

ON_{the} TRAIL

The defaunation bulletin
n°40. Events from the 1st March to the 31th May, 2023



Quarterly information and analysis report on endangered
animals poaching and smuggling
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ON_{the} TRAIL

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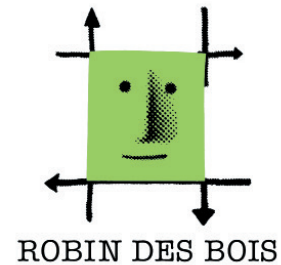
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NOTE AND ADVICE TO READERS

"On the Trail", the defaunation magazine, aims to get out of the drip of daily news and 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" also relates ongoing trials and the evolution of regulations and sanctions.

• A single event may refer to several species (e.g. simultaneous seizure of ivory, bear bile and snake skins); it is then analysed in the "Multi-species" chapter, with the exception of events that bring together the following species and which have their own chapter:

- Pangolins + elephants + rhinos + hippos
- Elephants + felines + rhinos + sperm whales
- Various reptile species (simultaneous seizure of several reptile species)
- Various marine species (simultaneous seizure of several aquatic species)

• Geographic regions at the continental scale are based on the UN classification.

• The US\$ conversion rates used are those applicable during the month of the event.

• The main sources are indicated at the end of each event. Each event reported and/or analysed is from a recension of one or more articles or press releases. This critical review eliminates inconsistencies in date, price and quantity if necessary, and if possible mistakes or looseness about the description of the species. The original source(s) are enriched by cross-checking and additional information from previous issues of "On the Trail", by Robin des Bois' investigations and archives, and by international bibliography and iconography. Details of the sources are available on request by email to contact@robindesbois.org indicating the "On the Trail" issue number, chapter and reference of the event.

Robin des Bois thanks the Species Survival Network, the NGO Save the Elephants and the Eagle Network for their alerts which enrich the daily monitoring carried out by the "On the Trail" team.

• When a species is CITES-listed at the time of the event, the Appendix is specified after its scientific name.

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.

PICTOS



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



Judgment and sanction. Condemnation, acquittal, fine...



Trapping. Poaching by jaw trap, snare, net ...



Poisoning. By chemicals, pesticides and medicines: cyanide, carbofuran, diclofenac, M99 ...



Full moon. Moonlight poaching

ACRONYMS

EAGLE : Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement

ENV : Education for Nature – Vietnam

IBAMA : Instituto brasileiro do meio ambiente e dos recursos naturais renováveis

KWS : Kenya Wildlife Service

LAGA : Last Great Ape Organization

PROFEPA : Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente

SAPS : South African Police Service

SPCA : Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

SSB : Sashastra Seema Bal

SVW : Save Vietnam Wildlife

SWT : Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

USFWS : United States Fish and Wildlife Service

WCCB : Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

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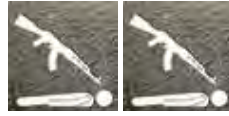
AFRICA

KENYA

May 3, 2023

Wajir, Wajir County, Kenya

The (Kenya Wildlife Service), alerted to a street sale of giraffe meat (*Giraffa camelopardalis*, Appendix II) in Barwago, approached the sellers in Kalkacha and exchanged gunfire - unusual in giraffe meat trafficking, though rather common when it comes to rhinoceros horns. One of the 3 traffickers who was armed with an AK47 fled, while his 2 accomplices, both 27-years-old, were mortally wounded. At the scene, police found 70 kg of giraffe meat, divided into 6 kg packs, as well as 10 empty 5.56x45 mm cartridges and 2 empty 7.62x39 mm cartridges. Their bodies were handed over to their 2 families, residing east of Wajir county. The Star (Kenya), May 5, 2023.¹



servant and an irreplaceable memory of the area. Located in the north-central part of the country, the Bamingui-Bangoran National Park (10,000 km²) is home to cheetahs, lions and wild dogs. It is threatened by poaching and deforestation. Following the disappearance of the last black rhinoceroses in the late 1980s, giraffes are now threatened with extinction; fewer than 10 remained in the latest census in 2017-2018. WCS, March 24, 2023.³

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

May 10, 2023

Cibumbiro, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Sud-Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo



NAMIBIA

March 3, 2023

Rundu, Kavango East Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.

A 34-year-old man lost his life. Joseph Kautjingu, suspected of trafficking in pangolin skin, was shot in the head and chest. He had fled at the time of his arrest. It is too early to speak of gunfire, as the victim may not have been in possession of a weapon. Investigation in progress. Namibia Daily News, March 6, 2023; New Era, March 7, 2023.²



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

March 20, 2023

Bamingui-Bangoran National Park, Prefecture of the Bamingui-Bangoran, Central African Republic



After 16 faithful years of service, Rama Doungous, head of the Bamingui site, was ambushed while on duty in the western section of the Bamingui-Bangoran National Park. The forest and the WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society) have lost a valuable

Eco-guard Alain Lukinga, 34, died in an armed conflict. Operators of a clandestine charcoal mine inside the park recruited several hundred villagers. Tensions are running high in the Kahuzi-Biega Park, whose focus is on preserving biodiversity and protected species such as gorillas, chimpanzees and elephants. Lukinga leaves behind a widow and 6 orphans. His colleagues say he sacrificed his life for his fearlessness, loyalty and solidarity. Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation, May 11, 2023; Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, May 11 and 17, 2023; Wildlife Conservation Society.⁴



Musubao Mubulya Justin



Muhindo Kasay Nickson



Paluku Mahamba Ovide

© Parc National des Virunga



Djiku Kakule Nzonda



Daniel Ngerageze Kamzungu

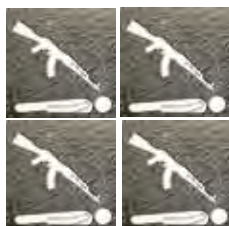


Paluku Kiyana

© Parc National des Virunga

**May 18, 2023
Virunga National Park, Lubero
Territory, Nord-Kivu Province,
Democratic Republic of the
Congo**

A Mai-Mai militia killed 3 rangers – Paluku Mahamba Ovide, 64, Musubao Mubulya Justin, 49, and Muhindo Kasay Nickson, 22 – as they escorted a civilian convoy. The ambush also killed Kambale Mbatumoya Jonas, a technician at TGB, a partner

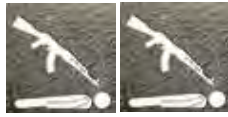


company of Virunga Energies (a hydroelectric power generation, transmission, distribution and marketing company owned by Virunga National Park), and wounded 6 others – 3 escorts and 3 local community members.

Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation, May 18, 2023; Virunga National Park, May 19 and June 12, 2023.⁵

May 28, 2023

Nyamusengera, Virunga National Park, Nord-Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo



Alerted after a hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) was poached near a fishing village on the shores of Lake Edouard, along the Uganda border, a patrol was attacked by suspected members of the Mai-Mai Kabido militia group. Two eco-guards, Djiku Kakule Nzonda, 34, and Daniel Ngerageze Kamzungu, 30, died, and 6 others were wounded and taken to the Catholic hospital in Vitshumbi.

Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation, May 28, 2023; VOA Afrique, May 28, 2023; Virunga National Park, May 19 and June 12, 2023.⁶

May 31 – June 1, 2023

Virunga National Park, Lubero Territory, Nord-Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo



Paluku Kiyana died Wednesday night after sustaining injuries from the May 18th ambush, which instantly killed 3 of his colleagues. Virunga National Park, June 12, 2023.⁷

SOUTH SUDAN

April 8, 2023

Gadiang, Jonglei State, South Sudan



A gang of suspected poachers attacked a patrol of rangers, deployed to combat wildlife trafficking during the drought, on the expressway between Jonglei and Pibor. One ranger was killed and another wounded. Three assailants were arrested, including an ex-ranger and a man wearing an army uniform, who may be a real soldier or an impostor wearing a stolen SSPDF (South Sudan People's Defense Forces) uniform. A counter-offensive was launched against the gang's bivouac, and authorities seized 7 motorcycles and dried bushmeat.

Eye Radio, April 8, 2023.⁸

CHAD

May 16, 2023

Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Wildlife Reserve, Batha Region, Chad



An exchange of fire in the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Wildlife Reserve between a GRF (Garde Forestière et Faunique) patrol and 12 armed poachers aboard 6 motorcycles. At the height of the scuffle, one poacher was "neutralized," which in Western police and military parlance means killed, another was wounded, and a third was handcuffed. A member of the GRF was also wounded and a patrol pick-up was damaged. Subsequently, 5 to 6 poachers were arrested and 7 motorcycles and military weapons were seized. Sacks of gazelle meat (Bovidae family) were discovered at the scene of the brawl. At least 11 gazelles were decapitated. Chad is home to dama gazelles (*Nanger dama*, Appendix I) and dorcas gazelles (*Gazella dorcas*, Appendix III in Algeria and Tunisia).

Ministry of the Environment, Fisheries and Sustainable Development (Chad), May 26, 2023; Tchadinfos, June 10, 2023.⁹

ASIA

INDIA

April 14 and 16, 2023

Batadrava Development Block, Nagaon District, State of Assam, India

On Friday, April 14, the STF (Special Task Force) intervened in Batadrava and seized a fresh rhinoceros horn (750 grams), handcuffed Saidul Islam, and let 3 other men go. Islam was immediately escorted to Kaziranga Park to reportedly locate the .303 rifle hidden in the bushes and reconstruct the poaching scene in the Bagori section of the park (see page 47 ref. 40). Taking advantage of dusk, Islam deliberately threw himself into the Brahmaputra. His drifting body was found on Sunday. This is not the first time that such an event has occurred in exactly the same conditions in the Brahmaputra (see "On the Trail" n°35 p.42, ref.33).

GP Singh, Director General of Police, Assam, April 15, 2023; Pratidin Time, April 16, 2023; The Times of India, April 17, 2023.¹⁰

**May 22, 23, 26 and 30, 2023
Similipal Tiger Reserve, Mayurbhanj
District, State of Odisha, India**

On the evening of Monday, May 22nd, 35-year-old Bimal Kumar Jena died instantly after suffering a fatal shot to the chest. He and his patrol were in the midst of arresting a gang of poachers.



The next morning, officials arrested 2 suspects and seized their pistol, though the hunt continues for some 15 additional suspects involved in Bimal Kumar Jena's death.

On Friday, May 26th, authorities seized 10 firearms and arrested 3 other gang members, including the former sarpanch of Gendapokhri, Bidhadeb Singh. The highest district level affirms, "Senior police officers are on the job to nab those on the run."

On Tuesday, May 30th, Akash Singh, also known as Dobra, was arrested.

Bimal Kumar Jena leaves behind a widow and a 6-year-old daughter. The family will receive 1.5 million rupees, or over 18,000 US\$.

Pratidin Time, May 23, 2023; The Hindu, May 24, 2023; The Times of India, May 24, 27 and 31, 2023.¹¹

**Night of May 31-June 1, 2023
Similipal Tiger Reserve, Mayurbhanj
District, State of Odisha, India**

On the night of Wednesday, May 31st, a patrol of 31 guards on a mission to locate and arrest the remaining fugitives involved in Bimal Kumar Jena's murder was confronted by a group of 10 poachers armed with bows, arrows, and at least one firearm. The poachers were reportedly ordered to surrender but refused to comply and lay down their weapons. The patrol subsequently fired 6 shots into the air, causing the gang to disperse during the night and run into a dry riverbed.

In daylight, an observation mission dispatched to the scene discovered the body of Jagannath Hembram, 24. He was shot a few hours earlier. Near him were 5 arrows, 2 guns and a pistol.

The Times of India, June 3, 2023.¹²



PANGOLINS



Sunda pangolin (*Manis javanica*). Photo gotta catch 'em all IG @wildpokedex

All 8 species of pangolins are listed under CITES Appendix I: the 4 African species (the giant pangolin *Manis gigantea*, the Temminck's ground pangolin *M. temminckii*, the long-tailed -black-bellied- pangolin *M. tetradactyla* and the white-bellied pangolin *M. tricuspis*) and the 4 Asian species (the Indian pangolin *Manis crassicaudata*, the Philippine pangolin *M. culionensis*, the Sunda pangolin *M. javanica* and the Chinese pangolin *M. pentadactyla*).

On the Trail n°40
Value on the black market according
to media or official sources
The values were estimated at the time of the seizures

1 kg of pangolin scales

Continent	Country	US\$	Ref. (year)
Africa	Liberia	15	1 (2023)
	Nigeria	485	3 (2023)

1 pangolin

Continent	Country	US\$	Ref. (year)
Africa	South Africa	8,220	24 (2023)

WESTERN AFRICA

LIBERIA

May 5, 2023

Grand Gedeh County, Liberia. Border with Côte d'Ivoire.

Officials seized 369 kg of white-bellied pangolin and long-tailed pangolin scales and arrested J. Folley Varney. His accomplices fled. Varney is charged with hunting protected animals, economic sabotage, and criminal conspiracy. As a whole, the local market value is estimated at 5,535 US\$, or 15 US\$/kg. As a reminder, a kilo of scales sells for an average of 2,000 US\$ on Asian markets.

Focused Conservation, May 8, 2023; FrontPage Africa, May 30, 2023.¹

NIGERIA

April 23, 2023

Emerald Forest Reserve, Osun State, Nigeria

Officials rescued a pangolin tied to a motorcycle just in time. The poacher-driver was about to sell him. As soon as the pangolin was freed, he took refuge in a tree.

Pangolins International, April 24, 2023.²



May 11, 2023

Between Sangere and Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria. Border with Cameroon.

Customs seized 4 bags of scales (216 kg) and a small bag of pangolin claws on Sangere-Yola road. The estimated value of the scales on the national market is 48 million naira, or 104,875 US\$ and 485 US\$/kg. The "goods" were taken to the government vault in Bauchi, Bauchi State, 400 km from Yola.

National Accord, May 22, 2023; The Punch, June 5, 2023.³

CENTRAL AFRICA

CAMEROON

April 13, 2023

Yaoundé, Centre Region, Cameroon

Oduche Beluchukwu and Mathieu Okala Ndengue were fined 330 US\$ and must also jointly pay the equivalent of 8,000 US\$ to compensate for damages inflicted on 100 giant pangolins. They attempted to sell 66 kg of scales in Yaoundé in October 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.8, ref.6).

LAGA, April 2023.⁴



April 14 and June 30, 2023

Bertoua, East Region, Cameroon

Augustin Alona Hans was arrested while transporting 45 kg of pangolin scales in a cereal bag on a motorcycle. Hans, a former employee at a logging company, would buy the scales from small collectors in the villages of Kapan, Kariol, Mbang and Molobo. Eco-guards from Deng National Park and the NGO LAGA were vital in the arrest.

LAGA, April and June 2023; Alwihda, May 4, 2023.⁵



Mid-April 2023

Mefou National Park, Centre Region, Cameroon



© Tikki Hywood Foundation Cameroon

The Tikki Hywood Foundation in Cameroon welcomed a very young resident. Born in a bushmeat market, she was discarded while her mother found a buyer to eat her. A woman took pity on the pup and brought her to the sanctuary. Tikki Hywood Foundation Cameroon, April 19, 2023.⁶

May 5, 2023

Makenene, Centre Region, Cameroon

Officials seized 3 bags and 78 kg of scales from 3 men. They collected the scales gram by gram in villages around Ndikinimeki, then stored them and sold them wholesale. The Makénéné Forestry and Hunting agents and the gendarmerie, along with the NGO LAGA's support, carried out the arrest. Camer.be, May 29 2023; LAGA, May 2023.⁷

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

May 24, 2023

Lodja, Sankuru Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Sentencing of Wotshakoy Sombo Cosmas to 2 years in prison and a fine equal to 2,500 US\$ for trafficking in pangolin scales near Lomami National Park. He was arrested on the night of Tuesday September 12, 2022. J.A.C.K. – Jeunes Animaux Confisqués au Katanga, June 9, 2023.⁸



REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

May 27, 2023

Dolisie, Department of Niari, Republic of the Congo

The gendarmerie caught 4 individuals in possession of 50 kg of giant pangolin scales, a hippopotamus tooth (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) and cinnabar (mercury sulfide). EAGLE, May 30, 2023; PALF, May 2023; First Mediac, June 8, 2023.⁹

MALAWI

March 11, 2023

Chiponde, Southern Region, Malawi. Border with Mozambique.

Two men, Afick John and Elias Janatu, were trying to sell a dead pangolin in the shopping center, that they had acquired dead or alive in Mozambique. A third man ran off. This is the first pangolin case in Chiponde since the beginning of the year. There had been 3 cases between January 1 and mid-March, 2022. But can we already speak of a lull in traffic?

Nyasa Times, March 13, 2023.¹⁰

End of April 2023

Lilongwe, Central Region, Malawi

Mandala village resident George Maloto, 52, was sentenced to 8 years in prison with hard labour for attempting to sell a live pangolin in June 2022 in Nathenje, 30 km from Lilongwe.

The Maravi Post, April 23, 2023.¹¹

May 4, 2023

Balaka, Southern Region, Malawi

Gabriel Chilunga, 51, sought to sell a live pangolin on the roadside. His scheme was reported to police and Chilunga was charged with violating the National Parks and Wildlife Act. He hails from the village of Chikanda, 80 km southeast of Balaka. Malawi 24, May 5, 2023.¹²

May 24, 2023

Limbe, Southern Region, Malawi

Frank Ngambi, 48, and Lazarus Bakuwa, 73, hid a live pangolin inside a laptop case. Bakuwa is from Nachamba and Ngambi from Ngoleka. Malawi 24, 26 May 2023.¹³

May 26, 2023

Mchinji, Central Region, Malawi. Border with Zambia and Mozambique.

New smuggling operation between Mozambique and Malawi. Jackson Yakobe and Selemani Felix, from Tete province, attempted to sell a pangolin in a shopping mall.

Malawi 24, May 29, 2023.¹⁴

UGANDA

April 28, 2023

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

Florence Deboru, a 38-year-old farmer, had been in custody since September 2022 for killing a pangolin and trying to sell him in a shopping mall. Faced with the prosecution's demand for a dissuasive sentence and the lawyer's plea for leniency for a sick mother, the judge sentenced her to a caution. New Vision (Uganda), May 1, 2023.¹⁵



May 10 and July 2023

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

The 20-year-old boda-boda driver was transporting a live pangolin on February 15, 2023. He was intercepted in the village of Palabe. He was brought to court in May and was finally fined 5 million shillings (1,360 US\$). Jural Media, May 11, 2023; EAGLE Uganda, July 2023.¹⁶



ZAMBIA

May 8 and 11, 2023

Zambia

A female Temminck's ground pangolin, confiscated from poachers, is released 3 days later at an undisclosed location for safety reasons. Wildlife Crime Prevention Zambia, May 12, 2023.¹⁷

May 2023

Zambia

Previously rescued from trafficking, 3 white-bellied pangolins are released at an undisclosed location. One of the females was rescued on May 4, 2022 and another in December 2022. The latter remains partially blind due to an eye infection contracted during captivity, but shows a strong will to fend for herself in the wild.

Wildlife Crime Prevention Zambia, May 19, 2023.¹⁸

ZIMBABWE

May 17, 2023

Bulawayo, Bulawayo Province, Zimbabwe

3 men were arrested in Nketa district for trying to sell a live pangolin.

The Zimbabwe Independent, June 21, 2023.¹⁹

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

April 2023

Tzaneen, Limpopo Province, South Africa

After more than a year of intensive care, recoveries, relapses, and caregivers oscillating between hope and despair, a juvenile female pangolin that was captured as a gift for a village chief has finally regained her freedom.

Umoya Khulula Wildlife Centre, April 16, 2023.²⁰

Beginning of April 2023

Gauteng Province, South Africa



Following a citizen's alert, officials seized a sub-adult female Temminck's ground pangolin and arrested 2 individuals. This was a joint operation by the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and SAPS (South African Police Service).

African Pangolin Working Group, April 8, 2023; Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, May 17, 2023.²¹

May 10, 2023

Groblersdal, Limpopo Province, South Africa

A pangolin trafficker, arrested back in March 2020 in a shopping mall, was sentenced to 6 years in prison.

Prof Ray J, May 12, 2023.²²



May 14, 2023

Kimberley, Northern Cape Province, South Africa

An emergency transfer to the Provet Animal Hospital of a female pangolin who had just been seized in another province.

Debbie English, June 4, 2023.²³

May 17, 2023

Gravelotte, Limpopo Province, South Africa

The Hawks and State Police, alongside the CIC (Cyber Intelligence Center) and private companies including D-Dass and Hoedspruit Farmawatch, all worked to intercept a vehicle, seize a pangolin inside worth an estimated 150,000 rand (8,220 US\$), and arrest the driver.

SAPS, May 18, 2023.²⁴

NAMIBIA

End of May 2023

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

An exceptional seizure of a female Temminck's pangolin living in the Cape Town metropolis, marking the 2nd known case. The severely injured and weakened female underwent an initial emergency treatment at the Cape of Good Hope SPCA, and was then transferred to the Johannesburg Veterinary Clinic, where a CT scan revealed she was pregnant. She has responded well to treatment and her carers hope she will return to the wild soon.

Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, May 28, 2023.²⁵

End of May-Beginning of June 2023

Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Reception and care in the veterinary clinic and more specifically in the pangolin section, the location of which is undisclosed for security reasons, of 7 Temminck's ground pangolins, including a male seized in Walkerville, Gauteng province, from 3 traffickers, a young female abandoned in Ventersdorp, North West province, in a car whose occupants fled during a road check, and a juvenile taken in charge in Benoni, Gauteng province, who after his capture and a long period of haggling was in a worrying state, with his 2 front claws amputated. He died after 2 days of care.

Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, June 13, 2023.²⁶

May 30, 2023

Mahikeng, North West Province, South Africa



Officials arrested 4 individuals, including one Botswanan, trying to sell 2 pangolins in a shopping mall for around 10,000 US\$. Pangolin poaching has been on the rise in recent years in Limpopo, Free State, North West, Northern Cape and Gauteng. SAPS, May 31, 2023; Daily Maverick, June 5, 2023; Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, June 13, 2023.²⁷

March 2, 2023

Otjiwarongo, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

Joseph Iyambo is arrested. He was in possession of pangolin armour (skin and scales) valued at \$50,000 (2,700 US\$).

Namibia News Digest, March 4, 2023.²⁸

March 22, 2023

Between Omuthiyagwiipundi and Ondangwa, Oshikoto Province, Namibia

Following a tip-off, the police set up a roadblock to apprehend 2 men in possession of pangolin armour. The operation was a success: the 2 Windhoek residents, who had set off to sell their goods valued at \$50,000 (2,700 US\$), were instead taken to court in Ondangwa.

Informanté, March 23, 2023.²⁹

Sunday April 9, 2023

Outapi, Omusati Region, Namibia

A 28-year-old man is arrested. He was attempting to sell 217 pangolin scales to an undercover agent. Allgemeine Zeitung (Namibia), April 12, 2023.³⁰

April 23, 2023

Rundu, East Kavango Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.

A 45-year-old man is arrested at around 12.30 p.m. in the vicinity of the Ngandu Safari Lodge. Coming from Katwitwi (West Kavango), 160 km away, he was trying to sell pangolin armour for 50,000 Namibian dollars (3,670 US\$).

Namibia News Digest, April 25, 2023; Informanté, June 1, 2023.³¹

EASTERN ASIA

CHINA

Beginning of May 2023

Xiamen, Fujian Province, China



Seizure of 48.37 grams of pangolin scales inside a piece of luggage. They were wrapped in aluminum foil and hidden in 3 underpants. Chinese Customs, May 7, 2023.³²

INDONESIA

March 12, 2023**West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia**

Officials seized 3.3 kg of pangolin scales from a man on a motorcycle on the Trans-Sumatra expressway. Someone in his inner circle reported him. He sought to sell the scales for the equivalent of 230 US\$/kg. Antara News, March 16, 2023.³³

April 12, 2023**Jakarta Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, Special Capital Region of Jakarta, Java Island, Indonesia**

The press release was issued on April 12. It has been delayed to prevent interference with the investigation. The seizure of 67.8 kg of pangolin scales dates back to mid-February. The main suspect is an Egyptian known by the initials A. S. H. He was aided and abetted by 2 Indonesian traffickers known by the initials A.T. who was arrested in Serang (Banten Province) and A. S. who was arrested in Bandung (West Java Province). The seizure corresponds to the poaching of 250 to 300 pangolins. The trio had been planning the operation for 3 months. Okezone.com, April 12, 2023; Tempo, April 13, 2023.³⁴

April 2023**Badau, Kapuas Hulu Regency, West Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island, Indonesia. Border with Malaysia.**

Following a report of suspicious movements on a side road leading to Malaysia, 2 bags were discovered in the forest by the military, one containing a live pangolin and the other 500 grams of scales. Indonesian Army, April 25, 2023.³⁵

May 17, 2023**Trisakti Port, Banjarmasin City, North Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island, Indonesia**

Seizure of 360 kg of Sunda pangolin scales bound for Surabaya, Java Island. After Java Island, authorities assumed the destination would be Batam, near the border with Singapore.

Garda Animalia, May 26, 2023; Directorate General of Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation, May 30, 2023.³⁶



Trisakti Port

VIET NAM

March 1, 2023**Quang Truc, Dak Nong Province, Viet Nam. Border with Cambodia.**

Dieu Duy, 19, was riding his motorcycle, on his way to sell a 4 kg Sunda pangolin. Dieu Nhon and Dieu Poi had poached the pangolin in Bu Gia Map National Park.

Thanh Niên, March 6, 2023; VietNamNet, March 14, 2023.³⁷

March 4, 2023**Khe Sanh, Quang Tri Province, Viet Nam. Border with Laos.**

A Khe Sanh resident known as N.T.B. was caught red-handed transporting two 10-kg pangolins into his town.

Lao Dong, March 4, 2023.³⁸

March 12, 2023**Huong Son District, Ha Tinh Province, Viet Nam**

Police stopped a motorcycle and apprehended the driver upon discovering 2 Sunda pangolins – undoubtedly bound for a deadly fate. They were kept in a net, cardboard box and iron cage.

SVW, March 13, 2023.³⁹

April 3, 2023**Thach Ha, Ha Tinh Province, Viet Nam**

Sentencing of Dung to 15 months in prison and to pay a fine of 2,100 US\$ for transporting and trafficking pangolins and other wild animals in October 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°38 p. 206, ref. 39).

ENV, April 3, 2023.⁴⁰

**April 3, 2023****Nghen, Ha Tinh Province, Viet Nam**

15.8 kg of pangolin scales and 556 room sprays seized from a vehicle at around 11 p.m. Arrest of Dang Van Duong.

Đại Đoàn Kết, May 22, 2023.⁴¹

Mid-April 2023

Cuc Phuong National Park, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam

Release in Ninh Binh province of 15 male and female Sunda pangolins, 3 of whom are pregnant. They had all been seized from traffickers, except for one who was born in the refuge. The rewilding education and the release have been successfully made by SVW (Save Vietnam's Wildlife) and Cuc Phuong National Park.

VnExpress International, April 19, 2023.⁴²

SOUTHERN ASIA

INDIA

March 9, 2023

Giridih District, State of Jharkhand, India



After a journey fraught with pitfalls and 4 cancelled appointments, ranger Neeraj Upadhyay, disguised as a buyer, finally came into contact with a meat and scales vendor and 2 accomplices. Just as Neeraj finalized the transaction behind the Gaurav Hotel, his colleagues, informed via Bluetooth and a coded message "Maal toh sahi hai" (The goods are fine), intervened.

ETV Bharat, March 10, 2023; The Times of India, March 12, 2023; WCCB, March 14, 2023.⁴³

March 17, 2023

Pratappur Tehsil, Surajpur District, State of Chhattisgarh, India

For a long time, rumors circulated of pangolin poaching deep in the forest, and of scales discreetly flowing out in an incessant stream. Thanks to detailed information, the Surajpur forestry division and the Jabalpur WCCB (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau) were in the right place at the right time on the road to Ramkola. Charku, Tangu and Vijay, between ages 21 and 35, were riding motorcycles and carrying 10 kg of scales.

Patrika, March 19, 2023; WCCB, March 22, 2023.⁴⁴

March 22, 2023

Boudh, Boudh District, State of Odisha, India

Officials intercepted 2 adult pangolins weighing 10 and 13 kg from Uchhab Kanhar and Prasant Kumar Behera.

Argus News, March 23, 2023; Newsroom Odisha, March 23, 2023.⁴⁵

April 2, 2023

Near Bijadihi, Bargarh District, State of Odisha, India

Seizure of a "bajrakatpa," a vernacular name for the Indian pangolin in Odisha. Weighing 12 kg, he is alive and is no longer in the hands of Mahadev Mutkia.

Odisha TV, April 2, 2023.⁴⁶

April 3, 5, 8, 9, and beginning of May 2023

Nepanagar and Sewal, Burhanpur District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

- Monday, April 3: police stop a truck and recover pangolin scales, 2 axes and 8 slingshots. During a subsequent interrogation, the driver and 13 passengers claim to have just returned from a 4-day-long, illegal tree-cutting operation, during which they poached deer, wild boar and pangolins for consumption.

- Wednesday, April 5: 60 rebels attack the Nepanagar police station and successfully free 3 men who allegedly took part in clearing and colonizing the forest, including one of the leaders, Hema Meghwal.

- Saturday, April 8: police try catching up with Hema Meghwal, who fled to Sewal village (4,000 inhabitants), but are instead pelted with stones and other missiles, and forced to call in reinforcement. To put Sewal in a state of submission, officials ordered the destruction of 18 illegal constructions and also cut off water and electricity supplies. They then arrested several residents, including Meghwal's brother-in-law.

- Sunday, April 9–Wednesday, May 3: a major operation is undertaken to dislodge hundreds of squatters living in the forest, accused of poaching and cutting down trees. Officials seize 40 trucks and 15 tractors, alongside 35 million rupees' (427,000 US\$) worth of logs, mainly teak. The woodcutters worked for a man named Phul Singh, who lived in a bungalow atop a hill with a 360° view of the territory he overtook. Between 150 to 200 axe-cutters, stump grinders, ploughmen and planters worked under his command. A second cohort, comprised of roughly 100 people, was responsible for guarding the citadel, armed with bows, arrows, slings, sticks and catapults. A third cohort composed of lookouts and messengers on motorcycles was responsible for reporting any potential threats, or going outside to buy materials or communicate with intermediaries. During the evacuation, several police officers, forestry agents and special forces members were wounded. There were no fatalities on either side. The "invaders" have fled elsewhere, though will likely try to reclaim their lost land once the evacuation and police vigilance come to an end.

The Times of India, April 4 and 13, 2023; Indian Masterminds, May 3, 2023.⁴⁷

Night of April 13-14, 2023**Siliguri, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India**

Nandu Mukhia and Amrit Pradhan were arrested for carrying a pangolin in a cage, that they planned to export to Nepal. Both suspects are from Darjeeling, situated on the slopes of the Himalayas and 60 km from Siliguri. A 3rd man fled.

