The repair of the famous Caravan is in progress. Air means are used to count animals, to keep livestock herds away from Tsavo and Meru parks, and to keep elephant herds away from Narok and Nakuru counties if necessary.

Delays in staff salaries are being reduced and reimbursement of employees' medical expenses is increasing.

The signatory of the letter, Julius Kimani, speaks as interim general manager of the KWS and further refutes the insolvency and financial bankruptcy put forward by Ndung'u Njaga an ex-KWS member in his initial letter to the Star entitled "Liberate Wildlife, KWS from Dr Leakey".⁴

Beginning of February 2018

Olarro Conservancy, Narok County, Kenya

Two tragedies, one after the other on the reserve.

–An adult elephant covered in bullet wounds died despite the care he received from Dr. Limo and the DSWT team. The tusks were removed, weighed and stored, according to the protocol.

–The carcass of a very young elephant calf was discovered a little later in the same area.⁵



February 15-16, 2018
Mwea National Reserve, Embu County, Kenya

Without the work of the veterinarians and nurses from the Mount Kenya DSWT unit, the young elephant, around 5 years old, would not have made it. He was caught in a snare that was wrapped around his trunk and an ear. As he struggled to get out of the snare, the steel cable dug deeper and deeper into his flesh. After setting him free, the specialists treated his wounds, and he should be alright. The scourge of snares is so widespread that there are now four DSWT teams operating in the Tsavo, Meru, Masai Mara and Lamu National Parks.⁶



February 27, 2018
Rimoi National Game Reserve, Elgeyo-Marakwet County, Kenya

When the lower section of the River Kerio, which crosses the reserve, dries up during the dry season, it pushes the animals to leave the reserve and move toward the groundwater collection points outside of the reserve. This leads to conflicts with villagers, and elephants are killed. Poachers also take advantage of the situation to hit easy targets. The carcass of an elephant with tusks missing was discovered today. It is the third elephant killed in a month. One of the others was killed as he drank water from the water collection point located at the border between Elgeyo Marakwet and Baringo counties. Residents have asked the Kenya Wildlife Service, who manages the reserve, to supply water to the wild animals.⁷

March 3, 2018
Southeast Kenya
Stop the spears!

This national sport, which consists of targeting elephants and harassing them with spears, has once again mobilised a team of veterinarians and multimedia logistics as a matter of urgency. This time the victim had a lance stuck in the lower part of the skull next to the connection with the trunk.⁸



March 25, 2018
Karimba, Meru County, Kenya

Arrested in possession of tusks estimated at \$2,500 US, Mwenda can be released on a cash bail of \$5,000 US or a bond of \$10,000 US.⁹

March 26, 2018
Mount Kenya National Park, Kenya

The traps are cruelly impartial and innumerable, and also illegal. The elephant calf had a terrible experience with one. He was rescued just in time, before he lost his front left leg, and then his life. He has been reunited once again with his mother. The Mount Kenya Vet Unit had to anesthetize her because she was too close and too curious, and was getting in the way of the operation. She awoke just as her calf arrived back at her side.¹⁰



MALAWI

January 22, 2018
Lilongwe, Central Region, Malawi

Two arrests. Robin and Wally were arrested near the Chitedze Agricultural Research Station (CARS). Seizure of two tusks weighing 6.5 kg. Estimated value of \$13,000 US, or \$2,080 per kg. The two men are from the districts of Mchinji and Chitipa, 109 km and 648 km away from Lilongwe, respectively.¹¹

March 10 and 28, 2018
Lilongwe, Central Region, Malawi

A sentence of 18 months in prison for having transported and attempted to sell two tusks in the area 23 of the city.¹²



MOZAMBIQUE

February 2018

Chupanga, Sofala Province, Mozambique

Six tusks weighing a total of 81.5 kg. Amaral Guilherme (43 years old) had hidden them in bags of corn bran. Their origin is unknown. Investigators believe that the suspect is part of a gang. He was initially held at the Chupanga administrative station, but was subsequently transferred to Beira. Amaral Guilherme is said to be a “businessman,” but will probably not be doing much business for a while. In 2016, Mozambique reinforced its Law on the Protection, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity. Penalties now range from 12 to 16 years in prison.¹³

February 2018

Gaza Province, Mozambique

Police say they had no choice but to shoot two elephants fleeing South Africa and Kruger Park and accused of destroying plantations, killing one woman and injuring another.¹⁴

February 24, 2018

Moamba District, Maputo Province, Mozambique

One hundred and four poisoned vultures including 80 African white-backed vultures (*Gyps africanus*, Appendix II) and 17 hooded vultures (*Necrosyrtes monachus*, Appendix II). The assessment may not be complete. Vultures may have fallen dead raids further and later. Several vultures were beheaded and mutilated. The use of organs for divinatory purposes in sports betting or black magic is suspected. Near the mass grave, a dead elephant, tusks cut off.

Arrest of a 62-year-old man, Nelson Machel, carrying two tusks and a bottle of poison. He admits having poisoned the vultures and denies the poaching of the elephant without giving any plausible explanation as to the origin of the tusks.¹⁵



End of March 2018

Beira, Sofala Province, Mozambique

Seizure of two tusks weighing 20 kg. The five people arrested were going to sell them to three Asian buyers among them a woman for the price of 5,000 meticaïs per kg, \$85 US/kg.¹⁶

TANZANIA

January 3, 2018

Babati District, Manyara Region, Tanzania

20 years in prison for Aggrey Mnjokava, accused by the Babati district court of illegal possession of tusks.¹⁷



January 2018

Tanzania

Hamisi Kigwangalla, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, published a list of companies benefitting from hunting concessions in national parks and suspected of collusion with agents of the Tanzania National Parks (Tanapa) to extend their rights of way, grant hunting permits beyond the allowed quotas, and facilitate the export of trophies including elephant tusks by providing falsified certificates.

To identify suspect companies, the Minister relies on intelligence from the United States of America, among other sources. He wants the company officials to be heard as quickly as possible by a special commission before going further in the procedures. The government's objective is to have neutralized the poaching and smuggling industry by the end of the year 2020. Cf. “On the Trail” n°18, p. 87.¹⁸

January 27-28, 2018

Katavi National Park, Rukwa Region, Tanzania

Two poachers died in a skirmish that lasted from midnight to 1h30 with the rangers and police. Arrest of three accomplices, seizure of three rifles, 16 cartridges and four tusks valued at \$ 15,100 US.¹⁹



February 14, 2018

Mbeya, Mbeya Region, Tanzania

Three men were driving a car through the Mwanjelwa neighborhood when they were stopped for a police inspection. The vehicle was searched and revealed four tusks weighing a total of 5 kg, estimated at 33 million shillings (\$15,000 US, or \$3000 US/kg). The police say that one of the traffickers is a student at the Saint Augustine University of Tanzania, but the Catholic institute affirms that he is not registered for the 2017-2018 school year.²⁰

March 2, 2018

Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania

Sentencing of three men, including a soldier, to 40 years in prison each. Twenty for illegal possession of ivory, 20 years for attempted marketing. The two penalties run concurrently. The 10 sections of tusks are estimated at the equivalent of \$ 88,000 US.²¹



ZAMBIA

Beginning of March 2018

Kalulushi, Copperbelt Province, Zambia

Two five-year prison sentences with hard labour for the illegal detention of 48 kg of raw ivory in March 2017.²²



ZIMBABWE

January 2018

Zimbabwe

Light and shade in Zimbabwe- followed

Will the new president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, continue to follow the same lines in wildlife management as former president Mugabe, a management system based on luxury hunting and taxidermy, on exporting trophies, elephant skins and live specimens, and on standardized nine-year prison sentences for the little men involved in poaching or ivory and pangolin trafficking ?

- The president's cabinet announced at the beginning of the year that the government was reviewing the conservation decisions of the previous dispensation and formulating new guidelines to move forward.

- The president visited the Tikki Hywood Foundation and had his picture taken with a pangolin that was rescued from poachers and was about to be set free.

- The ex-minister of the environment under the former president Mugabe, Ms. Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri came back from exile and her position has been extended by the new president. Her positions and actions on the subject of elephants, considered exportable and edible merchandise, and regarding national parks "responsible for wasteful land use" shocked NGOs and a certain category of the public. Therefore, it is too early to rejoice in renewed wildlife management and exploitation. In this field, Zimbabwe is not ready to take the same path as Botswana, the neighboring country that shares the same migratory mammals and transborder ecosystems.²³

January 2, 2018

Tsholotsho District, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

It was on December 26 that the information reached the ears of two undercover Zimparks agents. Jayelane Sibanda (49 years old) and Taboka Sibanda (30 years old), two residents of the village of Tsholotsho were reported to be in possession of a rifle and allegedly linked to a number of poaching incidents in the Hwange National Park. Their home was searched and nothing illegal was found, but during their interrogation, they revealed where they were hiding a tusk. They also disclosed the name of their accomplice, George Moyo, who had the rifle and, since September, has been in Botswana with three other ivory tips.

According to Simelisizwe Sibanda, director of the Tsholotsho Community Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE): "We receive a lot of reports in which villagers from the San community are [...] employed in poaching activities. It is sad that many go to jail, leaving suffering families behind, over deals which never benefited them at all"²⁴

January 11, 2018

Harare, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

Appearance of Respina Masukuta, 34 years old (cf. "On the Trail" n°19 p. 98). She had tried to leave Zimbabwe via Robert Mugabe airport with 200 kg of ivory labelled "tiling". The cargo should have flown to Malaysia. Respina Masukuta's accomplices are Rainstone Masukuta, Ephraim Ncube, Rebecca Manyere and Meili Lin, alias Annah, who allegedly found a buyer in Kuala Lumpur. Respina is not the only one to have dealings with Malaysia. For family reasons, the Mugabe couple also have their habits there.²⁵

January 25, 2018

Harare, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

10 years in prison. A shadow was abruptly cast over the future of Onesimo Tafiraje (31 years old) when the magistrate Josephine Sande read out the sentence. He was charged with trying to sell 1 kg of ivory to detectives from the Minerals and Border Control Unit, on December 29. The detectives had been informed that a man was trying to sell ivory in the city of Chitungwiza, about thirty kilometers from Harare. They contacted him, posing as clients, and set up a meeting at the Zengeza 3 Shopping Center. When the inspectors arrived, Onesimo Tafiraje got in his car and took out a bag with a tusk inside. The jig was up.²⁶



January 26, 2018

Matusadona National Park, Zimbabwe

Seizure of 5 pieces of carved ivory, including three tusks. Phony antiques from clandestine workshops?²⁷



January 27 and 29, 2018

Binga District, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe. Border with Zambia.

Two poachers, arrested the day before yesterday, have each been sentenced to 20 years in prison, including a suspended sentence of 5 years. They were found in possession of 6 tusks weighing a total of 12.1kg, as well as a .303-caliber rifle and 2 kg of cyanide.²⁸



GANG

January 30, 2018

Harare, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

The Toyota Avensis sedan was driving through the capital around 9 a.m. with four men on board. The police had received a tip. Laurence Edward Van Aswegen (69 years old), Norman Dlamini (43 years old), Christopher Mishoni (46 years old) and Vusa Lunga (29 years old) were transporting 118 kg of ivory cut into 26 pieces and worth an estimated \$20,000 US. Van Aswegen was said by his accomplices to be the "owner" of the ivory. At his home in the residential neighborhood of Hillside, the police discovered two other pieces in a storeroom.²⁹

End of January 2018
Outside the Hwange National Park, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

New cyanide poisoning of four elephants. The bodies were found on the edge of the park, partially skinned and completely amputated of their tusks.³⁰



REPEATED OFFENSE

February 4, 2018

Matusadona National Park, Zimbabwe

A well-known poacher was arrested in the sector with four tusks and some ammunition.³¹



Beginning of February, 2018
Harare, Province d'Harare, Zimbabwe

Three poachers sentenced to nine years in prison (see "On the Trail" n°19, p.97). Three tusks were seized from their residence (34.2 kg) and have been estimated at \$5800 US, or \$170 US per kg.³²



February 6, 2018
Zimbabwe, Near Chirundu checkpoint between Zambia and Zimbabwe

"The only thing we could do, since he had been poisoned, was to put him out of his misery, even though it broke our hearts to do it," explained Hemmersbach Rhino Force.³³



Beginning of March 2018

At the junction of the Shangani and Gwayi rivers, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Two arrests after an elephant was poisoned and the two tusks were stolen in an area previously ignored by poachers and appreciated by elephants.³⁴



Beginning of March 2018
Zimbabwe

Seizure of 3 kg of cyanide, fruits and syringes. Everything to poison elephants.³⁵



March 7, 2018

Near Gonarezhou National Park, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe

Death of a male super tusker by the bullets of a Russian hunter whose identity was not revealed. He was accompanied by Martin Pieter, ex-chairman of the Zimbabwe Professional Hunters and Guides Association, by two trackers, and a park ranger. The safari was legal but emotionally charged because the victim is one of the last carriers of large tusks in the park.³⁶

March 25, 2018

Mbire District, Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe

Agents from Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) posing as buyers laid a trap for James Shereni. They arrested him in possession of a real tusk and a fake one made in wood. The young man justified his acts explaining that he had trouble feeding his three wives and six children. The Mbire district, along the border with Zambia, has erratic rainfall patterns with intermittent droughts, massive siltation and a decline in soil fertility. It is one of the poorest in Zimbabwe. James Shereni (26 years old) could get nine years in prison.³⁷



SOUTH AFRICA

January 28, 2018

Mbaula, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

Seizure of four tusks, one arrest. The poacher (or poachers) did not have to go far. Mbaula is at the edge of the Kruger Park.³⁸



March 10, 2018

Near Matsulu, South of the Kruger Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Three male elephants that escaped from Kruger Park are shot down by the provincial police. A SANParks helicopter tried to redirect them toward Kruger Park. The attempt failed due to the intervention by inhabitants of Matsulu.³⁹

March 28, 2018

Lefaragatlha, North West Province, South Africa

Somebody sent word to the police that an ivory transaction was underway. Agents raided a village house and found five men. When they searched the house, they discovered two tusks inside the trunk of a Toyota with Botswana license plates. The tusks are estimated at 600,000 rand (\$51,000 US). The suspects will appear before the Bafokeng Magistrates' Court.⁴⁰

March 31, 2018

Boksburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Three arrests. Seizure of raw ivory.⁴¹

BOTSWANA

November 2017 to January 2018

Nata, Central District, Botswana

According to the police, Nata becomes a gloomy village where trafficking in ivory, stolen cattle and rape are rampant. Nata la mal famée is on the road that connects Maun in the north to Gaborone the capital in the south. Truck trafficking facilitates illegal trafficking." In three months, we had to deal with three cases of illegal ivory transport."⁴²

FAMILY AFFAIRS

End of February 2018

Setata Veterinary Gate, North-West District, Botswana

The police searched a Mitsubishi vehicle coming from Gumare and heading for Sehitwa with five men on board. The search led to the seizure of nine tusks. The team was denounced. A subsequent search in Gumare led to the discovery of two additional tips, two pistols and 82 rounds of ammunition at the home of one of the suspect's father. The father was also indicted. Three Zambian nationals, Samson Chaima (41 years old), Stephen Mukwemba (24 years old) and Cletus Kamwale (37 years old) and two citizens of Botswana, Onthusitse Mothusiemang (23 years old) and Kelebogile Tonkole (18 years old), were remanded in custody.⁴³

NAMIBIA

January 8, 2018

Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region, Namibia. Border with Zambia.

The Zambezi Region is a hot spot for poaching and ivory trafficking. The region is 450 km long and 30 km wide, situated in the extreme north-east of Namibia, along the borders of Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. The Katima Mulilo court receives poaching cases evenly. Last Monday, the magistrate Vincent Nzaca refused bail for four Namibians and a Zambian who were arrested in possession of four tusks that had been poached in the Chobe National Park in Botswana. The group was reported to the police, who raided a house in Choto on January 5. The owner, Sonety Lizazi (39 years old), was keeping the ivory tips while Mashozi Lizazi (34 years old), Sameja Debecious (49 years old), Alex Sitali (32 years old) and Tapiso Simasiku were in Zambia to meet with purchasers. The police arrested them when they returned to the Wenela border post. They have all pleaded not guilty. The trial has been scheduled for April 26.⁴⁴



January 24, 2018

Namibia

The Chinese Embassy in Namibia announces on its website that two ivory seals were seized from the baggage of a Chinese suspect as he was getting ready to return home. He was sentenced to a fine equal to \$1,300 US or to 3 years of prison.

The Chinese Embassy calls on all Chinese nationals to respect local and Chinese laws and to stay away from wildlife trafficking.⁴⁵



February 28, 2018

Nkurenkuru, Kavango West Region, Namibia

Today, villagers found the carcass of an elephant that died of bullet wounds about one month ago. Its tusks were sawn off. No one has been arrested. The police have called on the population to denounce anyone who attempts to sell ivory. The region is close to the borders with Angola, Zambia and Botswana, which offers multiple smuggling possibilities.⁴⁶

WESTERN AFRICA

BENIN

February 13, 2018

Parakou, Borgou Department, Benin

The Court of Appeal reduces the sentences and fines imposed on four traffickers of 14 kg of raw ivory (cf. "On the Trail" n° 17 p. 97). The prison sentences were shortened by two months and the initial fines of \$510 US passed to \$95 US. No information on the damages and interest fixed at \$26,000 US in the court of first instance.⁴⁷



The "Nouvelle Tribune" talks about 2017 as a "landmark year in the fight against wildlife criminalization." Twenty-eight elephant tusks were seized, for a total weight of 75.84 kg, or an average of 2.7 kg. Elephant calves are targeted. Plus two live pangolins and 16 turtle shells.⁴⁸

GHANA

March 2018

Mole National Park, Northern Region, Ghana

Death of a park ranger by poacher's bullets. "Brawls between our agents and poachers are not rare," declares Starr FM, the park's director. He refuses to say more so as to not harm the investigation.

The last death of a guard goes back to 2002. The poachers primarily attack elephants and antelopes. They take advantage of the rainy season and the lush vegetation to hide and operate with relative impunity. They are in contact with Chinese backers.⁴⁹



GUINEA

January 13, 2018

Kamsar, Boké Prefecture, Guinea

An ivory carver has been arrested. He is part of a well-established network in the city and has been connected to Chinese traffickers for several years. Seydouba Sylla was in possession of 9 necklaces and 4 bracelets made of ivory when he was arrested by agents from the Department of Water and Forests, assisted in their investigation by the GALF (*Guinée Application de la Loi Faunique* or Guinea Application of the Law on Wildlife) program. Two ivory dealers are involved, Kaba and Kaboul.

Two months later, Sylla was condemned to two months jail and fine \$ 4,5 US. Kaba and Kaboul who jumped the justice summons were sentenced to six months jail and fined \$ 6,7 US each. The three convicts have to pay \$ 5,6 US damage each. According to local medias, this case is flawed since the beginning.⁵⁰



NIGERIA

Beginning of March 2018

Janiyi, Ondo State, Nigeria

Adaralode, a skilled hunter, says that he performed a patriotic act by killing an elephant who, along with seven companions, was harassing the village of Janiysi as well as six neighboring villages.

Ilesanmi Adeyemo, a professor in the department of ecotourism and wildlife of the Akure University, says that these allegations are pure lies: "The killing of that elephant is a loss to the country because we have no more than 10 left in the whole of Nigeria." The future of the tusks is unknown. The villagers are feasting off of the flesh. The reporter for the Saturday Tribune, who came to investigate on the spot, was offered a piece.

If Adaralode and his emulators kill the seven other elephants of the herd, there will only be two left in Nigeria.⁵¹

CENTRAL AFRICA

ANGOLA

February 14, 2018

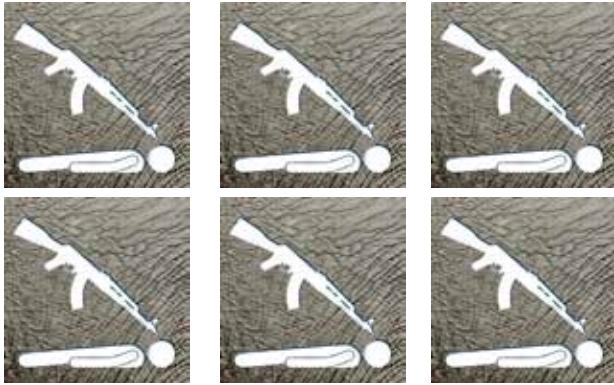
Luanda, Luanda Province, Angola

The Criminal Investigation Service announced that between August and October 2017, they seized 21 kg of raw and carved ivory: two Chinese nationals were trying to export 5.45 kg of raw ivory and a sculpture weighing 2.58 kg, from the Luanda port; and an Angolan national, arrested in possession of a 13.25 kg tusk, estimated at \$46,375 US, or \$3500 US per kg.⁵²

CAMEROON

February 8-9, 2018

Bouba Njida National Park, North Region, Cameroon. Border with Chad.



Six soldiers and two guides were murdered. They were ambushed by night in the national park, by poachers on horseback from Sudan. In December 2012, it was in this park that 300 elephants were massacred and their tusks stolen. The victims are Captain Liman Dalaina Filbert, Sergeant Nyangono Ernest, Caporal Medjou Noule William, Caporal Marcel Ndipnu, Caporal Farina Saidou, 2nd class soldier Timamo Tassata, Ousman Issa and Djoda Djaole.⁵³



Beginning of March 2018

Meyo-Centre, South Region, Cameroon

Agents from the Regional Delegation for Wildlife, assisted by the judicial police, stopped tailing the car in the middle of an intersection in the center of the village, on the road heading for Ebolowa. The vehicle was blocked and the two 41-year-old traffickers were arrested. They were transporting two bags in the trunk: one contained four tusks cut into seven pieces, and the other contained the perfect poacher's kit – a 458 caliber hunting rifle, a machete, a saw, a military uniform, a headlamp, a scale and a calculator. Two ivory tusks weighed 33 kg, the other two were much smaller, indicating that a mother and her calf had been slaughtered. The two men were turned over to the judicial police and seem to have been talkative. They stated that they had gotten the tips early in the morning in the village of Akak, located inside the Campo-Ma'an National Park perimeter, and that they were going to sell them in Ebolowa. They also mentioned a colonel who supplied the military uniform and a police chief's widow who gave them the rifle. A search of the widow's home revealed two other weapons, apparently stolen. One of the two traffickers who were arrested has killed three elephants.⁵⁴



End of March 2018

Yaoundé, Centre Region, Cameroon

Seizure in the gallery of a luxurious hotel in Yaoundé of a hundred pieces of carved ivory. This testifies yet again that underground workshops to process illegal ivory are in operation in West Africa.

The Chinese clients of the palace are the principal buyers.

Shocking that the exhibition and commercialization of ivory could have thrived with impunity for years!⁵⁵

GABON

OPERATION NZOK

(Elephant in Fang, local dialect)

GANG / FAMILY AFFAIRS

January 2018

Gabon

It really is a family affair. Abdoulaye Mohamoud Ibrahim and eight assistants, including his son, his wife and his daughter-in-law, were finally nabbed after a long investigation. The financier, known as Wagué, was also arrested. In 2017, the gang was responsible for smuggling and attempting to smuggle 6.355 t of tusks weighing between 2 and 35 kg, destined for Cameroon and other western African countries. According to the ANPN, the National Agency for National Parks, "analysis of the telephones and laptop computers revealed a connection between these ivory traffickers and terrorists from a Boko Haram cell in western Africa." The arrests took place in November 2017. They were announced in January 2018, so as not to hinder the on-going investigation.⁵⁶



Abdoulaye Mohamoud Ibrahim

January 4, 2018

Libreville, Estuaire Province, Gabon

As is often the case, the seller was arrested, but the purchaser was left alone. That is what happened to Gustave Ndong, a Gabonese citizen living in Booué, who had made an appointment with a client in the Charbonnages neighborhood. The judicial police nabbed him, with support from Conservation Justice jurists and agents from the Department of Water and Forests. His bag contained 4 ivory tips. He recited a well-known tale, according to which he had "found" the tusks in the forest.⁵⁷

REPEATED OFFENSE

January 4-6, 2018

Tchibanga, Nyanga Province, Gabon

Bansé Benjamin (43 years old), garage mechanic from Burkina Faso, lived in the town and had been under surveillance for several weeks. When the policemen heard about the transaction that he planned to carry out on January 4, they called for the Department of Water and Forests and the NGO Conservation Justice. The teams arrived on the scene and found Bansé Benjamin exhibiting four pieces of ivory on the floor of a building. After a few ridiculous statements, he finally gave the name of a trafficker, Rodrigue Mihindou, who had sold him the ivory. Mihindou was arrested the next day. Bansé Benjamin also admitted to knowing the poacher Jean-Felix Mouity, who received a simple fine in January 2016 for possession of two ivory tips ("On the Trail" n°12, p. 88). The three of them risk up to 6 months in prison.⁵⁸

January 10, 2018

Moanda, Haut-Ogooué Province, Gabon

After an investigation several months long, police finally arrested Diawara Hame, a Malian citizen, Korokosse Ibrahim and Traoré Makancira, of Gabonese nationality, in the middle of a transaction. 16 ivory tips cut into 32 pieces were under bargaining. Diawara Ham is the only one to admit to what he had done. Korokosse Ibrahim tried to buy his release for 400,000 Fcfa (\$730 US), supplied by his uncle, Korokosse Gagny, but the police confiscated the money and charged them both with attempt at bribery.⁵⁹



January 17-18, 2018

Booué, Ogooué-Ivindo Province, Gabon

Waghe Mamadou and Djime Djouwara were arrested for possession and attempted sale of two sections of tusk.⁶⁰

January 27-28, 2018

Makokou, Ogooué Ivindo Province, Gabon

Seize and get divested.

Break-and-enters are on the rise again in the record offices.

The Makokou court was again targeted by a "burglary" (cf. "On the Trail" n°9 p. 73 and n°17 p.98). Ninety-five tusks or sections have disappeared, as many exhibits in ongoing investigations. Some poachers and traffickers are still in prison but the ivories they held are now free.

The Mouila court in Ngoumié province was also "robbed" during the night of 4 to 5 January 2017, 42 kg of ivory seized by Waka National Park agents disappeared. In Oyem in April 2015, 300 kg of ivory vanished along with the court guard. The omerta reigns. Judges and clerks could be involved.⁶¹

GANG

February 15, 2018

Libreville, Estuaire Province, Gabon

Four men linked to "trans-border criminal networks," according to the public prosecutor, have been turned over to the Estuaire Regional Police Department after a search in a house in Akebé Ville (3rd *arrondissement* in Libreville) revealed 27 tips, weighing a total of 150 kg. The four suspects include Oumar Keïta and Keïta Ousmane, Ivoirian jewelers; Issama Ila, a Gabonese "businessman;" and Nouhou Adamou, an agent for the Gabonese Water and Forests Department. Other search warrants have been issued and the search for accomplices continues.⁶²



March 3, 2018

Near Pongara National Park, Estuaire Province, Gabon

Death of Poto, the most popular elephant in Gabon. Even the most crooked poacher would not have dared to shoot him. But in November 2017, he fell into a trap. He was freed and treated, but he never fully recovered. He died in a pond.⁶³



Poto during his lifetime

March 8, 2018

Libreville, Estuaire Province, Gabon

The three men had been under surveillance for several weeks by the NGO Conservation Justice, agents from the department of Water and Forests and the judicial police. They were trying to sell two tusks and an elephant tail. Once the rendez-vous with the buyer was set, the trap closed in on Restant Junior Oyabi Yanga, Kere Steeven Lengouma and Ulrich Fred Mouele. They were arrested as they spread their loot out on the ground. The tusks had been cut into four sections. The potential buyer did not get into trouble. Kere Steeven Lengouma apparently admitted to having killed the elephant near Makokou (Ogooué-Ivindo Province), but the gang is also apparently active in Okondja and Mekambo (Haut-Ogooué Province).⁶⁴

March 12 and 13, 2018

Abanga, Estuaire Province, Gabon

Four arrests. "They were lawless poachers who made the villagers lose sleep." Five rifles, including one of large caliber intended for elephant killing, were seized from them. They are at the Gros-Bouquet jail.⁶⁵

March 17, 2018

Lambaréné, Moyen-Ogooué Province, Gabon

Jean-Christian Tchango was tailed. When he set up a meeting around 10:30 a.m. in an alley in the 1st arrondissement to sell five ivory tips, agents from the Counter-Intervention and Military Security Division and their colleagues from the Water and Forests Department were waiting for him. Jean-Christian Tchango claims that the tusks are from the village of Nsilé, located near National Route 1, heading toward Libreville. He also says that he "picked them up," but as the local press pointed out, "the theory is not very convincing." He has been taken into custody.⁶⁶

March 2018

Bitam, Woleu-Ntem Province, Gabon. Border with Cameroon.

Seizure of elephant tusks and organs. Four men under arrest. They were getting ready to go to Cameroon.⁶⁷

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

January 9 and 18, 2018

Souanké, Sangha Department, Republic of the Congo

Juskar Edanga, a mechanic by profession, is also involved in smuggling. He was arrested on January 9 by the ETIC (*Espace tridom interzone Congo*) ecoguards, in a vehicle transporting 4 tusks (total weight 26.6 kg). He appeared before the Ouessou court on the 18th for an initial hearing. He claims to have been hired by a "local" to find a purchaser and was on his way to deliver the ivory tips to a Cameroonian accomplice, who is now on the run. The public prosecutor will make the decision regarding charges.⁶⁸



GANG

January 29-30, 2018

Ouessou, Sangha Department, Republic of the Congo. Border with Cameroon.

José Loukahou, Fils Biambi alias Mozalisi, Murielle Makaya, Gédéon Malonga, Mohamed Karibou and Asco Elenga were taken in through two operations. The press did not give details on the roles of each of the gang members, but the Sangha Department of Forest Economy and the police department have identified order-givers, poachers and carriers. 15 tusks and a Kalashnikov were seized.⁶⁹



February 17, 2018

Ouessou, Sangha Department, Republic of the Congo

The arrest of Félicien Eboab Elogo and Pépin Blaise Momata on August 23, 2017 (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.95) is a respite for the wildlife of TRIDOM. When the anti-poaching patrol found them, they were carrying 8 tusks, a Kalachnikov and ammunition. They admitted to the court that they had killed four elephants in the Nki National Park in Cameroon, and killed 10 others as well, whose tusks they had already sold. TRIDOM is a protected forest area that includes 178,000 km², and covers parts of Cameroon, Congo and Gabon. With very few roads and barely one inhabitant per km², it is one of the last elephant sanctuaries in central Africa. There are an estimated 25,000 elephants left. But many poachers leave them no respite. Some areas have lost 70% of their elephants in the last 10 years. At least Félicien Eboab Elogo will leave them alone for a while. He was sentenced to 5 years in prison. Pépin Blaise Momata got a 10-month suspended sentence. They will also have to pay a fine of 500,000 Fcfa (\$950 US) between the two of them.⁷⁰



February 26, 2018

Ouesso, Sangha Department, Republic of the Congo

Three men had taken a dugout canoe down the Sangha to escape from controls on the road between Pokola and Ouesso. In vain. They were arrested by Water and Forestry agents and the police, thanks to information provided by the Wildlife Law Enforcement Support Project. Four ivory tips weighing a dozen kilos in total were seized. They belonged to a female and her calf, both killed in the district of Pokola. The three traffickers—two coming from the Republic of the Congo and one from the Democratic Republic of the Congo—are presented as “regulars of illegal trade of wildlife products in the Sangha and Likouala Departments.” One of the would be a former member of the armed forces of the Republic of Congo. They recognized the facts and are charged with poaching, illegal possession and circulation of trophies of fully protected animal species.⁷¹



February 2018

Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

The band spotted by the rangers at dusk had left over 70 kg of tusks on the spot. Three men were arrested three days later near Pokola, a town where illegal loggers swarm.

The nationals of the Democratic Republic of Congo were sentenced to 5 years in prison and fined \$10,000 US each for poaching 11 elephants in Ndoki National Park in the north of the country. The gang, whose leader and three accomplices are on the run, reportedly engaged in successive transfers of raw ivory from Congo Brazzaville to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The total weight of the contraband would reach 400 kg.⁷²



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

February 9 and 16, 2018

Kinshasa and Barumbu, Kinshasa Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Border with Republic of the Congo.

The ICCN (Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature), the national police, the general directorate of customs, as well as technical and financial partners like WWF and USAID, are working to stamp out ivory trafficking. After the closing of the Wenzé ya Bikeko public market in Kinshasa in April 2017, two operations resulted in the seizure of several packages of raw and worked ivory discovered under beef bones. This is a well-known concealment method in the region. Arrest of six traffickers and artisans.⁷³

March 14, 2018

Goma, North Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Border with Rwanda.

Seizure of 8 kg of raw ivory and 2 kg of worked ivory, bracelets, necklaces, figurines. Three arrests.⁷⁴



LOUDSPEAKER NETWORK

March 15, 2018

N'djili International Airport of Kinshasa, Kinshasa Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Seizure of worked ivory “in large quantity” from a speaker system in the midst of the belongings of a female passenger about to board a Kenya Airways flight to Dubai, United Arab Emirates.⁷⁵



CHAD

January 2018

Binder-Léré Faunal Reserve, Mayo-Kebbi Ouest Region, Chad. Border with Cameroon.

Heavy losses in the Binder Léré wildlife reserve: 19 elephants killed, eviscerated, and stripped of their tusks. The massacre is attributed to Sudanese horsemen. The threat of poaching also weighs on the Sena Oura and Bouba Ndjida reserves.

Binder Léré is registered on RAMSAR Convention list as a wetland of international importance. It is the home to hippopotamuses, manatees, leopards, and birds like whistling ducks, black crowned cranes, and pelicans. In addition to poaching, the reserve is threatened by oil exploitation, quarries, and the extension of cotton fields.⁷⁶

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

January 23, 2018

Tallahassee, State of Florida, United States of America

A fine of \$12,000 US for Malcolm Mason, director of Manor Auctions, an auction house. Six times between June 2012 and November 2013, Manor Auctions exported or attempted to export figurines in African ivory to Canada, Thailand, Russia, the United Kingdom and China. The figurines are allegedly 100-hundred-year-old netsukes, according to an associate at Manor Auctions. Mason does not have a license to import or export ivory, did not fill out export documentation and avoided all of the regulatory formalities. Manor Auctions is specialized in the sale of firearms. Their other activity was exposed in June 2012 when the customs bureau in Frankfurt, Germany, seized 14 figurines sent by Manor Auctions with no CITES documentation.⁷⁷



January -March 2018

United States of America

- In an interview with the British TV channel ITV, President Trump said to have reversed the US Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to reauthorize the import of elephant trophies hunted by American citizens in Zambia and Zimbabwe. He calls his administration's decision "terrible". "I don't want elephants to be killed and stuffed and for the tusks to be brought back to the United States." Trump's comments on the foreign media confirm some of his tweets. However, as the American NGO, Center for Biological Diversity, points out, a tweet is not a policy.