Siliguri Times, April 13, 2023; The Telegraph India, April 14, 2023.⁴⁸

April 22, 2023**Khatima, Udham Singh Nagar District, State of Uttarakhand, India. Border with Nepal.**

Seizure of 4.7 kg of scales. Arrest of 2 men aged 20 and 50. They intended to sell the scales in Nepal. They claim to have caught the pangolin in March in the Pilibhit District (40 km away) where they live. City Web News, April 23, 2023; The Times of India, April 23, 2023; WCCB, April 28, 2023.⁴⁹

April 26, 2023**Golaghat, Golaghat District, State of Assam, India**

Interception of 2 motorcycle traffickers carrying 4.4 kg of pangolin scales. WCCB, April 28, 2023.⁵⁰

Beginning of May 2023**Sangli Metropolitan Region, Sangli District, State of Maharashtra, India**

Seizure of 4.75 kg of scales. Arrest of Imran Mulaji and Dinesh Dingankar. The Times of India, May 5, 2023.⁵¹

May 15, 2023**Badjhad, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India**

Police seized the full 2.135 kg armour of a pangolin from Santosh Kumar Si, Begar Marndi, Ramachandra Marndi, Saheb Marndi, Umesh Chandra Singh, and Gagan Behera.

Mayurbhanj Police, May 16, 2023; Odisha Bytes, May 16, 2023; The Times of India, May 17, 2023.⁵²

FAMILY AFFAIRS**May 17, 2023****Lachhipur, Subarnapur District, State of Odisha, India**

Arrest of Bedabyasa Dharua and Nabadeep Dharua. They were carrying 2 large live Indian pangolins weighing 7 kg and 3 kg.

Ommcom News, May 17, 2023.⁵³

May 25, 2023**Badakhman, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India**

Seizure of 7 kg of pangolin scales from Mangal Singh and Gansa Ho, along with 4 homemade rifles and wild animal meat.

Argus News, May 25, 2023.⁵⁴

May 30, 2023**Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur District, State of West Bengal, India**

Arrest of 2 thugs in possession of a live pangolin by the Kharagpur Forest Division thanks to information provided by the WCCB (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau).

WCCB, June 5, 2023.⁵⁵

PAKISTAN**March 12, 2023****Islamabad, Islamabad Capital Territory, Pakistan**

A pangolin was rescued between a sports field and a housing development in F-10, a district in Islamabad (population over one million).

Dawn, March 13, 2023.⁵⁶

PANGOLINS, ELEPHANTS, RHINOS AND HIPPOS

AFRICA

KENYA

May 27, 2023

Kabarnet, Baringo County, Kenya

Esther Jerono Chebichii was arrested for the illegal possession of 5 elephant tusks and 105 pangolin scales weighing 2 kg. She was caught red-handed in Kabarnet, the county capital, and released pending trial on bail worth 1.5 million shillings (11,120 US\$). Nairobi Review, May 31, 2023.¹

Casino (around 126,600 US\$). The sentences for trafficking and money laundering were combined. Their daughter, Lin Huixin, was fined 200 US\$, but faces 12 months in prison in the event of non-payment. The court justified its leniency by saying, "She is a first offender and young, with a whole future ahead." See "On the Trail" n°25 p.104 (ref.7), n°26 p.101 (ref.7), n°29 p.20 (ref.1), n°34 p.50 (ref.2) and n°38 p.15 (ref.2).

Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, April 6, 2023; Nyasa Times, April 6, 2023.²

MALAWI

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 5, 2023

Lilongwe, Central Region, Malawi

Zhang and her husband Lin were sentenced in June 2020 and September 2021 to 11 and 14 years in prison, respectively, for wildlife trafficking (hippopotamus and elephant ivory, pangolin scales, rhinoceros horn). Now, they have been sentenced to 6 and 8 years in prison, respectively, for money laundering at Marina



NIGERIA

May 17, 2023

Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria

John Kanu and Obinna Eze were sentenced to 4 years in prison after pleading guilty to the organised possession of 839.4 kg of pangolin scales and 145 kg of raw ivory (see "On the Trail" n°35 p.14, ref.3). Anthony Onyebuchi and Monday Nnamani, 2 alleged accomplices who pleaded not guilty, face a separate trial.

Daily Trust, May 17, 2023; The Punch, May 18, 2023.³



ELEPHANTS

The African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) is listed in CITES Appendix I, the African savannah elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) is listed in 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°40

Black market raw ivory quotation from media or official sources

The values were estimated at the time of the seizures

1kg of raw ivory

Continent	Country	US\$	Ref. (year)
Africa	Kenya	790	13 (2023)
		1,476	21 (2016)
		760	28 (2021) and 29 (2023)
		830	30 (2023)
		1,660	31 (2023)
		730	33 (2023)
		740	34 (2023)
		717	35 (2023)
		755	36 (2023)
	Tanzania	2,000	41 and 43 (2023)
		555	47 (2023)
Zimbabwe	170	51 (2023)	
Asia	India	2,000	83 (2023)
		7,310	92 (2023)

ANGOLA

OPERATION REGRESSO**Beginning of March 2023****Luanda, Luanda Province, Angola**

The SIC (Serviço de Investigação Criminal de Angola) arrested 5 men and seized over 21 kg of semi-raw ivory balls, rings, and fragments measuring roughly 10 centimeters long. Known as "Fortaleza do Cantinton", the group of 5 wreaked havoc in the area around Luanda's international airport. When they weren't trafficking ivory on behalf of Chinese and Vietnamese individuals who have yet to be identified, they were stealing motorcycles and other goods, brandishing edged weapons. The youngest, 21, is suspected of homicide.

Criminal Investigation Service of Angola, March 13 and 14, 2023; Novo Jornal, March 15, 2023; Solidário, March 15, 2023.¹

March 2023**Quissama National Park, Bengo Province, Angola**

For 2 years, a man had been bivouacking in the park, poaching gazelles for food and elephants for profit, leaving the carcasses to rot and selling the tusks on the fresh market in Mutamba. Officials intercepted 2 baby elephant tusks, a dagger, and steel wire for setting traps.

Novo Jornal, March 21, 2023.²

March 12, 2023**Lastoursville, Ogooué-Lolo Province, Gabon**

At 1 p.m. on Sunday, March 12, Albert Yombe dit Balle, Ydrice Bobe Koungoumbera, Glade Christopher Mambela Ngoye and J. Pierre Litouki Yapa were arrested, followed by Simon Boutoukou Zito. They were found in possession of 19.3 kg of raw ivory. Litouki, the driver, was released on bail. The DGR (Direction Générale de Recherches) of Koulamoutou, reinforced by Eaux et Forêts and Conservation Justice, helped execute the operation. Conservation Justice has been pursuing its mission and vocation since 2012. Thanks to its investigations, legal expertise and partnerships with relevant authorities, the NGO has been involved in over 800 arrests pertaining to wildlife and timber trafficking. Gabonews, March 16, 2023; Conservation Justice, March 2023.³

April 5 and 6, 2023**Makokou, Ogooué Ivindo Province, Gabon**

Frédry Bruel Mendjoko, Willy Ibackabobe, Augustin Samba and Maxis Engoungou Alloyi were arrested in 2 stages. They had 2 whole tusks and 2 tusks cut into 5 sections (total weight 15 kg), as well as 2 firearms.

EAGLE, April 7, 2023; Gabonews, April 9, 2023; Conservation Justice, April 2023.⁴

May 27 and 29, 2023**Fougamou, Ngounié Province, and Imenou, Moyen-Ogooué Province, Gabon**

Aboubacar Guebre, Jean Claude Moyet and Robert Guisagoutou were arrested on May 27 and 29, 2023, in Fougamou and Imenou (Ngounié and Moyen-Ogooué provinces). Officials seized 12 tusks from them, weighing 12.5 kg. The 3 men, including Guebre from Burkina Faso, specialise in elephant tusks. Guisagoutou is the chief of Imenou village. Conservation Justice supported the investigation. 7jours Info, May 31, 2023; Conservation Justice, May 2023.⁵

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**March 27, 2023****Goma, South Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Border with Rwanda.**

Arrest of 4 traffickers, including 2 Rwandans. They were in possession of 5 sections of raw ivory, including one from a baby elephant tusk.

SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), March 28, 2023.⁶

March 29, 2023

Bukavu, South Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Border with Rwanda.

The arrests of ivory traffickers are continuing in South Kivu. Following those of March 25 and 27 in Goma (see p. 18 ref. 6 and p. 37 ref. 3), the police have this time arrested 2 men with 5 sections of raw ivory. Initial investigations suggest that they are part of a network with connections in Burundi. Adams Cassinga, March 29, 2023.⁷

April 25, 2023

Beni, North Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

At 3 p.m., the national police arrested a man in possession of 73 kg of raw elephant ivory and the skin of an okapi (*Okapia johnstoni*). Conserv Congo, April 25, 2023; Adams Cassinga, April 29, 2023.⁸

May 25, 2023

Butembo, Nord Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Officials seized 11 tusks cut into 17 sections, the largest weighing 15 kg. The 4 male suspects plead guilty. Adams Cassinga, May 25 and 26, 2023.⁹

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

March 6, 2023

Brazzaville, Department of Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo



Pembele (Congolese) and Coulibali (Malian) were sentenced to 2 years in prison and 2 million CFA francs (3,200 US\$) in damages. They were arrested in May 2022 with 2 tusks weighing 20 kg (see "On the Trail" n°36 p. 21, ref.21). Samuel Divin Pembele is a known ivory trader (November 2016, February and May 2020, May 2022); he owes a huge debt to elephants. The men were convicted without being present at court. A warrant has been issued for their arrest. First Médiac, March 11, 2023; PALF, March 2023.¹⁰

CHAD

Beginning of April 2023

Beinamar, Logone Occidental Region, Chad



Elephant poachers have a hideout in southern Chad, 400 km from N'Djamena. The deputy director of the Forests, Wildlife and Fisheries administration confirms that elephants have been poached, though is unable to disclose exact figures. According to Adam Ahmat Assane, Secretary General of SOS Elephants, at least 5 elephants have been killed by armed horsemen and their tusks amputated. Military reinforcements have been dispatched to the area to track down and ward off poachers. Tchadinfos, April 7, 2023; Alwihda, April 11, 2023; France 24, April 11, 2023.¹¹

EASTERN AFRICA

ETHIOPIA

End of March 2023

East Hararghe, Oromia Region, Ethiopia



Six ivory poachers and traffickers within the Babile elephant sanctuary were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 1 year and 5 months to 2 years and 5 months. Police forces caught the gang red-handed in the Midega Tola district at the start of 2023.

The Babile sanctuary (nearly 7,000 km²), founded in 1971, is the easternmost elephant habitat in Africa. It is seriously threatened by the encroachment of agricultural activities and housing. Its elephant population, estimated at 200-300 individuals, is in rapid decline.

Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, March 22, 2023.¹²





African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*). Photo Marie Delport

KENYA

March 3, 2023

Wangige, Kiambu County, Kenya

Officials seize 15 sections of raw ivory – 40 kg valued at 790 US\$/kg – and arrest 4 individuals.

The Star reminds us that an elephant is poached every 26 minutes in Africa.

Directorate of Criminal Investigations (Kenya), March 12, 2023; The Star (Kenya), March 13, 2023.¹³

March 3, 5 and 12, 2023

Amboseli National Park, Kajiado County, Kenya



- Discovery of the carcass of an elephant killed by a spear. The rangers take the tusks away for safekeeping.

- Report of an adult elephant with a trap on one leg. Despite a search, he could not be found.

- New discovery of the carcass of an elephant killed by a spear. The wound was 3 days old. The rangers take away the tusks.

Big Life Foundation, March 2023.¹⁴

FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 11, 2022, March 7 and October 19, 2023



Mombasa, Mombasa County, Kenya

On the run since 2015, brothers Nicholas and Samuel Jefwa were wanted by Interpol and the Kenyan police. They are suspected, with the complicity of other stakeholders, of having smuggled nearly 7.7 tonnes of raw ivory in 3 maritime containers bound for Asia under the guise of tea leaves, in which their import-export company, Potential Quality Supplies, specialised. As tea is a major product in the country's economy, it is exempt from systematic checks, and benefits from simplified customs formalities upon export. The Jefwa brothers turned themselves in to the hands of justice in November 2022. In their statement, they said that they had opted for exile to escape the

profiles of perfect scapegoats with which they were labelled, and claimed that they had been subjected to psychological torture as a result of the prosecutions to which they were unjustly subjected. They denied any responsibility for ivory smuggling in 2015. A container with 3.1 tonnes of ivory was seized in Bangkok in April 2015 and 2 containers with 4.6 tonnes of ivory were seized a month later in Singapore. They were bound for Viet Nam.

The Jefwa brothers were released on bail of 500,000 shillings (4,150 US\$) on November 11, 2022 and it was only during the appearance of their alleged accomplices that their return to Kenya and their release were announced.

On October 19, 2023, these accomplices, Abdulrahman Mahmoud Sheikh aka Said Juma Said, Sheikh Mahmoud Abdulrahman, Mahmoud Abdulrahman Sheikh, Lucy Muthoni Kahoto, Musa Jacob Lithare, Samuel Mbote Mundia, Salim Mohamed Juma Khamisi, Abbasi Issa Rashid and Kenneth Mwangi Njunga (Njuguna), were all acquitted due to lack of evidence. Another 2 massive ivory smuggling operations from the port of Mombasa have gone unpunished and unexplained for the time being.

It is unlikely that the forthcoming trial of the Jefwa brothers will establish the truth.

See "On the Trail" n°9 p.77, n°13 p.95 (ref. 105), n°15 p.88 (ref.2) and n°23 p.114 (ref.11).

SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), March 8 and 11 and October 19, 2023; Nation (Kenya), March 11 and October 28, 2023.¹⁵

REPEATED OFFENCE

March 9, 2023

Kenya

Thanks to information provided by Big Life, a man with 56 kg of raw ivory was arrested on a motorbike. However, he managed to escape by taking advantage of a mob. He is wanted for further dealings with the law.

Big Life Foundation, March 2023.¹⁶

March 10, 2023

Kenya

Thanks to information provided by the Mara Elephant Project, 2 men were arrested for transporting 4 elephant tusks (3.7 kg in all) on a motorbike.

Mara Elephant Project, March and April 16, 2023.¹⁷

March 13, 2023

Homa Bay County, Kenya

Thanks to information from the Mara Elephant Project, the KWS arrested an ivory trafficker known in the area with 3 tusks, 11 kg in total, including one tiny one.

Mara Elephant Project, March and April 16, 2023.¹⁸

March 14, 2023

Masai Mara National Reserve, Narok County, Kenya

During a downpour, the elephant wounded by 3 arrows was treated, got up, and should fully recover in the next few days.

Mara Elephant Project, March 2023.¹⁹



End of March 2023

Nakuru County, Kenya

County intelligence arrested 2 men with 6 sections of tusks weighing a total of 7 kg. The operation was carried out with the support of the Mara Elephant Project.

Mara Elephant Project, March and April 16, 2023.²⁰

End of March 2023

Meru, Meru County, Kenya

Joseph Nyeere Mutea, alias George, and Edward Kaburu Nyaga can choose between 5 years in prison or a fine of 2 million shillings (15,800 US\$). Alternatively, as a 3rd option, they can appeal within 14 days. The 2 traffickers were caught in a scheme by KWS agents disguised as civilians (see "On the Trail" n°15 p.88, ref.3). The deal involved 22 kg of raw ivory from 6 elephants, 5 sub-adults and one baby elephant. The sale price was 3.3 million shillings or 32,470 US\$ (1,476 US\$/kg). When the Natural History Museum of Kenya appraised the lot, they also found a carved elephant bone. Edward Kaburu Nyaga was involved in another case (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.14, ref.17). A 3rd man escaped conviction. He had been released on bail and has since not responded to court summonses.

Nation (Kenya), March 22, 2023.²¹



April to June 2023

Kenya

Mobile units of the SWT (Sheldrick Wildlife Trust) and KWS (Kenya Wildlife Service) published their report on elephant operations in the Mara, Meru, Tsavo and Mount Kenya National Parks (March operations were reported in "On the Trail" n°39 p.13, ref.8).



-21 favourable prognoses for victims of traps (2), arrows (5), spears (10), poisoned arrows (3) and bullets (1).

- Three unfavourable prognoses for victims of an arrow and spear throwing (1), a spear (1) and a bullet shooting (1).

- Four deaths were recorded by veterinary teams on site due to poisoning (1) and stabbing (3).

One adult female elephant took refuge in an obscure area, and a veterinary team had to walk 30 minutes to reach her. She was lying in a dry stream with a wound on her back near the lumbar vertebrae, inflicted by a spear throw. Her hind legs were immobile and unresponsive. Vets diagnosed her with a spinal cord injury, and ultimately decided to put her out of her misery. The tusks were then cut up and handed over to the KWS. An autopsy later confirmed the spinal cord injury.

A rural community in the Mount Kenya forest buffer zone reported a dead adult elephant near a cultivated plot of land. When KWS rangers arrived on scene, closely followed by a veterinary team, a crowd surrounded the carcass. The one remaining tusk had been cut out and secured. The spleen, liver, heart, kidneys and stomach mucosa were hemorrhagic. The stomach contained watermelon seeds. The massive flow of blood indicates the cause of death was from ingesting poison. After the autopsy, hundreds of villagers rushed to butcher the carcass, despite warnings from the veterinary team, local chieftom and ranger commander.

Of the 28 elephants involved, 24 were males and 4 females.

SWT/KWS Amboseli Mobile Veterinary Unit, April 2023; SWT/KWS Mara Mobile Veterinary Unit, April, May and June 2023; SWT/KWS Meru Mobile Veterinary Unit, April 2023; SWT/KWS Tsavo Mobile Veterinary Unit, April, May and June 2023; SWT/KWS Mount Kenya Mobile Veterinary Unit, June 2023; SWT/KWS Sky Vet program, June to September 2023.²²



April and June 2023

Amboseli National Park, Kajiado County, Kenya

- Following the report of a dead elephant, rangers arrive and discover a bull. He had been killed 3-4 days before, shot from a tree, and had 3 spear wounds on his back. His tusks were cut off and stored in a safe place.

- Another report of a dead elephant. The spear wound is several weeks old. His tusks were cut off and secured.

Big Life Foundation, April and June 2023.²³

Beginning of April 2023

Kenya



Officials arrest 2 men carrying 2 tusks, weighing a total of 40 kg. They intended to sell them abroad. Mara Elephant Project, May 4, 2023.²⁴

April 3, 2023

Kenya

Two suspects are arrested in possession of 2 tusks weighing a total of 26.2 kg.

Big Life Foundation, April 2023.²⁵

April 6, 2023

Maralal, Samburu County, Kenya

Lebo Leshoomo from Samburu County and Anthony Muchai from Kiambu County were arrested and 37 tusks or tusk sections, weighing a total of 106.1 kg, seized.

Big Life Foundation, April 14 and April 2023; SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), April 17, 2023.²⁶



April 27, 2023

Kibera, Nairobi County, Kenya

Collins Omondi Otieno was sentenced to a fine of one million shillings (7,600 US\$), or, in the event of non-payment, to one year in prison. He was previously charged with possession of 34 kg of ivory in August 2017, then with attempted murder of a policewoman in October 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.19, ref.19). SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), April 27, 2023.²⁷



End of April 2023

Mariakani, Kilifi and Kwale Counties, Kenya

Three million shillings (22,800 US\$) fine or 5 years in prison for having been arrested in August 2021 in possession of 12 kg of raw ivory worth 1.2 million shillings (918 US\$ or 760 US\$/kg) at the time of the offence, without holding a transport permit or legal exemption. His sister-in-law, who was arrested at the same time, was acquitted for lack of sufficient evidence of her involvement in the crime.

Office of The Director Of Public Prosecutions, April 26, 2023; Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, April 27, 2023.²⁸



April 29 and May 10, 2023

Mbakasi, Kajiado County, (border with Tanzania) and Kahawa, Nairobi and Kiambu Counties, Kenya

- Morris Mure Kadili was arrested on April 29, 2023 in possession of 38 kg of raw ivory from Mbakasi, located along the Tanzania border. Several accomplices fled the scene.

- He was sentenced to 7 years in prison, with the possibility of filing an appeal within 2 weeks. "I was the carrier and not the owner, the owner managed to escape and I urge the court to forgive me." The ivory he was carrying has an estimated worth of 3.8 million shillings or 28,870 US\$ and 760 US\$/kg. The Star (Kenya), May 10, 2023.²⁹



May 2, 2023

Kahawa, Nairobi County, Kenya

13th hearing of the 4 men aged between 50 and 70 arrested on July 31, 2022 in possession of 26.5 kg of raw ivory hidden in a yellow plastic jerry can cut in 2 at Mogunga near the Masai Mara National Reserve and 50 km from the border with Tanzania and Uganda. The value of the seizure is estimated at 2.65 million shillings or 22,120 US\$ and 830 US\$/kg. The 4 suspects live in Kisii. One witness called by the prosecutor attends the hearing. Another is excused. He was prevented from answering the court summons because of the ongoing demonstrations in Nairobi. The authenticity of the ivory as ascertained by the Natural History Museum was recalled. In fact, the Museum's expertise will be challenged during the 14th hearing by the suspects' lawyer, as we shall see in "On the Trail" n°41. SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), September 15, 2023.³⁰

May 4, 2023

Mombasa, Mombasa County, Kenya

Kazungu Changawa has been charged for previously attempting to sell 5 tusks or tusk sections (6.2 kg in all) and a hippopotamus tooth (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) (2.76 kg) without a permit near the Royal petrol station in Bombolulu on November 15, 2022. The elephant ivory carries an estimated value of 1.24 million shillings or 10,280 US\$ and 1,660 US\$/kg, and the hippopotamus tooth is worth 50,000 shillings or 400 US\$ and 145 US\$/kg. Expert Ben Nyakundi used microscopic examination and Schreger lines to confirm that the 5 exhibits, F1 to F5, were indeed elephant ivory, and feels that exhibit F6 corresponds to the structure of hippopotamus ivory. Mr. Changawa remains in prison awaiting trial.

SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), June 2 and September 18, 2023.³¹



May 5 and 7, 2023

Kenya

Information provided to authorities by Big Life led to :

- the arrest of 2 suspects in possession of 4 tusk sections weighing 18 kg,
- the arrest of a suspect in possession of a 34 kg tusk,
- the arrest of 2 suspects in possession of a 4.72 kg tusk.

Big Life Foundation, May 2023.³²

May 7, 2023

Mukaa, Makueni County, Kenya

Samuel Muisyo and Bashir Kassim, Tanzanian, were arrested at a checkpoint with 81.7 kg of ivory inside their vehicle. A third man escaped. They were all driving to Nairobi. The KWS valued the goods at 8.1 million shillings or 60,000 US\$ and 730 US\$/kg. The tusks and sections were painted black, a concealment technique often used in air transport. The Star (Kenya), May 10, 2023; SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), August 7, 2023.³³

May 14, 2023

Nzau, Makueni County, Kenya

Victor Owino Odour was arrested in possession of 10 kg of raw ivory in a garbage bag, with an estimated local value of one million shillings or 7,400 US\$ and 740 US\$/kg. The Museum of Kenya confirmed that the ivory is genuine.

SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), October 16, 2023.³⁴

May 24, 2023

Sipili, Laikipia County, Kenya



Authorities intercepted 113.75 kg of raw ivory worth an estimated 11 million shillings or 81,575 US\$ and 717 US\$/kg from a vehicle. The driver, Alfred Gathecha, claimed to be transporting a load of tomatoes, under which the 23 tusks were concealed in maize sacks.

On June 5 and 12, the court examined Gathecha's bail application. Initially set at 10 million shillings (72,480 US\$) and an equivalent guarantee provided by his family, the court reduced his release conditions to 4 million shillings (28,990 US\$) in total after his lawyer portrayed him as a farmer of 3 acres (1.2 hectares) and father of 3 children.

Appointed by the court, Veronica Ondso, an expert of 15 years at the Kenya Museum, testified that the material was ivory, that 20 tusks were matched, and that 13 elephants had been killed. At the time of the arrest, the head of the Laikipia police force told the press that some of the tusks came from baby elephants.

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, May 24, 2023; Directorate of Criminal Investigations (Kenya), May 25, 2023; The Star (Kenya), May 25, 2023; SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), September 21, 2023.³⁵

May 30, 2023

Nyeri, Nyeri County, Kenya

Officials seized 52 kg of tusks and arrested Mr. Gichohi and Mr. Wahome. Some of the tusks appear to have been poached very recently. Their total value on the domestic market is estimated at 5.3 million shillings or 39,300 US\$ and 755 US\$/kg. Citizen Digital, May 31, 2023; The Star (Kenya), May 31, 2023.³⁶

MOZAMBIQUE

REPEATED OFFENCE

March 31, 2023

Zumbo District, Tete Province, Mozambique

Officials seize 25 kg of raw ivory, i.e. 10 tusks or tusk sections. Two men tried to sell them and the buyers fled.

Club of Mozambique, April 5, 2023; Mozambique News Agency, April 11, 2023.³⁷

UGANDA

May 6, 2023

Uganda

The Uganda Wildlife Crime Unit seized 6 tusks weighing a total of 60 kg and lead to 4 arrests. Focused Conservation, May 8, 2023.³⁸

May 30, 2023

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

Mr. Wasswa, posing as a businessman, was caught in the act of transporting 27 kg of raw ivory without a permit from the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). He pleaded not guilty but was jailed pending a bail hearing.

New Vision (Uganda), June 1, 2023.³⁹

SOUTH SUDAN

Mid-March 2023

Nimule, Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan. Border with Uganda.

The Nimule mobile court granted Atheib Osmane and Carlo Ali the choice of either paying a fine of 250,000 pounds (370 US\$) each or spending 5 years in prison for attempting to sell elephant tusks in the Ugandan border town of Elegu on August 16, 2022. At the start of the proceedings, they were due to be tried in Kampala, Uganda, but at the request of South Sudanese authorities, were extradited and tried in their own country.

Eye Radio, March 21, 2023.⁴⁰



TANZANIA

March 10, 2023

Madunga, Manyara Region, Tanzania



Frank John, 26, Daniel Gabriel, 39, and Bashiru Ally, 45, were transporting 6 tusks on 2 motorcycles at dusk, estimated by police and experts to be worth 100 million shillings (42,780 US\$), or, on the basis of 2,000 US\$/kg, weighing approximately 21 kg. Mwananchi, March 11, 2023; The Gazelle News, March 12, 2023.⁴¹

March 2023

Same District, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania

Officials seize 6 tusks and arrest 1 individual. The trafficker's identity has not been disclosed. Mwananchi, March 14, 2023.⁴²

March 25, 2023

Uyole, Mbeya Region, Tanzania

Police seized 25 tusks or tusk sections from Emmanuel Joseph, Mussa Jackson and Oden Mwaseba, between 32 – 50 years-old, in a guest house. The value of the lot is estimated at 280 million shillings or 120,000 US\$. Based on 2,000 US\$/kg, the overall weight would be 60 kg.



Reconstruction of the tusks and sections has indicated that 22 elephants were killed. The director of Ruaha National Park says that elephant poaching has been on the rise since the beginning of 2023. Patrols are finding tuskless carcasses in all 4 corners of the park and along its immediate periphery. Pemba Press, March 28, 2023; The Guardian (Tanzania), March 29, 2023.⁴³

April 2023

Sambasha, Arusha Region, Tanzania

Loshiri Lawai of Olkokola and James Samwel of Tengeru were arrested by police in Sambasha with 2 tusks they had just loaded onto their motorcycles. Dar24, April 17, 2023.⁴⁴

April 1-2, 2023

Zanzibar, Unguja Urban West Region, Zanzibar Archipelago, Tanzania

Police arrested 2 intoxicated men at a lodge over the weekend, in possession of 45 tusk sections. The Zanzibar police worked in liaison with the NTAP (National Task Force Anti-Poaching).

Ivory trafficking in the Zanzibar archipelago, see "On the Trail" n°3 p.61, n°12 p.81 (ref.38) and n°17 p.96 (ref.56).

HabariLEO, April 7, 2023.⁴⁵

End of April 2023

Lindi Region, Tanzania



Police arrested 3 male Nanjilnji residents between the ages of 22 and 55 and seized 28 tusks and 62 tusk sections, equivalent to over 30 poached elephants.

Mwananchi, April 26, 2023.⁴⁶

End of April 2023

Kidyama, Kigoma Region, Tanzania

Officials confiscated 20.4 kg of raw ivory, worth an estimated 26.4 million shillings (11,320 US\$ and 555 US\$/kg), from a man whose name has not been disclosed in order to preserve the ongoing investigation. The man is believed to work as a health staff member in Uyui, some 500 km from Kidyama. The ivory, divided into 14 tusk sections, is said to come from Gombe National Park.

HabariLEO, May 12, 2023.⁴⁷

Beginning of May 2023

Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania



Huang Qin and Xu Fujie, 2 snail trading specialists, just had their third appeal rejected. Back in 2013, the Chinese men were found in possession of 706 tusks or sections, and in March 2016 were sentenced to either a staggering fine or 30 years in prison. A second appeal in May 2021 reduced their sentence to 20 years in prison. Their lawyer, Said Ndomba, filed the most recent appeal on the grounds of a procedural error. He argued that his 2 clients should initially have been charged with violating the EOCCA (Economic and Organised Crime Control Act), punishable by a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison. See "On the Trail" n°3 p.60, n°12 p.81, ref.37 and n°33 p.32, ref.68. The Citizen (Tanzania), May 2, 2023.⁴⁸

May 20, 2023

Mpanda and Usevia County, Katavi Region, Tanzania



Ali Hamad Makame, a regional police commander, announced several recent arrests to the press while displaying several pieces of evidence. Alex Ruben, Masele Kasema and Nkamba Ntemula, from Kapalamsenga, Sitalike and Maji Moto in the Tanganyika, Mpanda and Mlele districts, respectively, were arrested after they were found in possession of 7 tusks or tusk sections. Another man, Michael Kisiba from Sumbawanga, placed 11 tusks in a bag of fertilizer and then hid the bag in a bush. The ivory seized during these 2 incidents bears an estimated worth of 247,590,000 shillings or 105,900 US\$, according to the Chief Conservator of Katavi National Park, and 13 elephants reportedly lost their lives to these 4 suspects' utter greed. Katavi Press Club, May 20, 2023.⁴⁹

May 2023

Mapogoro, Iringa Region, Tanzania

Tony Vitus was arrested while carrying 4 large tusks and 7 sections.

HabariLEO, May 24, 2023.⁵⁰

ZIMBABWE

March 19, 2023

Bulawayo, Bulawayo Province, Zimbabwe

Police statement:

"On Sunday at around 9 p.m., police received information to the effect that 2 persons were in possession of ivory elephant tusks along Plumtree Road. Police swiftly reacted to the information and proceeded to the intersection of Dundee Road and Plumtree Road. They approached the 2 accused persons and requested to search them recovering 2 tusks of raw unmarked ivory which were wrapped inside a canvass tent. The ivory weighed 13.90 kg, valued at 2,363 US\$, i.e. 170 US\$/kg. Melusi Mahlangu and Justice Ndlovu, ages 27 and 30, respectively, were arrested. They live in Mzilikazi and Emganwini, 2 districts of Bulawayo. The Chronicle (Zimbabwe), March 21, 2023.⁵¹

March 30, 2023

Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Officials seize 4 tusks – 2 measuring 75 cm long, one 15 cm and one 10 cm – belonging to 2 baby elephants and arrest Cephas Charumbira and Dickson Munkombwa.

The Chronicle (Zimbabwe), April 1, 2023.⁵²

May 11, 2023

Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Inspectors from the Minerals, Flora and Fauna Unit in Victoria Falls confiscated 2 matching 106 cm-long tusks and arrested Godin Mudimba and Joshua Mkwanzani.

Zimbabwe Republic Police, May 13, 2023.⁵³

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

March 12, 2023

Centurion, Gauteng Province, South Africa

On a Sunday afternoon in the Irene Village shopping mall, the Hawks arrest 3 men and recover 2 tusks. The trio will remain in custody at least until March 23, when the court considers their bail application. SAPS, March 15, 2023.⁵⁴

OPERATION TLOU TSU

March 16, 2023

Makhado, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Operation Tlou Tsu ("elephant smoke" in Sesotho language) results in the Hawks intercepting 2 tusks in an underground parking lot at a shopping center and arresting 2 suspects.

SAPS, March 18, 2023.⁵⁵

May 2, 2023

Lekubung, North West Province, South Africa

Residents of Lekubung (population approx. 6,000) are having a field day. Two officers at the province's Wildlife Conservation Department killed 2 elephants that had been out for several days at the Lekubu Game Farm. Denga, the manager, explains, "We told the community they could extract the elephant meat, but leave the skull and tusks." And in the background, the press can hear crowds chanting, "go, take a piece." People are usually stripping the copper fence surrounding the Lekubu Game Farm and selling it in pieces to metal salvagers.

News24, May 3, 2023.⁵⁶

May 16, 2023

Eldorado, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Lesley Mpofo and Kealeboga Makwaeba were sentenced to 5 years in prison for illegally carrying ivory and firearms. They have been in prison far from home since 2020 (see "On the Trail" n°28 p.102, ref.25).

Tzaneen Voice, May 22, 2023.⁵⁷



BOTSWANA

Mid-March and end of June 2023

Gaborone, South East District, Botswana. Border with South Africa.

The court sentenced 12 men including Oshima Chilume, Lesang Nladile, Oaitse Boiki, Ditsaone Nkarabang, Onkagetse Tshemedi, Olefile Zuku, Unoda Montshiwa, Nkemisang Mamelang and Oemisitse Boy to a 745 US\$ fine and/or 5 years in prison. The source does not disclose whether the 2 sentences are conjoined or alternative. These men were caught carrying 72 kg of raw ivory in mid-March near the Grand Palm hotel.

Mmegi, July 10, 2023.⁵⁸

April 12, 2023

Francistown, South East District, Botswana

Morerwa Mbazera, a 54-year-old professional fisherman, was acquitted by the Francistown Court of Appeal after spending 4 years and 4 months in prison for illegally transporting 45 kg of ivory in September 2016. In December 2018, he was sentenced to 6 years in prison or a fine of 1,900 US\$. Two of his accomplices received the same sentence, but were released after paying the fine. Mbazera filed an appeal in February 2022, and it was only in April 2023 that the Francistown High Court, after re-examining the investigation file and the testimony of his alleged accomplices, acquitted Mbazera.



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AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 13, 2023 Miami, State of Florida, United States of America



Art dealer Eduardo Ulises Martinez is sentenced to 51 months in prison and 3 years' probation upon his release as well as a 20,000 US\$ fine. He was arrested at Miami International Airport with ivory in his luggage on September 8, 2021. He had bought art pieces containing ivory from auction houses in Spain, the UK, Australia and Canada. He had accomplices in the UK and Spain who would buy the objects, declare that they were being kept in the European Union, and then, per Martinez's instructions, ship them to various addresses under the classification of porcelain, bronze or marble sculptures. Martinez would also sometimes dismantle the works of art and ship the marble, bronze and ivory to the USA in separate parcels. Email and audio messages obtained by investigators prove that Martinez fully knew that his actions were illegal. U.S. Attorney's Office - Southern District of Florida, November 9, 2022 and March 13, 2023.⁶³

EASTERN ASIA

BEIJING AUTONOMOUS MUNICIPALITY

March and beginning of April 2023 Beijing Capital International Airport, Beijing Autonomous Municipality, China

- Seized: 8 carved ivories including bracelets and good luck charms, weighing 400 grams in total.
- Seized: 1,678 grams of bracelets, pearls, other carved ivories and pendants.

Total weight: 2,078 grams.
Chinese Customs, April 6 and 11, 2023.⁶⁴



Upon his release, Mbazera returned to his girlfriend at home, only to find her caring for a toddler she had had with another man. He also realized that his own 4 grown-up children, whom he shared with his wife who died in 2012, had unknowingly dispersed to the country's 4 corners, and that his few cattle had been sold. So he took his few belongings and went elsewhere.

The Voice (Botswana), April 26, 2023.⁵⁹

Beginning of May 2023 Maun, North West District, Botswana

Sentencing of Alec Charles, Kago Collen Obiditswe, and Godfrey Sapula to 2 years in prison for illegally transporting 2 elephant tusks weighing a total of 45.4 kg in a Toyota Land Cruiser on August 14, 2020, outside the Mababe Trust, of which 2 were employees and the third a resident of Mababe. The 3 men were on their way to Maun, a key ivory-trading town.

The Mababe Trust is an organisation co-managed by State services and the local community of Mababe in the Okavango Delta, dedicated to preserving cultural and natural heritage, with the capacity to sell elephant and other wildlife hunting permits to safari organisers every year.

The 3 convicts have appealed, claiming that they intended to use the Toyota Land Cruiser they had personally hired to hand over the raw ivory that they "found" in the Mababe Community Development Trust area to the central authorities in Maun. The trio will remain in prison until the Court of Appeals has ruled.

The Voice (Botswana), April 14, 2023; The Ngami Times, May 8 and June 12, 2023.⁶⁰

NAMIBIA

April 28, 2023 Dzoti Conservancy, Zambezi Region, Namibia. Border with Botswana.

The decomposing carcass of an elephant is discovered with his tusks missing. According to police observations, he was killed 2 weeks prior. New Era, May 3, 2023.⁶¹

May 7, 2023 Onamwege, Omusati Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.

Following a manhunt, authorities identified the suspect who fatally shot an elephant with an A303 of unknown origin. The firearm, magazine and ammunition were found near the elephant. The ivory's fate is unknown. Informanté, May 10, 2023.⁶²



CHONGQING AUTONOMOUS MUNICIPALITY

April 2023 Chongqing Autonomous Municipality, China



An incoming parcel said to contain “clothing” instead held a painting scroll with tips made of ivory, an analysis later proved. Total weight: 423 grams.

Chinese Customs, April 20, 2023.⁶⁵

TIANJIN AUTONOMOUS MUNICIPALITY

April 2023 Port of Tianjin, China



A package bound for a company in Tianjin contained a painting scroll with tips apparently made of ivory. Customs officials transferred the goods to a laboratory, which confirmed the presence of ivory. Total weight: 43 grams.

Chinese Customs, April 27, 2023.⁶⁶

SHANGHAI AUTONOMOUS MUNICIPALITY

Beginning of March-Beginning of April 2023 Shanghai Pudong International Airport, Shanghai Autonomous Municipality, China

- Seizure of 18 carved ivories, 17 bracelets, 2 of which were dyed black, and a Buddha statuette among the clothes in a trafficker’s suitcase (1 kg in all). According to the wildlife identification laboratory in Shanghai, the ivory is supposedly recent.

- Seizure of 13 knives with ivory handles from a sea container of general cargo. The total quantity of ivory is 371 grams.

- Seizure on an old imported grand piano of key covers made of authentic ivory (237 grams) attested by the Shanghai laboratory.

Total weight: 1,608 grams.

Shanghai Customs, March 15, 2023; Chinese Customs, April 1st and 14, 2023; Xinmin Evening News, April 4, 2023.⁶⁷

ANHUI PROVINCE

March 2023 Hefei, Anhui Province, China

Customs officials seized a painting scroll with suspected ivory tips from an incoming parcel. A Raman spectrometer exam allowed customs to confirm the presence of ivory. Chinese Customs, March 28, 2023.⁶⁸

GUANGDONG PROVINCE

April-May 2023 Shenzhen, Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Border Post, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Hong Kong and Macau.

- Two carved ivories (2.06 kg) including a backscratcher recovered from an incoming passenger’s backpack.



- An incoming passenger’s suitcase housed 6 bracelets and pendants (350 grams), all with the same color, texture and patterns as ivory, wrapped in aluminum foil, stuffed into shoes. A lab analysis proved the items were made of modern ivory.

- A suspected ivory bracelet was confiscated from a Hong Kong passenger. On May 30th, a lab confirmed the customs officers’ suspicion and specified that it was modern ivory.

Total weight: over 2,410 grams.

Chinese Customs, May 7 and 24, 2023; Gongbei Customs, June 5, 2023.⁶⁹

HEILONGJIANG PROVINCE

April 2023 Harbin Taiping International Airport, Heilongjiang Province, China

Customs recovered 15 carved ivories (477.3 grams) taped around a limping passenger’s ankle. The ivory came from “the incisor teeth of African or Asian elephants”.

Chinese Customs, April 18, 2023.⁷⁰

HUBEI PROVINCE

March 2023

Wuhan, Hubei Province, China

A mahjong game made of ivory was seized from an incoming parcel. Weight: 2,260 grams. Chinese Customs, March 15, 2023.⁷¹

HUNAN PROVINCE

March 2, 2023

Changsha Huanghua International Airport and Changsha, Changsha Prefecture, Hunan Province, China

- Seizure of 2 ivory necklaces (99.4 grams) in a package sent from abroad.
- Seizure in a postal sorting center of 2 ivory tips (55.4 grams) from a painting scroll.
- Seizure of an ivory necklace and elephant pendant in a package from abroad.

Total weight: 189.80 grams.

The Xinhua news agency reports that, according to customs statistics, ivory smuggling into China rose from 9.2 tonnes in 2019 to 68 kg in 2021.

Chinese Customs, March 6 and 14, 2023; China Daily (with Xinhua), May 8, 2023.⁷²

JIANGSU PROVINCE

May 2023

Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China

Customs seized 2 painting scrolls with tips resembling ivory from an incoming parcel. On May 15, it was confirmed that they were ivory. Chinese Customs, May 22, 2023.⁷³

LIAONING PROVINCE

April 2023

Dalian Zhoushuizi International Airport, Liaoning Province, China

Customs officers seized 2 carved ivories (390 grams) from an overseas passenger's luggage. Dalian Customs, April 26, 2023.⁷⁴

GUANGXI ZHUANG AUTONOMOUS REGION

May 2023

Dongxing, Fangchenggang Prefecture, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. Border with Viet Nam.

Customs seized 17 carved ivories, hidden among decorative wooden objects, from passengers upon arrival. Total weight: 1.63 kg. Chinese Customs, May 28, 2023.⁷⁵

ZHEJIANG PROVINCE

March 2023

Hangzhou; Yiwu, Jinhua Prefecture; Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport; Zhejiang Province, China

- Seizure in a postal sorting center of 4 pairs of chopsticks displaying all aspects of ivory. Customs officers immediately seized the package and

transferred the suspect products to an identification center, which established that the material was indeed ivory and that the items were "modern." 110.1 grams.

- Customs seized 327 painting scroll tips in several parcels. Total weight: 6.47 kg. The ivory is described as "modern" by the identification center.

- 41 hard, milky-white chopsticks, bracelets, and a pendant suspected of being made of ivory were seized in a bag full of clothes. The identification center confirmed that it was "modern" ivory. 1,192 grams.

- Seizure in an incoming parcel of a wooden box from Japan containing a painting scroll with 2 ivory tips.

Total weight: 7,772.10 grams.

Chinese Customs, March 20, May 5 and 8, and June 6, 2023.⁷⁶

SOUTHEASTERN ASIA

INDONESIA

Mid-March to end of May 2023

Karang Ampar, Central Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia



An elephant had been trapped by a snare on her left front leg for several days. As is often the case in Asia, she was disemboweled and treated without anaesthesia. The foot is deeply cut and the prognosis is guarded.

SINDOnews, April 2, 2023.⁷⁷

May 17, 2023

Panggong, Aceh Jaya Regency, Aceh Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia



The sliding rope trap was apparently intended for deer, but it restrained the 3 to 4-year-old 600-700 kg baby elephant and his right front leg was deeply cut when the veterinary team mobilized by the BKSDA finally arrived on the scene. Treatment and extrication took over an hour. Antara News, May 19, 2023.⁷⁸



THAILAND

March 4, 2023

Near Kaeng Krung National Park, Surat Thani Province, Thailand

Two fluted bullets struck the 15-year-old, skinny victim in the left hind leg and made 3-4 cm diameter holes. His body was in a plantation one kilometer from Kaeng Krung Park. A Buddhist ceremony was performed in front of the corpse



before it was buried on site by a construction machine. The grave was sprinkled with lime. Department of National Parks, and Plant Conservation, March 2023.⁷⁹

VIET NAM

March 20, 2023

Port of Haiphong, Viet Nam

Inside a shipment of peanuts from Angola were 7 tonnes of elephant tusks. The 3 containers had been transferred from one container ship to another in Singapore, and included elephant tusks as tall as a human, baby elephant tusks, and semi-carved ivory in the form of bracelets and chopsticks. This serves as evidence that processing workshops still exist in Angola and neighbouring countries. Based on an average weight of 10 kg per tusk, 7 tonnes of ivory would come from 350 elephants. The current elephant population in Angola is estimated at 3,396 individuals.

Báo điện tử Chính phủ, March 20, 2023; Customs News, March 21, 2023.⁸⁰



End of March 2023

Dak Lak Province, Viet Nam

A new anti-ivory raid in the elephant capital and souvenir stores culminates in the interception of 178 rings, necklaces and other junk sold as ivory for between 200,000 and 7.5 million dong (8 to 315 US\$), sometimes made from resin "ivory". ENV, March 29, 2023.⁸¹

May 2023

Dak Lak Province, Viet Nam

Dak Lak People's Committee fines a stallholder 8,340 US\$ for selling carved ivory.

ENV, May 30, 2023.⁸²



SOUTHERN ASIA

INDIA

March 4, 2023

Tinbatti More, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India

Three men were bargaining in a greasy spoon. Foresters arrested Manikant Gowala, who was carrying a 3-kg tusk. He was going to sell it for at least 6,000 US\$ (2,000 US\$/kg), though the 2 buyers fled.

The Telegraph India, March 6, 2023.⁸³

March 6, 2023

Kalikoundankottai, Dharmapuri District, State of Tamil Nadu, India



Two adult elephants and a makna (tuskless elephant) were electrocuted overnight. After TANGEDCO (Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation) staff disconnected the 30 cm-high clandestine cable, connected to a medium-voltage network, 2 baby elephants were saved. They would regularly return to their family's corpses. A WLOR (Wildlife Offence Report) was issued against K. Murugesan, 67, the farmer wanting to prevent wild animals and human marauders from trespassing on his land. He would operate his illegal bypass from 10 p.m. to dawn.

.../...

The 2 baby elephants, ages 15 to 18 months and 6 months, remained in despair for a week near the pit where their family was buried. The elder protected the younger and prevented any human encroachment. Mahouts from the Theppakadu camp placed melons, jackfruit and grains by the stream, where the 2 orphans occasionally came to drink, despite the villagers forming noisy, curious crowds.

After 8 days, the 2 babies finally approached a family of 8 elephants, including 2 baby elephants from the nearby forest. The rangers hope that an “adoption” will take place naturally and remain vigilant. The 2 orphans are unable to feed or protect themselves. If they are not “embedded” by a surrogate family, they will be anaesthetised and transferred to a camp for domesticated elephants.

Tamil Nadu’s forestry authorities are asking magistrates to apply the Goondas law. In exceptional cases, the Goondas Act allows suspects to be held in police custody for up to 12 months. Goondas Law, see “On the Trail” n°38 p.147 (ref. 98) and p.228 (ref.5).

The Hindu, March 7 and 8, 2023; The New Indian Express, March 18, 2023.⁸⁴

March 13, 2023
Teesta Firing Range,
Jalpaiguri District, State of
West Bengal, India



Four elephants died in a firing range after being hit by shrapnel. The military had the bad idea of setting up a 16 km firing range on the banks of the Teesta River, on the elephant trail between the Baikunthapur forest and the Mahananda sanctuary. So as not to hinder the elephants’ movements, the shooting range was not fenced in. There was only a sign, and activities were announced in the villages. Still, a local resident who was collecting scrap metal also died at the range. The Times of India, March 15, 2023; Down To Earth, March 25, 2023.⁸⁵

March 17 and 19, 2023
Athimathaiyanur,
District, State of Tamil Nadu, India



An unfortunate elephant who was unable to eat due to a purported “injury caused by dental malformation that led to the damage of the tongue”, was in fact struck by a bomb, her autopsy confirmed. The bomb was an “avuttukai”, a large fruit that’s filled with ammonium nitrate and other detonating substances.

The New Indian Express, March 18, 2023; The Hindu, March 19, 2023; The Times of India, March 21, 2023.⁸⁶

March 23, 2023
Near Kalmachaturi, Balasore District, State of
Odisha, India



This marks the 7th elephant to die in 12 months at the Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary, which seemingly welcomes poachers. This elephant died at least 3 days ago and his 2 tusks were amputated.

Biswajit Mohanty, a local elephant conservationist, wonders how so many elephants can be killed and so many tusks stolen in a sanctuary forest that is guarded 24 hours a day. He believes this is attributable to the sanctuary’s scarce budget and reduction in the number of guards and other means of surveillance.

Kalinga TV, March 24, 2023; Odisha Bytes, March 24, 2023.⁸⁷

March 31, 2023
Kovilnatham, Erode District, State of
Tamil Nadu, India



A farmer was arrested and remanded for 15 days in Bhavani prison. An elephant was electrocuted on his land 10 months ago from an illegal medium-voltage grid fence. He installed it to protect his maize and tapioca from intruders. Once informed, foresters excavated a suspicious mound and unearthed the elephant’s skeleton, including his 4 feet, femurs and skull.



The bones will now undergo a genetic analysis to determine the victim’s age and sex. If he is a male, the fate of the tusks remains to be seen. Authorities are also looking for accomplices, as moving and burying a 2–3-tonne corpse alone is beyond the scope of any one man.

DT Next, April 1, 2023.⁸⁸

April 4, 2023

Lingapatna, Mandya District, State of Karnataka, India



A 5-year-old elephant died by electrocution. According to official data, 7 elephants were electrocuted in Karnataka in 2021 and 2022, 84 across all of India in the same 2 years, and 348 between 2017 and 2022.

The Times of India, April 5, 2023.⁸⁹

OPERATION WILEP

April 5, 2023

Katihar, Katihar District, State of Bihar, India

A bag containing 7 pieces of raw ivory, weighing 6.61 kg was found lying next to a train car toilet. Could it have been an oversight, a failed transfer attempt or fear of approaching the RPF patrol?

Railway Protection Force, North East Frontier Railway, April 6, 2023; The News Post, April 6, 2023.⁹⁰

April 6, 2023

Hyderabad, Hyderabad District, State of Telangana, India

Officials confiscated raw ivory from Deepak Thapa, who is from Nepal but spent the past 12 years based in Hyderabad. He worked in the sheep meat business but had serious financial problems, so he began investing in ivory trafficking. He sought to sell the raw ivory for 1.5 million rupees (18,270 US\$). Asian News International, April 6, 2023.⁹¹

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 6, 9 and 27 and May 31, 2023

Ahmedabad, Ahmedabad District, State of Gujarat and Sirugamani, Tiruchirappalli District, State of Tamil Nadu, India



- **April 6 and May 31.** Arrest of Anbil, Duraisamy, Anandha Prasath, Anbarasan, and Manikandan. They were in possession of a tiger skin (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), 2 raw tusks, 2 spotted deer antlers (*Axis axis*), and 2 Bengal fox tails (*Vulpes bengalensis*, Appendix III in India). They reportedly claimed to be working under the orders of Prakash Jain.

They were released on bail subject to representation.
- **April 9 and 27.** This heavy elephant tusk (13.9 kg) is supernatural. It is the subject of a tall tale. A woman is said to have found it drifting in the Indian Ocean at Veraval while collecting shellfish out of a state of necessity. The miraculous tusk then passed into the hands of Kabrani, father and son, then into the hands of Dawood Khokhar, age 55, his wife Rabia Khokhar, age 50, and Anish Khokhar, age 30, all 3 of whom live in Ahmedabad, 400 km from Veraval and the sea.

The Khokhars had in fact “inherited” the tusk through Prakash Jain, a quiet tailor who was in fact hounded by the unfortunate reputation of having been an assistant to the mythical sandalwood and ivory trafficker Veerappan, killed after a merciless hunt by the Tamil Nadu police in October 2004. Prakash Jain was approached by an ivory trafficker with every indication of competence in the trade and a well-stocked address book - in short, every sign of involvement in the exploitation of elephants, even though he was an undercover policeman. After some haggling, the deal was made for 600,000 rupees/kg (7,310 US\$ /kg) or 14.4 million rupees (175,428 US\$) for the famous 13.9 kg tusk. Prakash Jain then went with the “buyer” to the Khokhar family home to deliver it, and the 3 members of the Khokhar family and Jain were arrested by a team of police officers who immediately intervened.

On April 27, despite the unfavourable opinion of the Gujarat lawyer, Prakash Jain was released on bail. His lawyer Vishal J. Dave pointed out that he had no previous criminal record and was suffering from serious heart problems incompatible with continued detention.

The Live Ahmedabad, April 10, 2023; The Times of India, April 10 and May 30, 2023; Ahmedabad Mirror, April 24 and 29, 2023; The Hindu, June 1, 2023; The Indian Express, June 1, 2023.⁹²



Dawood Khokhar, Prakash Jain, Anish Khokhar and Rabia Khokhar in front of the miraculous tusk.

April 10, 2023

Sivagiri Taluk, Tenkasi District, State of Tamil Nadu, India



Another male elephant caught in a trap a kilometer or so from the forest. Karupiah, 65, was arrested. He had diverted electricity from the TANGEDCO grid and stretched a cable across the ground, posing a risk to anyone.

The Times of India, April 10, 2023.⁹³

April 10, 2023
Harhi, Ranchi District, State of Jharkhand, India



A 25-year-old male elephant died in a field from a violent shock.
Daily World, April 10, 2023; The Times of India, April 11, 2023.⁹⁴

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 11, 2023
Near Mahada, Subarnapur District, State of Odisha, India



Birendra Sharma, 60, and his son Allaudin Sharma, 30, were arrested and remanded in custody. They stretched a steel wire, connected to a utility pole, on the ground in the Bardunguri forest. An adult elephant was electrocuted after his trunk and front leg came into contact with the wire. A forest patrol officer laments, "Despite regular patrolling by the forest officials, poachers are continuing to hunt wild animals in the jungle with electric traps."
The Times of India, April 12, 2023.⁹⁵

April 16, 2023
Near Kamat, Kishanganj District, State of Bihar, India

An elephant died in the middle of a cornfield, and 13 other elephants watched over him. Whether he died by accident, electrocution or natural causes, one of his tusks was amputated, indicating it was somehow accessible to ivory cutters. According to local sources, the elephant family came from Nepal.
The Times of India, April 18, 2023.⁹⁶

April 17, 2023
Chuhkimar, Raigarh District, State of Chhattisgarh, India



An elephant calf dies by electrocution in a sugarcane field.
The Times of India, April 18, 2023.⁹⁷

April 20, 2023
NH-49 National Road, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India

Officials recovered 4 tusks and arrested Raghunath Pingua, alias Linga. The 2 elephants were reportedly poached in December 2022 and February 2023 inside the Similipal Tiger Reserve.
Ommcom News, April 21, 2023; The News Insight, April 21, 2023; High Court of Orissa, May 9, 2023.⁹⁸

April 27, 2023
Anandnagar, Thane district, State of Maharashtra, India

Seizure of 2 tusks, weighing 2 kg each, from Sayed, a resident of Tamil Nadu, and Khan, a resident of a Mumbai suburb, by Vikas Ghodke, Inspector of the fifth police unit, and his team.
The Free Press Journal, April 27, 2023.⁹⁹

April 30, 2023
Delhi, National Capital Territory of Delhi, India
A tusk seized during a joint operation by the WCCB and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). No further details.
WCCB, May 8, 2023.¹⁰⁰

May 4, 2023
Pilani, Jhunjhunu District, State of Rajasthan, India



Manish Singh alias Tinku, Murarilal, and Abhimanyu Singh alias Amuj were arrested during an inspection. They were on their way to deliver 6 tusks, including 2 baby elephants, with an estimated value of 9 million rupees (110,031 US\$). Investigators are looking for the buyer.
Navbharat Times, May 4, 2023; WCCB, May 8, 2023.¹⁰¹

Mid-May 2023
Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Shahdol District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Following Ajay Dubey's report to the NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) of the death of an elephant calf and the burning of his carcass (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.20, ref.55), 5 guards and lookouts from the reserve were arrested by the WCCB. They are suspected of having buried the animal's remains in 6 pits in November 2022, and of having crushed bones mixed with ashes before scattering them in the Son River. The WCCB questions the motives of the gravediggers and the fate of the tusks if the elephant was a male.
The Times of India, May 19, 2023.¹⁰²

SRI LANKA

May 15, 2023

Muthanga, Wayanad District, State of Kerala, India

The police seized a 500-gram elephant molar in a Jeep. The driver and 6 passengers were handed over to the Muthanga Forestry Department. Mathrubhumi, May 16, 2023.¹⁰³

May 20, 2023

Balugodu, Kodagu District, State of Karnataka, India

In the middle of the night, on a private residential estate, an 18-year-old elephant was shot in the ear. She died instantly. During the post-mortem examination, a baby elephant was discovered in her belly. The 2 suspects are on the run. The canine brigade has traced them to their homes.

Star of Mysore, May 21, 2023; Deccan Herald, May 22, 2023; The Times of India, May 22, 2023.¹⁰⁴

May 24, 2023

Madikeri, Kodagu District, State of Karnataka, India

Seizure of 2 ivory bracelets adorned with precious stones. Expert appraisals are underway to verify the authenticity of the materials.

Star of Mysore, May 25, 2023.¹⁰⁵

May 31, 2023

Achipothar, Dhemaji District, State of Assam, India

Three tusks weighing 8.67 kg, 3.93 kg, and 2.39 kg were being transported by Delu Purnananda Yen and Lakshinath Panging. The seizure is credited to the WCCB and district foresters.

ETV Bharat, June 1, 2023; WCCB, June 5, 2023.¹⁰⁶

End of May 2023

Girinagar, Bengaluru Urban District, State of Karnataka, India

Seizure of 25.5 kg of raw ivory. Ravi Kumar and Somashekhar, agricultural workers by profession, claim to have "found" a dead elephant in the forest, cut off a tusk, and then buried the corpse on their own. The police have doubts about this scenario. They think they're up against a network.

Country and Politics, June 4, 2023.¹⁰⁷

NEPAL

April 4, 2023

Sauraha, Chitwan District, Bagmati Province, Nepal

During the night, the trunk tip of a 45-year-old domestic elephant was cut off at the home of Dipendra Khatiwada, who organises elephant tours. Elephant activist Shristi Singh Shrestha was outraged by the cruelty of the act. "The elephants captivated by hoteliers in Chitwan are treated like slaves as they are put to work tirelessly until they can."

Online Khabar, April 5, 2023.¹⁰⁸

March 15, 2023

Thambuttegama, North Central Province, Sri Lanka

An adult elephant died in a forest reserve. His right tusk gleams in the sunlight, and a crowd forms. Is the killer present? Several bullet wounds were found on the kneeling victim's body.

Colombo Gazette, March 16, 2023.¹⁰⁹

April 2023

Pitabeddara, Southern Province, Sri Lanka

A 65-year-old monk was trying to sell a pair of tusks for 5 million rupees (15,400 US\$) after an adherent made him that offer 5 years ago. He was arrested by the Panadura Walana anti-corruption unit.

Daily News (Sri Lanka), April 21, 2023.¹¹⁰

NORTHERN EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

April 3, 2023

Bexleyheath, Greater London County, England, United Kingdom

Kostadin Shterev was sentenced to 3 months in prison (suspended), 180 hours of community service, and 239 £ (295 US\$) in court costs plus a surcharge. In January and February 2020, he attempted to smuggle 2 parcels of carved ivories to Hong Kong. British customs seized them. A specialised laboratory proved that the ivory came from Asian elephants. Shterev must also pay 2,072 £ (2,558 US\$) to HMRC (His Majesty's Revenue and Customs).

National Wildlife Crime Unit, April 4, 2023.¹¹¹



ebay

WESTERN EUROPE

FRANCE

REPEATED OFFENCE

March 14, 2023

Saint-Omer, Department of Pas-de-Calais, France

The auction room of Saint-Omer was fined 8,000 € (8,445 US\$), Maître Elodie Peeren, an auctioneer, was fined 3,000 € (3,165 US\$), half of which is to be suspended, and Hadrien Fourquet, manager and employee of the auction room, was fined 3,000 €, of which 1,000 € is to be suspended, for offering for sale several items made of elephant ivory without taking all the necessary precautions, in particular by failing to ensure that all the items sold had been manufactured before 1947. Regulations in France and the European Union prohibit the sale of ivory manufactured after 1947.

Pierre Grignon Dumoulin, a forensic ivory expert, examined the seals piece by piece. He confirmed by examining the Schreger lines that the items were indeed made of elephant ivory. He found that a dozen of them were handmade and that some of them showed the soiling typical of artisanal work, not always of very good quality, but on the whole corresponding to manufacture in the 1900s and thereafter, prior to 1947. He also noted traces of electro-mechanical equipment on 18 seals - drills, electric chisels, abrasive disks, milling cutters - allowing him to reasonably attribute them to mass production according to a stereotype typical of semi-industrial ivory carving in Hong Kong workshops in the 1950s and thereafter. "The expertise of the auctioneer and his associate was not really expertise at all," sums up the OFB (Office Français de la Biodiversité, French Biodiversity Agency).

Hadrien Fourquet had been sentenced in January 2020 for possessing a stuffed sawfish (Pristidae, Appendix I) without authorization in 2019. Following the proceedings, the Saint-Omer auction house decided to cease all ivory sales. Annual income from ivory sales was around 15,000 €.

La Voix du Nord, January 26 and March 23, 2023; Douai Court of Appeal, March 14, 2023.¹¹²

May 16, 2023

Gien, Department of Loiret, France



Seizure of 12 carved pieces of ivory, a tusk, and a hawksbill turtle shell (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, Appendix I) from a gold buyer. Also seized were 92 inscription plates worth 300 to 1,600 € each (330 to 1,765 US\$). An inscription plate is a copper plate on which the tax authorities record each goldsmith's hallmark, name, and registration number in order to guarantee its validity and uniqueness. La République du Centre, May 31, 2023.¹¹³

SOUTHERN EUROPE

ITALY

Beginning of March 2023

Parma, Province of Parma, Region of Emilia-Romagna, Italy

Officials seized carved ivories at the Mercanteinfiera fair worth around 1,000 € (1,055 US\$) and without CITES certificates proving that they were made before 1947.