- January 29, 2018.

After having solicited the Freedom of Information Act, the Huffington Post publishes the wish lists of eight sport hunting associations sent in July 2017 to Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. The signatories are convinced that they are contributing to wildlife and habitat conservation by investing tens of millions of dollars in the revenues of African countries. Conservation Force, Dallas Safari Club, Dallas Safari Club Foundation, Houston Safari Club, African Safari Club of Florida, Wild Sheep Foundation, Grand Slam Club/Ovis, and International Wildlife Fund are calling for the immediate import of 35 lion hides that have been the object of litigation for 18 months, the immediate lifting of the embargo on elephant trophy imports coming from Zambia and Zimbabwe, guarantees on the continuation of African leopard trophies, and the end of administrative nuisances that unnecessarily complicate formalities for importing trophies.

To consolidate their argument and succeed in convincing the recipient, the signatories say in a postscript that 30% of the budget dedicated to wildlife protection in Zambia and Zimbabwe comes from hunting permits, that the percent reached 75% in Tanzania. They say that all, or most, of the funds dedicated to the protection of black rhinoceroses in Namibia come from hunting permits, that hunting creates millions of jobs, notably anti-poaching guards and that hundreds of tons of hunting meat are distributed each year to the people by safari organizers.

- February 19, 2018

The NGO Friends of Animals calls for a ban on imports of African elephant, lion, leopard, and rhinoceros trophies into New York State. According to the NGO, New York is the first of 18 points of entry for hunting trophies into the United States. Between 2005 and 2014, more than 150,000 stuffed animals entered the United State through New York State, including 1,130 elephants and 83 pairs of tusks, 1,169 leopards, and 110 white rhinoceroses.

.../...

- March 2, 2018

The US Fish and Wildlife Service announces that import permits for African elephant trophies will be reviewed on a "case by case" basis.

- March 16, 2018

First meeting in Washington, DC of the newly formed International Wildlife Conservation Council under the supervision of Ryan Zinke, in the office of the Secretary of Interior.

Among the members of this new NGO, which no doubt will be present as observers at the next CITES plenary meeting, are the president of the Safari Club, two pillars of the NRA (National Rifle Association), the vice president of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, a pro-hunting lobbying organization for the Senate, and the former president of the Dallas Safari Club who sold a permit to hunt a black rhinoceros for \$350,000 US at an auction in 2014. The official job of the IWCC is to increase public awareness domestically on the subjects of conservation, wildlife law enforcement, and economic benefits that result from United States citizens traveling to foreign nations to engage in hunting.

- March 20, 2018

Four NGOs including the Center for Biological Diversity, the Humane Society, and Born Free file a lawsuit against the administration's decision to grant important permits on a case by case basis for elephant, lion, and blesbok (a species of antelope registered in CITES Appendix II) trophies. According to the plaintiffs, this decision opens the way to arbitrariness and confidentiality and violates the Endangered Species Act by its lack of scientific rigor.

- The Namibian hunting industry immediately expressed its worry. According to the Minister of the Environment, sport hunting, followed by trophy exportation to the hunters' countries of origin, brings in 450 million Namibian dollars (\$38 million US) each year and creates 15,000 jobs—professional hunters, game guards, trackers, and taxidermists. Namibia is the third largest exporter of trophies to the United States, after Canada and South Africa.⁷⁸



ASIA

CHINA

January 9, 2018

Hong Kong, China

Although he was a respected ivory trader on the Hong Kong market, there was nothing respectable about William Lau Sai-Yuan. A member of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce and the Hong Kong Art Craft Merchant Association, he was also appointed by the government in September 2016 to be an advisor to the Endangered Species Advisory Committee... He lost face over a simple pair of chop sticks. In June 2017, agents from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department came into his shop posing as customers. They bought a pair of chop sticks. Radio carbon dating analysis on four samples revealed that they were made of ivory taken after 1990, the year that international trade was banned. He received a fine of \$8000 HK (\$1366 US). That is an expensive pair of chop sticks, but not much of a deterrent for ivory traffickers. Nonetheless, he was forced to resign from his position as wildlife advisor following pressure from environmental protection associations. The authorities would be wise to keep an eye on William Lau Sai-Yuan: he has already stated that he is shifting his business to selling "legal mammoth ivory" and "other crafts".⁷⁹



January 31, 2018

Hong Kong, China

A wave of congratulations spread through the world after the Hong Kong Legislative Council approved a plan to gradually ban the trade of elephant ivory in the Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Discrete criticism of the draft law focuses on the long disengagement process (5 years) and the possibility of compensating the merchants and craftsmen who earn part of their revenue from ivory. 370 retailers and about a hundred craftsmen are allowed to sell and to carve ivory. The law only applies to elephant ivory, which leaves the door wide open to hippopotamus, walrus and mammoth ivory, as well as to various forms of fraud.⁸⁰

January 2018

Xi'an, Province of Shaanxi, China

Arrest of an antique dealer who sold carved ivory on the Internet. The craftwork totaled 1 kg worth \$ 6120 US.⁸¹

January 2018

Gongbei, Province of Guangdong, China

Seizure by custom services of 130 kg of raw ivory, large sizes cut into sections. The chauffeurs between Hong-Kong and Gongbei hid the ivory in the truck's tool boxes. Six arrests.⁸²

January 2018

Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, China

The X-ray examination of a package from the United Arab Emirates reveals the presence of “5 bones” which after examination turn out to be 5 sections of ivory. This is a first for the city’s postal customs.⁸³

**January 17 and February 21, 2018
Karamay, Karamay District, Xinjiang Province, China**

During two separate trials, the District People’s Court found two merchants from the city guilty of the acquisition and sale of objects produced from protected species.

A man named Chen was accused of having made purchases on line, between 2015 and 2017, of items made of elephant ivory and of helmeted hornbill (*Buceros vigil*, Appendix I) in order to sell the objects in his shop. Helmeted hornbill, also known as “red ivory,” is also used in traditional Chinese medicine and to make trinkets, jewelry and belt buckles. They are worth up to \$6150 US / kg.

On August 16, 2017, when agents from the Forest Public Security Bureau raided his shop, Chen had a helmeted hornbill and 16 objects made of elephant ivory. The ivory items were estimated at 5657 yuan (\$900 US). The court sentenced him to 8 months in prison, suspended for 1 year, and fined him 3,000 yuan (\$480 US).

A man named Han went to Qingdao (a large port in the Shandong province, nearly 4000 km away) between 2015 and 2016 to acquire objects in elephant ivory and sell them in his shop at the China World Mall in Karamay. A search was carried out on August 29, 2017 in his shop and in his home, and led to the seizure of 25 objects in ivory, plus a bracelet found in a client’s home. The overall value was estimated at 11,150 yuan (\$1800 US). Han was sentenced to 10 months’ imprisonment, suspended for 1 year, and fined 3000 yuan (\$480 US). The suspended sentence includes a probation period during which the person is required to respect certain obligations; if they are followed, the prison sentence is annulled.⁸⁴

February 2018

Chongzuo, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China

Motorcyclist check and search within his barda at the border crossing with Viet Nam. A total of 10 ivory chopsticks boxes, 42 bracelets, 51 necklaces, 20 elephant skin fragments, 21 wallets and 23 crocodile skin dog leashes were found.⁸⁵



February 2018

Changsha, Tianxin District, Province of Hunan, China

Sentencing to a fine worth \$ 790 US, to four months prison suspended sentence following five months on parole for having sold in a jewelry shop 65 g of trinkets made in ivory worth \$ 430 US.⁸⁶



February 26, 2018

Shenyang, Province of Liaoning, China

Seizure of a parcel coming from the United Kingdom with two carved ivories for a total weight of 560 g.⁸⁷

March 2018

Qingdao, Shandong Province, China

Another seizure by customs officers of ivory statuettes in a parcel coming from Europe. This time, there were two of them, weighing a total of 268 g. This announcement follows the one regarding the seizure last December of an ivory sculpture sent from the United Kingdom to Qingdao (see “On the Trail” n°19 p. 104).⁸⁹

March 2018

Daluo Checkpoint, Menghai County, Yunnan Province, China. Border with Myanmar.

Confiscation of a necklace made of 109 ivory pearls, plus 10 loose pearls, found in the carry-on baggage of a Chinese national. The total weight was 200.48 g. This is the first seizure of ivory in three years at this border post.⁸⁸

AMPLIFIERS AND TAILOR NETWORKS

March 17- 18, 2018

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Province of Guangdong and Chengdu-Shuangliu International Airport, Province of Sichuan, China

-Seizure of the luggage of a foreign passenger, inside too audio high-speakers of 61 carved ivories for a total weight of 2260 g. The Guangdong customs have seized since the beginning of the year over 20 kg of ivory and note an increase in seizures of over 140% compared to the first months of 2017. Electric kettles, food wrappings, crockery, powdered milk cartons are the main hiding places.



-Seizure of two ivory bracelets in a CD player and four bracelets in the specially sewn pockets of a sweater. Total weight 280 g. The Ethiopian Airlines flight was coming from eastern Africa.⁹⁰

March 26, 2018
Hong Kong, China

Huen Kwok-leung is the second in Hong Kong to be trapped by carbon 14. The ivory chopsticks cut out in his workshop came from elephants killed after the international embargo of 1990. He was only fined \$ 5,000 HK or \$ 640 US.⁹¹



March 28, 2018
Hangzhou, Province of Zhejiang, China

Seizure of raw ivory in a postal package coming from abroad. The ivory cylinders were rolled in craft or calligraphy paper. The cylinder ends stuck out on each side.⁹²



March 26, 2018
Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport, Province of Zhejiang, China

Seizure of 90 ivory pearls some of which were set on bracelets.⁹³

March 26, 2018
Shenzhen, Province of Guangdong, China

Seizure by custom services of five ivory statuettes. Total weight: 2.52 kg. The origin was not communicated.⁹⁴



March 27, 2018
Xiamen Gaoqi International Airport, Fujian Province, China

Two Chinese nationals returning from Africa where, according to customs, they had gone "on business," were transporting ivory hidden under wine bottles in two suitcases and two cardboard boxes. They had transited through Hong Kong. Their baggage revealed 386 pearls, 19 necklaces, 14 bracelets, 23 pendants, 24 cm³ of flat pieces and a pair of chop sticks wrapped in aluminum foil.⁹⁵

GANG
March 29, 2018
Hefei, Province of Anhui, China

The case dates back to 2013 and the main instigators of the channel have already been convicted for having fraudulently imported from Japan and Ethiopia ivory and leopard skins. Total value of the smuggling would amount to about \$ 700,000 US. It's now in turn the two clients, "passionate" collectors of carved ivory, to be brought before justice for having ordered statuettes from the traffickers and their middlemen weighing in full five kilos and for having paid 75,300 Yuan, i.e. \$ 12,000 US, along with two other kilos of statuettes paid 32,500 Yuan or \$ 5200 US.

Investigations are progressing thanks to grouping of information gathered on the traffickers' internet site, in airline and postal companies registers and the culprits phones and bank accounts.⁹⁶

INDIA

January 1-2, 2018
Kurubarahandi, Chamarajanagar District, State of Karnataka, India

Within 24 hours, he was dead. He was about eight months old. He entered the village with his mother and another adult. The villagers raised a ruckus to try to chase the trio back into the forest. The elephant calf froze, paralyzed by fear and handicapped by wounds of



undetermined origin. He was surrounded, selfied and later treated by a veterinarian and forest rangers. But to no avail; he died a few hours later.⁹⁷

January 17, 2018
Mayurbhanj's Padampur, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India

Seizure at Mustaz's home, an elephant poacher, of Rs 14 lakh or \$ 22,000 US in cash and bones that are not human but whose species remains to be determined. Mustaz reportedly received Rs 14 lakh for a poaching campaign on the Majhigaon side. The man also has a reputation as a tiger tracker. Mustaz took the tangent, his address was given by his accomplices, five gang members arrested by police. See No. 19 p.110.⁹⁸

January 27, 2018

Sabarimala, Pathanamthitta District, State of Kerala, India

Plastic waste is killing sperm whales in the sea and elephants on land. See "On the Trail" n°18 p. 100.

One week after the Makaravilakku festivities and pilgrimages in Sabarimala, an approximately 20-year-old female elephant was found dead 1 km from the Pamba garbage dump. The autopsy showed that she had died after ingesting a large quantity of plastic, including a 3-meter-long tarpaulin typically sold by street vendors to be used by the festival goers. Elephants and other mammals are attracted to the leftovers from the meals, particularly all of the salted food wrappings. For the past few years, forest rangers have been noticing the presence of plastic fragments in elephant dung, and in 2016, the State Supreme Court banned disposable plastic during the Sabarimala Makaravilakku. The court ruling came after a sambar deer choked to death on plastic. Nonetheless, mounds of plastic bottles and blisters that are more or less empty of their food contents are scattered along the roads and forest paths in and around the hills of the Hindu sanctuary.⁹⁹

February 2018

State of Goa, India

Thomas Cook was accused of mistreating elephants. One of the most respected British travel agencies added a visit to the Sahyadri Spice Plantation to its excursions, without specifying it when reservations were made. During the visit, the tourists, mostly English, got a chance to take a ride on an elephant's back. Each of the two elephants does at least 20 excursions a day. They seem to function "in automatic mode," taken as clowns and posing for family photos. According to the farm workers, "they were given to the plantation ten years ago to produce manure and lead good lives, their only work was to be giving rides to ants."



In 2016, after receiving a petition with 175,000 signatures, Thomas Cook officially renounced the elephant rides and now presents itself on Internet as "an industry leader in animal welfare."¹⁰⁰

February 9, 2018

Biswanath District, State of Assam, India

Members of the Aranya Surakhya Samiti association for environmental protection found an elephant carcass in the Behali forest reserve, near the border between the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The tusks, the nails and the tongue of the animal had been cut off. According to Divisional Forest Officer Rajen Choudhury, an investigation has been opened and an autopsy will be performed.¹⁰¹

February 12, 2018

Angul District, State of Odisha, India

Another electrocution of a male because of an electric fence.¹⁰²



February 14, 2018

Near Raghubala, Dhenkanal District, State of Odisha, India

The carcasses of a mother elephant and her calf were found this morning near the village, within the Mahabirada forest range. The animals apparently died five days earlier from an unknown cause. The divisional forest officer has opened an investigation, and will be assisted by vets.¹⁰³

Mid February 2018

Mallaguri, Siliguri District, State of West Bengal, India

Seizure of a tusk cut into three sections, 87 cm long and weighing nearly 13 kg. The elephant was poached five or six months ago in Arunachal Pradesh or Assam. The ivory was on its way to Nepal. Two arrests.¹⁰⁴



February 21, 2018

Athagarh, Cuttack District, State of Odisha, India



"Prima facie, it seems the elephant [a female approximately 8 years old] had ventured into the village in the night to eat vegetables growing in the fields, and it came in contact with a live electric wire." That is the analysis of the forest ranger.¹⁰⁵

February 26, 2018

Karbi Anglong District, State of Assam, India



Two male elephants electrocuted. They tried to reach their trunks over an electric fence at a tea plantation. The contact struck them down instantly. The high voltage of these wild connections to power lines is deadly for animals and for humans.¹⁰⁶



Badamba and Athagarh Forests, State of Odisha, India

February 20 and 27, 2018

-Discovery of an elephant killed several days earlier and ridden of his tusks. People in the area say the forests are completely taken over by mafias and poachers. Guards would have deserted the sector and are in cahoots with the pillagers. Within nine months, eight elephants have been poached. Body findings come one after the other. Suspicion points the finger to loggers.

-Two death on the elephants' side. Four tusks stolen.¹⁰⁷

February 2018

Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India

Zulfikar Ansari and Yassir have been accused by the Forest Administration of being members of a gang specialized in trafficking protected species. They were arrested in possession of 1.5 kg of elephant ivory, foreign currency, coins, supposed cough syrups, documents and ATM cards. They had planned to take all of it into the neighboring Nepal.¹⁰⁸

March 6, 2018

Kolkata, State of West Bengal, India

The Crime Investigation Department and the State Forest Department, with assistance from the police, went to see Paul Rabin, in the New Alipore neighborhood. He had been denounced. The agents found two presumed elephant tusks weighing a total of approximately 31 kg. The tips measured 132 and 148 cm long, 34 and 35 cm in circumference. Although Rabin was in possession of them, the police are not sure he was actually the owner.¹¹⁰

March 14, 2018

Mathipalayam, Coimbatore District, State of Tamil Nadu, India



Death by electrocution of a 20-year-old male elephant. The owner of the fields will be questioned. Last year (2017), five elephants, including two calves, died of electrocution in the Coimbatore area alone.¹¹¹

March 20, 2018

Belagundi, Belagavi District, State of Karnataka, India

Dismantling of a network specializing in counterfeit ivory. Their technique was to cut up sambar deer antlers (*Rusa unicolor*), polish and whiten them.¹¹²



Gowri's hell in religion's service.

March 2, 2018, Nanjangud, Near Mysore, State of Karnataka, India

Truck transfer for Gowri, a 36-year-old elephant suffering from mouth and foot sores from Sri Srikanteshwaraswamy Temple to Kolar Rehabilitation Centre.