ParmaToday, March 11, 2023.¹¹⁴

Mid-April 2023

Samarate, Province of Varese, Region of Lombardy, Italy

Everyone can inherit bulky, dangerous, or compromising objects. For his part, the man notified the local CITES carabinieri. A tusk and 5 carved ivory figurines, whose legitimacy was not documented, were jointly considered suspect and seized. The newspaper "La Provincia Di Varese" recalls that "the elephant is the largest land mammal on the planet." "They are imposing animals that can exceed 3 meters in height and weigh over 5 tonnes."

La Provincia Di Varese, April 20, 2023.¹¹⁵

EASTERN EUROPE

SLOVAKIA

End of May 2023
Prešov Region, Slovakia

Hearing of a man who had bought an ivory chess set in April and was trying to sell it on the Internet in May.

Police of the Slovak Republic, May 31, 2023.¹¹⁶

CZECHIA

OPERATION SOLON
End of March 2023
Plzen, Plzen Region, and Capital City of Prague, Czechia

As part of Operation Solon, named after the Greek legislator who promoted respect for the general interest and amended the Constitution accordingly back in 5th Century B.C., customs seized 2 elephant tusks and several dozen ivory objects worth 6 million crowns (268,000 US\$) from an antique dealer's 2 homes. Authorities also intercepted 25,000 crowns (1,120 US\$) in cash, 500,000 crowns (22,340 US\$) deposited in several banks, and a car valued at 300,000 crowns (13,400 US\$) at the

2 homes. The dealer sold "the goods" over the internet or via direct contact with buyers. If the antique dealer fails to provide documentation proving the objects were manufactured before 1947, they will be confiscated. During Operation Olifant, named after the ivory horns worn by knights during 8th century A.D., a similar confiscation was made in Plzeň (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.37, ref.129). Customs Administration of the Czech Republic, April 14, 2023; Krimi Plzeň, April 14, 2023.¹¹⁷



MAMMOTHS

EUROPE

RUSSIA

Mid-April 2023
Sheremetyevo International Airport, Moscow Oblast, Russia

Customs seized an alleged one-tonne shipment of decorative objects from Belarus to China, which in fact came from Siberia and contained 95 sections of mammoth tusk with an estimated heritage and cultural value of 20 million rubles (260,780 US\$/kg). All about customs and foreign trade, April 13, 2023.¹



April 18, 2023
Pulkovo International Airport, Federal City of Saint Petersburg, Russia



The Chinese passenger flying to Chengdu took the green channel before boarding her flight, but customs detected "strange bone-like objects" in her luggage. They were 2 juvenile mammoth tusks, some 40 cm long. They were seized. The trafficker had no document of origin for this ivory, which in China can be misleadingly sold as elephant ivory. Federal Customs Service, April 18, 2023; TV Channel St. Petersburg, April 18, 2023.²

ELEPHANTS, FELINES, RHINOS AND SPERM WHALES

AFRICA

ANGOLA

First quarter 2023

Quatro de Fevereiro International Airport, Luanda Province, Angola

Manuel Alaiua, spokesman for SIC (Serviço de Investigação Criminal), announces that during the first quarter, 2 Vietnamese nationals were arrested separately at the airport with a total of 26 kg of ivory carved into jewellery, 4 kg of raw ivory, 6.6 kg of rhinoceros horn, and 8 grams of elephant hair rollers. The 2 suspects had been paid to travel to Luanda and return to Viet Nam via Dubai with the wildlife contraband.

The Independent (UK), April 18, 2023.¹

MOZAMBIQUE / TANZANIA

May 27 and June 7 and 9, 2023

Julius Nyerere International Airport, Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania, Pemba, Cabo Delgado Province, and Nampula, Nampula Province, Mozambique

The Crab with the Golden Claws

- At Dar es Salam airport, customs confiscated 1,300 kg of polystyrene boxes from Pemba, Mozambique, bound for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The boxes were said to contain crabs (and lobsters), but in fact contained sections of raw ivory, 20 lion teeth and 65 lion claws (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II) and bones. The shipper is Chinese-owned Zein Mariscos, based in the Expansão district of Pemba.

- The Sernic (Serviço Nacional de Investigação) has questioned 3 employees at LAM (Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique), which manages the Pemba airport's cargo sector, comprised of 2 security guards, a customs officer, a policeman and 2 airport officials plus a businessman. The Sernic is also coordinating the investigation in Mozambique.

- A Vietnamese woman, considered to be the co-owner of the cargo and who fled immediately after the seizure, was arrested. She also reportedly paid the suspects one million meticais (15,540 US\$) for their silence and cooperation.

The value of the shipment is estimated at 1.41 million US\$. The ivory is believed to come from both Tanzania and Mozambique.

Carta de Moçambique, May 30 and June 7, 2023; Zumbo FM, May 30, 2023; Notícias (Mozambique), June 9, 2023; Mwananchi, July 12, 2023.²

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

March 25, 2023

Goma, South Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Border with Rwanda.

Seizure of 10 sections of ivory and 2 pelvic bones from an elephant. The 2 bones weighed more than 7 kg and most of the ivory sections weighed between 1.5 and 3 kg. At the same time, the authorities and ICCN (Institut congolais pour la conservation de la nature) officers got their hands on a leopard skin (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I). Seven arrests.

Adams Cassinga, March 26, 2023; Environews RDC, March 26, 2023.³

TOGO

March 10 and 11, 2023

Lomé, Maritime Region, Togo. Border with Ghana.

- In a joint mission by the OCRTIDB (Office Central de Répression du Trafic Illicite des Drogues et du Blanchiment), MERF (Ministère de l'Environnement et des Ressources Forestières) and Eagle Togo, officials seized 7 adult elephant tusks in 2 bags outside a bar. They arrested Abel Dzokpe, Nazif Ouro-Kpasse, Koffi Tsali and the gang's leader, Luc Tevi.

- At Tevi's home, police, acting on a search warrant, seized an additional 12 sub-adult elephant tusks, 5 of which were polished and carved, 13 statuettes, a necklace, 2 baby elephant tusks, 19 fragments of leopard skin (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I), 51 fragments of lion skin (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), a warthog skull (*Phacochoerus africanus*) and 2 presumed human or non-human primate jaws. The raw and carved ivory weighed a total of 167 kg.

- A 5th man, the driver of the vehicle, was arrested the following day.

EAGLE, March 18, 2023; Le Correcteur, March 20, 2023; EAGLE Togo, March 2023.⁴

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

April 24 and May 11, 2023
New York, State of New York, United States of America



This is the end of the trials in New York of the 5 African members of the "Enterprise": Moazu Kromah alias Ayoub, alias Ayuba, alias Kampala Man, Mansur Mohamed Surur alias Mansour, Amara Cherif alias Bamba Issiaka, Abdi Hussein Ahmed alias Abu Khadi and Badru Abdul Aziz Saleh alias Badro. They were presented by Uganda, Kenya, the United States judiciary and NGOs as the instigators of a conspiracy flooding the United States West Coast market with heroin, ivory and horns. After separate trials spread over time, they were sentenced to effective prison terms ranging from 3 years and 6 months to 5 years and 3 months. The internal workings and distribution of profits within the "Enterprise" have not been demonstrated. The 5 men have already been released or are in the process of being released, and may one day resurface in the news of delinquency. On the criminal level, it was a cold shower. Such little punishment for such big trafficking would be a scandal in the United States if they were handed down by the justice system in Africa.

"The Enterprise", see "On the Trail" n°18 p.86 (ref.25), n°25 p.81 (ref.4), n°29 p.42 (ref.3), n°30 p.41 (ref.1), n°31 p.42 (ref.1), n°36 p.43 (ref.1), n°37 p.38 (ref.2) and n°38 p.39 (ref. 7 and 8).

Inner City Press, April 24, 2023; U.S. Attorney's Office - Southern District of New York, May 11, 2023; SEEJ-AFRICA (Saving Elephants through Education and Justice), May 14, 2023. ⁵

ASIA

CHINA

April 2023
Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China



Customs seized a 20 cm-long, 370-gram ivory tooth belonging to a sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*, Appendix I), as well as 11 carved ivories weighing 962 grams from the luggage of an overseas passenger.

Chinese Customs, April 25, 2023. ⁶

INDIA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 8 and 9, 2023

South Dum Dum, North 24 Parganas District, State of West Bengal, India

Seizure in the 2 houses of an astrologer and spellcaster of tiger teeth (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I) made into amulets, fragments of ivory and rhinoceros horns, the skin and antlers of a deer (family Cervidae), human skulls and bones, voodoo dolls and opium. Sourav Chowdhury, the master of ceremonies, was absent at the time of the search. He is wanted. But his father Rakhal Chowdhury and 2 of his assistants, Dulal Adhikari and Arijit Gupta, are being questioned by investigators. Sourav Chowdhury is also said to be an employee of the town of South Dum Dum, population 571,000.

Devdiscourse, March 9, 2023; India Today, March 9, 2023; The Times of India, March 10, 2023. ⁷

VIET NAM

April 25, 2023

Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi, Viet Nam



11.8 kg of rhinoceros horn and 4.7 kg of semi-carved ivory were seized from the luggage of a Vietnamese citizen who left for Angola on March 29 and returned to Viet Nam via Doha, Qatar. He had been paid 50 million dong (2,130 US\$) for the Angola-Viet Nam shipment.

Customs News, April 26 and 27, 2023; VnExpress International, April 27, 2023. ⁸

EUROPE

IRELAND

End of May 2023

Aughinish Port, County Limerick, Ireland

The Irish Examiner reveals that in December 2022, 18.5 kg of lion claws and 5.4 kg of raw and carved ivory were found and seized from a ship loaded with bauxite from Guinea, West Africa. Based on 2 grams per claw and 18 claws per lion, the seizure represents more than 500 lions. If there are any lions left in Guinea, they can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The ivory consisted of 2 tusks and 13 carved ivories, including combs and bracelets. County Limerick is home to the Rathkeale Rovers clan.

Europe's largest bauxite refining and alumina production plant is located in Aughinish. It is the Irish subsidiary of the Moscow-based Russian conglomerate Rusal. The plant's wharf in the Shannon estuary can accommodate 80,000-tonne ore carriers. Rusal Aughinish Alumina has been producing nearly 2 million tonnes of alumina a year for 20 years. A 200-hectare red mud deposit is adjacent to the plant. Red mud is waste from the industrial process. Rusal wants to increase the height of the waste dump by 12 metres, but is encountering hostility from local residents. The major risk for the environment is that a high tide accompanied by torrential rain could erode the red mud mass and pollute the estuary and its ecosystems which are hosting a number of protected birds and marine mammals.

Irish Examiner, May 28, 2023.⁹



SWEDEN

**April 2023
Stockholm,
Sweden**

Stockholm County,



Three company directors are sentenced to tax fines and 100, 120 and 140 hours of community service for pretending to attend conferences in Zimbabwe in 2016 and 2017 at their companies' expense while they were actually in Africa hunting elephants and leopards (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I).

Jakt & Jägare, August 21, 2021 and April 14, 2023; Krimfup.se, April 15, 2023; Katrineholms-Kuriren, April 24, 2023.¹⁰

RHINOCEROSES



Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*). Photo Opicak

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 Eswatini 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: the Indian rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, the Sumatran rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, and the Javan rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus*.

On the Trail n°40

Estimation of the economic value of a rhinoceros

Continent	Country	US\$	Ref. (year)
Africa	Zimbabwe	120,000	4 (2022)
	Namibia	22,780	28 (2023)

EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA

April 21, 2023
Ruma National Park, Homa Bay County, Kenya



Attempt to rescue a juvenile black rhino. She had been trapped by a leg and chained to a tree for several days. Very quickly, she was diagnosed with a rupture of her hip joint and ligaments of the left hind leg. Following emergency treatment under anaesthetic and a thorough examination of the irreparable injuries, she was put down. The horns were cut off and placed in a safe place.

SWT/KWS Mara Mobile Veterinary Unit, April 2023.¹

May 20, 2023
Ruma National Park, Homa Bay County, Kenya



A rhino had been dead for at least 2 weeks when he was found, meaning a post-mortem examination was no longer feasible. A steel trap attached to a tree was visible around the victim's cervical region.

SWT/KWS Mara Mobile Veterinary Unit, May 2023.²

MOZAMBIQUE

Beginning of April 2023
Mozambique

In prison for 30 years for trafficking rhino horns (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.39, ref.2), Valoi fell into a trap. A guard offered him a cell phone in exchange for a bit of change so that he could communicate with his family. Instead of contacting his mom and dad, he reactivated his network of poachers and planned a new poaching campaign in South Africa from his cell, unaware that he was being strung along. The telephone was tapped and all Valoi's conversations were analyzed, enabling the Sernic to arrest all his accomplices, whose identities he had refused to give at the time of his arrest. The courts charged Valoi with rhino poaching for a second time, with the aggravating circumstance that it was carried out in conspiracy.

Integrity Magazine, April 10, 2023; Club of Mozambique, April 17, 2023.³

ZIMBABWE

March 26 and 29 and April 2023
Bubye Valley Conservancy and Beitbridge, Matabeleland South Province, Zimbabwe



Prince Mudenda (24), a former ZimParks (Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority) ranger, was sentenced to 9 years in prison for killing and amputating a black rhinoceros in conspiracy on July 14, 2022. The horns were allegedly sold in Harare. The economic value of the victim is estimated at 120,000 US\$.

Several other ZimParks rangers and lookouts are involved in arms and ammunition trafficking, as well as clandestine mining activities. The monthly salary of a ZimParks ranger is said to be 200 US\$. Their 3,500 families live below the poverty line. Due to insufficient pay for day or night work, which exposes them to multiple risks, many professionals succumb to bribes to improve their family standard of living.

The Chronicle (Zimbabwe), May 11, 2023; She Corresponds Africa, June 27, 2023.⁴

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 2, 2023
Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province South Africa



The Zitha brothers, ages 30 and 34, are in trouble far from their Mozambique home for attempts to poach one or more rhinos in conspiracy in the Kingfisher section of the Kruger. They have been sentenced by the Skukuza specialised court:

- Trespassing in a national park: 2 years.
- Contravention of Immigration Act: one year.
- Possession of a prohibited firearm with no serial numbers: 6 years.
- Possession of unlicensed ammunition: 2 years.
- Conspiracy to commit a crime: 4 years.
- Possession of a dangerous weapon (an axe): one year.

Some sentences run concurrently. Effective sentences are 11 years.

Lowvelder, March 3, 2023; SAPS, March 3, 2023.⁵

Saturday March 4, 2023

Lalibela Game Reserve, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

A routine assessment of the reserve's fences led to a break-in and the painful, rare discovery of the corpses of a mother and her 2 cubs, all 3 having had their nasal and frontal horns hacked off with axes and saws.

In 2,300 days, the reserve's superintendent had never witnessed such a massacre and such relentlessness. The province is afflicted by the horn's evil. Let's not forget the death of Bonnie and Clyde (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.28, ref.8).

The Lalibela Game Reserve (105 km²) offers tourist packages for families with children, with safaris to observe the "Big Five" (elephants, rhinos, lions, leopards and buffalo) and accommodation.

The Herald (South Africa), March 6, 2023; News24, March 7, 2023.⁶

March 9, 2023

Piet Retief, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

They were under the hood! Authorities spotted and followed a Gauteng-registered Nissan Qashqai on the R534 road. Just before entering Piet Retief (population 57,500 according to the last census in 2011), police pulled the vehicle over. SAPS seized 2 rhino horns and 27-year-old Ntsako Prince Letswele was arrested.

SAPS, March 10, 2023.⁷



March 13, 2023

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



From Mozambique, 32-year-old Benedicto Tovela was sentenced to 22 years in prison for poaching 2 rhinos in the Stolzneck section of the Kruger in July 2015. He and at least one accomplice were in possession of 4 fresh horns, an axe, ammunition and a firearm, which ballistics tests proved were responsible for the 2 rhinos' deaths. His accomplice plead not guilty and will be tried later by the wildlife court.

The National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa, March 13, 2023.⁸

March 2023

Polokwane, Limpopo Province, South Africa



During his trial, Bethuel Mdubane, 36,

pleaded not guilty and consequently expressed no remorse. A former security guard for a private company, he was in charge of rhino protection at the Lapalala Wilderness Nature Reserve. Yet he was sentenced to 24 years in prison for poaching 2 rhinos with the help of Primar Salazar Maluleque, and for then killing his accomplice



on the spot. According to the investigation file, he wanted to profit alone from the resale of the 2 nasal horns, estimated at the time of the crimes in March 2020 at one million rand (65,000 US\$). They were never found. During his arrest, police seized a large-calibre rifle, ammunition, a silencer, an axe and a dagger (see "On the Trail" n°28 p.4, ref.3). Independent Online, March 17, 2023.⁹

March 17, 2023

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



Thembi Juliegirl Mangane, 37, was sentenced to 16 years in prison. She acted as accomplice to Matsinye Joao Sithole and Vasco Tibane, convicted in June 2021 (see "On the Trail" n°25 p.77, ref.12 and n°33 p.66, ref.25) for killing a rhino in the Crocodile Bridge section of the Kruger and taking his 2 horns. Juliegirl, a South African, drove the getaway car for the 2 Mozambican poachers.

SAPS, March 19, 2023.¹⁰

**March 26 and April 4, 2023
White River, Mpumalanga Province,
South Africa**



- Clyde Mnisi, 37, head of the Bushbuckridge clan, was killed by 5 guys who emerged from a black BMW in balaclavas and armed with high-caliber rifles. Mnisi was stranded in the evening on the road to Kruger International Airport. His car had a flat tire and he was in the passenger seat. His driver suffered leg injuries.

- Charlene Felicity Mathews, 30, Clyde Mnisi's wife, was murdered in her home between 1 and 2 a.m. by assailants who fled the scene and left no claim. Beside her body, 2 men were seriously wounded. They were taken to hospital.

For the record, Mister Big, whose real name was Petros Sidney Mabuza, had been riddled with 17 bullets on June 17, 2021 as he left a shopping mall. He was at the wheel of his Ford Ranger (see "On the Trail" n°33 p.65, ref.20). The Mpumalanga gang is shrinking fast. The trial of these thieves and rhinoceros horn sellers should open before the summer (year 2023), barring further postponement. Big Joe, whose real name is Joseph Nyalunga, and 3 accomplices, including a former SAPS agent, will remain on the stand, barring any further setbacks. Lieutenant-Colonel Leroy Bruwer previously led the investigation into the gang before he was killed in a road ambush on March 17, 2020 (see "On the Trail" n°28 p.4, ref.4 and n°30 p.45, ref.18).

Lowvelder, March 27, 2023; News24, March 27 and April 4, 2023.¹¹

Gang Mabuza-Nyalunga-Mnisi, see "On the Trail" n°6 p.62-63 (ref.16), n°7 p.62 (ref.5), n°9 p.66 (ref.44), n°12 p.69 (ref.19), n°15 p.82 (ref.41), n°21 p.77 (ref.30), n°22 p.79 and p.81 and n°23 p.104 (ref.26) and this issue p. 45 réf.25.

**March 30, 2023
Between Tzaneen and Hoedspruit, Limpopo
Province, South Africa**

Hoedspruit ranch lookouts reported a vehicle bound for Gravelotte, which was then stopped by Hawks on the R521 road. Under the hood was a .308-calibre rifle with the numbers obliterated, and 14 rounds of ammunition. The 2 occupants are suspected of wanting to poach rhinos. SAPS, March 31, 2023.¹²

**April and May 2023
Balule Nature Reserve, Limpopo Province, South
Africa**

In 2019, a preventive dehorning campaign was instituted at the Balule Reserve, which neighbours the Kruger Park. Only one rhino has been poached since, and the reserve has gone 1,089 days without losing a rhino – a new record for Balule.

In addition to the 11,000 US\$ per year it costs to protect a single black or white rhino by training a canine brigade and arming and training rangers, Balule is a firm believer that dehorning practices carry a deterrent effect. Ian Nowak, head of the reserve's rangers, even views dehorning as a means to reduce natural mortality. "There are always territorial disputes," he says, "but before they often ended in hernias or other deep, fatal wounds, and now the losers retire unharmed to the reserve in search of territory to invest in."

Eyewitness News, May 16, 2023.¹³

**April 4 and 5, 2023
Sibuya Game Reserve, Eastern Cape Province,
South Africa**

- 2 pregnant females were poached and had their horns amputated.

- The following day, the one-year-old daughter of one of the slaughtered females was found shot in the reserve. She was rushed to an orphanage. The reserve's management reluctantly decided to proceed with preventatively dehorning its rhinos. Sibuya Game Reserve, April 6, 11 and 12, 2023; The Herald (South Africa), April 7, 2023.¹⁴

**April 4, 2023
Kempton Park, Gauteng Province,
South Africa**



Shuihau Chen was sentenced to pay 500,000 rand (27,700 US\$) or spend 5 years in prison. He was arrested in 2019 for trafficking horns. He is part of the same gang as Ping Wu, who was sentenced to 5 years in prison for money laundering (see "On the Trail" n°35 p.40, ref.19).



SAPS, April 5, 2023; Oxpeckers, April 6, 2023.¹⁵

April 10, 2023

Makhanda, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

At 2 a.m., 3 men climbed over the fence of a private ranch. The anti-poaching unit let 2 of them slip away and stopped one. It was an old acquaintance. Abraham Moyane, a Zimbabwean national aged around 30, is one of the escapees on October 18, 2022. He had been arrested in 2018 as part of Operation Full Moon for the poaching of 13 rhinos (see "On the Trail" n°22 p. 80 and n°37 p.42, ref.17). Abraham Moyane was sentenced on June 14, 2023 (see page 45, ref. 24). SAPS, April 11 and 12, 2023.¹⁶

April 25, 2023

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



The 5 rhino stalkers and killers who, according to a sensationalized police recount, were overpowered by a single ranger in the Kruger in November 2019 (see "On the Trail" n°27 p.88, ref.14) were released on bail after all the fuss. Three never responded to their summonses, and the 2 men, ages 37 and 39, who chose to take the stand in their own trials were sentenced to 34 and 39 years in prison, respectively. Independent Online, April 26, 2023; SAPS, April 26, 2023.¹⁷

End of April to the beginning of May, 2023

Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, Limpopo Province, South Africa

With 2 airplanes, a helicopter, drones, all-terrain vehicles, veterinarians and nurses, an army-like task force traverses the 60,000-hectare reserve to locate, approach, anaesthetise and dehorn rhinos. Colin Rowles, general-in-chief of this "mammoth dehorning plan", sends "A sincere thanks to the pilots and capture teams who made the operation the success that it was, and this, without any veterinary or other complications."

Dehorning in the Klaserie Reserve, see "On the Trail" n°34 p.55, ref.26. The Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary has published striking photos of rhinos being groped, painted, bandaged, truncated and, as a bonus, given vaccines and vitamins after undergoing anaesthesia from helicopters and armoured 4x4s.

Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary, April 30, 2023; Letaba Herald, May 5, 2023.¹⁸

Beginning of May 2023

Kariega Game Reserve, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

The Helping Rhinos charity continues to promote dehorning by touting the benefits of its annual intervention in the private Kariega Reserve.

The Kariega Reserve covers an area of 115 km², and both the Kariega River and Bushmans River run through it. Guests can take part in photo safaris to witness the "Big 5" (elephants, rhinos, lions, leopards and buffalo). On its website, the reserve's management praises the absence of malaria risk, the "warm" atmosphere, and an experience that's both traditional and luxurious, altogether an excellent value for money.

Helping Rhinos, May 9, 2023.¹⁹

May 2, 2023

Mtubatuba, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa



Dumisani Gwala is a mainstay in "On the Trail". Nine articles have been devoted to him: "On the Trail" n°12 p.71 (ref.39), n°14 p.63 (ref.21) and 66 (ref.41), n°18 p.72 (ref.31), n°19 p.86 (ref.20), n°20 p.81 (ref.15), n°21 p.75 (ref.17), n°31 p.45 (ref.15) and n°32 p.62 (ref.18), involving violence against police, colluding with magistrates, buying horns from undercover police officers, repeatedly changing lawyers, intimidating journalists and garnering 30 trial postponements.

This Tuesday, May 2, he reappeared in court and deployed a new defense system. He claimed that police mistook his identity during an arrest in 2014, and intended to arrest his brother Senzo "Shibilika" Gwala instead. Zwelonke Ngwenya, the nefarious lawyer who defended him in 2014 and obtained his release on 10,000-rand (600 US\$) bail and regained his client custody of 5 previously seized luxury cars, is once again Gwala's counsel. Gwala exercised his constitutional right to remain silent following his revelations about the alleged miscarriage of justice. Zululand Observer, May 2 and July 25, 2023.²⁰

May 3, 2023

George, Western Cape Province, South Africa

After police stopped a civilian car just outside George upon witnessing one of its passengers throw a package out the window, a car chase ensued. The civilian vehicle continued on towards the Eastern Cape before being brought to a halt. The driver fled the scene. The package was found and inside was the nasal horn of a rhinoceros whose body had just been found in the Botlierskop private hunting reserve.

Independent Online, May 7, 2023.²¹

REPEATED OFFENCE

May 6, 2023

Kabokweni, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Odis Maluleke, 47, was arrested in a gambling den 27 km from Kruger. Originally from Mozambique, he has 3 known weapon offences.



- July 2015. Maluleke attempted to enter the Kruger through the large Skukuza

gate entrance with 3 accomplices from South Africa wielding ammunition, a large-caliber firearm, an axe, and the intent to attack rhinos and seize their horns. The 4 men were arrested, and Maluleke was released on bail of 20,000 rand (1,630 US\$). He disappeared into the wild, never again responding to law summonses.

- May 2017. Maluleke, now a member of the Mercedes gang, was involved in a rhino poaching incident in a private reserve near the Botswana border. He was wounded during a shootout with guards, taken to the nearest hospital and again released on bail by a local court.

- February 2019. After poaching at least one rhino in the Kruger alongside 3 men, including a park employee, Maluleke was arrested again as a helicopter landed in the middle of the gang's escape route. Despite vehement opposition on behalf of the examiners, Maluleke was granted bail by a 3rd court and escaped again.

TimesLIVE (South Africa), May 8, 2023; SAPS, May 9, 2023.²²

May 21, 2023

Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary, Barberton Nature Reserve, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

A young orphan on the brink of death arrives at the sanctuary. After his mother was killed by poachers, he was chased and wounded by hyenas.

Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary, May 24, 2023.²³

May 21 and June 14, 2023

Mthatha and Makhanda, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa



- Francis Chitiyo and Nhambo Muyambo, the last 2 horn traffickers who escaped from Grahamstown prison in October 2022, are back behind bars. They were newly part of a gang of telephone battery thieves. A car carrying 5 people, including a man wanted for rhino poaching, was intercepted near Tarkastad on road 61 with all the tools needed to carry out a burglary inside. It was during the search of their hideout that Muyambo and Chitiyo were arrested again. See "On the Trail" n°22 p. 80 and n°37 p.42 (ref.17).

- Sentencing of Francis Chitiyo to 20 years' imprisonment, Nyamo Moyambo or Nhamo Muyambo to 19 years' imprisonment, Abraham Moyambo or Abraham Moyane to 18 years' imprisonment, Trymore Chauke to 17 years' imprisonment, Simba Masinge to 17 years' imprisonment and Mischek Chauke to 16 years' imprisonment. During Operation Full Moon, they were arrested in July 2018 on suspicion of poaching 13 rhinos in 2 years (see "On the Trail" n°22 p.80). They escaped from prison on October 18, 2022, with the exception of Mischek Chauke (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.42 (ref.17)). They were one by one recaptured by the police between October 21, 2022 and May 21, 2023. All 6 are Zimbabwean nationals. At the time of their arrest, they were aged between 25 and 30. See also page 44 ref.16.

Talk of the Town, May 22, 2023; Grocott's Mail, June 15, 2023; SAPS, June 15, 2023.²⁴

REPEATED OFFENCE

May 27 and December 7, 2023

Kampersrus and Lenyenye, Limpopo Province, South Africa

- Big Joe Nyalunga arrested again (see p. 43 ref. 11). After a chase due to suspicion of involvement in rhino poaching in Lydenburg, his vehicle was stopped. Nyalunga was immediately arrested by the Hoedspruit Police and the Limpopo Stock Theft Unit. A sum of cash was seized from inside the vehicle. Three knives, a silencer, and 6 rounds of high-caliber ammunition were seized from a garbage bag that an accomplice had thrown onto the side of the road before fleeing into the bush. The police press release does not mention Nyalunga's identity. It refers to a 59-year-old suspect considered to be the kingpin of a rhino poaching syndicate in Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces. The Lowvelder media clearly revealed his identity.

- Big Joe Nyalunga has been released on bail for 10,000 rand (540 US\$) pending trial in 2024.

Big Joe Nyalunga, see "On the Trail" n°6 p.62 (ref.16), n°7 p.62 (ref.5), n°9 p.66 (ref.44), n°12 p.69 (ref.19), n°22 p.81 and n°23 p.103 (ref.26).

SAPS, May 28, 2023; Lowvelder, May 29 and December 16, 2023.²⁵

BOTSWANA

Beginning of April 2023

Khama Rhino Sanctuary, Central District, Botswana

Four rhinos were shot dead in the Botswana sanctuary where white and black rhinos are placed under military protection. Authorities had nothing to say except "Investigations on the matter are ongoing to identify the cause of death." According to other sources, the death toll has risen to 7 in just a few days. WAR (Wildlife At Risk) estimates the death toll as high as 9 and asserts that since Covid-19, assailants from Zambia and Namibia have crossed rivers on inflatable mattresses and other makeshift boats, entered empty parks, and are tracking rhinos disoriented and moved from a sanctuary to another and horns.

Namibia Daily News, April 13, 2023; Save the Beasts, April 13, 2023; Wildlife At Risk, April 22, 2023.²⁶

NAMIBIA

Beginning of March 2023

Okahandja, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

Employees discover the carcasses of 2 white rhinos in a private reserve. The horns were missing. The police estimate that they were killed between Friday 3 and Monday 6 March and that their total economic value is 840,000 dollars (45,560 US\$). Namibia News Digest, March 9, 2023.²⁷

March 6, 2023

Waterberg, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

The 4 poachers broke into the lodge on Sunday or Monday, killed a male white rhino on Monday evening, took his horns and disappeared, leaving behind footprints that the police and owners of neighbouring reserves tried to follow. They were never found. The economic value of the rhino is estimated at 420,000 dollars (22,780 US\$). Namibia News Digest, March 8, 2023.²⁸

March 16, 2023

Dordabis, Khomas Region, Namibia

Arrest at around 9 a.m. of 2 men aged 27 and 47. They are accused of killing a female rhinoceros and her calf in a private reserve. They were in possession of 2 horns, a rifle and several cartridges, 3 of which were empty. Informanté, March 17, 2023.²⁹

April 3 and 5, 2023

Etosha National Park, Oshikoto Region, Namibia

Following the discovery of 2 rhino carcasses, 4 men were apprehended by the park's anti-poaching unit. The men had horns and rifles in their possession. The Namibian, April 11, 2023.³⁰

April 6, 2023

Between Otavi and Tsumeb, and Etosha National Park, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa Regions, Namibia

Sakaria Johannes and Tomas Domingos were arrested at a roadblock carrying 2 rhinoceros horns. Investigators, suspecting poaching in Etosha National Park a hundred kilometers away, traveled there and discovered a fresh carcass. The Namibian, April 13, 2023.³¹

April 7, 2023

Between Outjo and Otavi, and Outjo District, Kunene and Otjozondjupa Regions, Namibia

Two suspects are intercepted on the road between Outjo and Otavi. They were carrying a pair of rhino horns. The investigation led to the arrest of 4 accomplices employed by an anti-poaching unit in a private reserve. One woman, Magdalena Mavandje Mukuve, is part of the conspiracy. Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism Namibia, April 13, 2023; The Namibian, April 13, 2023.³²

April 17, 2023

Opuwo, Kunene Region, Namibia

Tjimbari Tjitauro, Museveni Uakazapi and Ngatjijande Rutjindo were in possession of 4 fake rhino horns and arrested. Namibian Sun, May 2, 2023.³³

April 2023

Otjituuo, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

The condition of the black rhinoceros' corpse with his horns amputated suggests he was poached in the private reserve several weeks back. The victim was shot twice in the head. Namibia News Digest, May 5, 2023.³⁴

May 7 and 24, 2023

Between Dordabis and Windhoek, Khomas Region, and Etosha National Park, Oshikoto Region, Namibia

Between Dordabis and Windhoek, officials arrested 3 Namibians and a Zambian coming from Katima Mulilo with knives, large-caliber ammunition, a pistol, and firearms with suppressors and no numbers in their car.

Since the start of 2023, 15 rhinos have reportedly been poached in the country, despite directives from the Ministry of the Environment to dehorn 2,000 rhinos from an estimated herd of 3,000 as a preventative measure. Pohamba Shifeta, the Minister of the Environment, explains: "The idea is to dehorn and store them in the bank until we have the opportunity, in cooperation with the international community, to find a buyer. This will add value to our Rhinos and their products. Currently, these products only have value in the hands of criminals. Even private owners of white Rhinos cannot sell their horns, while poachers sell them for millions. .../..."

SOUTHERN ASIA

INDIA

March 23, 2023

Ambagan, Nagaon District, State of Assam, India



Khaliluddin, Jakir Hussain and Akbar Ali are arrested in possession of a rhinoceros horn. To date, no poaching has been recorded in Kaziranga or in the State since the beginning of the year. Northeast Now, March 24, 2023.³⁹

March 26 and 31 and April 1, 2023

Kaziranga National Park and Jakhlabandha, Nagaon District, State of Assam, India

- A dehorned rhino carcass was discovered after floating 6-7 days in a pond during rainy season in the western sector of the park, marking the first discovery of 2023. A reward of 500,000 rupees (6,042 US\$) is promised to anyone who can help apprehend the culprits.

- Harun Islam, Joban Ali and Rekot Ali, between 25-45 years old, were arrested on the night of Friday March 31st into Saturday April 1st. They are suspected to be involved in the poaching. The Print, March 27, 2023; The Times of India, March 28, 2023; Deccan Herald, March 31, 2023; Pratidin Time, April 1, 2023; Time8, April 1, 2023.⁴⁰

April 3, 2023

Gogamukh, Dhemaji District, State of Assam, India

Seizure of what is suspected to be a rhinoceros horn (950 grams, 20.3 cm long) from Doley, Mili, and Pegu.

Pratidin Time, April 3, 2023.⁴¹

April 27, 2023

Lhomithi, Dimapur District, State of Nagaland, India

Raidang Engti was arrested in the Dimapur district nearly 13 years after poaching a rhino and amputating his horn on July 3, 2012, in the Karbi Anglong district, near Kaziranga in Assam. Dimapur is located 35 km from the Karbi Anglong district. The years 2012, 2013 and 2014 were the worst for rhinos in Assam, with 25 to 27 poaching acts per year. In 2018 and 2021, poachers reportedly sold horns to Engti.

Hindustan Times, April 27, 2023.⁴²

We are currently seeking a legal means of selling them." For security reasons, black rhino population figures have not been disclosed, as their horns are most sought after by Vietnamese and Chinese brokers.

Namibian Sun, May 24, 2023; Informanté, May 25, 2023.³⁵

May 15, 2023

Grootfontein, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

The carcass of a pregnant female black rhino shot inside a private reserve is discovered.

Xinhua, May 22, 2023.³⁶

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 22, 2023

Waterloo, State of New York, United States of America

A search by the Narcotics Unit at 66 Stark Street resulted in the indictment of Brian E. MacGill, Kristie L. Pontius and Mark P. Pontius for possessing and intending to distribute cocaine, and for possessing a rhinoceros horn.

Seneca County Sheriff's Office, March 23, 2023.³⁷

SOUTHEASTERN ASIA

VIET NAM

REPEATED OFFENCE

May 12, 2023

Hanoi Municipality, Viet Nam

Sentencing of Nguyen Van Tuyen to 42 months in prison and a fine equal to 2,130 US\$, Nguyen Van Ngoc to 36 months in prison, and Nguyen Van Chinh to 30 months in prison for transporting and attempting to sell 2 kg of rhinoceros horns on September 14, 2022 in Hanoi. Van Tuyen had already received a 30-month suspended prison sentence in 2019 for illegally trafficking 2 king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*, Appendix II).

Cơ quan Trung ương Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam, May 13, 2023.³⁸



Eastern serval (*Leptailurus serval ssp. lipostictus*). Photo Raf

On the Trail n°40
Black market feline parts quotation from media or official sources
The values were estimated at the time of the seizures

Animal	Part	US\$	Country/region	Ref. (year)
Tiger	Skin and bones	24,365	India	16 (2023)
	Skin	24,450		18 (2023)
	Skin and bones	4,755	Indonesia	22 (2023)
Lion	Skin rug	1,200	United States of America	40 (2023)
Leopard	Skin	12,000	India	48 (2023)
	Teeth	611		68 (2023)
	Claw	307 to 367		

TIGERS - *Panthera tigris*, Appendix I

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

End of March 2023

Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa

A Siberian tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*) was confined in conditions that seriously compromised his physical and psychological health, as well as public safety. Neighbours alerted the SPCA to his arrival. The DALRRD (Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development) noted that the owner did not have a transport permit. The tiger was transferred to a safe place. His origin is unknown.

Eyewitness News, March 30, 2023.¹

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

May 18, 2023

Balcarce, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Court-ordered seizure of 2 tigers from a clandestine breeding farm supplying game to hunting companies, with technical and financial assistance from the NGO Four Paws. The tigers were transferred by a Turkish Airlines flight to the Al Ma'wa Sanctuary in Jordan which is run by the Princess Alia Foundation. Its founder, Princess Alia Al Hussein, is the daughter of King Hussein of Jordan, who ruled from 1952 to 1999. There are an estimated 200 captive tigers in Argentina, excluding zoos.

Four Paws, May 19, 2023; La Nacion, May 19, 2023.²

MEXICO

January 14 and 16 and beginning of March 2023 San Francisco del Rincón, State of Guanajuato, Mexico

Bengal tigers are common in this city of 130,000 inhabitants. Another tiger was intercepted, this time in the Las Torres district.

On January 14, a tiger cub was spotted on Calle Madero and Boulevard Aquiles Serdán, but then disappeared.

On January 16, authorities stopped a young man at the corner of Concepción and Emiliano Zapata streets. He was travelling in his Dodge pick-up with a tiger cub as a passenger.

The tigermania began at the end of June 2022, when a man came to eat in a restaurant with a pet tiger on a leash.

Noticias Vespertinas, March 10, 2023.³

April 4, 2023

Culiacán, State of Sinaloa, Mexico

An animal brigade transferred a Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) chained to a stolen car to a PIMVS (Predio o Instalación que Maneja Vida Silvestre) under Profepa's (Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente) supervision. PROFEPA, April 4, 2023.⁴

Mid-April 2023

Tijuana, State of Baja California, Mexico



Agents from the SEDENA (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional), Gendarmerie Nationale and FGR (Fiscalía General de la República) rescued an adult Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) abandoned in the yard of an illegal building site.

El Sol de Tijuana, April 17, 2023.⁵

April 17, 2023

State of Guanajuato, Mexico

Another tiger transferred from a private home to a PIMVS.

PROFEPA, April 17, 2023.⁶

May 13 and 19, 2023

Técpán and Petatlán, State of Guerrero, Mexico

Seizure of 3 tigers from organised crime groups.

- One female tiger was transferred by PROFEPA to the Zoológico de Chilpancingo de los Bravos.

- PROFEPA agents, in cooperation with the Sedena (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional) and under the authority of the public prosecutor, anaesthetised 2 Bengal tigers in a private home: a 4-year-old, 150 kg male with claws torn off, and a 3-year-old, 130 kg female of unknown origin. They were transferred to the Hidalgo State Zoo.

Tigers and other exotic animals were sold and dispersed following the country's ban on traveling circuses.

El Sur Acapulco, May 19, 2023; PROFEPA, May 19, 2023.⁷

ASIA

INDIA

March 4, 2023**Khairabari, Chirang District, State of Assam, India**

A 23-year-old man is arrested in the Dibang Tiger Reserve carrying the skin of a sub-adult tiger, the skull, 4 teeth and some bones. The 4,149-km² reserve has been approved by the NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) but not yet by the Assam government. It is steep, making mountain surveillance difficult. For the time being, 4 or 5 rangers stand on guard.

India Today NE, March 4, 2023.⁸

March 12, 2023**Kerhia, Sidhi District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India**

T-32, a 4-year-old tigress whose tracks were known to thieves, fell into an electric ambush. Her body was found by a canine brigade in a pit dug in the sand on the banks of the Gopad River, a sub-tributary of the Ganges river. Two individuals have been arrested.

The body of another electrocuted tigress, T-30, was found in November 2021 in the same river (see "On the Trail" n°34 p.64, ref.16).

The Times of India, March 12, 2023; New Delhi Television, March 13, 2023.⁹

Monday March 20 and Tuesday 28, 2023**West Delhi District, National Capital Territory of Delhi, India**

- Following the seizure of 2 sub-adult Bengal tiger skins valued by authorities at 4 million rupees (48,340 US\$) on the international market, capital police are working hard to dismantle the gang and trace the poaching back to its origins. Five men between ages 22 and 28 have been arrested.

- The 2 tiger skins were painted and cut from dog skins, according to the Dehradun Wildlife Institute laboratory's gory findings.

Hindustan Times, March 24 2023; The New Indian Express, March 29 2023.¹⁰

March 25 and April 1, 2023**Rangapet, Mancherial District, State of Telangana, India**

Balachander, K. Anji and Laxmaiah killed a tiger a few years ago near Rangapet, (677 inhabitants according to the last census in 2011). As is typical, they set a trap, a steel wire connected to a battery, which, instead of catching a deer or a wild boar, catches the wrong target. The men stripped the tiger of 3 claws (one for each of them!) before burying the body. Following an anonymous tip-off while the men were trying to sell the claws, police seized the goods. The men led the police to the burial site. A few bones were removed and are being examined to determine the tiger's sex and age. A tiger has 18 claws and many other parts that are sought after on superstition, witchcraft and food markets. Are the 3 claws just the last remnants of the tiger's sale?

Hindu Dayashankar, March 25, 2023; Telangana Today, April 1, 2023.¹¹

March 26, 29 and 30, 2023**Koka Wildlife Sanctuary; Parsodi, Bhandara District, State of Maharashtra, India**

A post-mortem examination confirmed that an adult tiger had died of poisoning on Sunday. On Wednesday, 2 suspects were arrested. On Thursday, a third accomplice was arrested, who had 6 tiger claws in his home. Naresh Bisne, 54, Moreshwar Shendre, 64, and Vashisht Baghele, 59, lived in Parsodi, 25 km from the Koka sanctuary. Loksatta, March 31, 2023; The Times of India, April 1, 2023.¹²

March 27, 2023**Bhatgachhi, Nadia District, State of West Bengal, India. Border with Bangladesh.**

A man attempting to cross the border on foot between Meherpur District (Khulna division) in Bangladesh and Nadia District (West Bengal State) in India was spotted by Indian border guards. As they approached, the smuggler dropped a bag. Inside was an undoubtedly authentic Bengal tiger skin (*Panthera tigris tigris*, Appendix I) including the head and teeth, and 2 horns of a blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Nepal and Pakistan).

Kolkata Customs, March 28, 2023; The Shillong Times, March 28, 2023.¹³

April 3, 2023**Pataguda, Chandrapur District, State of Maharashtra; near Afisabad, Kumuram Bheem Afisabad District, State of Telangana, India**

According to Telangana Today, the skin of an adult female tiger poached near Afisabad in Telangana was in the hands of Vikas Madhav Gotmukle, Jyotiram Bhiku Pandraram, Dhondiram Limbu Cheekram, Tirupati Mahadu Cheekram, Sandeep Lingu Korange, and Isru Somu Madavi. They were transporting the skin in Maharashtra, but it will not be used as a carpet in the bathroom or bedroom of an opulent and eccentric asiatic personality, as it has been seized by the police in Pataguda. Bones, teeth, vertebrae, claws, skull, and other remains of the tiger known to the NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) as K4 were uncovered by foresters, guided to the scene by the suspects' confessions.

Deccan Chronicle, April 3, 2023; Telangana Today, April 3, 2023; The Times of India, April 5, 2023.¹⁴

TIGERS - followed

April 11, 2023

Chamrajpet, Bengaluru Urban District, State of Karnataka, India

Seizure of 5 tiger claws from the bag of Raghukumar, who claims to have bought them from a tribal clan in Chikkamagaluru. He was going to sell them in Bangalore.

Deccan Herald, April 15, 2023.¹⁵

April 29, 2023

Labdanguri, Barpeta district, State of Assam, India

Seizure of a tiger skin and 7.15 kg of bones with an estimated total value of 2 million rupees (\$US 24,365). Arrest of Balendra Gayari, Munindra Basumatary, and Dimbe Gayari.

Pratidin Time, April 29, 2023; Hindustan Times, April 30, 2023.¹⁶

May 1, 2023

Bhandara District, State of Maharashtra, India

Ashfaque Sheikh living in Lakhni, Prakash Mate living in Tavepar, and Ravindra Barai living in Sawli were looking to sell 17 tiger whiskers which are used for black magic rituals and by miracle workers. News 18, May 2, 2023; The Times of India, May 3, 2023.¹⁷

May 3, 2023

Tekari, Gaya District, State of Bihar, India

Seizure during the night of a Bengal tiger skin by the WCCB, the SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal), and the Gaya Police. The value is estimated at 2 million rupees (24,450 US\$). Two passengers in the vehicle, known as Kundan Kumar and Abhinav Anand, both living in Tekari, were arrested. An accomplice living in Jamshedpur managed to escape.

ETV Bharat, May 4, 2023; The Times of India, May 5, 2023; WCCB, May 8, 2023.¹⁸

May 17, 2023

Beohari Forest and Madaudol Village, Shahdol District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Discovery of a tiger carcass with the teeth and claws removed. After 4 days of tracking by the canine brigade, 3 suspects were located. Diwashu Singh Baghel and Sujit Baiga were arrested, while Chokhelal Panika fled. He is believed to be in possession of 2 claws and several whiskers. The nearby Bandhavgarh and Sanjay Dubri Reserves, which are linked by a migration corridor, are home to a dozen tigers.

The Times of India, May 28, 2023.¹⁹

INDONESIA

March 11, 2023

Buket Meuh, South Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia



A 7-year-old, 80 kg, 2.2-meter-long Sumatran tigress (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) died from strangulation in a wild boar trap. According to the NGO Suar Galang, dedicated to animal justice, 19 Sumatran tigers were fatally trapped or poisoned between 2019 and 2022 out of a global population of roughly 500, including 6 in Aceh province where the population is estimated at 100 individuals. Kompas, March 12, 2023; Tribunnews.com, March 12, 2023.²⁰

May 4, 2023

Sungai Penuh, Jambi Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

Yaparudin was known for his commitment to forest protection since 2014. He had even received the Kalpataru award for environmental conservation from the province of West Sumatra and had joined the forest police of Kerinci Seblat National Park the same year. In November 2022, he was dismissed for disciplinary reasons. At 10 a.m. on Thursday, May 4, he was waiting outside the Mahkota Hotel with a 2-meter-long tiger skin in a large plastic bag, which he intended to exchange for 20 million rupiah (1,330 US\$) when he was surprised by the police. After examining his cell phone, he was suspected of having already bought and resold 3 tiger skins. The skins were allegedly obtained from a trapper in the vicinity of Kerinci Seblat Park. Kompas, May 11, 2023.²¹

May 10, 2023

Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

Attempted sale of a tiger skin and bones. Their value is estimated at 70 million rupiah (4,755 US\$) on the local market. Two arrests in front of the mosque in Jalan Lintas Sarolangun-Bangko, a 3rd in Aur Gading. Garda Animalia, May 11, 2023.²²

May 16, 2023

Tanjung Baringin, Pasaman Regency, West Sumatra Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia



Despite the desperate efforts of a BKSDA team and a veterinarian, a female tiger less than 2 years old died after being caught in a boar trap. Garda Animalia, May 17, 2023.²³

TIGERS - followed

May 20, 2023

Pastap Julu, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia



Death was a long time coming for this Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) caught in a trap on Friday and extricated on Saturday after several hours of effort and care by a BKSDA veterinary team. He was being transferred to the Batang Gadis National Park clinic when he took his last breath. He was buried confidentially to avoid his body being looted.

IDN Times Sumut, May 22, 2023.²⁴

NEPAL

March 18, 2023

Padampur Community Forest, Chitwan District, Bagmati Province, Nepal



A Royal Bengal tiger, around 6 years old, was found dead. Poisoning is suspected. This marks the first tiger poaching in the district's forests, and a terrible loss for a population estimated at around 10 individuals.

Nepal News, March 19, 2023.²⁵

VIET NAM

March 1, 2023

Pho Yen, Thai Nguyen Province, Viet Nam

Ngo Van Quan, a representative in Tien Phong, was sentenced to 36 months in prison and his 2 accomplices to 12 and 15 months in prison. At Quan's home, police seized a frozen tiger, other tiger parts and other remains of protected animals in January 2022 (see "On the Trail" no. 35 p. 48, ref.22). ENV, March 1, 2023.²⁶



March 16, 2023

Dai Tu District, Thai Nguyen Province, Viet Nam

Seizure at the home of Nguyen Duc Manh of a dead tiger, 13.8 kg of fresh tiger meat, 18.3 kg of wild animal bones, horns, and hooves. Six other suspects were arrested: Nguyen Tuan Anh, Ngo Van Ninh, Ngo Van Thang, Le Van Tung, Nguyen Van Anh, and Trinh Van Nguyen. They organised appetizers. Handpicked guests were invited to taste and buy tiger by-products.

Lao Dong, March 16, 2023.²⁷

March 17, 2023

Hanoi Municipality, Viet Nam



Officials recovered 3 tiger skins, 2-3 meters long, and 2 heads from a cab on its way to a bus station. The driver and passenger claimed to be solely responsible for the delivery and to have been recruited by traffickers who did not disclose their identities.

Tap chi Doi song va Phap luat, March 18, 2023; VnExpress International, March 19, 2023.²⁸

EUROPE

RUSSIA

March 29, 2023

Khabarovsk, Khabarovsk Krai, Russia. Border with China.

A dead Siberian tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*) was found inside the trunk of a car. Three men wanted to sell him for 700,000 rubles (9,285 US\$). Unfortunately for them, the interested buyer with whom they had arranged to meet was an undercover FSB agent, and the 3 men were remanded in custody pending indictment and pre-trial coercion. The Siberian tiger will not be resurrected, but any punishment imposed on their traffickers is positive for the survival of the species. The investigative committee of the Russian Federation, March 30, 2023.²⁹

TIGERS - followed

End of April 2023

Obluchensky District, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Russia. Border with China.

Seizure in a carefully camouflaged hole of the body of a freshly poached Siberian tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*). Additional arrest and seizure of undeclared firearms. The man faces 4 years in prison.

Amur Tiger Center, April 26, 2023; Komsomolskaya Pravda Khabarovsk, April 26, 2023.³⁰

UKRAINE

April 11, 2023

Kyiv Oblast, Ukraine

UAnimals rescued a live tiger that had been held in the courtyard of a private home since the war's onset. The tiger was evacuated to the shelter run by Natalia Popova and UAnimals in Chubynske, 30 km from Kiev.

UAnimals, April 12, 2023; GolosInfo, April 15, 2023.³¹



**LIONS - *Panthera leo* (Africa), Appendix II
Panthera leo persica (Asia), Appendix I**

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

March 2023

South Africa

A lion was injured by a neck trap. He was freed by veterinary surgeon Joel Alves. He had already been caught in a trap and rescued in 2021.

African Wildlife Vets, March 9, 2023; Blue Sky Society Trust, March 14, 2023.³²



March 15, 2023

Randfontein, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Authorities intercepted 3 lions that were circling a yard, unable to leave. The operation was carried out by the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), the GDARD (Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) and staff at the Isindile Big Cat & Predator Sanctuary in the Free State province, where the 3 lions were transferred. Fourways Review, March 15, 2023; Randfontein Herald, March 31, 2023.³³

April 2023

Gauteng Province, South Africa

A juvenile male lion that got caught in a neck snare was later rescued. The next morning, he left his caregivers to rejoin his pride.

Saving The Survivors, April 18, 2023.³⁴



May 23, 2023

Hartbeespoort, North West Province, and Muldersdrift, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Four lion cubs were reported stolen from the Lion and Safari Park on Tuesday morning. On Tuesday evening, an individual of Malawian descent who turned out to be a park employee was caught red-handed trying to sell the 4 lion cubs at a service station in Muldersdrift, 50 km away. He sought to sell each cub for 20,000 rand (1,100 US\$).

Kormorant, May 25, 2023; Focused Conservation, May 26, 2023.³⁵

KENYA

May 8, 2023

Ittilal, Kajiado County, Kenya

A lioness lay near a bush, motionless and oblivious to outside noises, with vomit nearby. A zebra carcass also lay nearby.

Poisoning was immediately suspected. The lioness died the next day despite emergency treatment. According to a preliminary assessment, which has yet to be confirmed, she was poisoned by a synthetic pyrethroid.

SWT/KWS Tsavo Mobile Veterinary Unit, May 2023.³⁶



May 24, 2023

Mbirikani, Kajiado County, Kenya

A lion wounded by a spear could not be saved. The poachers have been identified.

Big Life Foundation, May 2023.³⁷

MOZAMBIQUE

April 14, 2023

Beira, Sofala Province, Mozambique

In Mozambique's 3rd largest city, a man claiming to be a deliveryman was caught carrying 14 claws and 4 lion's teeth. According to Sernic, the 38-year-old who committed this blazing offence was a salesman who had previously worked in Maputo. Club of Mozambique, April 18, 2023; MMO, April 19, 2023.³⁸

LIONS - followed

ZIMBABWE

Beginning of March 2023

Victoria Falls, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe. Border with Zambia.



Rescue of a sub-adult lion whose neck had been cut by a metal trap. The operation required a great deal of precaution, as he had taken refuge in the bush with the 7 other members of his troop, but it was successful.

Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust, March 7, 2023.³⁹



© Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

May 10, 2023

Great Valley, State of New York, United States of America



Seizure from an antique dealer of a lion skin rug for sale for 1,200 US\$ and other trophies worth 4,000 US\$. The dealer pleaded guilty to illegal wildlife trading. He was fined 2,000 US\$ and given one year's probation.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, May 11, 2023; WIBX 950, May 12, 2023.⁴⁰



© NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

ASIA

KAZAKHSTAN

May 4, 2023

Karasay District, Almaty Region, Kazakhstan. Border with Kyrgyzstan.

Seizure of 2 5-month-old lion cubs from a 22-year-old man.

Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, May 4, 2023.⁴¹

EUROPE

RUSSIA

March 9, 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia



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Officials intercepted a 4-month-old, stunted lion cub from a car on Gerasim Kurin Street. His owner called him Zeus and claimed the cub was from Asia, but specialists confirmed that he was an African lion. Transferred to the Moscow Metropolis Wild Animal Rehabilitation Center, Zeus is said to be improving thanks to frequent sun exposure. But he will never regain his freedom.

Moscow City Prosecutor's Office, March 9 and 22, 2023; Moscow Department of Nature Management and Environmental Protection, June 10, 2023.⁴²

Beginning of April 2023

Chelyabinsk, Chelyabinsk Oblast, Russia

The stunted cub was handed over to the Spasi Menya! (Save me!) shelter. His tail was frozen and his coat was worn. He had been given as a birthday present to a so-called businessman who had no use for him. Over the past 13 years, "Save me!", run by veterinary surgeon Karen Dallakyan, has taken in and rescued bears, cheetahs, tigers, leopards, and 5 lions, including the newcomer, who is in recovery and for whom a permanent home zoo is being actively sought before winter. This may well be the Taigan Lion Park in Crimea.

Tsargrad TV, May 14, 2023; Komsomolskaya Pravda Chelyabinsk, July 14, 2023.⁴³

LIONS - followed

UKRAINE

May 4, 2023

Vyshkivs'ke, Kiev Oblast, Ukraine

UAnimals is alerted to illegal practices of selfies and contact with lion cubs in the "Zoloty Fazan" (Golden Pheasant) amusement park. "The lion cubs are exploited as toys and later, as adults, become bulky and waste," warns UAnimals. The police are slow to react.

UAnimals, May 5, 2023.⁴⁴

LEOPARDS - *Panthera pardus*, Appendix I

AFRICA

MOZAMBIQUE

REPEATED OFFENCE

April 22, 2023

Beira, Sofala Province, Mozambique

A man who, according to Sernic, is a regular trafficker and seller to "foreigners" was caught with a skull and leopard skin in his hands.

Club of Mozambique, April 26, 2023.⁴⁵

ZIMBABWE

March 11, 2023

Victoria Falls, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe. Border with Zambia.

In this Bermuda triangle of elephants, felines and hippos along the Zambia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia borders, police nabbed 4 men with 7 leopard skins.

NewZimbabwe.com, March 14, 2023.⁴⁶

ASIA

INDIA

March 1, 2023

Near Murkwad, Uttara Kannada District, State of Karnataka, India

A 3-year-old leopard was shot dead. His body drifted into a canal near a sugarcane field. Planters of the field are suspected of hiring a hitman to ensure that no "big cat" pests would disrupt their harvest.

Deccan Herald, March 1, 2023.⁴⁷

Night of March 1 to 2, 2023

Sarangpal, Kanker District, State of Chhattisgarh, India

Raitu Ram Korram and Teju Ram Kashyap, age 19, had been approached by Jaytu Korram and Phool Ram to sell a leopard skin in Kanker. Each was promised 30,000 rupees (360 US\$). At least that's what they said after being intercepted on the road to Kanker on Wednesday night. The 2 skins are estimated to be worth 2 million rupees (24,000 US\$) and change.

ETV Bharat, March 2, 2023; Asian News International, March 3, 2023.⁴⁸

Beginning of March 2023

Koodlapura, Mysuru District, State of Karnataka, India



A female leopard, around 2 years old, died in one of the traps set around the farm. The farmers identified her presence and habits by tracking and marking her footprints. The landowner now faces legal action.

Star of Mysore, March 2, 2023.⁴⁹



March 9, 2023

Near Sirvoi, South Goa District, State of Goa, India



Farm workers tried to scare away a leopard with various noises in a field not far from a warehouse. But the leopard remained impervious to these attempts to frighten him away, and for good reason: he died as a result of his injuries and efforts after being captured by a trap. The Times of India, March 10, 2023.⁵⁰

LEOPARDS - followed

March 10, 2023

Kothagudem, Bhadradi Kothagudem District, State of Telangana, India

Officials seized an adult leopard skin and arrested 9 poachers and traffickers. They were all gathered in a forest to negotiate the sale of the skin. The male leopard was poached in the Chintalnar forests in the State of Chhattisgarh. The skin was then transferred to Chintoor in Andhra Pradesh, 700 km from Chintalnar, and then to Kothagudem in Telangana, 590 km from Chintoor. The 9 suspects have been identified as G. Venkat from Telangana, Kandukuri Phaneendra, P. Chiranjeevi, S. Srinivas, M. Kosaiah and K. Erumaiah from Andhra Pradesh, and Madkam Mukesh, M. Jitender and Punem Singha from Chhattisgarh.

Telangana Today, March 10, 2023.⁵¹

Mid-March 2023

Chorgalia Kotaliya, Nainital District, State of Uttarakhand, India



Suraj, 24, carried in his rucksack the skin, teeth and claws of a leopard he had poisoned in the forest. He was on his way to Gujarat to sell them. A reward of 7,500 rupees (90 US\$) was awarded to the arresting team.

City Web News, March 14, 2023; Janjwar, March 14, 2023.⁵²

Mid-March 2023

Haridwar, Haridwar District, State of Uttarakhand, India



Rakesh and Kamal were sentenced to 7 years in prison and fined 10,000 rupees (120 US\$) for trafficking in leopard skin and bones back in 2011.

The Times of India, March 13, 2023.⁵³

March 18, 2023

Harabhanga, Boudh District, State of Odisha, India

A joint operation by the STF (Special Task Force) and Boudh foresters led to the arrest of a man carrying what is presumed to be the skin of a leopard and 2 spotted deer (*Axis axis*) skins.

Asian News International, March 20, 2023.⁵⁴

March 20, 2023

Lahru Community Forest, Kangra District, State of Himachal Pradesh, India

Villagers discovered the body of a 4-year-old adult leopard and reported it to authorities. A post-mortem examination revealed 8 bullets from a Mauser rifle in the victim's right flank. The body was cremated under authority supervision.

The Tribune (India), March 21, 2023.⁵⁵

March 24, 2023

Uttan, Thane District, State of Maharashtra, India



A female leopard was illegally captured inside a trap cage where a rooster had been placed as live bait. The 3-year-old injured her head while trying to get out. Alerted forestry services anaesthetised her and transferred her to the Sanjay Gandhi National Park infirmary. The vets hoped to be able to release her within a few days.

Danny Gonsalves, the farmer who had set the trap cage, has been charged with poaching and the illegal possession of a protected species. He has been released on bail. For Stalin D., a local animal defender who was the first to inform the forestry services, "The ease with which bail was obtained will encourage poachers and that is a huge threat to wildlife."

On behalf of the forest department, Rakesh Bhoir replies that "We will continue to pursue legal action against the accused" and that "the Uttan area is densely wooded and could be supporting a larger population of leopards."

The Free Press Journal, March 24, 2023; The Times of India, March 24, 2023; Hindustan Times, March 26, 2023.⁵⁶

March 29, 2023

Chandanapally, Nalgonda District, State of Telangana, India



The body of a male, 5-6 year-old leopard was discovered in a garbage dump. He had apparently been poisoned 10 days prior. A pig farmer who made his pigs glean the forest says that 25 of them died of poisoning in one week. He says other farmers want to defend their fields from wild and domestic animals. Residents of Kesharajupally, Seshammagudem St Colony and Chandanapally had been on leopard alert for several weeks. The intruder disappeared around 10 days ago. The corpse had probably been thrown in the garbage dump, but the stench drew the pig farmer's attention.