Gowri's ordeal goes back a long way. She entered the temple at the age of 4 in 1986. At 22 in 2004, she had become obese. 500 devotees visited the Hindu temple every day and many offered him bananas, cane sugar, sweets or coconuts. The veterinary doctor Raman Sukumar said then that "Asian elephants' average age is 60 years, but with obesity it could come to down to almost 40".

Every day Gowri would go on a paved road north of the Kapita River to bring back a water tank used by the monks for ceremonies and she would participate every month in the full moon procession.

In 2014, a CUPA (Compassion Unlimited Plus Action) survey revealed that 34 elephants in Karnataka were being exploited in places of worship. Gowri was cited as an example. 13 were dedicated to begging, 16 to offerings from the faithful and blessings and 5 to attractions. Almost all elephants were obese and suffered from "foot erosion" and other ailments. The president of CUPA stressed then that "no sacred books say that an elephant has to be used for religious purposes".¹⁰⁹

March 22, 2018

Bokkapuram, Nilgiris District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

- When a nine-year-old "Makna" was found dead on the property of the Wild Inn, a holiday resort, the director and four co-owners were charged with "negligence." A field investigation revealed the presence of an abandoned pit that had not been filled and created a passive trap for elephants and other wild animals.

Maknas as tuskless males that have very little luck with the females, and secrete a strong-smelling, hormone-rich liquid that flows constantly from glands on either side of their foreheads. There is no musth season for maknas. But mahouts say that their secretions are less rich in hormones than those of males with tusks.¹¹³

March 24, 2018

Near the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

The tusks are missing. The body has been cut in some places. In this area, poachers are used to burying their loot while they wait for things to blow over.¹¹⁴



March 24, 2018

Kochi, Ernakulam District, State of Kerala, India

Thanks to bogus certificates issued by the veterinarian Abraham Tharakan, the elephant Kottarappilly Kuttisankaran, alias Kuruvath Kuttisankaran or Oottoly Kuttisankaran, participated in a Pattupurakkal temple procession with open wounds on his feet, hidden with charcoal ashes. The Kerala State veterinary disciplinary council opened an enquiry and the administration called an emergency meeting. The administration announced that temples and other parade and procession organizers risk severe penalties if they use wounded domestic elephants. They also issued a reminder that only forest service veterinarians were authorized to issue health certificates and that the said-certificates are only valid for 15 days.¹¹⁵

March 26, 2018

Near Hosur, Krishnagiri District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

An elephant calf fell in a lake-water derivation trench where he and two other elephants had just taken a drink. The villagers called firefighters who widened the 1.52-m-deep trench. After two hours of digging, the calf was freed. Beforehand, to facilitate operations, the adult elephants had to be chased away.¹¹⁶

March 26, 2018

Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The mother fell in an anti-elephant trench. She was injured, unable to get out and died. Her calf stayed by the trench and tried to touch his mother with his trunk. He had to be taken away and relocated in the forest.¹¹⁷

INDONESIA

January 7, 2018

Mount Raya Protected Area, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia

A male Sumatran elephant, approximately 10 years old, was poisoned and his tusks cut off. According to an expert from the NGO Jejak Indonesia, the grass and grove were sprayed with an undiluted and colorless pesticide, and other elephants and wild animals are also in danger from the toxic trap.¹¹⁸



February 12, 2018

Way Kambas National Park, Way Kanan Regency, Lampung Province, Indonesia

The cadaver of an approximately 20-year-old female Sumatra elephant (*Elephas maximus sumatranus*) was found. She appears to have died of bullet wounds. The animal's trunk and tusks were missing. Five wounds on the right side of the animal resembled projectile impacts, but no bullets were found in the body.¹¹⁹

JAPAN

January 31 - March, 2018

Tokyo, Kantō Region, Japan

Arrest of the director of the All Japan Ivory Center, a shop authorized by the authorities to sell objects made of ivory, as long as certain formalities are met, including making information available about the origin and destination of objects. The director, Masao Tsuchiya, is accused of having worked in collusion with two Chinese nationals to smuggle 605 ivory seals into China, where ivory trade is now forbidden. The seals were seized on November 28, 2017, in the belongings of a Chinese sailor, as he boarded his container ship docked in the Tokyo harbor on a stop-over (see "On the Trail" n°19 p. 111). The sailor had acquired the carved ivory from another Chinese national in exchange for 300,000 yens (\$2800 US). That middleman had gotten them from the All Japan Ivory Center. Based on documents confiscated from the shop archives, investigators from the Tokyo Metropolitan Police suspect the three men of having acted in conspiracy.

At the end of March, the public prosecution against the holder of the store have been left in default of proof.¹²⁰

End of March 2018 - Japan

Ito-Yokado Co is asking licence holders in its many shopping centres to stop selling ivory items. Seven & I Holdings Co, Rakuten Inc., Mercari Inc. and Aeon Co. are already on the same line.¹²¹

JORDAN

January 3, 2018

Zarqa, Province of Zarqa, Jordan

Seizure inside a house of two tusks over a meter long and unregistered weapons. The tusks will be destroyed.¹²²



MALAYSIA

GANG

OPERATION GADING

March 10, 2018

Gerik, State of Perak, Malaysia

A gang was dismantled. Police had been after them for nearly 10 years. It would be accountable for the poaching of at least 20 elephants. Within 2 days, four men were arrested and modern or makeshift weapons, many traps, ammunition, daggers, deer antlers and bones presumably from tigers were seized. The mutilated carcass of a male elephant about thirty years old was found in the Piah forest. The four men are being held under Police remand for seven days.¹²³

MYANMAR

February 26, 2018

Ye Nwe forest, Bago Region, Myanmar

A male, approximately 30 years old, did not survive the gunshots. "The poachers wanted to take his hide, trunk and tusks," said U Tun Tun OO, Myanmar Timber Enterprise director. They did not have time. The villagers quickly contacted the police.¹²⁴

March 9, 2018

Ngapudaw, Ayeyawady Region, Myanmar

Two arrests of poachers before the happenings. Firearms, daggers, arrows, powder, crowbars. A third man is on the run.

There are one thousand elephants now in Myanmar versus 10,000 in Burma in 1995.¹²⁵

March 12, 2018

Ngapudaw, Ayeyarwady Region, Myanmar

An elephant killed, ridden of his tusks and skinned. The square meter of skin is more expensive than the kilo of ivory. The crime remains unpunished. The Forests Ministry, Friends of Wildlife and the WWF are offering a reward worth 3 million kyats (\$ 2250 US) to anyone who would enable the arrest of the escaped poachers. 15 posters are put up in villages.¹²⁶

SINGAPORE

March 5, 2018

Port of Singapore, Singapore

Loaded in Apapa (Nigeria) and destined for re-exportation to Viet Nam, the container declaration stated that it was filled with groundnuts. It was targeted for inspection by the harbor veterinary service (AVA) and immigration (ICA). They sent it through the Pasir Panjang Scanning Station. It in fact contained 61 bags holding 1787 pieces of ivory, weighing a total of around 3500 kg. The load was estimated at \$2.5 million US, or \$715 US kg. The Singapore forwarding agent is said to be collaborating with the investigators.¹²⁷



SRI LANKA

January 2, 2018

Polonnaruwa, North Central Province, Sri Lanka

A fine of 200,000 rupees (\$1320 US) for the murder by electrocution of an elephant. On December 13, 2017, the 54-year-old man fled the Dimbulana area once the deed was done on his property. The Wildlife Conservation Department caught him.¹²⁸



January 7, 2018

Thanthirimale, North Central Province, Sri Lanka

A macabre track game. Elephant remains attributed to the "Kallaru tusker" that no one has seen alive in five months were "found" on December 28.

Three suspects have been arrested. They plead guilty and were sentenced to a fine equal to \$ 480 US each and six months suspended jail.

According to environmental organizations, three other well-known tuskers around Wilpaththu are also missing.¹²⁹



January 2018

Galgamuwa, North Western Province, Sri Lanka

The three Grama Niladaris (administrative agents in rural areas appointed by the State) involved in the Dala Puttuwa poaching have been relieved of their duties and taken into custody (see "On the Trail" n° 19, p. 112).¹³⁰

THAILAND

Beginning of January 2018

Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

The packages arrived from Lagos (Nigeria) on December 20, by an Ethiopian Airlines flight. No one came to pick them up. The destination address in Thailand does not exist. Airport customs decided to open them, and discovered three elephant tusks and 31 pieces of ivory, weighing a combined 148 kg and worth 15 million bahts (\$459,800 US, i.e. \$3106 US/kg). A DNA analysis should identify their origin. Customs services believe that China was the final destination of the batch.¹³¹



Beginning of January 2018 Thailand

The 23-year-old female Thong Phoon's ordeal has maybe met its end. But Wildlife Friends Foundation who took her in is facing problems. A collect was opened on Internet to buy her from her persecutors and to build a safe fence in pen: out of the \$ 43,000 US needed only \$ 5185 US were gathered. Thong Phoon is traumatized. The ill treatment she suffered during the successive incarcerations in tourist camps have made her aggressive. In the last camp, in Pattaya, she blew up and attacked a mahout, several tourists and a baby elephant. With her two from legs in chains, she was exposed under the hot sun, without any water available. In the previous camp she gave birth to two babies who were taken from her. Since the attack, her "owners" were trying to get rid of her. The Wildlife Friends Foundation took her for fear that they would get rid of her in a more definitive manner but had to promise to buy her off, which is against the NGO's policy.¹³²



January 12, 2018

Kui Buri National Park, Kui Buri District, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province, Thailand

Neither the autopsy, nor the ballistic investigation, nor the fingerprints taken on the site enabled the police and the army to arrest those guilty of poaching an approximately 20-year-old male.

There are two official trails:

- Farmers at the edge of the park, exasperated by nearby elephants and the damage they did in the fields.
- Foreign poachers who tried in vain to take the tusks.

The body was cremated in the forest.¹³³

March 14, 2018

Mae Sot District, Tak Province, Thailand. Border with Myanmar.

The pick-up coming from near the border was inspected at a road-block and found to contain 24 trunks and 16 elephant tails. Saithan Maliwan (45 years old), driver, and Boopeng Utaway (54 years old), passenger – mahout by profession – stated that they had purchased the trophies from a Birman near the border and were driving toward the north-eastern part of the country to sell them.¹³⁴



VIET NAM

February 6, 2018

Thuong Tin District, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Located along the Red River, about 15 km south of the capital, the rural district of Thuong Tin has been identified as a hub in the elephant ivory and rhino horn trafficking business in Viet Nam. In July 2016, police carried out several searches and were able to dismantle a gang and seize 256 kg of ivory. A document presented by Viet Nam at the 17th Conference of Parties to CITES (September 24 – October 5, 2016) makes reference to “the ongoing and substantial illegal sales of rhino horn and elephant ivory in Thuong Tin district, Hanoi.” This time, it was in the town of Khang Ha that 971 kg of raw and carved ivory were seized from a house. The renter, Dinh Thi Nhung (52 years old), said that he was using the place to store ivory to be made into jewelry and craft works. The police are now trying to backtrack and find the supplier or suppliers.¹³⁵

February 15, 2018

Cu Jut District, Dak Nong Province, Viet Nam

Cu Jut National Park rangers discover the body of a male elephant about 40 years old. The fate of the tusks is unknown. Research into the causes of death is ongoing.

Some elephants coming from Cambodia or the Vietnamese national park Yok Don 60 km away come to spend the winter in the forests of Cu Jut.

As a reminder there are less than 50 wild elephants in Viet Nam and less than 200 in Cambodia.¹³⁶

March 27, 2018

Buon Ma Thuot, Province of Dak Lak, Viet Nam

Dinh Thi Viet Ha (aged 31) is at the end of the ivory trafficking chain. Semi-wholesaler, the young woman would buy jewelry and pearls and sold them in different provinces. When she was arrested by police around noon, she was carrying 4.7 kg of rings, pearls and bracelets made in ivory. Search of her home added 3 kg of jewelry to the lot. Dinh Thi Viet Ha claims she does not know the names of her suppliers. The underground workshop making the jewelry is not far...¹³⁷



EUROPE

SPAIN

Beginning of February 2018

Toledo, Autonomous Community of Castile-La Mancha, Spain

The Guardia Civil of Toledo intervenes back-to-back on two cases of illegal sale of elephant parts.

- Seizure of three African elephant feet serving as a stool (cf. “On the Trail” n° 8 p.89) and an umbrella stand for sale on the Internet.

- Seizure in a shop of a carved tusk without CITES certificate.¹³⁸



NETHERLANDS

March 23, 2018

Netherlands

Seizure of a bracelet made in elephant hairs on a traveler coming from Tanzania.¹³⁹

UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom January 2018

Colonial ivory from Asia and Africa haunts the attics and living rooms of English homes and serves as currency and additional income when families are broken and need cash. The United Kingdom is the world's largest legal exporter of ivory, most of which is worked ivory destined for Asia. These ivories are exportable under current European regulations and are deemed to have been produced before 1947. Carbon 14 dating is exceptional and ivories after 1947 regularly leave the UK. Even Christie's with his army of experts is trapped (cf. "On the Trail" n°13 p.97).

There is indeed a risk that the United Kingdom and other colonial European countries such as Belgium and France will become exporters of fake ancient ivories, especially since the ban on the marketing of ivory that came into force in mainland China at the beginning of 2017 does not apply to antiques and does not specify the date from which an ivory is an antique. The UK Government is considering a ban on the sale of ivory items within and from its territory and this announcement could be made at the Fourth International Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trafficking to be held in London in October 2018.¹⁴⁰

January 22, 2018

London, England, United Kingdom

Seizure of 110 items in carved ivory sold on eBay, leading to a fine of £1000 UK (\$1350 US) for Janet Winstanley, who claimed to sell "carved ox bones." The Schreger lines (see "On the Trail" n°8 p. 82, n°17 p. 97, n°18 p. 106) gave the trafficker away.¹⁴¹



March 14, 2018

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire County, England, United Kingdom

The police were not very talkative about the search and seizure that was made that day, with assistance from National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU). Investigations are apparently still underway. The Cheltenham police Twitter feed simply announced that "A large number of items believed to be ivory were seized." Neither the address, nor the total weight were given.¹⁴²

March 19, 2018

Derby, Derbyshire County, England, United Kingdom

The Derby court declares itself incompetent to try Ngie Chung-Law on suspicion of having committed 15 offences relating to ivory trade and export. The case will be brought before the Crown Court.¹⁴³

Mammoths

EUROPE

RUSSIA

January 12, 2018

Yemelyanovo International Airport, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Siberian Federal District, Russia

Seizure of 10 kg of mammoth ivory and one walrus tooth in the luggage of a 25-year-old passenger living in Nevinnomyssk in southern Russia. The man said that he "picked up a trash bag" and decided to bring the remains home as a souvenir.

The debate on mammoth ivory remains open. Some consider it to be an ethical substitute for elephant and other animal ivory trafficking. As of today, the Russian law on mining resources, along with a 5-year permit worth 7500 rubles (\$130 US), authorizes the geological extraction of mammoth remains, without formally banning their trade. White gold diggers use high-flow pumps to thaw permafrost and extract fossils. In the United States, four states – New Jersey, New York, California and Hawaii – have banned the sale of mammoth ivory. International mammoth ivory trade facilitates scams. Traffickers and merchants use the term "mammoth ivory" to conceal the elephant origin of a number of carved ivories. Mammoth ivory, see "On the Trail" n°3 p.76, n°7 p.71 and p.88, n°8 pp 82-84, n°9 p.103, n°11 p.86 and 97, n°12 p.92, n°13 p.77, n°14 p.88 and 109, n°15 p.87 and 105, n°16 p.81 and 90, n°17 p.107 and 108, n°18 p.105.¹

February 2018

Vladivostok, Primorsky Krai, Far Eastern Federal District, Russia

Since the ban on selling elephant ivory came into effect in China on December 31, 2017, mammoth ivory remains a legal substitute and an easy cover for contraband elephant ivory. Before the ban, the label "mammoth ivory" could already be seen in specialized crafts shops, for example in Shanghai and Suzhou, in display windows quite clearly filled with objects made of elephant ivory. The two networks function in synergy and reinforce business for traffickers. The annual "production" in Russia is apparently 100 t, at least one third of which is extracted illegally. 90% of the volume is exported to China. While permafrost is melting in Siberia, every year new quantities of mammoth tusks appear, and pillaging is on the rise. .../...



The Siberian Times reporter.

This month's seizure made by border guards, in a container in Vladivostok, is the largest ever made: more than 650 tusk fragments of various weights and sizes wrapped up in bags, and 14 very well-preserved whole tusks. The declared value of the load was \$35,000 US, but in fact, is estimated at over \$6 million. One 50kg-tip would sell for \$15,000 US (\$300 US/kg). The end of legal ivory trade in China fuels interest. A Sino-Russian partnership project is being assessed by regional authorities in Yakoutia: the creation of a joint venture with a capital of 1.3 billion rubles (\$23 million US), specialized in Arctic ivory. The mammoths will not be resting in peace for much longer.²



The Siberian Times reporter.



The Siberian Times reporter.

Other Mammals

AFRICA

KENYA

End of March 2018

Meru Conservation Area and close to the Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

Two giraffes rescued in the savanna. -One male giraffe who had managed to pullout of a trap but whose one leg was caught in metal wire.