Telangana Today, March 29, 2023; The Times of India, March 30, 2023.⁵⁷

March 31, 2023

Narayanpur Forest, Rayagada District, State of Odisha, India

Police seized 136 kg of cannabis and a 1.2-metre-long leopard skin from Nageshwar Majhi, Soula Majhi and Nausen Mallik upon receiving information about illegal plantations in the forest. Their bail application was rejected. Police have identified and are searching for the 4th man who skinned the leopard and tanned his hide.

ETV Bharat, March 31, 2023; The Times of India, April 1, 2023.⁵⁸

LEOPARDS - followed

Beginning of April 2023

Kharvate, Ratnagiri District, State of Maharashtra, India



Two Nepalese farm workers are accused of setting traps in their bosses' land and capturing a leopard. The victim was left in agony for several hours without the forestry services being called, and Rajesh Chaudhary and Jagatram Chaudhary then buried him, without the landowners Nitin Kulkarni and Sunil Kulkarni ever being officially held responsible. The foresters were informed of the affair after the fact. The body of the leopard, about 3 years old, was exhumed and a veterinarian confirmed, despite the advanced state of decomposition, that it was indeed a leopard. However, there was no way to know whether he had been amputated of his paws, claws, or teeth before being buried.

The Times of India, April 7, 2023.⁵⁹

April 8, 2023

Between Vyara and Vejalpur, Vadodara District, State of Gujarat, India

A crowd quickly gathered around the dead leopard, and rumors soon spread as to why the left hind paw and part of the tail had been amputated. Some talk of a fight with a crocodile, others of black magic or mutilation after the victim was extracted from a trap. The air around here is not healthy for leopards. A month ago, a leopard died entangled in barbed wire on a farm.

Gujarat Samachar, April 9, 2023; The Times of India, April 10, 2023.⁶⁰

April 11, 2023

Penthabahal, Sambalpur District, State of Odisha, India

Seizure near the Champali River by the STF of the skin of a leopard in the hands of Babuli Naik.

Argus News, April 12, 2023; India News Diary, April 12, 2023.⁶¹

April 16, 2023

Padariya, Mandla District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Seizure of a leopard skin in poor condition and a motorcycle. Arrest of Narbad Singh and Sehtar Singh Markam, residing in the Dindori and Kabirdham districts of Chhattisgarh. They came on their red motorcycle which was expected to turn a corner thanks to a good tip-off from an informant. As expected, they were carrying a blue bag with a leopard skin inside. They were on their way to Sijhaura in Madhya Pradesh.

The Hitavada, April 19, 2023; WCCB, April 28, 2023.⁶²

April 23, 2023

Abdarwadi, Satara District, State of Maharashtra, India



After receiving a call from a farmer, foresters found that a female leopard, approximately 4 years old, had been fatally captured by a "faski," a trap set by poachers. The surrounding area was scoured for leopard cubs, but the search was in vain. The body was buried after a post-mortem examination. The victim bore wounds to the chest and paws. "The accused will be arrested soon," say the foresters. But beyond these good words, leopard deaths are multiplying in and around the Patan Forest, and leopard cubs are taking refuge in the sugarcane fields. The Times of India, April 25, 2023.⁶³

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 23, 2023

Khajuripada, Kandhamal District, State of Odisha, India

Sujit Rajaswadip and his nephew, both living in Arapaju, were trying to sell a leopard skin. For authentication and to find out more about the victim, the skin was transferred to the Dehradun Biological Laboratory.

Argus News, April 24, 2023; India News Diary, April 24, 2023; Odisha Bytes, April 24, 2023.⁶⁴

Night of April 25 to 26, 2023

Gogunda Tehsil, Udaipur District, State of Rajasthan, India

The ATS (Anti-Terrorist Squad) and the SOG (Special Operations Group) arrested on Wednesday night near a hotel on the Gogunda road a certain Sunil, whose real name was Chunaram, in possession of 2 adult leopard skins and 2 leopard cub skins. He had been poaching leopards on commission for 4 years and in the past had already gone to prison for kidnapping young girls and forcing them into marriage.

Patrika, April 26, 2023; The Times of India, April 27 and 29, 2023.⁶⁵

May 12, 2023

Alanahalli, Mysuru District, State of Karnataka, India



A 3-year-old male leopard struggled for 8 hours to extricate himself from a net that poachers had set at night to capture a wild boar. Informed at 10 a.m. by villagers taking their herds out to graze, forestry officers intervened at 2 p.m. inside a mob. Perhaps fearing the lynching of the feline, the forestry officers anaesthetised him, disentangled him from the net, and loaded him into an autorickshaw at full speed on a small, bumpy road. The leopard was reportedly injured in transit to a care center. In fact, according to the Star of Mysore, villagers protested against this brutality. Star of Mysore, May 13, 2023.⁶⁶

LEOPARDS - followed

May 13, 2023

Khajuripada Tehsil, Kandhamal District, State of Odisha, India

Aged 28 and 20, Jashobant Kanhar and Alok Kanhar were transporting the skin of a leopard 180 cm long and 36 cm wide on a motorcycle. The leopard had been poached 3 months ago.

The Times of India, May 14, 2023.⁶⁷

May 19, 2023

Chandanapuri, Ahmednagar District, State of Maharashtra, India

The fake buyers from the WCCB and the Forest Department had agreed with the real sellers of 11 whiskers, 4 canines, 4 molars and premolars, and 6 leopard claws to buy the lot for 500,000 rupees (6,113 US\$). On the black market, a tooth sells for around 50,000 rupees (611 US\$), and a claw for between 25,000 and 30,000 rupees (307 to 367 US\$). Shriram Sarode and Sudhir Bhalerao are waiters in a dhaba. They are now under arrest. In their defense, they say that the claws, teeth, and whiskers were taken from a dead leopard, and some forest officials, while helping with the investigation and fact-checking, point out that over the past 5 years, road collisions with leopards have not been uncommon. In a press release, the WCCB does not rule out the possibility that the organs were taken from a tiger.

The Times of India, May 21, 2023; WCCB, May 25, 2023.⁶⁸

May 24 and June 10, 2023

Rayagada, Rayagada District, State of Odisha, India

- Arrest of Dambrudhar Majhi. He was in possession of the skins of 2 adult leopards and one cub.

- Arrest of Santosh Kumar Naik, his accomplice.

India News Diary, May 25, 2023; The Times of India, May 26, 2023; Kalinga TV, June 10, 2023.⁶⁹

May 26, 2023

Chainpur, Khargone District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Accused of deliberately injuring Umesh Davar's hand on his way to his fields, the leopard was surrounded by villagers and beaten to death with stones and sticks. He was 3 or 4 years old.

Deccan Herald, May 26, 2023.⁷⁰



IRAN

March 2023

Rudsar, Gilan Province, Iran



An individual was arrested for attempting to sell the entire skin of a Persian leopard (*Panthera pardus saxicolor*).

Borna News, March 15, 2023.⁷¹

PAKISTAN

March 2023

Margala Hills National Park, Islamabad Capital Territory, Pakistan

Acting on a tip, 3 rangers discovered the body of a sub-adult leopard with his tail, paws and jaws amputated near a waterhole at the park's northern entrance. Post-mortem X-rays revealed 11 bullets in the torso.

Dawn, March 22, 2023.⁷²

CHEETAHS - *Acinonyx jubatus*, Appendix I

AFRICA

ETHIOPIA

April 2023

Ennessa Kotteh, Oromia Region, Ethiopia

The region's environmental and agricultural authorities rescued 2 cheetahs from traffickers. After 24 hours on the road, they arrived at the Born Free shelter, thin, infected with parasites, but alert.

Born Free Foundation, May 16 and July 5, 2023.⁷³



SOMALIA

March 11, 2023

Hargeisa, Somaliland Autonomous Region, Somalia

A 5-month-old female cheetah in very poor health arrived at the CCF (Cheetah Conservation Fund) refuge. CCF estimates that every year, 300 cheetahs that get captured in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia including Somaliland)

are smuggled internationally, 4 to 6 of whom die before reaching their destination, and most of whom do not live beyond 2 years.

Cheetah Conservation Fund, April 25, 2023.⁷⁴



CARACALS - *Caracal caracal*, Appendix II except for the Asian populations listed under CITES Appendix I

EUROPE

DENMARK

April 21, 2023

Asnæs, Zealand Region, Denmark



A several-week-old caracal was purchased in Germany and smuggled into Denmark. His anonymous buyer shortly after abandoned him in the Odsherred Zoo's parking lot. A carer was scratched on the hand when she handed the hungry feline some minced chicken. Odsherred Zoo Rescue is already home to a caracal that was acquired illegally in France and abandoned shortly afterwards due to his aggressive behavior.

TV 2, April 21 and 22, 2023; TV2 ØST, April 24, 2023.⁷⁵

SERVALS - *Leptailurus serval*, Appendix II

AFRICA

MALAWI

May 2023

Lilongwe Wildlife Centre, Lilongwe, Central Region, Malawi

A female serval, freed from a neck trap, returns to the wild.

Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, May 26, 2023.⁷⁶



EUROPE

FRANCE

March 21, 2023

Hellemmes, Department of Nord, France. Border with Belgium.

Further evidence of serval trafficking in northern France and Belgium. At the home of a man wanted for other crimes, police came face to face with 2 servals. The OFB reminds us that servals are protected animals and classified as dangerous by regulations. "This small feline native to Africa, who can reach 15 to 20 kg, is not suited to life on the sofa in an apartment, unless you want to ensure his own misfortune!"

La Voix du Nord, March 24, 2023.⁷⁷

Mid-April 2023

Saint-Martin-la-Plaine, Department of Loire, France

Arrival at Tonga Terre d'Accueil of 2 new servals, a female and a male seized in France from a private individual who had bought them in Eastern Europe. In one year, 18 servals have found refuge at Saint-Martin-la-Plaine. "Serval and caracal trafficking is a much more intense fad than Barbary macaques from 2000 to 2010 and lion cubs in the following decade." The association's vice president says he can't take them all in. "There is also the problem of new cat breeds, such as the Savannah, a cross between a serval and a domestic cat. After the fifth generation, it is considered to be a domestic cat, but some people take advantage of this authorization to have servals in their homes and pass them off as cats."

Tonga Terre d'Accueil, April 17, 2023; France Bleu Saint-Etienne Loire, April 18, 2023.⁷⁸

End of May 2023

Montpellier, Department of Hérault, France

Capture of a stray serval in a private garden. Yet another victim of trafficking in this species native to Africa. If they are introduced into France and the rest of the world, it's not just to look pretty for a while in a more or less gilded cage, it's also to crossbreed with cats, at least for the males, and produce savannahs that are highly sought-after on the decorative cat market.

France Bleu Hérault, June 1, 2023.⁷⁹

CLOUDED LEOPARDS - *Neofelis nebulosa*, Appendix I

ASIA

CAMBODIA

March 21, 2023

Cardamom Protected Forest, Kaoh Kong Province, Cambodia



A patrol rescued 2 clouded leopard kittens from a poacher. They are now bottle-fed in the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center and under the care of Nick Marx, a veterinarian with extensive experience in feline care. The team says that without a mother – whose fate is unknown – this is the best company the kittens could have.

Wildlife Alliance, September 27 and November 9, 2023.⁸⁰

LEOPARD CATS - *Prionailurus bengalensis*, Appendix II except for the populations from Bangladesh, India and Thailand which are listed under CITES Appendix I

ASIA

CHINA

March 1, 2023

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China



In the Tseung Kwan O. area, officials removed 11 trap-cages and rescued a leopard cat, who was later transferred to the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden. The AFCD (Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department) and the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) led the operation. Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, March 1, 2023.⁸¹

INDONESIA

March 6, 2023

Amuntai Tengah District, North Hulu Sungai Regency, South Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island, Indonesia

Two leopard cats were seized from a 21-year-old man trying to sell them for 380,000 rupiah or 25 US\$ each in front of the At-Taqwa mosque. Radar Banjarmasin, March 8, 2023.⁸²

JAGUARS - *Panthera onca*, Appendix I

AMERICA

BOLIVIA

March 10 and 21, 2023

Alto Beni, Province of Caranavi, and Palos Blancos, Province of Sud Yungas, Department of La Paz, Bolivia



- "I killed that mother-fucker," Eugenio Angeles Vila heart-warmingly writes in the WhatsApp group RtcSapecho, accompanied by a photo of the jaguar.

- On his Facebook page, Jorge Canare Cambi showcases the body of a freshly poached, toothless jaguar between his hands and a wheelbarrow.



La Voz de la Naturaleza, March 20 and 21, 2023.⁸³

COSTA RICA

April 21, 2023

Madidi National Park, Province of Abel Iturralde, Department of La Paz, Bolivia

A jaguar suffered a violent death on the banks of the Tuichi River. Animal activists lodged a complaint. This marks the 6th jaguar to die from poaching in Madidi Park, and each time it goes unpunished. La Voz de la Naturaleza, April 21, 2023.⁸⁴

April 28, 2023

Santa Rosa de Yacuma, Province of José Ballivián, Department of Beni, Bolivia

Several unidentified individuals were seen loading a dead jaguar into a truck bed, with photos attached. The conditions of his death are unknown, and a complaint has been lodged. An investigation is underway to find the individuals and question them.

La Voz de la Naturaleza, May 6, 2023.⁸⁵

May 6, 2023

Riberalta, Province of Vaca Díez, Department of Beni, Bolivia

Seizure of 6 jaguar fangs in a private home. The occupant of the premises was reported and arrested.

La Voz de la Naturaleza, May 6, 2023.⁸⁶



BRAZIL

April 1 and 2, 2023

Cáceres, State of Mato Grosso, Brazil

João de Deus da Silva was placed under provisional release for hunting 3 jaguars with the help of 6 dogs, then decapitating 2 of the jaguars and hanging their heads from a branch, with photos and video. Pantanal Oficial, April 3, 2023.⁸⁷



COLOMBIA

March 4, 2023

Medellín, Department of Antioquia, Colombia

A jaguar skin is seized from a sidewalk display at an all-you-can-buy fair. Pulzo, March 7, 2023.⁸⁸

May 17, 2023

Rancho Redondo District, San José Province, Costa Rica

- Firefighters arriving at a farm to neutralize swarms of bees made an unexpected discovery and alerted their ACC (Área de Conservación Central) colleagues.

- Seizure of a dehydrated and neurasthenic jaguar by the security forces, backed up by FRN (Fundación Restauración de la Naturaleza) and COVIRENA (Comité de Vigilancia de los Recursos Naturales). Sinac, May 17, 2023.⁸⁹

ECUADOR

May 23, 2023

San Vicente, Province of Manabí, Ecuador

Seizure of 2 jaguars, Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), and macaws (*Ara* spp., Appendix I or II) during the arrest of 5 suspected accomplices of Gato Farfán, a drug kingpin arrested in Colombia in February 2023. He is suspected by Juan Zapata, Ecuador's Minister of the Interior, of having masterminded the prison massacres that began in February 2021.

Ecuavisa, May 23, 2023.⁹⁰

MEXICO

March 1, 2023

Tepatitlán de Morelos, State of Jalisco, Mexico

A woman pulled a black, melanistic jaguar kitten by the leash. There is no subspecies of black jaguar. Black felines like leopards or jaguars have an unjustified reputation for ferocity, while white lions have an unjustified reputation for docility. In adulthood, the jaguar's black coat often reveals dark eye-spots. This kitten has been taken away from his owner and temporarily entrusted to the zoo. If, unfortunately, he stays there for a long time, he will either earn the zoo revenue or be sold to another zoo at a higher price than a black and yellow jaguar.

PROFEPA, March 1, 2023; Quinto Poder, March 2, 2023.⁹¹

PUMAS - *Puma concolor*, Appendix II, except for the populations of Costa Rica and Panama, which are in Appendix I

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 2023

Portland, State of Oregon, United States of America

A man who shot a mountain lion without a licence was fined 440 US\$, ordered to pay 7,500 US\$ in damages, and had his hunting licence suspended for 3 years. An accomplice was fined 225 US\$. The poacher had attempted to right his misdeed by purchasing a tag after the fact. Oregon State Police, March 2023.⁹²



EUROPE

POLAND

March 27, 2023

Zawiercie, Silesian Voivodeship, Poland

Ex-soldier Kamil Stanek was initially sentenced in May 2022 to 2 years of community service, specifically 30 hours a month, for illegally holding a puma and exploiting him. According to witnesses, Stanek would charge people for selfie sessions and to hold the cub he purchased from a Czech kennel in 2014 when he was just a few months old. According to other testimonies, the young puma was harshly trained. In 2015, 2017 and 2019, Stanek was fined for smuggling the puma into Poland, hosting exhibitions perilous to public health, and illegally housing a dangerous animal. Stanek, a former combatant in Afghanistan and a tough-talker, gained international fame and won the admiration of survivalists when, amidst the court-ordered seizure of the puma, he fled into the Silesian forests with the animal he considered his son.



Now, on March 27, Stanek's appeal trial opens in the absence of the puma he voluntarily handed over to the Chorzow zoo after vehemently refusing to hand him over to the Poznan zoo keepers as required by court order. Stanek said back in 2019 that he had fulfilled the formalities to operate a circus in which his puma was the only animal and the only attraction.

Whatever sentence Kamil Stanek receives, he has helped usher progress in regulating circuses in Poland and the possession of animals deemed dangerous. Only scientific institutions and zoos approved by national authorities and voivodeships are allowed to keep them. The circus door has closed on Stanek.

OKO.press, March 29, 2023; Kurier Zawierciański, June 30, 2023.⁹³

RUSSIA

March 15, 2023

Odintsovsky District, Moscow Oblast, Russia



A dispute leaves a puma dead in a Moscow suburb. In the middle of the night, an unknown person threw a Molotov cocktail into the feline's enclosure, obscure from surveillance cameras, and the animal was burned alive. The "owner" is said to be a local politician. She was home alone with a 7-year-old child. Her husband is a soldier on a "special military operation".

Moscow Oblast Prosecutor's Office, March 18, 2023; Moskovski Komsomolets, March 19, 2023.⁹⁴

BOBCATS AND LYNX - *Lynx* spp., Appendix II

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Beginning of March 2023

Cadillac, State of Michigan, United States of America

A hunter is indicted for shooting a bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) during deer season.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources, March 18, 2023.⁹⁵

MULTI-FELINES

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 20, 2023

Montello, State of Wisconsin, United States of America

After receiving disturbing information about the management of live and dead animals at roadside zoos operated by Matt and Alice Schoebel under the banners of Timbavati Wildlife Park and Shamba Safari, the Wisconsin DNR (Department of Natural Resources) went on site and slapped the couple with 3 citations for years of shoddy and inaccurate recordkeeping, including failure to report the deaths of several animals, such as bobcats (*Lynx rufus*, Appendix II), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*, Appendix II), pumas (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II) and American black bears (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II). Zoos that do not comply with the minimum rules of traceability, welfare, and health monitoring know how to recognize each other and work together to cover their tracks. The Schoebels have long exchanged animals with Oswald's Bear Ranch in Michigan, which has a long list of violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, such as physical abuse of bears, rations made from restaurant leftovers or dog food, and the premature sale of cubs just a few weeks old. PETA, May 1, 2023.¹⁰¹

Beginning of March 2023 Traverse City, State of Michigan, United States of America



A man turned up at the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) to register a bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), that he professed to have killed with a regular rifle shot. An interview revealed that he had set a trap to catch the bobcat. He then shot the bobcat after he got caught, and repeated the process with a 2nd bobcat.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources, March 18, 2023.⁹⁶

OPERATION GAME THIEF

March 8, 2023

Tucson, State of Arizona, United States of America



A bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) hung 6 meters high from a leghold trap in a tree located on the edge of an avenue. A 500 US\$ reward has been promised to help find the perpetrator(s) of this cruel and deliberate crime.

Arizona Game and Fish Department, March 8, 2023; The Sacramento Bee, March 9, 2023; KOLD, March 10, 2023.⁹⁷

End of March 2023

Cass County, State of Illinois, United States of America

A local resident without a CITES permit sent a bobcat fur (*Lynx rufus*) to the care of a Missouri taxidermist. The individual was indicted.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, March 31, 2023.⁹⁸

End of April 2023

Roscommon County, State of Michigan, United States of America



Rescue of a bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) caught in a trap. The trap's identification number was used to find the owner, who admitted to "forgetting" to remove his traps at the end of the bobcat hunting season on December 29. He has been charged.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources, April 29, 2023.⁹⁹

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 9, 2023

Williamstown, State of Kentucky, United States of America

Following the seizure of a bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) in February, the Pilkington couple went into overdrive, posting a stream of funny images on social media to show that the wild feline purchased in Arkansas had become a domestic cat, adapted to his new home to the point of relieving himself in the household toilet. A true celebration of the domestication of wild animals transformed into clowns eating mash heated in the microwave. The animal was almost euthanized by court order, but he finally found a home at the Black Pine Animal Sanctuary in Indiana.

WCPO 9, April 20 and May 9, 2023.¹⁰⁰

ASIA

INDIA

April 6, 2023

Nathdwara, Rajsamand District, and Udaipur, Udaipur District, State of Rajasthan, India

In possession of 2 "big cat" claws to be appraised - tiger or leopard -, the 2 traffickers fell into the clutches of the WCCB and the Forest Department. WCCB, April 13, 2023.¹⁰²

EUROPE

RUSSIA

April 21, 2023

Kardonikskaya, Karachay-Cherkessia Republic, Russia

Seizure at an illegal zoo of 2 black panthers, 3 African lions, 2 tigers, a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) and a Persian leopard (*Panthera pardus saxicolor*). North Caucasus Interregional Department of the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance, April 28, 2023.¹⁰³

WOLVES, ASIATIC WILD DOGS, FOXES, COYOTES AND HYAENAS



Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*). Photo Seth Beaudreault

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

March 2023

Vryburg, North West Province, South Africa

Johannes Venter, 57, is out on bail after being caught illegally keeping lion cubs in the Free State. In his spare time, he used to capture brown hyenas (*Parahyaena brunnea*) and trade them for who knows what. He carried 3 of them in his pick-up truck and headed for Brits, 400 km away. Brown hyenas were called “shore wolves” by Dutch settlers because they lived off fish, crustaceans and cetaceans washed ashore. Wrongly, breeders took a disliking to them, and by the middle of the last century, leading hyena specialists were already fearing their disappearance. Venter is said to be an illegal wildlife broker.

News24, March 8, 2023.¹

AMERICA

CANADA

REPEATED OFFENCE

May 30, 2023

Prince Albert, Province of Saskatchewan, Canada

Lloyd Slonski was fined 9,000 dollars (6,600 US\$), banned for life from holding a hunting licence, and forced to forfeit his snowmobile. He set choke traps baited with the meat of a deer presumably killed in a road collision between December 2020 and January 2021 and captured a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) and a coyote (*Canis latrans*) on a reservation where only Indigenous people of the James Smith Cree Nation are allowed to hunt. Slonski was taken aback by the ruling. He claims to have intervened at the Cree's request to regulate the wolf population. He has 30 days to appeal.

paNOW, January 23 and May 30, 2023.²



PERU

March 22, 2023

Huaraz, Province of Huaraz, Department of Ancash, Peru



The Serfor rescued a Sechuran fox (*Lycalopex sechurae*). A young man “found” him, confused, wandering and frightened, near Pampas Grande, 110 km from Huaraz. He was abandoned by his mother for unknown reasons. Sechuran foxes often give birth and nurse their young in abandoned armadillo burrows.

Serfor, March 23, 2023.³

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 31, 2023

Yungay, Province of Yungay, Department of Ancash, Peru



The skin of the colpeo fox (*Lycalopex culpaeus*, Appendix II) and the stuffed Sechuran fox (*Lycalopex sechurae*) enticed passers-by and signalled the den of a couple of charlatans who promised wonders for money by manipulating animal amulets.

Serfor, May 31, 2023.⁴

ASIA

CHINA

May 2023

Hohhot Baita International Airport, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China

Seizure by customs of 46 canine teeth in an incoming package, which after examination by experts were attributed to grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix I or II).

Chinese Customs, May 22, 2023.⁵

INDIA

Beginning of May 2023

Nagarhole National Park, Mysuru District, State of Karnataka, India



After several days’ tracking, rescue of a dhole or Asiatic wild dog (*Cuon alpinus*, Appendix II) strangled by the steel wire of a trap. Far from his pack, he had taken refuge in a forest cabin. After anaesthesia, antibiotics, and ointments were applied to the wound. The species is endangered. In Karnataka and Maharashtra, their population is below 1,000.

The Times of India, May 10, 2023.⁶

EUROPE

GERMANY

March 23 and April 7, 2023

Gifhorn, Lower Saxony Land, Germany



The head of a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) was discovered in front of the NGO NABU's premises (Naturschutzbund Deutschland). DNA analysis confirmed that the female wolf belonged to the Ringelah pack, and that the decapitated she-wolf discovery in Gifhorn on March 23 and the she-wolf head in Leiferde on April 7 were 2 different poaching incidents.

Jan Janisch, April 7, 2023; Gifhorn Police Inspectorate, March 24 and April 8, 2023; Bild, April 15, 2023; PIRSCH, May 17, 2023.⁷

April 24, 2023

Between Langenhagen and Wedemark, Lower Saxony Land, Germany

The post-mortem examination of a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) found dead on the side of a road in Langenhagen, with a shattered shoulder, revealed that he had not been the victim of a road collision, but rather of a poacher's firearm. A complaint against X has been filed.

t-online, April 24, 2023; Official portal of the Land capital and region of Hanover, April 25, 2023.⁸

SPAIN

March 12, 2023

Montenegro de Cameros, Province of Soria, Autonomous Community of Castile and León, Spain

In Burgos, the autopsy of a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) discovered on a trail in the Urbión hunting reserve proves that he was shot at point-blank range. The shooter faces a 200,000 € (211,000 US\$) fine. The Guardia Civil and the Junta de Castilla are leading the investigation.

Desde Soria, March 14, 2023.⁹

April 28, 2023

Ponga, Principality of Asturias, Spain

Two grey wolf heads (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) on the town hall forecourt.

La Nueva España, April 28, 2023; El Español, May 20, 2023.¹⁰



FINLAND

March 3 and July 4, 2023

Joensuu, Region of North Karelia, Finland

- As reported in "On the Trail" n°35 p.66 (ref.14), hunters killed a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) in Joensuu under suspicious circumstances. One of the hunters, age 65, received a 6-month suspended prison sentence and a 4-year hunting ban for shooting the wolf on sight without any basis for self-defence, killing him, and then transporting the corpse out of sight.

- The Court of Appeal upheld the judgment.

Yle, March 3 and July 4, 2023.¹¹

Wolf in Finland, see also page 207, ref. 85.



FRANCE

March 7, 2023

Barjac, Department of Gard, France

A young grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) weighing 23 kg and in poor physical condition (brittle coat, no subcutaneous fat, tapeworm infestation) was found dead in the thicket. A judicial inquiry has been launched. The precise cause of death is not known. Of note, he was discovered by a trapper authorized to kill forest animals deemed harmful, and it was the Hérault hunters' federation that alerted the OFB. Barjac is 140 km from the Parc des Loups du Gévaudan, home to around 100 wolves.

France Bleu Gard Lozère, March 16, 2023.¹²



March 7 and October 2, 2023

Giez and Annecy, Department Haute-Savoie, France



At 7 a.m. in early March, he attempted to run over a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) on a departmental road and bragged about it, on video, to his friends and family. But the OFB, which was not part of it, ended up being the recipient. He was ordered to pay 8,000 € (8,430 US\$) to the associations One Voice, the Klan du Loup, the LPO (Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux) de Haute-Savoie and the ASPAS (Association pour la Protection des Animaux Sauvages et du patrimoine naturel), to complete a citizenship course or in default to pay a fine of 3,000 € (3,160 US\$). The judgment will be published at his own expense in L'Essor Savoyard, the local weekly newspaper. France Bleu Pays de Savoie, May 8, 2023; L'Essor Savoyard, October 2, 2023.¹³

March 2023

Grenoble, Department of Isère, and Nîmes, Department of Gard, France



- The Grenoble administrative court annulled 2 decrees issued in April 2020 granting a farmer in Plan-de-Baix, located in the Drôme department, the right to shoot grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) at sight if his flock of sheep was ever under attack. The court found that concomitant measures to protect the flock by physical means had not been taken. On April 6, 2020, a suckling she-wolf was shot under this abusive decree, which expired 2 years after its issuance.

- The Nîmes administrative court cancelled the order issued by the Vaucluse prefect in September 2020, allowing wolves to be shot in the communes of Bedoin, Aurel, Monieux, Sault, Beaumont-du-Ventoux, St-Léger-du-Ventoux, Malaucène and Brantes. According to the administrative court, the Prefect and its departments did not have sufficient evidence that the wolf or wolves were causing significant and recurrent damage in the Ventouret zone.

The main ways preventing wolves from harassing domestic herds are to preserve space for wolves in forests and meadows, to reduce the pressure of hunting, beating and human activities in their habitats, and to dissuade wolves from attacking domestic animals by all possible non-violent means. Nîmes Administrative Court, October 9, 2020; La Provence, February 4, 2023; Ferus, March 27, 2023; 20 Minutes, April 3, 2023.¹⁴

HUNGARY

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 1 and August 2, 2023

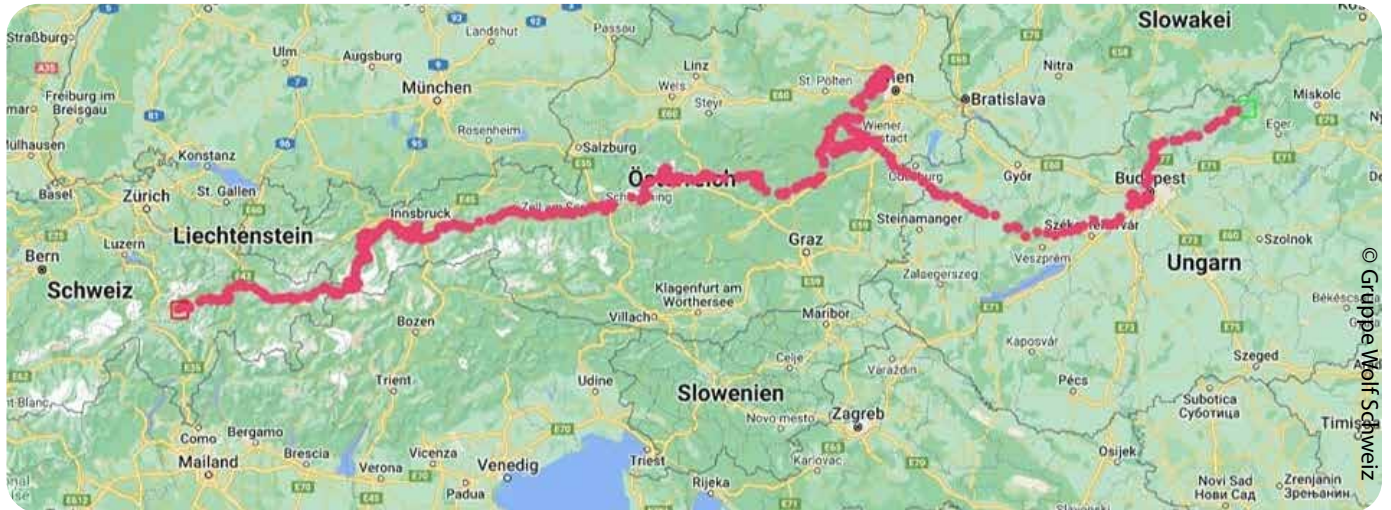
Hidasnémeti, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, Hungary. Border with Slovakia.