© DSWT

-One young male giraffe on whose back a concrete iron bar used as a spear was stabbed. Both operations were carried out by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and the Kenya Wildlife Service.¹



© DSWT

NIGERIA

End of February 2018

Yankari National Park, State of Bauchi, Nigeria

Four hyenas (Hyaenidae family) and other carnivorous poachers were arrested in two stages.² Yankari Park, see "On the Trail" n°7 p. 80-85, n°10 p. 56, n°12 p. 103, n°14 p. 84, n°17 p.113, n°18 p.40.

AMERICA

BRAZIL

January 10, 2018

Bataguassu, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

A fine equivalent to \$1500 US for each of two poachers found in possession of the remains of a South American tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*, Appendix II), and two fire arms.³



MEXICO

March 12, 2018

Mérida, State of Yucatán, Mexico

Seizure in the sad courtyard of a restaurant of two white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*, *Odocoileus virginianus mayensis*, Appendix III in Guatemala).⁴

PARAGUAY

February 9, 2018

Boquerón Department, Paraguay

Three supposed civil servants arrested in a vehicle belonging to the MOPC (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Comunicaciones) with three poached chacoan Peccaries (*Catagonus wagneri*, Appendix I).⁵

PERU

January 26, 2018

Nuevo Chimbote District, Santa Province, Ancash Region, Peru

Rescue by the SERFOR (Servicio Nacional Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre) of two South American coatis (*Nasua nasua*, *Nasua nasua solitaria* is in Appendix III in Honduras) aged about 8 months illegally detained in miserable conditions by a private individual.⁶



End of January 2018

Virú Province, La Libertad Region, Peru

Seizure in a restaurant of two stuffed foxes holding in their mouth two long-tailed mockingbirds. There are several species of foxes in Peru: the short-eared zorro (*Atelocynus microtis*), the colpeo fox (*Lycalopex culpaeus*, Appendix II), the Argentine grey fox (*Lycalopex griseus*, Appendix II) and the Peruvian desert fox (*Lycalopex sechurae*).⁷

ASIA

INDIA

January 6, 2018

Manas National Park, State of Assam, India

Following an intervention in Manas National Park, the 15th battalion seized two dead deer, four spears, a home-made rifle and eight nets. Manas Park is home to swamp deer (*Rucervus duvaucelii*, Appendix I), barking deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*), hog deer (*Hyelaphus porcinus*) and sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*). Two arrests.⁸

January 15, 2018

Araria District, State of Bihar, India. Border with Nepal.

A deer antler weighing approximately 2 kg was smuggled from Nepal into India. It was seized around 6 a.m. by forest rangers. No arrests.⁹

February 1, 2018

On the road between Kishanganj and Bahadurganj, State of Bihar, India

Md Moin (25 years old) and Vishnu Lal Rajak (40 years old) were arrested by forest rangers and agents from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). The two men were transporting 8 deer antlers. Their motorcycle, their two mobile phones, the trophies and the suspects were all turned over to the Purnea DRI.¹⁰

REPEATED OFFENSE / GANG

Beginning of February 2018

Near Halagur, State of Karnataka, India

The gang has been pirating the State forests and the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary for years. Already in 2008, Raju (38 years old) was involved in a case of elephant poaching in the Bilekal State Forest. He was also identified in 2017 with his accomplices Cheluvvaraju (30 years old), Madegowda (63 years old), Jagadish (25 years old), Ramesh (42 years old) and Girish (32 years old), poaching around the village of Byadarahalli. This time, the forest rangers found six men in the Basavanabetta Reserve Forest. They had three rifles, two vehicles, flash lights and a deer carcass.¹¹

February 3, 2018

Supaul District, State of Bihar, India. Border with Nepal

Four deer antlers were found around 5:30 a.m. by border guards in Birpur. They were hidden in the expectation of the smuggling. No arrests. The seizure was turned over to the Supaul Forest Office.¹²

February 13-14, 2018

Faridabad District, State of Haryana, India

Seizure of the skin of a blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Pakistan and Nepal) in the home of a 99-year-old retired veterinarian. Rajbir Singh says that he received it as a gift from the prestigious Ali Khan Pataudi, captain of Test, the Indian cricket team. Singh worked at Pataudi's residence at the time. Hunting blackbuck has been illegal in India since 1972.¹³

February 26, 2018

Pilibhit District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

They were transporting nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) quarters in a car stopped by Sungari police. Three arrests, including a sharpshooter member of the Pilibhit rifle club. Although the nilgai is considered a pest for fields, it can only be hunted by people with a special permit. The three men are under custody.¹⁴

IRAN

January 26, 2018

Shahr-e Babak, Kerman Province, Iran

Seizure of a dead wild goat (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) and a shotgun in the trunk of a car pursued by police. The occupants fled enjoying the night.¹⁵

February 6, 2018

Konarak, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Iran

Sentenced to 6 months imprisonment each and a fine of 100 million rials (\$ 2700 US) for poaching two wild goats (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan). Photos on their cell phones show them grilling meat.¹⁶



February 9, 2018

Tabas, South Khorasan Province, Iran

Arrest of two poachers. They had been photographed by rangers while tracking and dismembering two urials (*Ovis aries*, Appendix II).¹⁷



February 12, 2018

Konarak, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Iran

Three poachers of Indian gazelles or chinkaras (*Gazella bennettii*, Appendix III in Pakistan) are sentenced to six months in prison each. The criminal records of the three convicted offenders were clean at the time of the forfeiture. Each of them will also have to pay a fine of 100 million real (\$ 2700 US).¹⁸



March 9, 2018

Shiraz, Fars Province, Iran

Two poachers of two wild goats (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) sentenced to 6 months in prison each.¹⁹



March 11, 2018

Parwar, Semnan Province, Iran

Seizure at home of three wild goats (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) dismembered. One arrest.²⁰

EUROPE

NETHERLANDS

January 22, 2018

Amsterdam-Schiphol Airport, Province of North Holland, Netherlands

Seizure of 23 boxes of Chinese traditional medicine. They all contained a white ball made with musk deer prepuccial gland (*Moschus moschiferus*, Appendix II).²¹



UNITED KINGDOM

January 23, 2018

Sevenoaks, Kent County, England, United Kingdom

Knightspur Homes, a real estate developer based in London, has pleaded guilty. The company is accused of three violations to the regulatory corpus on the protection of species and their habitats. In 2015, an inventory of wildlife on the site of a real estate project in Edenbridge showed that colonies of several species of bats were present in certain buildings scheduled for demolition. As a result, a special permit from Natural England was required before the work could be done. One year later, it came to the attention of authorities that one bat-habitat building had been demolished with no precautions taken, no authorization and no compensatory measures. The county police, in liaison with the Bat Conservation Trust, established the facts and the judicial investigation was just wrapped up by the Sevenoaks court. Seventeen species of bats have been inventoried in the United Kingdom.²²

February 16, 2018

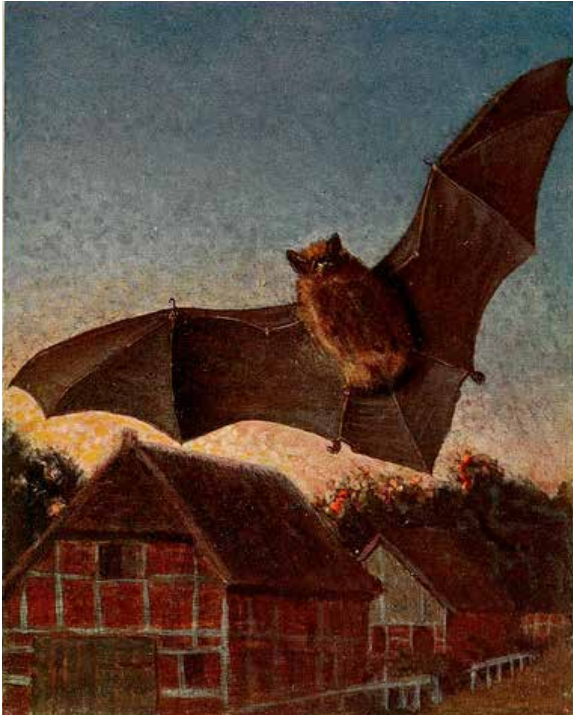
**Bournemouth, Dorset
County, England, United
Kingdom**



A real estate developer and a housebreaker were found guilty of having destroyed pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and long-eared bat (genre *Plecotus*) colonies habitats without doing an impact study, with no authorization from Natural England and without the cooperation of the Bat Conservation Trust.

- Christopher Wilson was sentenced to pay a fine of £1750 UK (\$2480 US), £500 UK (\$700 US) in legal fees and £120 UK (\$240 US) in compensation fines.

- David Stokes, director of South Coast Demolition was sentenced to pay a fine of £1600 UK (\$2260 US), £400 UK (\$565 US) in legal fees and £120 UK (\$240 US) in compensation fines. Bat helpline: 0345 1300 228 for real estate developers, housebreaking companies or the general public.²³



SWITZERLAND

January 1st, 2018

Switzerland

A deceiving toll for the seizure of shawls made of wool from Tibetan antelopes (*Pantholops hodgsonii*, Appendix I) called shahtoosh: 61 in 2016 and 34 in 2017. According to the Federal Office for food safety and veterinarian affairs (OSAV), the decrease in seizures can be correlated with lessening of controls caused by staff reduction. To make one shawl, 2 to 5 antelopes must be killed and shaved. The 2017 toll is equivalent to 68 poachings at least, at most 170. The value in Switzerland of a shahtoosh is estimated at 20,000 francs (€ 17,000).²⁴ Cf. " On the Trail " n°8 p. 93.

Multi-species

AFRICA

ALGERIA

February 27, 2018

Naâma Province, Algeria

The Director General of Forests announced the seizure in 2017 of 6,000 animals, mainly gazelles (genus *Gazella*), victims of local poaching, as well as goldfinches and monkeys intercepted at borders. The hyenas and grey parrots smuggled from Saharan and equatorial Africa are also in the bag of the customs and other services.¹

BENIN

January 31, 2018

Pendjari National Park, Atacora Department, Benin

Revival operation for the largest park in western Africa (4800 km²).

The National Geographic Society, African Parks, the Wyss Foundation based in the United States and the Republic of Benin are joining forces to revitalize the park, which overlaps Benin, Niger and Burkina Faso. It is the last ecosystem in the region that still provides shelter to lions and elephants. The budget forecast is set at \$23.5 million US. Plans include the reintroduction of rhinoceroses and African wild dogs. Currently, the park is devastated by international poaching and uncontrolled logging. See "On the Trail" n°6 p.81, n°7 p.76-77, n°8 p.95, n°10 p.56 and 59, n°13 p.88.²

BURKINA FASO

March 15, 2018

Matiacoali, Gourma Province, Burkina Faso

Death of a wildlife warden. He was with six colleagues stationed in Nassougou north of the WAP park (W-Arly-Pendjari) which federates Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger. The post was attacked at night by a dozen unidentified men. 400 AK47 casings were recovered at the scene. Jules Sombouaya Yameogo, 29, was buried in Ouagadougou in the presence of the Minister of Environment and Green Economy. " May the Free Earth of Burkina Faso be light for you," said the minister in his funeral oration.³



CAMEROON

January 31, 2018

**Ambam, Vallée-du-Ntem
Department, South Region,
Cameroon**

The NGO Laga received information that a private individual had a baby chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) in the Melen-si neighborhood. A delegation from the Department of Forests and Wildlife, along with national police, obtained a warrant and searched the house where they found the little primate, approximately one year old, in the toilets. The two men present in the house were arrested, while a third arrived on a motorcycle and was arrested as he attempted to flee. A fourth man got away. As they continued their search, the police officers came across "enormous quantities of giant pangolin scales," (*Manis gigantea*, Appendix I) behind the entrance door. One of the men was a Nigerian national and had brought the chimpanzee to the house; the others were responsible for the scales. The little monkey was undernourished and terrified, and was taken to the Mvogbetsi zoo. But some experts think that given his condition, he should have been transferred to the Mefou chimpanzee sanctuary, where he would have received better care.⁴



COTE D'IVOIRE

February 20, 2018

Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire

Seizure and burning of 630 kg of bush meat from 172 animals and 15 species. Since the official end of the Ebola pandemic, trafficking has returned. Yamoussoukro is a hotspot for it.⁵

KENYA

March 2018

Kenya

The Secretary of State for Tourism wants to make bushmeat a culinary attraction. Since 2004, the marketing of bushmeat is prohibited on paper except crocodile and ostrich meat. Mr. Najib Balala is reported to have come under pressure from restaurants, hotels and tourist agencies. "Le Carnivore", a renowned table in Nairobi would be in the front line in the bushmeat rehabilitation campaign. Tourists and Asian customers would regret not being able to enjoy antelopes, gazelles and giraffes and being condemned to eat crocodiles. However Mr. Balala was cautious enough to mention that it was necessary first to make breeding before tasting the animals. But he didn't specifying how, the very day, seated at the "Carnivore" he will be able to determine if his zebra steak comes from a breeding or a poaching in a national park.⁶

MOZAMBIQUE

End of March 2018

Maputo, Mozambique

Four arrests. On the central market they were selling birds, ivory, leopard, lion and other felines' claws and teeth.

The bird seller claims he was not aware these were species protected by law, the ivory seller says he was only filling in for some time the official stand holder. The carved ivory was intended for tourists or expats. Prices were labeled in US\$. The Maputo central market is accustomed to such doings and sellers don't lack imagination when it comes to finding alibis. See "On the Trail" n°16 p. 96.⁷



NAMIBIA

January 4, 2018

**Windhoek, Khomas Region,
Namibia**

Bail for Lai Yau Ruan (80 years old) was set at \$180,000 dollars Namibian (\$14,580 US). The wealthy Chinese pensioner has been living in the country for 17 years. He was arrested on January 2nd when his house in the posh Windhoek suburb of Ludwigsdorf was searched. The police found a rhinoceros horn, 60 pieces of ivory, a leopard head skin and a cheetah skin. Lai Yau Ruan did not have a permit that would allow him to possess these trophies.⁸



February 2018

**Windhoek, Khomas Region,
Namibia**

The trial of Hou Xuecheng is postponed to 5 November 2018 due to the absence of a Mandarin interpreter at the hearing (cf. "On the Trail" n°6, p.103). Hou was arrested in June 2014 for his involvement in ivory trafficking - four tusks weighing a total of 54 kg, one cheetah skin and one leopard skin. A little later, seven zebra skins, a leopard's head and a pangolin armour had been discovered in the Chinatown offices of Windhoek occupied by Hou and his partner in crime. Hou, on bail, continues to traffic. Two trucks and four sea containers full of illegally logged timber in the Zambezi region belonging to one New Force Logistics company headed by Hou were seized by ACC (Anti Corruption Commission) agents as they were on their way to the port of Walvis Bay.⁹



NIGERIA

February 6, 2018

Gashaka Gumti National Park, Serti, State of Taraba, Nigeria. Border with Cameroon.

Usman A Yahaya died in service the day before his birthday. His patrol was targeted by unidentified gunmen.