M237 was born in 2021 in the Swiss Canton of Graubünden, the son of F31 and M125. M237 crossed 4 countries - Switzerland, Italy, Austria, and Hungary - over mountains, across the Danube, crossing dozens of roads, freeways, and railroads. He covered more than 1,900 km over mountains and valleys, avoiding towns and logistical corridors.

As a solitary wolf, he approached packs in the Carpathian Mountains.

The grey wolf's (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) geolocation collar said he was running at 100 km/h on a freeway. The truth is that he had just been killed and 2 men were on their way to dump his body in the Hornád River, a tributary of the Sajó River. Even more astounding, the wolf was killed by a 9-year-old child. His father had entrusted him with one of his rifles, and the budding hunter was accompanied in his hunt by one of his father's friends. The 2 adults are being prosecuted.

Gruppe Wolf Schweiz, March 22, 2023; BOON, April 13, 2023; Hungarian Police, August 3, 2023; Magyar Nemzet, August 4, 2023.¹⁵



ITALY

March 20, 2023

Cerignola, Province of Foggia, Region of Apulia, Italy

An immobile 7-month-old female grey wolf cub (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) was spotted by farm workers, who then alerted veterinary services and the Amici di Balto association. Pesticide poisoning is suspected. The victim has been transferred to a wildlife park for treatment, and for the moment, the diagnosis is favourable.

CerignolaViva, March 21, 2023; La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno, March 24, 2023.¹⁶



End of March 2023

Ceriana, Province of Imperia, Region of Liguria, Italy

A forest patrol discovered the decomposing carcass of an adult grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II). A post-mortem examination showed that he was poisoned by a high dose of rodenticide mixed with meat bait. After Genoa's specialised canine brigade was summoned to intervene, Baro, a German shepherd, set out to find other poisoned baits scattered around the forest. This first detection campaign was unsuccessful, though additional campaigns



are planned in the forest. In the meantime, hikers and other forest users are advised to keep their dogs on a leash.

Il Secolo XIX, March 28, 2023.¹⁷

April 19, 2023

Viterbo, Province of Viterbo, and Sant'Oreste, Metropolitan City of Rome Capital, Region of Lazio, Italy

After the seizure in 2021 in the Region of Viterbo of canines presumed to be grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) or Czech wolfdogs (see "On the Trail" n°32 p.98, ref.25) and the transfer of 9 puppies to the Mount Amiata animal park, where they are now overcrowded, it was planned, following on-site visits by experts, to transfer them to the Maiella National Park in the Abruzzo region, which houses injured or problem wolves in an enclosure, and to the il Pettiroso refuge in Modena. The transfers were in preparation. They were cancelled after the Viterbo court ordered the wolves to be returned to their breeder, now based in Sant'Oreste, pending further genetic testing to establish the truth about the canids' genetic code.

Wolfdogs, see "On the Trail" n°16 p.63 (ref.5), n°31 p.73 (ref.14), n°32 p.98 (ref.20 and 25) and n°38 p.73 (ref.27).

Kodami, May 9, 2023; Tusciaweb, July 8, 2023 and January 20, 2024.¹⁸

End of April 2023

Dragoni, Province of Caserta, Region of Campania, Italy



A grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) died in a wild boar trap. Wolves are known to regulate wild boar populations. Ispra (Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e Ricerca Ambientale) has counted 4 to 5 packs in the Caserta province of the Matese mountains and the Cilento National Park, and one in the Tifatini mountains, "a pack being defined as a reproductive nucleus composed of a male and a female and 4 to 8 cubs who at the age of 2 disperse in an attempt to found other reproductive nuclei."

Il Mattino, April 25, 2023.¹⁹

April 27, 2023

Fiumicino, Metropolitan City of Rome, Region of Lazio, Italy

Discovery by a dog-walker of the body of a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II). The hole in the chest and the bloody wound leave little doubt as to the cause of death. In recent years, 17 wolves have died in the Litorale Romano Reserve, but this official death toll underestimates the truth. Nine were run over by cars, without it being possible to distinguish between accidental and intentional collisions, while 4 were killed by traps or firearms. The deaths of the last 4 are attributed without certainty to natural causes. The nature reserve covers almost 16,000 hectares between Fiumicino and Rome. The presence of the wolf has been attested for some 10 years.

Kodami, April 28, 2023; RomaToday, April 29, 2023.²⁰

Sunday, May 7, 2023

Vaglia, Metropolitan City of Florence, Region of Tuscany, Italy



A she-grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) is dead. She had a deep wound on one paw, a sign that she was captured by a leg-hold trap. Her body was deliberately dumped by the side of a hiking trail on the slopes of Monte Senario.

Leonardo Borchini (Mayor of Vaglia), May 8, 2023.²¹
Wolf in Italy, see also p. 209, ref. 95.

NORWAY

May 16, 2023

Oslo, Eastern Norway Region, Norway



The courts are playing leapfrog with the grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) and in the end it's the wolves who lose.

- In July 2021 (see "On the Trail" n°33 p.99, ref.10), the Oslo District Court condemned the State for having authorised the preventive killing of 4 wolves in Elverum.

- In July 2022 (see " On the Trail " n°37 p.61, ref.7), the Court of Appeal upheld the judgement. "The fact that the wolf population in Norway is assumed to have reached the viability threshold set by parliament does not, however, authorize action to limit wolf numbers."

- In May 2023, the Supreme Court requested by the State contradicted the rulings, arguing that mitigating conflict and safeguarding Elverum's economic interests outweigh the special interests of the wolf pack known as the Letjenja pack.

- The Ministry of Climate and Environment welcomed the Supreme Court's decision.

Jakt & Fiske, May 16, 2023; NOAH, May 16, 2023.²²

POLAND

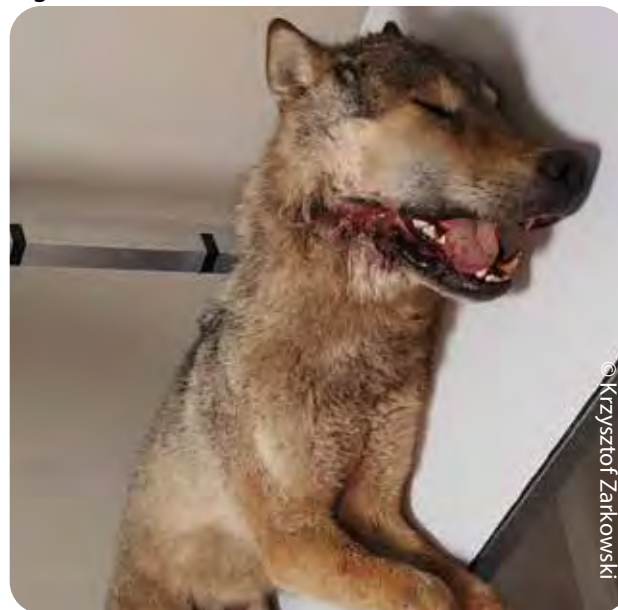
Saturday March 4, 2023

Walbrzych, Lower Voivodeship, Poland

Silesian



Sightings of 3-legged grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) are no longer rare in the voivodeship. The army of traps continues to rage.



A female was found lying by the river after being strangled by a steel collar attached to a tree. As the days and hours passed, necrosis invaded her head and her desperate efforts to escape lacerated her cheeks and disarticulated her jaws. Finally rescued by vets and police, she died on the way to the Wethelp clinic.

Association for Nature "Wolf", March 27, 2023.²³

April 4, 2023

Jagodniki, Podlaskie Voivodeship, Poland. Border with Ukraine.

The adult grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) and the 10 to 11-month-old cub were next to each other. They had been killed by poachers a few days before the bodies were discovered. Bullet marks are obvious.

Mammal Research Institute Polish Academy of Sciences, April 5, 2023; TVP3 Białystok, April 5, 2023.²⁴

CZECHIA

April 7, 2023

Łuków Forest, Lublin Voivodeship, Poland

They shot a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II)! The young male, aged 2 years and 4 or 5 months, was dead and covered in branches. Upon examination, the rangers spotted bullet holes. Usually, hunters in this private reserve shoot wild boar or deer.

Łuków.tv, April 13, 2023.²⁵

Mid-April 2023

Białogard County, West Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland



The Gruszewo, Laski and Sińce triangle is especially dangerous for grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II). After 2 crippled wolves freed themselves from traps as trap-cameras proved, a third victim, a she-wolf from the same pack, was less lucky. Her decomposed body was found by chance. People from the 3 cursed villages set traps everywhere to collect wild meat at the bottom of gardens, in thickets, small woods, at the edge of ponds, in piles of garbage and abandoned household appliances.

Association for Nature "Wolf", April 21, 2023.²⁶

SLOVENIA

Week of March 20, 2023

Municipality of Ribnica, Lower Carniola Region, Slovenia

Two grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) carcasses are found in a meadow, presumably after poisoning or shooting. In 2022, the wolf population in Slovenia (approx. 20,200 km²) was estimated at 12 packs and 120 wolves. Government directives permit shooting wolves that are suspected wolf-dogs hybrids, as well as wolves that have attacked larger domestic animals 3 times in 3 months, or smaller animals 9 times in 3 months.

Slovenian Forest Service, March 27, 2023.²⁷

SWEDEN

End of March 2023

Jämtland County, Sweden

Slanderous denunciation! A breeder claimed that one of his reindeer was killed by a grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II). In retaliation, and after the county's services took note, a wolf was killed to prevent a recurrence. After the fatal blow, services realized that the reindeer had in fact been killed by a Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*, Appendix II). The county is claiming 55,000 kronor (5,250 US\$) in damages.

Sveriges Television, March 30, 2023.²⁸

Beginning of May 2023

Jablunkov, Moravian-Silesian Region, Czechia. Border with Poland and Slovenia.

Just as the Agency for Nature and Landscape Protection had presented on its website an emergency plan to reduce the aggressiveness of the pack of grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) in the Beskydy mountain range, on the condition that breeders had taken all precautions to deter attacks beforehand, it turns out that the pack has already been completely liquidated by vigilante hunters and that its 5 members, 2 adults and 3 cubs, have been buried in the greatest secrecy. The late pack was suspected of slaughtering 200 sheep and dogs. Environmentalists are outraged by this eradication and are calling on the government and the courts to seek out and punish the culprits. There are thought to be between 120 and 150 wolves in the country, mainly concentrated in the Beskydy Mountains, the Ore Mountains, and the Sumava National Park. The State compensates farmers for the damage they suffer.

Blesk.cz, May 4, 2023; ParlamentníListy.cz, May 14, 2023.²⁹

May 2, 2023

Šonov, Hradec Králové Region, Czechia. Border with Poland.



Discovery of a dead grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) with a docked paw on the side of a trail. The post-mortem examination concluded that she had died slowly in a trap of hunger and thirst after being immobilized for several weeks and losing a quarter of her body weight. There were pine needles and a piece of a wolf's paw in her stomach, and she was pregnant with 6 fetuses. According to the experts, the wolf had been caught in a trap and was moved after her death. The director of a hunting society where the martyred wolf was discovered "rules out the possibility that one of its members was involved in this horrific act." To prolong her life and that of her unborn cubs, the wolf ate herself. How can anyone still doubt the firm and victorious will of the species to maintain itself on the surface of the Earth despite the claims and extensions of the invasive species it faces day and night?

Agency for the Protection of Nature and Landscape of the Czech Republic, June 16, 2023; ČT24, October 24, 2023.³⁰





Female grizzly bear and cub (*Ursus arctos horribilis*). Photo Adam Duff

AMERICA

CANADA

March 3, 2023

Province of British Columbia, Canada

Justin Thibault was fined 7,400 dollars (5,450 US\$) in damages and 75 dollars for illegally possessing an American black bear cub (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) in June 2020 (see "On the Trail" n°29 p.73, ref.2). The bear cub suffered from the onset of obesity due to an inadequate diet, but was resistant to human contact – proof that he was only recently captured. Transferred to the Northern Lights Wildlife Society, he was released a year later. CBC/Radio-Canada, March 6, 2023.¹



OPERATION CROSSING LINE

March 30, 2023

Grandview Municipality, Province of Manitoba, Canada

Following the seizure of 2 American black bear (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) hides by the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Pembina, North Dakota port of entry in September 2019, a joint investigation by Canadian and United States services was launched. It was revealed that between 2012 and 2021, hunters residing in the US had killed 2 bears with 2 outfitters under the cover of a single permit, and had used a Manitoba taxidermist to illegally bring the 2 hides to the US. The scheme resulted in fines of 5,585 US\$ and 3,915 US\$ for the hunters, 585 US\$ for the taxidermist, 3,900 US\$ and 7,400 US\$ for the owner of Royal Elk Outfitters, and 1,480 US\$ for the



owner of South Park Outfitters. The Department of Natural Resources and Northern Development cancelled the licences for Royal Elk Outfitting and South Park Outfitters.

Outfitters are businesses that offer services and infrastructures related to hunting and fishing. Manitoba Government, March 30, 2023.²

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 17, 2023

Williams Lake, Province of British Columbia, Canada

Kurt Walden Mohr, age 41, was fined 15,000 dollars (11,000 US\$), prohibited from entering Crown Land near Williams Lake for 10 years, and prohibited from entering all Crown lands in British Columbia in the company of a non-resident carrying a firearm for 5 years. Together with his 77-year-old father, Mohr organised hunting parties for non-Canadian clients without a hunting guide's licence, and with the prohibited assistance of several dogs. According to the investigation file, Mohr's father and son profited from the poaching of 70 bears (*Ursus* spp., Appendix II) in one year. 100 Mile Free Press, April 1, 2022; British Columbia Conservation Officer Service, May 17, 2023.³



Sunday, May 21, 2023

Quesnel, Province of British Columbia, Canada

Following a public alert, the 4 murderers of a grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*, Appendix II) were identified. The carcass and 3 rifles were seized. Grizzly bear hunting is prohibited year-round in British Columbia.

British Columbia Conservation Officer Service, May 24, 2023.⁴

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

End of March 2023

State of Washington, United States of America

An unsolved case of a cooler full of bear paws, (*Ursus* spp., Appendix II) discovered and seized in June 2022 in a backyard, has resurfaced after the WDFW (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) received unpublished information. Officials searched the home of a man incarcerated for domestic violence and uncovered a bear skull and a female elk (*Cervus canadensis*) skull. It turns out the suspect shot a bear near Lost Lake over Memorial Day weekend (Saturday May 28-Monday May 31), even though he was prohibited from owning and using a weapon due to prior convictions, and bear hunting season was over.

The prisoner has now been charged with illegal possession of a weapon, poaching a protected species and trafficking in protected species parts. He had attempted to sell the skulls over the Internet. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Police, March 29, 2023.⁵

March 31, 2023

Sandy Ridge, State of Pennsylvania, United States of America

Sheldon Sharpless, age 87, killed an American black bear (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) in his backyard, who at night had allowed himself to nibble some seeds from bird feeders.

WJAC, May 31, 2023.⁶

April 20, 2023

Marshall, State of North Carolina, United States of America

"On the Trail" n°38 p.77 (ref.20) reported on this senseless carnage - 3 American black bear cubs (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) torn to pieces. Bunkley was given a 45-day suspended prison sentence, fined 7,000 US\$, ordered to perform 50 hours of community service and barred from hunting for 5 years. The conviction was based on 20 violations of the Hunting Code. Cruelty to animals was not considered.

Diana Starr, a bear advocate who lives in Asheville, said laws need to be strengthened for those who mutilate animals.



"While the sentencing today for this despicable act will hopefully deter other poachers, unfortunately, the only wildlife crime in North Carolina that can be charged as a felony is the illegal taking of ginseng," she said.

"Surely the slaughter of a mother bear and her cubs should have stronger penalties than for a plant. We must fight to add felony charges for wildlife crimes to North Carolina law and align our laws with the majority of the public who want greater protections for all wildlife."

Asheville Citizen Times, April 21, 2023.⁷

April 21, 2023

Anchorage, State of Alaska, United States of America

Travis Larson and his company Alaska Premier Sportfishing were indicted for hunting 4 American black bears (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) with 4 Norwegian clients. Moreover, they claimed to have killed the bears on Nuka Island where bear hunting is permitted, when in fact the killing took place in Beauty Bay and Surprise Bay on the Kenai Peninsula, where bear hunting is prohibited in all seasons.

For a similar bear poaching case in Alaska, see "On the Trail" n°36 p.76 (ref.11).

U.S. Attorney's Office - District of Alaska, April 26, 2023.⁸

April 22, 2023

Dover, State of New York, United States of America

A resident was cited for multiple offences including killing a specimen of a protected species, in this case, an American black bear (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II), out of season and without a hunting licence. At the start of the investigation, he claimed to have been forced to shoot to save his dog, who had been attacked by the bear. He claimed this was in some way self-defense, but ECO (Environmental Conservation Officer) Kevin Wamsley pointed out several inconsistencies, and the man finally admitted that it was the dog that was chasing the bear. It was the biggest bear ever seen in Dutchess County. He weighed around 320 kg. Some meat was removed as evidence, and the carcass was donated to Hunters Helping the Hungry.

Mid Hudson News, April 24, 2023; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, April 26, 2023.⁹

May 1, 2023
Shoshone National Forest, State of Wyoming, United States of America



Residents discovered a dead grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*, Appendix II) on the side of the highway leading to Yellowstone National Park. Some claim he was deliberately finished off by a driver after a collision. Whatever the circumstances - self-defense, accident - the death of a grizzly must be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities. In the absence of a call or other report, Wyoming Game and Fish considers the grizzly to have been the victim of poaching, and issues an appeal for witnesses.

Big Horn Basin Media, May 2, 2023; Powell Tribune, May 12, 2023; The Wyoming Truth, May 24, 2023.¹⁰

May 12, 2023
Ruston, State of Louisiana, United States of America

6,000 US\$ reward for the identification and arrest of the person or persons responsible for the shooting death of a Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*, Appendix II).

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, May 13 and June 1, 2023.¹¹

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 16, 2023
Newport, State of Oregon, United States of America



Corey Douglas Loving II and his mother Gail Faye Freer are fined 15,000 US\$, have their hunting licences suspended until 2026, and are placed on probation until 2028 for poaching 2 American black bear cubs (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) that were wandering through blueberry bushes (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.75, ref.6). According to Jason Kirchner, speaking on behalf of the district's wildlife protection services, there's no excuse for killing 8-month-old bear cubs. And what's more, he laments, the meat was left to rot.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, May 16, 2023; Outdoor Life, May 17, 2023.¹²

May 16, 2023
Berry Mountain, State of Montana, United States of America

The male grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*, Appendix II) was nothing like "horribilis" as his Latin name suggests. He had never been a source of conflict with human activity, as evidenced by the geolocation tag he had been wearing for years. He was killed on Tuesday evening and discovered on Wednesday, May 24 near Bull River and a forestry road.

The Fairfield Sun Times, May 30, 2023.¹³

May 2023
Wahkiakum County, State of Washington, United States of America

Arrest of a 31-year-old man in flagrante delicto of hunting the American black bear (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) out of season, with the forbidden help of dogs whose movements he monitored with geolocation collars. He led the officers to the bear's corpse. In his pick-up truck, a man was waiting. He claimed not to know what was going on outside. He was accompanied by a toddler.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Police, May 26, 2023.¹⁴

Monday, May 29 and Sunday, June 4, 2023
Bristol, State of Vermont, United States of America

An American black bear (*Ursus americanus*, Appendix II) was shot and killed by teenagers who had gathered on Memorial Day for a fishing trip. The cub was recovered by wildlife ranger Dale Whitlock a week later in the thicket not far from where his mother had been poached. He immediately transferred him to a Lyme bear care centre in New Hampshire, 140 km from Bristol.

Addison Independent, June 8, 2023.¹⁵

ASIA

GEORGIA

March 2023
Liakhvi Nature Reserve, Region of Inner Kartli, Georgia

In the Liakhvi State Reserve, President Gagloev of South Ossetia, a self-proclaimed republic recognized by a handful of countries including Russia, Syria and Venezuela, apparently worked alongside the reserve director, some friends and Panov, a Russian citizen with a large social media following, to hunt brown bears (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II). Hunting tourism thrives in South Ossetia, which is still part of Georgia, according to the United Nations.

JAMnews, June 1, 2023.¹⁶

INDIA

Night of March 6-7, 2023

Lavatara, Rajnandgaon District, State of Chhattisgarh, India

A sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*, Appendix I) and her cub were electrocuted by a fence protecting the fields. No claws or other marketable parts were removed from their bodies. According to the Times of India, some of the forestry officers are sympathetic to the farmers and understand for their methods of defence. No arrests. The Times of India, March 8, 2023.¹⁷



April 3, 2023

Kormud, Dhamtari District, State of Chhattisgarh, India

Tiju and Tiharu are in custody for killing an 8-month-old sloth bear cub (*Melursus ursinus*, Appendix I) with a bow and arrow. The cub's remains were found at their home in the village of Kormud (500 inhabitants).

ETV Bharat, April 3, 2023; The News Mill, April 5, 2023.¹⁸

IRAN

Beginning of May 2023

Izeh, Khuzestan Province, Iran

Six months' imprisonment for 3 men who led and instigated the lynching and death of a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) (see "On the Trail" n°37 p. 67, ref. 32). Khabaronline, May 18, 2023.¹⁹



End of May 2023

Germi County, Ardabil Province, Iran

A brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) died of exhaustion after being chased, threatened, tied up, dragged by a tractor, and beaten for several hours by villagers who accused the victim of being aggressive and intrusive. The 2 ringleaders have been identified and are being questioned by the police. "It was a male, in general they are not aggressive and are cautious unlike females who take risks to protect their cubs" says the director of wildlife protection in Germi and surrounding areas. Khabarfoori, May 20, 2023; Sadonline, May 31, 2023.²⁰

MALAYSIA

May 12, 2023

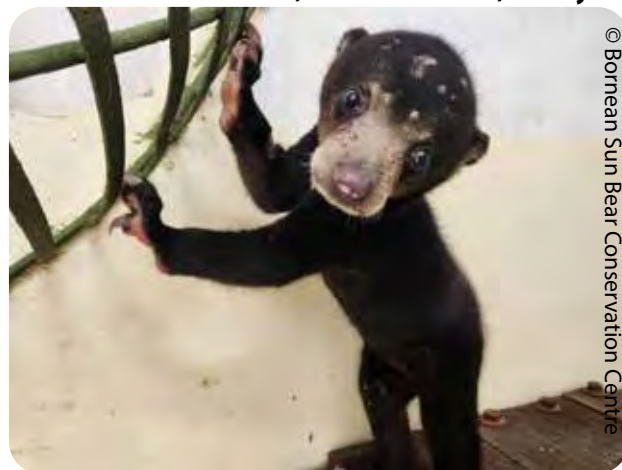
Kampung Taviu, State of Sabah, Malaysia

A Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*, Appendix I) escaped from his cage and the village chief, fearing for the safety of his constituents, killed him with a firearm.

Daily Express, May 12, 2023.²¹

May 29, 2023

Lok Kawi Wildlife Park, State of Sabah, Malaysia



© Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre

A 3-month-old female bear cub arrives at the rehabilitation center for Malayan sun bears (*Helarctos malayanus*, Appendix I). Veterinary doctor Wong Siew Te isn't too worried about her, given her agility during the day and her peaceful sleep at night on a mattress of dry leaves. On the other hand, Siew and the caretakers are concerned about the mother's fate, and point out that Malayan sun bear cubs are resistant to life in captivity in private homes. "In an ideal world, Tenom [the new arrival's nickname] would be living happily with her mum in the forest learning the bare necessities naturally." The Star (Malaysia), June 11, 2023.²²

MONGOLIA

REPEATED OFFENCE

Beginning of April 2023

Batshireet District, Khentii Aimag, and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

B. killed a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix I in Mongolia) with a firearm and killed her 2 cubs with a stone or stick. The 3 skins were seized from his home. He intended to resell them. The Batshireet District is 400 km from Ulan-Bator. B. has to pay 11,900 US\$ in damages. He has already been convicted 3 times in the past for poaching. iKon.MN, May 1, 2023.²³



TAIWAN

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 6, 2023

Wutai Township, Pingtung County, Taiwan

Indictment of 9 members of tribal communities who, as part of survival training and a return to the roots of the immemorial hunting practiced by their ancestors and handed down from generation to generation, shot and killed at least 4 Formosan black bears (*Ursus thibetanus formosanus*, Appendix I) between January 2020 and December 2022. The poaching methods - which involved collective beatings - and the videos ridiculing the victims that investigators discovered reveal that the gang's motives are a far cry from the rituals of subsistence hunting. In several restaurants in the township, "wild meat" was sold at expensive prices, which investigators believe may have come from the murdered Formosan black bears.

Tribal hunting in Taiwan, see "On the Trail" n°33 p.232 (ref.79) and n°38 p.87 (ref.15).

Bear hunting in Taiwan, see "On the Trail" n°29 p.74 (ref.10), n°30 p.165 (ref.44), n°36 p.80 (ref.36) and n°38 p.79 (ref.34) and p.205 (ref.31).

Liberty Times Net, April 7 and 8, 2023; Taiwan News, April 7, 2023; Taipei Times, April 8, 2023.²⁴

May 1, 2023

Zhuoxi, Hualien County, Taiwan

Rescue of a 2-year-old Formosan black bear (*Ursus thibetanus formosanus*, Appendix I) caught in a steel noose by his left forepaw in a tea plantation at an altitude of 400 meters. The report was made at around 9 p.m. on Monday, and the veterinary team arrived on the scene the following morning. Amputation of a finger was unavoidable. The survivor has been transferred to a specialised shelter for a month, to allow time to monitor his healing and rehydration, and for the authorities to find the means and place for his release in consultation with the local tribes, who are not all of them friendly with the Taiwan's black bears.

Ya!Travel, May 2, 2023.²⁵



THAILAND

March 7, 2023

Pang Mu, Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand, border with Myanmar.

Seizure of 2 Asian black bear cubs (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I) from someone claiming to have rescued them from across the border when their mother was being harassed by hunting dogs. The border police didn't take his version at face value. They believe there is a conspiracy, that the cubs were bought in Myanmar, and that the man was involved in the poaching. In fact, he wanted to "breed" them to resell them. The seizure took place near a refugee camp. The preliminary investigation is credited to the 713th Infantry Regiment and the National Parks Department.

Dep. of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, March 7, 2023; The Thaiger, March 8, 2023.²⁶

On the Trail n°40. Robin des Bois

VIET NAM

April 17, 2023

Da Lat, Lam Dong Province, Viet Nam

Sentencing of Huynh Thi Thanh Hang to 15 months' imprisonment for selling in his Feng Shui store and via Facebook 20 Malayan sun bear claw pendants (*Helarctos malayanus*, Appendix I) and other alleged items, notably ivory, which after examination were found to be fake. See "On the Trail" n°34 p. 222 (ref. 72).

Báo Điện tử VOV, April 18, 2023; ENV, April 18, 2023.²⁷



April 27, 2023

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Handing over of a male Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*, Appendix I). The individual thus escaped prosecution for shamelessly keeping a protected animal in captivity for over 6 years, "donated by an acquaintance." The Malayan sun bear was anaesthetised and taken to the Cu Chi wild animal shelter.

Ho Chi Minh City Law Journal, April 27, 2023.²⁸

EUROPE

CROATIA

Sunday, May 28, 2023

Ruzic, Sibenik-Knin County, Croatia

In the SUV intercepted by customs officers, the 2 men claim to be returning from a hunting reserve in Lika, 80 km from Ruzic (near the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina), and to be carrying a regularly slaughtered European roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) for whom they present a certificate of origin. But upon closer inspection, customs officials also discovered the body of a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II).

Customs Administration of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Croatia, May 29, 2023.²⁹

FINLAND

May 30, 2023

Kouvola, Region of Kymenlaakso, Finland

On Wednesday, August 31, and Saturday, September 3, 2022, members of a hunting reserve baited brown bears (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II), a prohibited practice. The investigation revealed that they then monitored the feeding site with night vision cameras. As soon as a bear approached, they unleashed a hunting dog, called in accomplices, and launched an all-night, all-morning hunt. At least 2 bears were poached thanks to this subterfuge. The case is now in the hands of the local prosecutor.

Police of Finland, May 30, 2023; Yle, May 31, 2023.³⁰

GREECE

Sunday April 2, 2023

Laimos, West Macedonia Region, Greece. Border with North Macedonia.

Officials rescued a 2-year-old brown bear cub (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) caught in a wild boar trap near a field. As soon as she awoke from her anaesthetic, she ran to her mother, watching nearby. This was a joint intervention by forestry officers and volunteers from the Society for the Protection of Prespa National Park and the Callisto NGO for the protection of large predators. Dasarxeio.com, April 3, 2023.³¹



Saturday, May 6, 2023

Pyrgetos, Region of Thessaly, Greece

Liberation by a veterinarian from the University of Thessaly, with the help of game wardens and members of the Callisto NGO, of a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) about 4 years old and weighing around 130 kg, caught in a metal trap attached to a tree, a practice increasingly common in the region's forests. The rescue operation lasted 5 hours. After a few treatments and his awakening, the bear was released.

Callisto, May 9, 2023; Dasarxeio.com, May 11, 2023.³²



NORWAY

6 mars et 27 août 2023

Trondheim, Comté de Trøndelag, Norvège

- Reindeer herder Odd Bjørnar Bjørkås received a suspended 8-month prison sentence and 2 years of probation for shooting a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) and 2 cubs, who he believed posed an imminent threat to his reindeer herd. His lawyer has appealed the sentence on his behalf. "Before the court of first instance, biodiversity law prevailed over the rights of indigenous peoples to practice their activities" (see "On the Trail" n°36 p.82, ref. 50). The Trøndelag bear breeding area is located in Lierne National Park. Mr. Bjørkås had previously applied for a bear culling permit, blaming bears for the deaths of young reindeer. The permit was not granted as the national park's bear population was below viability targets.



- The Court of Appeal aggravated the lower court's decision. Mr. Bjørkås was sentenced to 6 months in prison. His lawyer vowed to take the case to the Supreme Court. To be continued!

Dagsavisen, March 6 and August 28, 2023; NOAH, March 6, 2023; Rovdyr.org, March 6, 2023; Trønder-Avisa, March 8, 2023.³³

April 6, 2023

Vindodden, Svalbard Arctic Region, Norway

The 17-year-old polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*, Appendix II) N23992 and her cub have just left their protection zone and ventured near the vacationers' bungalows. They are chased away by men on snowmobiles with signal pistols and throw themselves into the water. "After a while, we saw that the bear was completely motionless, her head underwater, while the cub swam around her," says the Governor of Svalbard in his statement. Officers arrived on the scene to recover the carcass for a necropsy. The bear cub refused to leave his mother's side and, after several attempts to put him to flight, was shot dead.