The Gashaka Gumti National Park stretches across 6700 km² of prairies, mountains, forests, marshes, a varied and unique habitat that is home to pangolins, chimpanzees, leopards, African wild dogs and four species of antelopes.¹⁰



SOUTH SOUDAN

March 6, 2018

South Soudan

The ministry of wildlife conservation and tourism banned trade in skins, furs, feathers and other animal parts. The ivory market had specifically been the subject to a similar decision a year ago (See "On the Trail" n°16 p.77). Sanctions for poachers and traffickers are reinforced. They face up to two years in prison.¹¹

ZIMBABWE

January 2018

Harare, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

The inquiry into the diversion of weapons from Fort Morris is progressing (see "On the Trail" no. 18 p. 114). Mabika reportedly sold an AK47 for \$ 350 US to Obiat Shumba, a poacher, who sold it for \$ 500 US to Masukuma, a school teacher. The use of this machine gun is not formally known. The likely option is poaching. Shumba is not sparing of his words. When the AK 47 was delivered, it was loaded and when Mabika could not get out of Fort Morris a.303 caliber rifle, he was getting out two less powerful rifles for the overall price of \$600 US. Mabika denies everything. The AK 47 was found at the teacher's home.¹²

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

End of January 2018

Dolores, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Seizure of 80 wildlife by-products including stuffed wild boars, warthogs, red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), chitala (*Axis axis*), blackbucks (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Pakistan and in Nepal), buffalo skulls and elephant feet as well as skins, skulls horns and antlers from species of which identification is still ongoing.¹³



February 7, 2018

Santiago del Estero Province, Argentina

Seizure in two game reserves of a yellow cardinal (*Gubernatrix cristata*, Appendix II) and of 100 hunting trophies, north Andean deers (*Hippocamelus antisensis*, Appendix I), marsh deers (*Blastocerus dichotomus*, Appendix I), tapirs (*Tapirus* spp., Appendix I or II), brocket deers (genus *Mazama*), collared peccary (*Pecari tajacu*, Appendix II), white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu pecari*, Appendix II), pumas (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II), caimans (*Caiman* spp., Appendix I or II), Argentine black and white tegu skins (*Salvator merianae*, Appendix II) as well as trophies of exotic species, bongo antelopes (*Tragelaphus eurycerus*), oryx antelopes (genus *Oryx*), kudu antelopes (genus *Tragelaphus*), common elands (*Taurotragus oryx*), and elephant tusks.¹⁴



February 10, 2018

San Carlos, Mendoza Province, Argentina

Seizure of 34 dead and eviscerated armadillos, two big hairy armadillos (*Chaetophractus villosus*), eight partridge legs, six frozen plains viscachas (*Lagostomus maximus*), legs and neck of rhea (*Rhea* spp., Appendix I or II), one puma head (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II), traps and hunting tools in a hunting lodge. One arrest. 58 years old.¹⁵

Beginning of March 2018

Esquina, Esquina Department, Province of Corrientes, Argentina

The *Amistad* was shamelessly navigation between kilometer 853 and 895 on the Parana river, near Esquina: the animals skins could be seen onboard from the outside. The river police squad stopped it and seized 62 capybara skins (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) and 26 caiman skins (*Caiman* spp., Appendix I or II). While broadening in its survey, it also found 80 m of nets and 440 l of smuggled fuel. Everything was confiscated and the 38 year old man running *La Amistad* was indicted.¹⁶

BOLIVIA

February 23, 2018

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Santa Cruz Department, Bolivia

Seizure of a skin, claws and teeth of jaguars (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I), claws of giant armadillos (*Prionomys maximus*, Appendix I), teeth of pumas (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II) and tigers (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), marsh deer antler (*Blastocerus dichotomus*, Appendix I), rattlesnake rattles (genus *Crotalus*), ivory statuettes and feline hide bags. Interpellation of a Bolivian and a Chinese national.¹⁷



BRAZIL

Beginning of March 2018

São Paulo and Itaipericica da Serra, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Internet sale and seizure of 134 animals: cobras (family Elapidae), big-eared opossums (*Didelphis aurita*), New World monkeys (families Cebidae and Callitrichidae, Appendix I or II), D'Orbigny's slider turtles (*Trachemys dorbigni*), turtle eggs, coatis (genus *Nasua*), spiders. Mice, rabbits and shrimps intended to feed the menagerie were also seized." Deplorable housing conditions, unventilated premises without natural light, a horrible situation" summarizes the prosecutor specializing in environmental crimes. Survivors are treated at Anhanguera Park.¹⁸



March 4, 2018

São Luiz do Paraitinga, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Anonymous information. Seizure of one parrot (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), one oncilla skin (*Leopardus tigrinus*, Appendix I), one armadillo skin (Dasypodidae family), one shotgun, ammunition and callers.¹⁹



March 9, 2018

Penedo, State of Alagoas, Brazil

Denunciation. Seizure of two toucans (Ramphastidae family), two peach-fronted conures (*Aratinga aurea*, Appendix II) and seven turtles (*Chelonoidis carbonarius* or *Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II) at the home of Monsignor Valerio Breda, Bishop of the city. Fine equal to \$ 14,200 US. According to Bishop Breda, the animals were given to him by parishioners.²⁰



March 11, 2018

Igreja Nova, Penedo and Corupide, São Francisco River Basin, State of Alagoas, Brazil

Seizure of 122 birds, 37 terrestrial turtles (*Chelonoidis carbonarius* or *Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II), 25 freshwater turtles and a six-banded armadillo (*Euphractus sexcinctus*).²¹

Mid-March 2018

Seropédica, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seizure of 80 birds, one white-eyed conure (*Aratinga leucophthalma*, Appendix II), two owls (*Strigidae*, Appendix I or II), one toucan (family *Ramphastidae*), 67 blue-black grassquits (*Volatinia jacarina*), eight double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulea*), one saffron finch (*Sicalis flaveola*) and four turtles (*Chelonoidis carbonarius* or *Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II). Transfer to CETAS. An arrest.²²

March 18, 2018

Salvador de Bahía, State of Bahia, Brazil

Seizure of 97 birds and five turtles (*Chelonoidis carbonarius* or *Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II). 12 arrests.²³



OPERATION NOAH ARCH 3

March 23, 2018

Ananindeua, Belem Metropolitan Region, State of Pará, Brazil

Seizure in a kind of private zoo of two tufted capuchins (*Cebus apella*, Appendix II), a spectacled caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*, Appendix I or II), two Schneider's smooth-fronted caimans (*Paleosuchus trigonatus*, Appendix II), three red-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II), a yellow-spotted river turtle (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II), an giant South American turtle (*Podocnemis expansa*, Appendix II), three scorpion mud turtles (*Kinosternon scorpioides*) and nine other freshwater turtles and an orange-winged parrot (*Amazona amazonica*, Appendix II).²⁴



End of March 2018

Iguape, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Seized live in the backpack of a poacher of five armadillos (*Dasypodidae* family) killed by machete blows. "They are for my personal consumption," he says. At his home, the police got their hands on a plain parakeets (*Brotogeris tirica*, Appendix II) and a chestnut-bellied seed finch (*Oryzoborys angolensis*) alive but mistreated. Fine of 16,500 reais (\$ 5095 US).²⁵



COLOMBIA

End of January 2018

Pereira, Risaralda Department, Colombia

Seizure of an ara (*Ara* spp., Appendix I or II), two parrots (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II), a parakeets (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II) and a tufted capuchin (*Cebus apella*, synonymous with *Sapajus apella*, Appendix II).²⁶

End of February 2018

Bogota, Cundinamarca Department, Colombia

Seized at a bus stop on 57th Street of a green iguana (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II) tied to the body of a young man and camouflaged under a jacket and of two blue-gray tanagers (*Thraupis episcopus*) in the suitcase pocket of an accomplice. The bus passengers were alerted by the iguana's escape attempt.²⁷



Beginning of March 2018

Cali, Valle del Cauca Department, Colombia

The Argentinean and leather working designer based in Colombia claims not to know the national and international regulations on endangered animals or their parts.

In his home, the environmental police found over 500 reptile skins, 49 bags and four spectacled caiman skin belts (*Caiman crocodilus*, Appendix II), 40 bags, five ostrich skin bags, a pair of python skin shoes (*Python* spp, Appendix I or II) and 201 arapaima scales (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) and on fragments of various animal skins including ostriches, pythons and anacondas (*Eunectes* spp., Appendix II). No certificate of origin or other legal document is available. Despite his cooperative attitude and the good faith he prides himself on, "the artist" was arrested. He faces 7 years in prison.²⁸

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 12, 2018

Standish, State of California, United States of America

Arrest of a serial killer. At his 40-hectare ranch a few kilometres from the Nevada border, 67-year-old Richard Parker was systematically exterminating raptors : 126 dead birds of prey in variable decomposition, mostly red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II). An owl (order Strigiformes, Appendix I or II) and a ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*, Appendix II), a rare species in northern California, also appear on Parker's hunt list. The remains lay at the feet of trees and telephone poles. Two dead bobcats (*Lynx rufus*, Appendix II) were scattered on the property.

Inside the house, US Fish and Wildlife agents observed the presence of a puma (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II) and several naturalized birds. Since 1991, the hunting of pumas and the possession of trophies has been prohibited in California.

Parker who left Lassen County jail after a few days faces fines of \$ 5,000 US for each bird of prey killed and \$ 10,000 US for the cougar as well as 6 months in prison. He is accused of taking birds of prey, taking non-game birds protected under the 1918 federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and taking other non-game birds and illegal possession of unlawfully taken wildlife.²⁹



MEXICO

January 23, 2018

Toluca de Lerdo, State of Mexico, Mexico

The coach was driving down the highway between Valle de Bravo and Lerma with a clandestine menagerie hidden in three suitcases. When PROFEPA agents and federal police officers opened them, they found 165 turtles (*Kinosternon* genus), five amphibians of the *Ambystoma* genus, three American bullfrogs (*Lithobates catesbeianus*), seven Montezuma leopard frogs *Lithobates montezumae* and 42 garter snakes of the *Thamnophis* genus, wrapped up in cloth or plastic bags. There were also 14 kg of crayfish (*Cambarellus* genus).³⁰



February 16, 2018

Chalco, State of Mexico, Mexico

Seizure in a truck of 8 Guatemalan howlers (*Alouatta pigra*, Appendix I) and 15 hooded orioles (*Icterus cucullatus*). All 23 animals were abused.³¹



February 18, 2018

San Blas, State of Nayarit, Mexico

Writ of sequestration for 244 animals in the "Cocodrilario La Palma": six military macaws (*Ara militaris*, Appendix I), one white-fronted amazon (*Amazona albifrons*, Appendix II), one lynx (*Lynx* spp., Appendix I or II), four jaguars (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I), three white-tailed deers (*Odocoileus virginianus*), two collared peccaries (*Pecari tajacu*), two American crocodiles and 223 American crocodile juveniles (*Crocodylus acutus*, Appendix I) and two European badgers (*Meles meles*).

The establishment is under the administrative regime of the PIMVS (Predio o Instalación que Maneja Vida Silvestre). PROFEPA (Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente) notes the absence of an annual activity report and the management plan approved by the Ministry of the Environment.

If "Cocodrilario La Palma" does not provide all the necessary documents including certificates of origin, the animals will be seized.³²

February 18, 2018

Mexico, Mexico

Two red-fored amazons (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II) and one axolotl (*Ambystoma mexicanum*, Appendix II) are put under sequestration pending clarification of their origin.³³



February 23, 2018

Colima, State of Colima, Mexico

Writ of sequestration for three lilac-crowned amazons (*Amazona finschi*, Appendix I), five boas constrictors (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II), two green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II), four common snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*, Appendix III in the United States of America), four common caracaras (*Caracara plancus*, Appendix II), one blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) and one Burmese python (*Python molurus*, Appendix II). They are under the responsibility of the "ecopark" of the town.

Some animals are infirm or sick. Their origins are doubtful and the conditions of accommodation are not worthy and respectful of animal welfare.³⁴

March 7, 2018

Ramos Arizpe, State of Coahuila, Mexico

Two white-tailed deers (*Odocoileus virginianus*, Appendix III in Guatemala) and a red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II) were put under sequestration in the "Mi Granjita para todos" leisure park pending the supply of the stud documents by the managers.³⁵

March 26, 2018

Iztacalco, Mexico, Mexico

Two African lions (*Panthera Leo*, Appendix II), one blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) and two red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II). All five are in good physical condition except that they are prisoners on a terrace. They have been put into sequestration under the responsibility of the owner. He has prohibition to move them and five working days to provide documents certifying the legal origin of animals. Otherwise, they will be seized.³⁶



PERU

Early February 2018

Sullana, Province of Sullana, Piura Region, Peru

Seizure in a restaurant of two mitred conures (*Aratinga mitrata*, Appendix II), a yellow-crowned amazon (*Amazona ochrocephala*), a green-winged macaw (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II) and a tufted capuchin (*Cebus apella*, Appendix II). Operation of the Servicio Nacional Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (Serfor).³⁷

February 13, 2018

Arequipa, Arequipa Province, Peru

Seizure in a market in the historic centre of the town of 26 fox legs and two fox skins, one red deer skin (*Cervus elaphus*) or northern Andean deer skin (*Hippocamelus antisensis*, Appendix I), seven Geoffroy's cat legs (*Leopardus geoffroyi*, Appendix I) or Andean cat (*Leopardus jacobitus*, Appendix I), 15 legs of viscaches (genus *Lagostomus* or *Lagidium*) and two incomplete wings, feathers and a skull of Andean flamingo (*Phoenicoparrus andinus*, Appendix II) distributed in five stalls. It is assumed that most of these parts of wild animals are used by healers.³⁸

Mid-February 2018

Pichari, La Convencion Province, Cuzco Region, Peru

Seizures in restaurants and leisure centres of a ara (*Ara spp.*, Appendix I or II), a live parrot (Psittacidae, Appendix I to II), three spectacled caimans (*Caiman crocodilus*, Appendix II), a live turtle and a live coatis (genus *Nasua*), a spectacled caiman head and an oncilla skin (*Leopardus tigrinus*, Appendix I).³⁹

March 2, 2018

La Merced, Province of Chanchamayo, Junín Region, Peru



Seizure of one female oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*, Appendix I) and two boas constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix I or II) by the Administración Técnica Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (ATFFS). They were detained by three individuals who offered exotic portraits to tourists.⁴⁰

March 7, 2018

District of Perené, Province of Chanchamayo, Junín Region, Peru

Seizure in a restaurant of two white-eyed conures (*Aratinga leucophthalma*, Appendix II), three agoutis (genus *Dasyprocta*) and one South American coati (*Nasua nasua*).⁴¹

URUGUAY

THIS QUARTER'S ROTTEN APPLE

Mid January 2018

Piriápolis, Maldonado Department, Uruguay



Marcelo Balcedo, 53 years old, heads the teachers' union in the Buenos Aires province. The union allegedly has 35,000 members. He owns several media outlets, including a radio station and newspaper that are influential in Rio de la Plata, and has been living outside of Argentina for a few years now. With a surprise raid, the Uruguayan police put an end to his active and connected retirement at Great Chaparral, his one-hundred-hectare ranch, one hundred kilometers from Montevideo. The police found a half a million US dollars, a quasi-military arsenal, several exotic cars, including a Porsche, a Ferrari and a Ford Camaro. A private airplane registered in the United States was also seized at the Carrasco airport. It was about to fly off to the island of Aruba (Dutch Caribbean), where Balcedo, his wife and their children regularly spent their vacations. Balcedo also had a private zoo with lamas (*Lama glama*), alpacas (*Vicugna pacos*), capybaras (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), a red-and-green macaw (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), a blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) and a turquoise-fronted parrot (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II) who could see the sea in the distance, behind the bars.

The Balcedo family is under arrest and waiting for the Argentinian extradition process to be completed. In his home country, Balcedo has been charged with corruption, money laundering, extortion, expropriation of public funds and collusion with drug cartels. The day after he was arrested, the newspaper Hoy published a black banner with the headline "Attack on freedom of expression." The new governor of the province of Buenos Aires, Maria Eugenia Vidal, is "very pleased" with the arrests of Balcedo and Suarez, leader of the SOMU (Sindicato de Obreros Marítimos Unidos), but also points out that it is only the tip of the iceberg of corruption.⁴²



ASIA

CAMBODIA

January 30, 2018

Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, Mondulhiri Province, Cambodia. Border with Viet Nam.

A soldier, a ranger and a member of the Wildlife Conservation Society were shot on sight and killed. They were on a surveillance mission in the sanctuary and had just seized a chainsaw and disrupted the "work" of some clandestine loggers. The police suspect Cambodian soldiers at the Vietnamese border post of having shot the three victims. For a price, the rogue soldiers acted as bodyguards for the clandestine lumberjacks. The demand for wood in China and Viet Nam, and the land-clearing authorizations granted indiscriminately to enable hydroelectric dams to be built or to plant rubber tree plantations have a cumulative result: forest cover is disappearing at an alarming rate and biodiversity is seriously threatened. The Keo Seima wildlife sanctuary is habitat to, among others, black-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nigripes*, Appendix I), yellow-cheeked crested gibbon (*Nomascus gabriellae*, Appendix I), leopard cats (*Prionailurus bengalensis*, Appendix II) and elephants.⁴³



CHINA

GANG

January 2018

Guangyuan, Sichuan Province, China

Continued from "On the Trail" n°13 p. 107. Six sentences of eight months to three years in prison and fines of 20,000 to 30,000 yuan (\$ 3200 US and \$ 4800 US) for illegal sale of protected species or parts thereof.

The investigation showed that between May 2016 and April 2017 the interprovincial gang was involved in the trafficking of bear bile and feet, pangolins, antlers and wild boar meat. The case had started when, in Sichuan province during a road check, two bear legs and a pangolin were discovered in the trunk of a car heading towards Shandong province (see "On the Trail" n°5 p 125).

One of the bear paw suppliers worked on a bear farm for the production and marketing of bile.

One of the bear paw buyers was a member of a provincial government. According to Sichuan online, he bought them at the price of 1300 yuan/kg or \$ 200 US/kg.⁴⁴

January 21, 2018

Hong Kong, China

Seizure, in a three-story loft and a neighboring storehouse, of 400 animals, including four Chinese giant salamanders (*Andrias davidianus*, Appendix I), a black pond turtle (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*, Appendix I), a Jullien's golden carp (*Probarbus jullieni*, Appendix I), an arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II), four leopard cats (*Prionailurus bengalensis*, Appendix II), seven common barn owls (*Tyto alba*, Appendix II), some small Asian mongooses (*Herpestes javanicus*, Appendix III in India and Pakistan), a peacock, civets, otters, eagles, over 70 snakes, including a python and several types of rodents.

Identification of the various species is under way. Two men were arrested and released on bail. The director runs a pet-sitting service, a veterinary clinic and a pet shop. The police were notified by neighbors who were disturbed by the leopard cats' miaowing, particularly the youngest ones who often went out on the balcony and were for sale on Internet.

The freshwater fish, including the arapaima, imported from the Amazon, were in an aquarium 1.5 m deep and 1.3 m wide.

It is the first time that a Jullien's golden carp is mentioned in "On the Trail." It is a member of the Cyprinidae family. It is also a member of the club of seven largest fish in the Mekong basin.



The decline in numbers in Thailand was noticed as early as 1945. The Jullien's golden carp is recognizable by its colors and its longitudinal stripes, and by its size which could exceed 1 m long when fully adult progenitors were still available. The Jullien's golden carp has also always been sought after and fished for its delicate and plentiful meat. In addition to overfishing and plundering natural resources, after the Second World War came hydroelectric dams, land clearing, deforestation and industrial forestry which accelerates soil erosion, the spread of chemical products, the degradation and turbidity of catchment basins. From the north of Cambodia to the Viet Nam delta, the Mekong is besieged. The Jullien's golden carp, a migratory fish that likes clear water, no longer has a single spawning area.

In continental Malaysia, the Perak basin has become a wasteland of Jullien's golden carp. The latest Malaysian statistics available make reference to world capture of 350,000 t in 2003 and 210,000 t in 2007. The drop is staggering.

The Chinese giant salamander has already appeared in "On the Trail" (n°8 p.19, n°10 p.77, n°12 p.108, n°16 p.102). The largest and one of the oldest amphibians on Earth is summoned to appear on the menu at banquets for dignitaries and aging businessmen who hope to appropriate part of its strength, its genetic resilience and its longevity. It suffers from the same difficulties as the Jullien's golden carp. Just two figures, though dated, are enough to highlight the stinging reality of the Chinese giant salamander. In the Hunan province, in the county of Sangzhi, the individuals caught generally weighed between 35 and 40 kg, and three of them weighed over 50 kg. Twenty years later, at the same place, all of the individuals captured weighed less than 5 kg, and none of them had reached sexual maturity. The exclusive distribution area of the Chinese giant salamander includes the Yellow, Yangtze and Pearl Rivers. They are caught by poachers using gillnets, dynamite or poison.⁴⁵

February 15-16, 2018

Hunan Province, China

A man boasted, with photos on social media to prove it, that for Lunar New Year's Eve, his family would be eating shark, bear's feet, crocodile and pangolin. He will be spending five days in prison, although he claims that the photos were fakes, photoshopped or downloaded online. "It was just a joke," says Rao. One thing is certain, he will not be eating shark during his brief stay in prison.⁴⁶



March 27, 2018
Shanxi Province, China

Seizure of 200 wild animals including an Eurasian eagle-owl (*Bubo bubo*, Appendix II), one arrest. The man recognizes poaching in Yushe and Shouyang counties and selling game on the internet.⁴⁷

INDIA

January 3 and 9, 2018
Midpu Forest, Papum Pare District, State of Arunachal Pradesh, India

Some fruitful road blocks have been set up since the beginning of the year by agents of the Banderdewa Forest Division at the edge of the Midpu forest.

- On Wednesday, January 3, vehicles coming from the districts of Kurung Kumey, Kra Daadi, Upper Subansarai, Lower Subansarai and Sagalee that were inspected had numerous poached animals onboard. Without going into detail, the administration has mentioned Himalayan civets (*Paguma larvata*, Appendix III), deer, wild doves, wild fowl and wild squirrels. Legal proceedings have been filed. The carcasses were destroyed in the presence of a magistrate and a police commissioner. In addition, other drivers who fell into the agents' trap were given fines and penalties totaling 25,110 rupees (\$390 US) for possession of forest products.

- On Tuesday, January 9, a second road block, at the same location. This time, seizures included Himalayan civet meat, dried squirrels, parts of an eagle and trophies made of other wildlife. The vehicles were coming from the cities of Kamin and Pasighat. Officers from the Forest Division and the police destroyed the carcasses and the trophies. Given the success of these operations, Neelam Nedo, officer of the Forest Direction, has announced that more road blocks will be set up.⁴⁸

January 8, 2018
Siliguri, Darjeeling District, State of West Bengal, India

Seizure by SSB of five deer musk prepuccial glands (*Moschus moschiferus*, Appendix II) and one Indian sand boa (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II). Consumption in an unspecified form of boa would cure AIDS according to the latest rubbish in progress. Three arrests.⁴⁹



January 8, 2018
Mumbai, State of Maharashtra, India

Kunal Solanki had posted a message to his WhatsApp group: he was selling three barn owls (*Tyto alba*, Appendix II) and an Indian spectacled cobra (*Naja naja*, Appendix II). He was spotted by members of the Wildlife Welfare Association (WWA), and fell into their trap. They posed as buyers and set up a meeting with him in the Byculla neighborhood, in front of the main entrance to the Rani Baug zoo. The transaction was to involve owls and a cobra. But the NGO had informed the police, who were waiting in ambush for the trafficker with five officers. The barn owls are estimated at 15,000 rupees (\$234 US) each, and the cobra at 10,000 rupees (\$156 US). Kunal Solanki has been charged. He claims to have "saved" the snake, near his house, and to have "rescued" the owls near Chinchpokli, in the southern suburbs of Mumbai.⁵⁰



FAMILY AFFAIRS
January 8, 2018

Meerut District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

He is no longer on the run. He turned himself in. He was sent to prison. At the end of April 2017, police seized a hunting arsenal, blackbuck skins and feline teeth from his home (see "On the Trail" n°17 p. 121). His son, a sharpshooter and accomplice to his father, was arrested in Delhi in June 2017. He is also in prison. The father wants to be released on bail.⁵¹

GANG
January 9, 2018
Sangdupota, Papum Pare District, State of Arunachal Pradesh, India

A traditional justice hearing ruled on the case of a gang of poachers would had set up camp on the banks of the Papum River, starting on December 31 2017, to blast fish and poach land animals. The United Sangdupota Intellectual Youth Forum (USIYF) intervention was decisive in the case. Members first spotted the poachers in action and filed a complaint with the Balijan police department on January 5, for polluting the river with chemical explosives and for destruction of wildlife. The gang, led by Rigio Turu and Kipa Karo, was questioned. Following in-depth discussions, the USIYF, the All Bassarnallo Youth Association (ABYA), the Gaon Burahs (traditional chiefs), the panchayat (village council made up of five elected members) and the village seniors decided to dispense justice. They fined the poachers, and also required that they write an apology, with assurance that such an act would not be repeated in the future.⁵²



GANG

January 11, 2018

Nurpur Bedi and Kiratpur Sahib, Rupnagar District, State of Punjab, India

A major operation was launched at dawn by the Delhi Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), the Punjab Forests and Wildlife Preservation Department and the Punjab police, but produced minor results as far as arrest are concerned. All of the suspects were able to escape the sites targeted by simultaneous raids, two in Nurpur Bedi and one in Kiratpur. A manhunt has been launched. Divisional Forest Officer Vidhya Sagri suspects a network made up of members of the Bangalas community, and perhaps directed by just one man. On the other hand, live snakes and multiple animal parts were seized; they were destined for the witchcraft and tantric practices market. Two Asiatic rock pythons (*Python molurus*, Appendix II), two Indian spectacled cobras (*Naja naja*, Appendix II) and an Indian sand boa (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) were taken to the Chhatbir zoo for observation and care. The booty that was seized also includes 55 peacock and owl claws, two chains fashioned from snake bones, 16 scales and skulls of snakes, 112 jackal skins, 70 other assorted parts of bones and teeth, 94 claws, five tails of wild animals and 30 spines or quills of Indian crested porcupines (*Hystrix indica*). Four steel traps and a motorcycle were also taken in. The species of some animals have not yet been identified.⁵³

February 12, 2018

Bhopal, Bhopal District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

A group of poachers had been reported to the police and was stopped at around 1:00 a.m. on their way back from hunting, at a road block set up in the Bharat Talkies neighborhood. Two men managed to flee, while three others were arrested. In their vehicle, the police found 150 kg of meat from spotted deer (*Axis axis*), blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Pakistan and in Nepal) and nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*, Appendix III in Pakistan). The animals had already been skinned and the hides carried separately. A 315 bore pistol brought the finishing touch. The suspects, Amir, Sahwar and Amir, said they had poached the animals in the Gulabganj forest.⁵⁴

March 3, 2018

Daying Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, State of Arunachal Pradesh, India

Banning Doso, Kayimang Borang, Yagmin Sisam, Orik Tayeng and Kuk Tayeng were caught red-handed inside the wildlife sanctuary, in the Jopong Paatang area. Their accomplice, Tokbong Rome, managed to escape from the forest rangers. At the poachers' campsite, the agents seized a monitor lizard (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), the carcass of a porcupine and a large quantity of smoked meat from hog deer (*Hyelaphus porcinus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*) and boar. Three hunting rifles were confiscated. The East Siang police is in charge with the inquiry.⁵⁵

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 10 and 29, 2018

Jaldapara National Park, State of West Bengal, India

– Eight poachers, including three with the same family name, supposed to be remorseful, turned themselves in to forest rangers and handed over their two rifles, trap-nets and other illegal equipment. They admitted to poaching deer, boar and rabbits, but deny having targeted elephants, rhinoceroses or leopards. The forest rangers are skeptical. Jaldapara, see "On the Trail" n°5 p.78, n°7 p.73, n°8 p.64, n°9 p.99, n°10 p.49, n°12 p.73 and n°15 p.85.⁵⁶

March 24, 2018

Jorabat, State of Assam, India

Seizure during a control of four Gaboon vipers (*Bitis gabonica*), one meerkat (*Suricata suricatta*), three marmosets (*Callitrichidae*, Appendix I or II), two African spurred tortoises (*Centrochelys sulcata*, Appendix II), two reticulated pythons (*Python reticulatus*, Appendix II), thirteen corn snakes (*Pantherophis guttatus*), ten scorpions including two dead, one sugar glider (*Petaurus breviceps*) and one dead central bearded dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*). All species are native to Africa, South America or Thailand. The exotic cargo came from Thailand via Myanmar according to the first elements of the investigation and was expected by a certain Pankas, a Delhi-based pet broker. Wildlife Trust of India deplores that this trafficking falls through the nets of the Federal Wildlife Protection Act, which provides nothing against trafficking in exotic species even if they are listed in an Appendix to the International CITES Convention. At best the animals are seized and the trafficker or traffickers risk a customs fine. The Tata Sumo led by Pradip Singh concealed an estimated \$ 150,000 US worth of wildlife and came from Aizawl, capital of Mizoram. He was stopped in his race after 15 hours of driving.⁵⁷



March 29, 2018

Somwarpet, Kodagu District, State of Karnataka, India

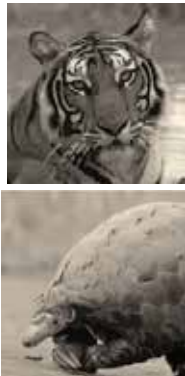
Six arrests. They were poaching in the Pushpagiri reserve. Seizure of 40 kg of blackbuck meat (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Pakistan and Nepal) and monkey meat (Appendix I or II), six rifles, six cell phones and a flashlight.⁵⁸

INDONESIA

January 16, 2018

Muaro Takung, Sijunjung Regency, West Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Ramli was arrested. He has been charged with trafficking bears, tigers, snakes and pangolins. For the past two years, he has gotten his supply from the poachers near Jambi, Pekanbaru and West Sumatra province. All of the meat was in freezers.⁵⁹



IRAN

January 2018

Sabzevar, Razavi Khorasan Province, Iran

The pictures in the gang phones are a confession. On their day and night hunting bags, they had at least seven urials (*Ovis aries*, Appendix II), a jackal and a gazelle (genus *Gazella*). There are three species of gazelles in Iran: the goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), the Indian gazelle (*Gazella bennetti*, Appendix III in Pakistan) and the mountain gazelle (*Gazella gazella*). Five arrests. They would live in Tehran, their marauders in the mountains were reported for some time to environmental forces.⁶⁰



Part of the gang's arsenal

January 20, 2018

Kian, Province of Chahar Mahaal and Bakhtiari, Iran

Seizure of two wild sheep (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) and a gazelle (genus *Gazella*) all stuffed, three firearms and bushmeat. There are three gazelle species in Iran: the goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), the chinkara (*Gazella bennetti*, Appendix III in Pakistan) and the mountain gazelle (*Gazella gazella*).⁶¹

February 13, 2018

Near Bojnord, North Khorasan Province, Iran. Border with Turkmenistan.

Seizure of parts of a leopard and a wolf, a rifle and its ammunition. One arrest.⁶²

PAKISTAN

January 20, 2018

Margalla Hills National Park, Islamabad Capital Territory, Pakistan

Safeer Shah, a park guard, is dead. He was shot several times. The shooter has not been identified.

The Safeer patrol was in the process of evicting shepherds whose goats were grazing in the park. Margalla Hills is home to leopards, gorals and golden jackals.⁶³



SINGAPORE

February 5, 2018

Singapore

The NGO Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) were monitoring sales websites. Their work led to the seizure of objects made of rhinoceros horn (a bracelet and a figurine), two Asian black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I) teeth and two ivory cigarette holders, for sale by a 57-year-old man living in the Jurong West area. According to Anbarasi Boopal, deputy chief executive of ACRES, ads for protected wildlife can be found on the Gumtree, Locanto and Carousell websites, and of course, Instagram and Facebook.⁶⁴



SRI LANKA

GANG

January 15, 2018

Hurulu Forest Reserve, North Central Province, Sri Lanka

A potential plundering was avoided, but two forest rangers were seriously injured. The Ritigala Wildlife Unit was tracking a group of poachers inside the reserve. The poachers opened fire when the rangers approached.

The two wounded rangers were taken to the Habarana hospital, and then transferred to the hospital in Dambulla, which is better equipped to take care of them. Eleven poachers were arrested and turned over to the Habarana police, who then set them free without even informing the rangers... The Hurulu Forest Reserve covers 25,000 ha of dry tropical forest, including parts that are classified as a biosphere reserve by UNESCO. The gang's targets are unknown, but many species in the reserve attract poachers: elephants (*Elephas maximus*, Appendix I), leopards (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I), rusty-spotted cats (*Felis rubiginosa*, Appendix II in Sri Lanka), lorises (*Loris* spp. Appendix I or II), Indian pangolins (*Manis crassicaudata*, Appendix I), Indian star tortoises (*Testudo elegans*, Appendix II), Ceylon junglefowl (*Gallus lafayetii*).⁶⁵

THAILAND

February 2, 2018

Khlung Kiu, Province of Chonburi, Thailand

Seizure by two special task forces of twelve tigers (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I) including several cubs in a pig farm. Other wild animals were seized, a leopard (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I), an Asian black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I), a sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*), eight hog deers (*Axis porcinus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), a red-shanked douc (*Pygathrix nemaeus*, Appendix I), a southern pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca nemestrina*, Appendix II), eight Alexandrine parakeets (*Psittacula eupatria*, Appendix II) and a Siamese fireback (*Lophura diardi*).⁶⁶



February 5-7, 2018

Ratchaburi, Nakhon Ratchasima and Kanchanaburi Provinces and Bangkok, Thailand

A 2:30 a.m., acting on a tip, rangers encircled the poachers' bivouac. They were operating in the Thungyai Naresuan jungle sanctuary. Three sophisticated firearms, hundreds of rounds of ammunition, the bodies of a black leopard (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I), a red muntjac (*Muntiacus muntjak*) and a Kalij pheasant (*Lophura leucomelanos*, Appendix III) were seized on the site.



The sanctuary stretches from the north of Kanchanaburi province to the south of Tak province. It is home to emblematic species such as elephants and tigers.

Four poachers were arrested. Among them is Premchai Karnasuta, president of Italian-Thai Development (ITD). This large public works company has won major calls for tender for construction of logistical infrastructure projects, in particular the high-speed train line between Thailand and China and the Laem Chabang harbor extension project. A search of his many residences in Bangkok and its outskirts led to the seizure of 23 rifles, 13 revolvers, 2 pistols, 11 rifle scopes, 1500 cartridges and 8 elephant tusks.

The ITD ethical charter requires that all employees follow an impeccable code of conduct in regard to the environment. The Ministry of the Economy has specified that the charges filed against Premchai Karnasuta concern him personally and that they are unrelated to the administration of his company. Premchai Karnasuta, 63 years old, along with his driver, his domestic servant and his assistant who all accompanied him in his poaching party, have been released on bail.

The former director of national parks has said that in the heart of the jungle, the businessman and his employees must have been guided by local accomplices who managed to flee into the night. The Wildlife Friends Foundation of Thailand put out a reminder that not very long ago, an unhappy couple caught collecting mushrooms in the same sanctuary were sentenced to 10 years in prison and it hopes that the same sanction, or even better, an aggravated sentence will be imposed on all of the offenders. .../...

Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha has instructed police to handle the case honestly in accordance with the law. If any government officials were found to be involved in the poaching, they would also be prosecuted without discrimination, he said. Despite having been caught red-handed, Premchai Karnasuta claims that it is only the second time that he has been in that area. "The first time dates back 30 or 40 years when Khao Laem Dam, the former name of Vajiralongkorn Dam, was being constructed," he said. "This time I came here for leisure," but he added, "I'm not a regular visitor to the wildlife sanctuary." Premchai claims that the tusks seized in his home are from Thai elephants. The assertion is surprising: the size of the tusks suggests African origin. Rumors that the industrial executive has fled the country have not been confirmed.⁶⁷

**February 17-March 3, 2018
Rattana-wapi District, Province of Nong Khai, Thailand. Border to Laos.**

The checkpoint in proving its value since the province government called to order and demanded from the custom officers more attention to wildlife trafficking.

-End of January, several wild animal skins including that of a fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus* Appendix II) were seized on the Ban Baengchan border market place.

-In heavy bags carried by humble Laotian mushroom gatherers, border police found in fact 80 animal remains including those of chevrotains (family Tragulidae) and a giant squirrel (*Ratufa* spp., Appendix II).⁶⁸

VIET NAM

**January 7, 2018
Ha Long, Quang Ninh Province, Viet Nam**

The search of the vehicle gave 29 surprises: five frozen tigers, three northern pig-tailed macaques (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II), 20 teeth of carnivorous mammals and 30 kg of pangolin scales. Arrest of 28-year-old driver Hoang Dinh Quan.⁶⁹



**January 12, 2018
Nam Dinh, Nam Dinh Province, Viet Nam**



To amuse his customers, the coffee shop owner built up a collection of protected animals, in cages or on chains. This may not really have been a plus for the coffee shop atmosphere: in the photos taken during the raid, all of the animals appear very gloomy. The clandestine zoo was reported to the ENV,

which transmitted the information to the Nam Dinh Forest Protection Department. Accompanied by police, agents raided the establishment and found three Burmese pythons (*Python molurus*, Appendix II), four long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II), a crocodile (Crocodylidae family, Appendix I or II), two Chinese water dragons (*Physignathus cocincinus*), two hawks and a turtle. They were taken to the police station while the investigation on the coffee shop owner continues. It is expected that some of the animals will be suitable for release back into the wild and the remainder will be placed in rescue centers.⁷⁰

**Mid January 2018
Thuan An, Binh Duong Province, Viet Nam**

Two shops in a residential neighborhood were selling protected animals secretly, and have been shut down. Six long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II), 12 Mekong snail-eating turtles (*Malayemys subtrijuga*, Appendix II), seven Burmese pythons (*Python molurus*, Appendix II), four Bengal monitors (*Varanus bengalensis*, Appendix I) and a common water monitor (*Varanus salvator*, Appendix II) were freed from cages and vivariums. They were all taken to the Wildlife Conservation Centre in the Dau Tieng district.⁷¹

**March 20, 2018
Ha Dong Urban District, Hanoi, Viet Nam**

Only 13 months in prison, Chien got off easy (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 57 and n°17 p.87). Since the 1st of January, the Vietnamese criminal code calls for 7 to 15 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$660,000 US for wildlife trafficking.⁷²



March 23, 2018

Nha Trang, Province of Khanh Hoa, Viet Nam

The restaurant had put on its menu small Indian civet (*Viverricula indica*, Appendix III in India) and water monitor (*Varanus salvator*, Appendix II). A 1.5 kg civet and a small monitor were about to be thrown into the pan, they were set free into the wild.⁷³

EUROPE

SPAIN

OPERATION LOXODONTA

**Beginning of February 2018
Calviá, Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands, Spain**

The taxidermist used the internet to sell his merchandise. 69 trophies were seized: lions, cheetahs, leopards, crocodiles, brown bears, elephant feet turned into stools, great ape hands turned into ashtrays.⁷⁴



Denis Rionnet www.deesnay.com

Beginning of February 2018

Uroz-Villa, Chartered Community of Navarre, Spain

Seizure of an owl (*Strix* spp., Appendix II), a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II), a northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), a marten (genus *Martes*) and a squirrels at an underground taxidermist's who had just sold a golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos* Appendix II).⁷⁵



FRANCE

January 9, 2018

Lauris, Vaucluse Department, France

List of the species seized from an individual's home by a joint team of the ONCFS, the Cadenet gendarmerie brigade and the Departmental Office for the protection of the population:

Reticulated python (*Python reticulatus*, Appendix II), Indian rock python (*Python molurus*, Appendix II), ball python (*Python regius*, Appendix II), carpet python (*Morelia spilota*, Appendix II), boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II), corn snake (*Pantherophis guttatus*), western hognose snake (*Heterodon nasicus*), Cuvier's smooth-fronted caiman (*Paleosuchus palpebrosus*, Appendix II), Mexican redknee tarantula (*Brachypelma smithi*, Appendix II), Brazilian salmon pink bird-eating tarantula (*Lasiodora parahybana*), emperor scorpion (*Pandinus imperator*, Appendix II), Australian green treefrog (*Litoria caerulea*), red-eyed leaf frog (*Agalychnis callidryas*, Appendix II), common leopard gecko (*Eublepharis macularius*), Guichenot's giant gecko (*Correlophus ciliatus*), Central bearded dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*), Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*, Appendix II), common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*, Appendix III in the United States of America), Pineapple tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*, Appendix II) and common Iguana (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II).

The 45 animals were turned over to a zoo. The man faces up to years in prison and a fine worth € 150,000 (\$ 186,000 US) for not having a permit for transit or trade of animals, illegal possession of protected species, forgery of administrative documents and use of forged documents.⁷⁶

ITALY

March 8, 2018

Bologna Guglielmo Marconi International Airport, Emilia-Romagna Region, Italy

- Seizure of 800 g of stony coral (order Scleractinia, Appendix II) in the luggage of an Italian tourist returning from Guadeloupe.

- Seizure in the suitcase of a Senegalese citizen settled in Italy of a belt made in python skin (family Pythonidae, Appendix I or II).⁷⁷

UNITED KINGDOM

January 17, 2018

Burnley, Lancashire County, England, United Kingdom

Seizure of rhino heads and horns, elephant tusks, sperm whale teeth and narwhal tusks. A 27-year-old man was questioned by police and released under parole.⁷⁸



January 2018

Selkirk, Scotland, United Kingdom

Appearance of Richard Wales for the illegal sale on the Internet of a tiger head, skull and claws, an Asian black bear fur (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I) and a leopard claw. Wales, 48, is said to be an expert in wildlife conservation.⁷⁹



RUSSIA

GANG

Beginning February 2018
Khanka Lake, Primorsky Krai, Far Eastern Federal District, Russia. Border to China.

The gang made up of three Chinese and two Russians was ready to cross the frozen Khanka Lake to enter China from Russia with five Amur tiger fleeces (*Panthera tigris altaica*, Appendix I), 867 brown bear paws (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) and Asian black bear paws (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I), red deer tails and genitals, dozens of kg of wild animal meat and frog testicles. The 45 km large lake is linking the Primorsky Krai in Russia and the Hailongjiang province in China. More information will be published when investigations are closed and various complicities uncovered. The loot seized by customs of Far Eastern Russia would at first sight be worth one million US\$.⁸⁰



OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

January 16, 2018

Adelaide, State of South Australia, Australia

Sentencing of Terry Dalkos to 4000 dollars in fine (\$ 3110 US). He was facing up to \$ 210,000 US in fine and 10 years prison sentence. Agents from the Federal Ministry for the Environment supported by expert naturalists had found at his home in June 2016 skulls, skins and other trophies from babirusa or deer-pigs (*Babirusa* spp., Appendix I), leopards (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I), bears, lions (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), wolves, cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*, Appendix I), orangutans and other primates. Dalkos admitted to having sold orangutan and leopard trophies.⁸¹



March 27, 2018

Sydney, State of New South Wales, Australia

Martin Kennedy, former rugby player for the Sydney Roosters and Brisbane Broncos (see "On the Trail" n°16 p. 107) pleads guilty to international trafficking in reptiles and fish and to having also declared under Ben's pseudo to an undercover wildlife crime agent that the fish are "finicky as f****" to handle but that at the end of the journey there are still enough alive "for the benefit to be interesting". "If you get busted it's a \$500 fine and (warning) don't ever do that again."⁸²



Donkeys

AFRICA

KENYA

February 3, 2018

Mwingi, Kitui County, Kenya

The head county veterinarian, Joseph Kamongo, has accused the Machakos slaughterhouse of causing donkeys to disappear in Kitui (24.385 km²) within a maximum of 6 years.¹

NAMIBIA

January 2018

Outjo, Kunene Region and Okahandja, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

Still no green light, nor red light, for the slaughterhouse project backed by a Chinese investor and a real estate agent.

- The Donkib Ge Cultural Group demands a moratorium on donkey slaughterhouses until an in-depth study can evaluate the risks involved in massive exportation of donkey skins and meat to China.

- The ministers of Agriculture and of the Environment deny having approved the Fu Hai Trading Enterprises CC in Outjo. A second Sino-Namibian project is bogged down in administrative procedures for the moment. Just like in other African countries concerned by the phenomenon, the business plan for the slaughterhouse has been severely criticized and donkey thefts have already been reported. The offenses are committed by gangs trying to put together a stock of donkeys.

Will Namibia learn from the quagmire and the cruelty that have shaken Bulawayo in Zimbabwe and make opening a "model" slaughterhouse less and less probable? (See below).²

NIGERIA

January 11, 2018

Nigeria

Nigeria bans exports of donkeys and donkey skins. Demand from China is too high. It is urgent to protect farmers and all the small jobs for which donkeys are vital.³

ZIMBABWE

January 23, 2018

Manningdale, Bulawayo Province, Zimbabwe

Before the slaughterhouse opened, funded by Battlefront Investments (see "On the Trail" n°19 p. 131), 200 donkeys were purchased in the area. Sixty-eight of them will have to be killed. They are undernourished and in deplorable condition. The operating license appears more and more improbable. The investors, who represent Chinese interests, could be sued for cruelty to animals by the VAWS (Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Zimbabwe).⁴



Mwingi : Launch of the collective for the well-being of donkeys.

AMERICA

February 2018

United States of America

Jet.com, a Walmart e-commerce subsidiary, has deleted from its catalogue all products made from ejaio, the supposed cure-all that is the latest rage in China.⁵

ASIA

CHINA

February 2018

China

Deej (Dong'e E'jiao), Chinese industrial leader in donkey skin gelatin, expressed concern over rising prices in an interview with the Financial Times. According to Liu Guangyuan, company vice-president, the unit price of a skin has reached 3000 yuan, or \$473 US. A formidable promotion campaign has revived old rumors about ejiao being a cure-all for everything that is wrong with society. Ejiao slows the aging process, is ideal for pregnant women, fights insomnia and dopes up sexual activity. The potential clientele is vast. Deej wants to use all parts of the donkeys: their milk, skin, meat and hoofs. The company is also promoting specialized restaurants.

Deej recognizes that in some countries, the illegal slaughter of donkeys for export to China has become unsustainable, but attributes the abuse to competitor companies. "In Africa, our main suppliers are Egypt [see "On the Trail" n°15 p.119, n°17 p.125], and Mauritania... We are now setting our import sights on Mexico and Peru." .../...

Deej claims to be aiming for exclusively Chinese resources by 2020, based on breeding farms that use artificial insemination and “large sized donkeys” with skins twice the size of ordinary donkeys. It is a difficult challenge to meet given the time necessary for the importation and acclimatization of those famous “extra-large” donkeys [Chinese geneticists refer to a Corsican species] and gestation, nursing and slaughter of 2-year-old donkey foals.

A financial analyst underlines the fact that Deej is worth \$6 billion US on the Shenzhen stock market and only represents 30% of the market. Self-sufficiency for the national industry in Chinese-bred donkeys does not seem realistic in less than ten years.⁶

AMERICA - CHINA

-According to the second report of the regional Junin Chamber of Commerce, Peru, donkey skin is the 3rd agricultural product exported behind cocoa and garlic and in front of artichokes, lupin and maca. Donkey skin is exclusively exported to China unlike maca which is sent to over 20 different countries.

- From 2015 to 2016, Colombia exported 208 tons of donkey skin, i.e. over 20,000 skins departing from Cartagena and Buenaventura Ports. Four slaughterhouses and four tanneries are involved in the channel. The exports are exempt of health certificates and would not all be declared to the Ministry of Agriculture. In the Atlantic and Cordoba Provinces skinned donkey are disappearing by the hundreds and the bodies are found in ditches. See “On the Trail” n°15 p.120.

- Mexico is not left out. The donkey population counted 1.5 million in 1991, there are 500,000 left now. Mechanization, disappearing of small scale farming replaced by large plantations partly explains such decline. Yet, the vice-director of the NGO Donkey Sanctuary based in the United Kingdom also points the finger at un-refrained exports to China.

The Internet site “Cuero de Burro Torreon” is offering for sale five maritime containers per month holding each 1700 skins.

At \$150 US per skin, the full load in each container is \$ 255,000 US. Donkey meat is increasingly sold on the Internet.⁷



February 2018

China

The message posted on Weibo came from the Ministry of Health and the Family planning commission. It said that ejiao was nothing more than boiled donkey skin and that the collagen protein coming out of the boiling was not a useful source of protein.

The China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (CATCM) condemns what they call a “fake” without the least scientific basis misleading the public and consumers. The CATCM call on everyone to show reason and consider its own information instead of blindly following advice from other sources. On 26 January after having been read and shared by millions of people, the message was taken off the China’s National Health and Family Planning Commission hotline. The official organism apologized and claims to have been victim of a hoax.⁸

February 2018

Provinces of Henan and Guangdong, China

The fake ejiao gang was bathing in money. Their melting kitchens made fake ejiao with gelatin and cow skins. 8000 boxes were seized for total value of \$ 6 million US. 36 arrests.⁹

IRAN

January 27, 2018

Semnan Province, Iran

The two Persian onager stalkers (*Equus hemionus onager*, Appendix II) are sentenced to two years in prison. The extremely rare equine had died. Part of the sentence is suspended for 3 years in view of the youth of the convicts, the regrets they expressed and the spirit of cooperation they showed during the investigation. The two young people are also condemned to 6 months of community service, such as collecting waste in protected areas, cleaning up water points where wild animals drink and presenting a five-page summary to the court on the special status of cheetahs and onagers in Turan National Park, after having attended five educational sessions on the living conditions of wildlife in the park. The third member of the band has died since the commission was completed. See “On the Trail” n°19 p. 132.¹⁰



<= “We chased him on a motorcycle and when he was exhausted we hit him with a stick.”

Donkey Hides from Kenya



Product Origin: Kenya

Payment: T/T, Western Union, Money Gram

Minimum Order: 150

Samples: Not Available

Delivery: 21 days

Packaging: in pallets

Description

PRODUCT SUMMARY

We supply Salted Donkey hides from Kenya, Senegal & Bolivia.
Prices varies according to country of Origin. Please check detailed description below.

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Payment terms: 40% deposit, balance against copy of documents

SALTED DONKEY HIDES FROM SENEGAL

Average weight: 8 kgs
Selection: TR
1 x container = 2,800 hides
Availability: 3 containers
Price*: US 49.00 per hide

SALTED DONKEY HIDES FROM KENYA

Weight: 6 to 12 kgs
Average weight: 8 kgs
Selection: 80% A, 20% B
Availability: 1000 available every 45 days
Price*: US 55 per hide



MAIN SOURCES

Sources are available on request by email to contact@robindesbois.org indicating the "On the Trail" issue number, section and reference of the event.

For instance, for the last event of "On the Trail" n°20 : chapitre Donkeys, Iran, reference 10.

Robin des Bois especially thanks the Species Survival Network and the NGO Save the Elephants.

Institutions

Administration des Douanes et Impôts Indirects (ADII - Maroc), Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux du Gabon (ANPN), Australian Border Force, Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam (BKSDA - Indonesia), California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Chinese Customs, CITES, Commission Européenne, Department of Environmental Affairs (South Africa), Douanes françaises, Dutch Customs, Forestry Development Authority of Liberia, Gendarmerie Nationale française, General Department of Vietnam Customs, German Customs, Government of Botswana, Hangzhou Customs, Hong Kong Customs, Hong Kong Government, Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA - Singapore), Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos recursos naturais renováveis (IBAMA), Interpol, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Lusaka Agreement Task Force, Ministère de l'Environnement du Burkina Faso, Ministère de la Transition écologique et solidaire (France), Ministerio del Ambiente del Ecuador, National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU - United Kingdom), Nederlandse Voedsel Waren Autoriteit Natuur (Netherlands), North Yorkshire Police, Office Central de Lutte contre les Atteintes à l'Environnement et à la Santé Publique (OCLAESP - France), Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS - France), Préfecture de la Réunion, Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente (PROFEPA - Mexico), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB - India), Servicio Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (SERFOR - Perú), South African National Parks, South African Police Service (SAPS), Sri Lanka Navy, Tribunal Administratif de Toulouse (France), U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UNESCO, United States Department of Justice, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB - India), Zambian Department of National Parks & Wildlife.

Non Governmental Organizations

African Parks Network, Alliance Nationale des Consommateurs et de l'Environnement au Togo (ANCE Togo), Appui à l'Application des Lois sur la Faune et la Flore (AALF), Asociación CREMA (Centro de Rescate de Especies Marinas Amenazadas), Bhejane Trust, Big Life Foundation, Born Free Foundation, Catalogue of Life (Species 2000 ITIS), Centre for Orangutan Protection, Conservation Action Trust, David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (The), EAGLE Network, Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV), Encyclopedia of Life (EOL), Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), FERUS, Fondation Franz Weber, Freeland Foundation, Gordon Consulting, Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP-UNEP), Hemmersbach Rhino Force, International Animal Rescue (IAR), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), International Ranger Federation, Iran's Environment and Wildlife Watch (IEW), Japan Wildlife Conservation Society (JWCS), Landschap vzw, Laos Wildlife Rescue Center, Last Great Ape organization (LAGA), Lwiro Primates, Mara Conservancy, Matusadona Anti Poaching Project (MAPP), Neotropical Primate Conservation, Olarro Conservancy, Olhar Animal, Orangutan Information Centre, Outraged SA Citizens Against Poaching (OSCAP), Protected Area Management Solutions Foundation (PAMS) Foundation, Pilanesberg National Park & Wildlife Trust, Projet d'appui à l'Application de la Loi sur la Faune sauvage (PALF), Robin des Bois, Ruaha Carnivore Project, Save the Elephants, Saving The Survivors, Sea Shepherd, SOS Eléphants, Species Survival Network, Stop Illegal Fishing, Tikki Hywood Foundation, Traffic, Unite Against Poaching, WARA, WildAid, Wildlife At Risk (WAR), Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT), Wildlife Trust of India, WWF.

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