N23992 was known as "Frost." She had undergone anaesthesia a few days earlier as part of a research campaign by the Norwegian Polar Institute. It is possible that she did not fully recover and succumbed to a heart attack as a result of the stress of the chase. Frost is known as the main character in the film "Queen Without Land" by Norwegian filmmaker Asgeir Helgestad.

Polar bears are protected by the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears signed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (now Russia), Norway, Greenland (Denmark), the United States, and Canada.

The polar bears of the Svalbard archipelago (formerly Spitzbergen) are disturbed by the routes and stopovers of cruise ships, and by increasingly noisy, bright, and invasive human disturbances.

To avoid conflicts between polar bears and human activities, see "On the Trail" n°7 p.60.

Governor of Svalbard, April 7, 2023; Svalbardposten, April 7 and 12, 2023; NRK, April 12, 2023; Polar Bear Science, April 23, 2023.³⁴

ROMANIA

Sunday, April 9, 2023

Călimani Mountains, Mureș County, Romania

Rescue of a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) being strangled by the noose of a steel trap thanks to the environmental guard, gendarmerie, Milvus Group, and Vets4Wild. Mures Environmental Guard, April 11, 2023.³⁵



April 2023

Gurahonț, Arad County, Romania

This story goes back to November 2017, when 40 hunters, including 8 Germans, embarked on a wild boar hunt in a mountain forest. They ended up killing a 3-year-old brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II), a 200 kg beast bearing little resemblance to a wild boar. This misunderstanding earned Georg Kurt Schrodel 15 months in prison and a 40,000 € (38,825 US\$) fine in October 2022. The 67-year-old German citizen has not appealed, thus the sentence is final. Schrodel is wanted by the Romanian police. Ghidul Aradean, November 23, 2017; Ziarul Românesc, April 24, 2023.³⁶



© Ziarul Românesc

May 9, 2023

Osesti, Vaslui County, Romania

Rescue of a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) caught in a trap by a joint team from the police, the Animal Protection Bureau, the Forestry Department, the Environmental Guard, and the Hunting and Fishing Association. The alert was raised by villagers, who first took the time to film themselves and take selfies in front of the immobilized bear. Adevarul, May 10, 2023.³⁷



RUSSIA

Beginning of March 2023

Zabaykalsky Krai, Russia. Border with China.

Officials seized bear paws (*Ursidae*, Appendix I or II) while dismantling a gang specialised in illegally cutting pine and larch wood and smuggling it to China. Criminal proceedings have initiated for "smuggling goods and resources of strategic importance". The gang exported at least 44,000 m³ of wood to China. Virtual Customs, March 9, 2023.³⁸

March 3 and April 25, 2023

Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Kamchatka Krai, Russia

The Kamchatka High Court (see "On the Trail" n°33 p.110, ref.54 and n°37 p.71, ref.60) acquitted Igor Redkin, a parliament member and businessman who admitted to mistakenly killing a scrap metal dealer in a garbage dump while poaching brown bears (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II). The only penalty was Redkin having his rifle and thermal camera confiscated. Kamchatka Krai - United Kamchatka, March 3, 2023; Kamchatka Krai Court, April 25, 2023.³⁹



March 13, 2023

Akbulak, Orenburg Oblast, Russia

A driver who attempted to transfer 4 brown bear cubs (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) to a circus in Uzbekistan, which the financially-troubled Syzran Zoo ultimately discarded, was given a 2.5-year suspended prison sentence and fined 30,000 rubles (400 US\$). He was arrested in Sagarchin near the Kazakhstan border (see "On the Trail" no.36 p.83, ref.53). Komsomolskaya Pravda Orenburg, March 13, 2023; Akbulaksky District Court, March 13, 2023.⁴⁰



End of March and April 12, 2023

Kotlas, Arkhangelsk Oblast, Russia



Информационное Серафимовское Агентство

Seizure of a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) held for more than 10 years in a riding club attached to a mini-zoo. The owner claims to have "adopted" her. Her mother was killed by hunters. He has never obtained authorisation to open a zoo, a sine qua non for keeping the bear. He says he has offered to sell her to accredited establishments, but to no avail.

On April 12, the court ordered the confiscation of the bear, who becomes federal property, and her transfer to an appropriate home. News Agency North News, March 24, 2023 ; Ria.City, April 18, 2023.⁴¹

April 13, 15, and 17, 2023

Krasnoyarsk and Boguchansky District, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Russia

- Two brown bear cubs (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II), one dead and the other dying, are found in the early hours of the morning in the residential area of Zelenaya Roschaya on the banks of the Yenisei. They had been torn to pieces by stray dogs. During the night, people heard barking and growling, unaware of the drama unfolding. When the fire department arrived on the scene, the 2 cubs were dead, and they were taken away. They were so small they could fit into a plastic bag.

- A cab driver rescues a live bear cub from the side of a freeway. He puts him in a banana box and takes him to the "Instinct" Centre. Instinct animator Lyubov Tomiris immediately named him "Banana."

.../...

SLOVAKIA

- Alerted by neighbours, police discovered a noisy bear cub emerging from a bathtub in a family apartment. Volunteers from the Instinct Center were called in to rescue him. They will take care of the cub for 2 months in the company of Banana, without making him dependent on human assistance, and will then transfer him to a reserve in the Altai region, where he will undergo a training course for life in the wild before being released. According to the initial investigation, the father of the family took the cub home after a hunting trip, and the volunteers at the Instinct Centre are very concerned about the fate of his mother.

- Three men, ages 37, 48, and 64 who killed a female bear and her cub as they left their den in April 2021 in a forest 15 km from the village of Oktyabrsky, were betrayed 2 years later by a video that one of them posted on social networks as a boast. The public was outraged, but local police were unable to identify where the crime had been committed until the Boguchansky gamekeepers and marshals recognized their trees and clearings. One thing led to another, and the poachers were hunted down. At their homes, an IZhK-1 smoothbore shotgun, 76 cartridges, and 700 grams of gunpowder were seized.

Channel 7 Krasnoyarsk, April 13, 2023; Rossiyskaya Gazeta, April 18, 2023; Smotrim, April 18, 2023.⁴²

Mid-May 2023

Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia

Customs seizure of 4 brown bear skins (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) bound for Kazakhstan under false names. The value of the 4 skins is estimated to be 200,000 rubles (2,450 US\$ or 610 US\$ per skin). This seizure follows the dismantling of a gang specialising in the smuggling of protected wild species in conspiracy (see page 209, ref. 98).

Life, May 12, 2023; Virtual Customs, May 15, 2023.⁴³

May 29 and June 20, 2023

Kuloy, Arkhangelsk Oblast, Russia

A brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) disappeared just before he was seized on a prosecutor's warrant in response to corroborating information and a petition signed by over 80,000 local residents. He had been held captive for several years and was helping to train dogs to hunt...bears on the estate of a prominent public works, funeral, and forestry contractor. He says the bear has been donated to local NGOs, but none of them are aware of the donation.

Arkhangelsk Oblast Prosecutor's Office, May 29, 2023; 29.RU, June 26, 2023.⁴⁴

April 21, 2023

Žilina Region, Slovakia. Border with Czechia.

Officials arrested 3 Czech nationals as they transported a skinned brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) and firearms in their car. "The case is currently the subject of intensive work and no further details can be provided."

Police of the Slovak Republic, April 21, 2023.⁴⁵



SAIGAS, GAZELLES, ANTELOPES, URIALS, MARKHORS, WILD GOATS ...



Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*). Photo Marc Faucher

AFRICA

COTE D'IVOIRE

REPEATED OFFENCE

End of April to the beginning of May 2023

Comoé National Park and Bouna, Zanzan District, Côte d'Ivoire

Twelve months' imprisonment for poaching in the Comoé Park and the illegal possession of weapons. At the time of his arrest by guards, he had killed 6 duikers (subfamily Cephalophinae) and a four-toed hedgehog (*Atelerix albiventris*). There are several species of duiker antelope in Comoé Park, including bay duikers (*Cephalophus dorsalis*, Appendix II), yellow-backed duikers (*Cephalophus silvicultor*, Appendix II), and Maxwell's duikers (*Philantomba maxwellii*, Appendix II).

Agence Ivoirienne de Presse, May 4, 2023; Koaci, May 4, 2023.¹



ZAMBIA

May 1 and beginning of July 2023

North Western Province, Zambia

Bernard Nkanza, Vincent Kayaya, and Hamphery Nkanza, all age 21, were in possession of 53 kg of southern lechwe (*Kobus leche*, Appendix II) and puku (*Kobus vardonii*) meat. Bernard Nkanza and Vincent Kayaya pleaded guilty and were sentenced to 5 years in prison.

Solwezi Radio, July 7, 2023.²

AMERICA

CANADA

Sunday, May 21, 2023

Leader, Province of Saskatchewan, Canada

Officials are calling on witnesses with information on who poached a female pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*, Appendix I in Mexico) on May 20 or 21. The body, left for vermin and scavengers, was found in a field 20 meters from a small road.

SaskTIP, May 28, 2023.³



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 23, 2023

Sacramento, State of California, United States of America

Indictment of Pir Danish Ali, a safari organiser in Pakistan, and Jason Keith Bruce, a hunting guide, for violating the Endangered Species Act in conspiracy by making false statements to bring prohibited hunting trophies into the United States of America. In 2016, Bruce paid Pir 50,000 US\$ to hunt a Ladakh urial (*Ovis vignei vignei*, Appendix I) even though Bruce knew that the population had been reduced to less than 200 individuals, that the species was listed in Appendix I of CITES, and that an urial trophy could only be brought to the United States fraudulently with Pir's complicity.

On March 29, 2018, Bruce returned from Pakistan with 8 hunting trophies, including Ladakh urial horns under a false name and accompanied by a falsified CITES certificate. He was unpleasantly surprised to hear customs and border police ask him to open his suitcases and unpack his papers. Despite his business card stating his profession as a hunting guide based in Galt, California, authorities seized all the animal parts brought back from Pakistan, including the urial horns that had cost him so much money. The investigation has since proved that between 2013 and 2018, at least 25 hunters from the United States had, with Pir's complicity, fraudulently imported 97 hunting trophies.

The News International, December 27, 2022 and April 6, 2023; U.S. Attorney's Office - Eastern District of California, March 24, 2023.⁴

ASIA

CHINA

March 2023

Fuzhou, Fujian Province, China

Seizure of a 57-gram saiga antelope horn (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II) from an overseas parcel. X-ray examination revealed an anomaly. Chinese Customs, March 25, 2023.⁵

April 2023

Fuzhou Changle International Airport, Fujian Province, China

Customs confiscated 2 saiga antelope horns (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II) inside the luggage of a passenger from abroad. Total weight: 230 grams. Chinese Customs, April 19, 2023.⁶

April 21 to May 8, 2023

Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, China



© Hangzhou Customs

In 6 incoming parcels declared to contain "coats," there were the 2 horns of 6 male saiga antelopes (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II). Hangzhou Customs, May 25, 2023.⁷

INDIA

March 19, 2023

Panne Singh Nagar, Jodhpur District, State of Rajasthan, India

The Bishnoi are always on alert. They shot a video of an Indian gazelle (*Gazella bennettii*, Appendix III in Pakistan) hanging from a tree and feeding a banquet of at least a dozen revellers, and are circulating it on social media. The scene took place on a farm. Animal rights activist Om Prakash says that poachers have set up camps between the Jodhpur and Barmer districts and that gazelle carcasses are sold during open-air fiestas or in hotels. Hindustan Times, March 21, 2023.⁸

April 5, 2023

Paniya, Amreli District, State of Gujarat, India

Officials seized the carcass of a young Indian gazelle (*Gazella bennettii*, Appendix III in Pakistan) or chinkara, 4 knives, pieces of net and steel wire, and arrested 3 individuals. The Indian Express, April 6, 2023.⁹



April 23 and 24, 2023

Leh, Leh District, Union Territory of Ladakh, India

Seizures of 62 wool stoles made with Tibetan antelope fur (*Pantholops hodgsonii*, Appendix I) by the Wildlife Division informed by the WCCB. WCCB, April 28, 2023.¹⁰

May 9 and 10, 2023

Amritsar, Amritsar District, and Pathankot, Pathankot District, State of Punjab; Union Territory of Ladakh, India

Seizure of 399 stoles made from shahtoosh, the wool of the Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsonii*, Appendix I). The stoles are woven from the hair shaved from under the animal's belly. 399 stoles correspond to the poaching of over 1,400 antelopes. A good-quality stole sells for 20,000 US\$ on the international market, particularly in Europe, and on the Indian market, they sell for between 50,000 and 400,000 rupees (610 to 4,890 US\$). They are woven in northern Kashmir, in Karzok in Ladakh, in Darchula on the Indo-Nepalese border, and smuggled via Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, and Kolkata.

Shahtoosh, see "On the Trail" n°3 p.76, n°5 p.109, n°6 p.100 (ref.10), n°8 p.93 (ref.12), n°9 p.91 (ref.13), n°11 p.49 (ref.30), n°16 p.103 (ref.61), n°20 p.114 (ref.24), n°23 p.140 (ref.26) and p.142 (ref.45), n°28 p.119 (ref.23), n°32 p.109 (ref.6), n°33 p.113 (ref.13), n°34 p.101 (ref.15), n°35 p.75 (ref.7) and p.76 (ref.11). Wildlife Trust of India, May 12, 2023; WCCB, May 19, 2023.¹¹

IRAN

Beginning of March 2023

Near Ardestan, Isfahan Province, Iran

Seizure of a rifle, its ammunition, the carcass of an urial (*Ovis vignei*, Appendix I), a pair of binoculars, and all the usual poaching paraphernalia. Irib News Agency, March 7, 2023.¹²

Beginning of May 2023

Agdag Protected Area and Khalkhal, Ardabil Province, Iran

Poaching continues unabated in protected areas along the Caspian Sea. Part of a wild goat (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) was found in a private home during a search warranted by the Shahrud district judiciary. According to article 680 of the Islamic Penal Code, anyone who hunts protected wild animals in violation of regulations and without a legal permit is liable to a prison sentence of between 3 months and 3 years. Irib News Agency, May 10, 2023.¹³

May 2023

Faruj, North Khorasan Province, Iran

Arrest of a poacher caught transporting the carcass of an urial (*Ovis vignei*, Appendix I) into a forest where he had entered on the pretext of collecting wood. Irib News Agency, May 28, 2023.¹⁴

KAZAKHSTAN

April 17, 2023

Beyneu, Mangystau Region, Kazakhstan



T. sentenced to 7 years in prison. He had been arrested with 527 saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II) horns weighing 114 kg (216 g per horn on average) on January 26, 2023 (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.58)

Mangystau Region Court, April 17, 2023.¹⁵

Map attached.



End of May, 2023
Almaty, Almaty Region, Kazakhstan



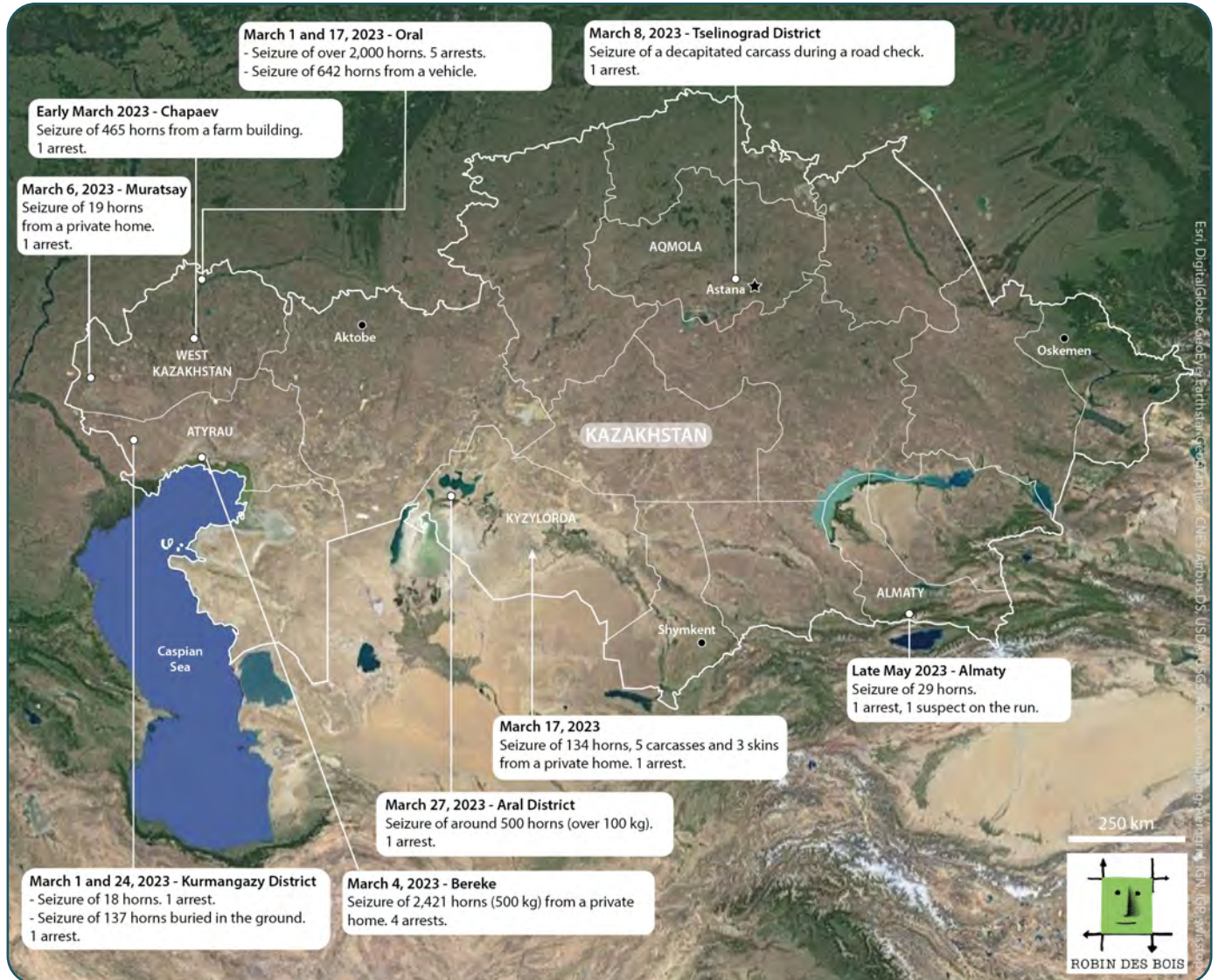
March 1, 2023
Oral, West Kazakhstan Region, Kazakhstan



March 27, 2023
Aral District, Kyzylorda Region, Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan

Seizures of horns (6,365), carcasses (6) and skins (3) of saiga antelopes between March 1 and May 31, 2023



Saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II).

Sources, see page 257.

A saiga horn costs around 2 million tenge (4.5 US\$) on the local black market.

MONGOLIA

March 8, 2023

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

J., age 32, was arrested in the Songino Khaikhan district while carrying 2 bags of Himalayan ibex horns (*Capra sibirica*, Appendix III in Pakistan) in his vehicle.

LiVETV.MN, March 9, 2023.¹⁶

UZBEKISTAN

March 4, 2023

Surkhan Nature Reserve, Surxondaryo Region, Uzbekistan

A suspicious car was driving around the reserve. The guards stopped it immediately. Inside, there were 3 men with a rifle and ammunition, and in the boot, a skinned markhor (*Capra falconeri*, Appendix I). The Surkhan Reserve (24,000 hectares) was established in 1986. It is home to other protected species such as urials, lynx, gazelles and vultures.

Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, March 5, 2023.¹⁷

Beginning of May 2023

Surkhan Nature Reserve, Surxondaryo Region, Uzbekistan



Arrest in flagrante delicto of A. J. and G. J. who were transporting a Bukhara urial (*Ovis bochariensis*, Appendix I). He was only a few weeks old and was separated from his mother under unknown circumstances. The presumed orphan has been placed under veterinary supervision pending a decision on his destination.

Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, May 2, 2023.¹⁸

PAKISTAN

Beginning of March 2023

Bahawalnagar District, Punjab Province, Pakistan. Border with India.

A poacher is arrested for hunting Indian gazelle (*Gazella bennettii*, Appendix III), blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III), and nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*, Appendix III).

Veterinary News and Views, March 17, 2023.¹⁹

Mid-March 2023

District of Chakwal, Province du Pendjab, Pakistan

Authorities arrested 3 urial poachers (*Ovis vignei*, Appendix II) and seized a rifle, a motorcycle, binoculars and a knife. The suspects were also fined 250,000 rupees (960 US\$) and have been remanded in custody for 14 days.

Veterinary News and Views, March 19, 2023.²⁰



SULTANATE OF OMAN

March 2023

Dhofar Governorate, Sultanate of Oman

Three arrests for poaching Arabian gazelles (*Gazella arabica*). Seizure of meat, weapons, and various devices for tracking and butchering the animals.

Times of Oman, March 16, 2023.²¹

THAILAND

April 21, 2023

Wiang Kosai National Park, Phrae Province, Thailand

Two old fertilizer bags were hanging from bamboo plants. They contained the head, horns, legs, bones, and organs of one serow (genus *Capricornis*), 2 homemade firearms, knives, and other cutting tools. One suspect ran off as the patrol approached. There are 2 species of serow in Thailand, the Chinese serow (*Capricornis milneedwardsii*, Appendix I) and the Southern serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*, Appendix I), and both are under maximum protection.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, April 21, 2023.²²



May 31, 2023

Ban Kaeng Cho, Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand. Border with Myanmar.

Seizure by rangers in Sai Yok National Park of 26 kg of Southern serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*, Appendix I) meat and arrest of the 2 poachers who were transporting it on scooters.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, June 1, 2023.²³

TURKIYE

March 2023

Şırnak Province, Türkiye

Y.O. was fined 261,000 lire (13,617 US\$) for poaching wild goats (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) in Mount Judi (or Mount Cudi in Turkish) near the border with Iran and Syria. He was caught red-handed by nature and park conservationists and the gendarmerie.

TRT Haber, March 16, 2023.²⁴

Beginning of April 2023

Erzincan, Erzincan Province, Türkiye

Fine equal to 13,300 US\$ for a poacher caught in the act of possessing and transporting the 2 horns of a wild goat (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) by a camera trap set up to monitor comings and goings in Erzincan National Park.

Rûdaw, April 8, 2023.²⁵



EUROPE

RUSSIA

March 23, 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

Indictment of a 66-year-old man who offered to sell a pair of saiga antelope horns (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II) online. He was charged with illegally trafficking wild animals belonging to species listed in the Red Book of the Russian Federation and protected by international treaties to which the Russian Federation is a signatory.

Moscow City News Agency, March 24, 2023.²⁶

March 24, 2023

Priargunsk, Zabaykalsky Krai, Russia. Border with China.

A Russian citizen and a foreign national (presumably Chinese) were sentenced to 6 years' deprivation of liberty in a general-regime penal colony, as well as a 250,000 rouble (3,315 US\$) fine and a suspended prison sentence of 5 years and 6 months, with a 4-year probationary period. The sentences are not in force as the convicts have the option of appealing.

In February 2022, they had attempted to smuggle 797 saiga antelope horns (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II) into China via the Starotsurukhaitui border post, and later on, an additional 2,313 horns were seized from a garage in Zabaikalsk, 180 km from Starotsurukhaitui.

Zabaykalsky Krai Prosecutor's Office, January 27 and March 24 2023; The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Zabaykalsky Krai, February 9 2023.²⁷

May 15, 2023

Chita, Zabaykalsky Krai, Russia

Man sentenced to 430 hours of community service for attempting to smuggle 46 saiga antelope horns (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II) in October 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.88, ref.21). Zabaykalsky borders China and Mongolia.

Argoumenty i Fakty (AIF), May 15, 2023.²⁸

May 25, 2023

Moscow Domodedovo International Airport, Moscow Oblast, Russia



Seizure of 214 saiga antelope horns (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II) weighing 90 kg (an average of 420 g per horn) in the luggage of a 26-year-old Vietnamese national returning home via the United Arab Emirates. The horns were wrapped in foam, but did not escape the X-ray. According to him, he didn't know there were horns in his luggage.

Vechernyaya Moskva, May 25, 2023; Vesti Podmoskovia, May 25, 2023.²⁹

GIRAFFES AND OKAPIS

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

April 22, 2023

Hoedspruit, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Suspect arrested. Seizure of his makeshift tent, knives, machetes, and a fresh impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) carcass. Protrack's investigation had begun 15 days earlier with the discovery of giraffes killed for their meat and skins.

Protrack Anti Poaching Training Academy, May 2, 2023.¹



KENYA

March 18, 2023

Amboseli National Park, Kajiado County, Kenya

During their patrol, the rangers spotted a giraffe with a fresh wound on his leg. He had just escaped from poachers.

Big Life Foundation, March 2023.²

April to June 2023

Kenya

April-May-June 2023 report (March is included in n°39 p.62, ref.1) from SWT and KWS mobile veterinary units in Meru National Park, Amboseli National Park, Tsavo National Park, and the Rift Valley. Ten interventions on 8 Masai giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis tippelskirchi*) and 2 Nubian or Rothschild giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis camelopardalis*) following injuries from traps, arrows, spears, and throwing weapons. Eight favourable prognoses, one unfavourable prognosis for a female Masai giraffe whose left hind leg was wounded and infected down to the bone, and one unfavourable prognosis for an elderly female Masai giraffe in deteriorated body condition, wounded in the femur and tendons of her left hind leg. After the revival antidote, she did not get up and a glucose infusion was carried out. After 3 unsuccessful attempts at recovery, she underwent an intravenous injection of adrenaline and righted herself 30 seconds later.

SWT/KWS Mara Mobile Veterinary Unit, April, May, and June 2023; SWT/KWS Meru Mobile Veterinary Unit, April 2023; SWT/KWS Amboseli Mobile Veterinary Unit, June 2023; SWT/KWS Rift Valley Mobile Veterinary Unit, June 2023; SWT/KWS Tsavo Mobile Veterinary Unit, June 2023.³



The giraffe wounded by a throwing weapon in the left hind leg gets up after treatment under anaesthesia and wanders off into the savannah (June 9, 2023, Rift Valley Unit).

April 3, 2023

Kenya

Officials seized 79 kg of giraffe meat following a tip-off and arrested one individual.

Big Life Foundation, April 2023.⁴

May 3, 2023

Amboseli National Park, Kajiado County, Kenya

A giraffe was shot, and the 2 poachers fled with the meat on motorcycles during the night.

Big Life Foundation, May 2023.⁵

May 29 to June 27, 2023

Kajiado County, Kenya

A rotten month for giraffes in the county.

- May 29: the giraffe is disabled. She was the victim of a botched poaching operation. Lookouts are monitoring her progress.

- May 31: food and care for a giraffe injured in a conflict with human activities.

- June 22: an adult giraffe is spotted with a spear in his left hind leg. The vets are informed. To be continued.

- June 27: report of 2 giraffe carcasses. Rangers visit the site. They have been dead for several weeks. They were caught in traps.

Big Life Foundation, May to June 2023.⁶



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

March 18, 2023

Beni, North Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Emisa Lofete Willy sentenced to 2 years in prison. He had been arrested with an accomplice in possession of an okapi (*Okapia johnstoni*) skin in September 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.83 (ref.13)). This is the first conviction for poaching or trafficking okapi in the country. Adams Cassinga, March 19, 2023.⁷



AFRICA

KENYA

March 7, 10, 14, 18 and 24, 2023 Amboseli National Park, Kajiado County, Kenya



Update on anti-poaching operations involving zebra (genus *Equus*, *Equus grevyi*, Appendix I, found in Kenya):

- Discovery of a dead zebra. A conflict with human activities is suspected.
- Discovery of a dead zebra due to a trap around his neck.
- Unsuccessful attempt to rescue a zebra with a trap around his neck.
- Discovery of a zebra killed by a spear.
- Two suspects arrested in possession of zebra meat. Big Life Foundation, March 2023.¹

End of March 2023 Mara Triangle, Narok County, Kenya



The zebra (genus *Equus*, *Equus grevyi*, Appendix I, found in Kenya) had managed to get back on his way, but the wire was digging deeper and deeper into his flesh. Thanks to Dr Asuka, he was able to walk away unharmed. Favourable prognosis. Joint operation by the KWS, the Anne K. Taylor Fund and the Mara Elephant Project.

Mara Elephant Project, April 2, 2023.²



© Mara Elephant Project

April to June 2023

Kenya



Review of zebra (genus *Equus*) interventions in April, May, and June by SWT and KWS mobile veterinary units in Amboseli, Mara, Meru, Tsavo, and Mount Kenya national parks and the Rift Valley. The March interventions are in issue n°39 (p.63, ref.1).

- A stallion was isolated and limping with his hind legs. He suffered an open cannon fracture and ruptured ligaments after being caught in a trap. Veterinarians decided to euthanize him to put him out of his misery. He was buried on site.
- An adult female, after being caught in a trap and having her right front leg half amputated above the hoof, suffered from an open, vermin-infested wound. The prognosis was irretrievably negative and it was decided to put her down out of her misery.

- The alarm was raised by the park's fence maintenance manager. The zebra was in great difficulty and was holding on at all costs in the midst of his herd of 10 or so individuals. The steel trap around his neck had fallen off, but the cervical vertebrae were nicked, the neck muscles sunken, and the trachea pierced, leading to incurable respiratory problems. Despite all possible care, he died during surgery under anaesthetic.

The prognosis for 2 other zebras is guarded.

But 17 zebras, including a zebra and a Grevy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*, Appendix I), victims of traps, an arrow, and a spear, were given a favourable prognosis after the interventions, and some, including a stallion, ran off again... like zebras.

SWT/KWS Amboseli Mobile Veterinary Unit, April 2023; SWT/KWS Mara Mobile Veterinary Unit, April, May and June 2023; SWT/KWS Meru Mobile Veterinary Unit, April and June 2023; SWT/KWS Rift Valley Mobile Veterinary Unit, April, May and June 2023; SWT/KWS Tsavo Mobile Veterinary Unit, April, May and June 2023; SWT/KWS Mount Kenya Mobile Veterinary Unit, May and June 2023.³



© SWT/KWS

May 2, 2023

Rwacumari, Kiambu County, Kenya

In the middle of the night, police broke into an illegal donkey slaughterhouse. The organiser and a dozen henchmen dispersed into the wilderness. The meat and carcasses of 26 donkeys were discovered. Some of the victims were allegedly brought to the site from neighbouring Kajiado County under the official guise of transporting sheep, goats, and pigs for sale at the Limuru livestock markets in Kiambu County.

The Star (Kenya), June 17, 2023.⁴

NAMIBIA

April 19, 2023

Karibib, Erongo Region, Namibia

Moses Frans, Josef Muti Kanyawa and Daniel Sharukanda were arrested for carrying a zebra carcass (genus *Equus*, *Equus zebra hartmannae*, Appendix II, found in Namibia).

Namibian Sun, May 2, 2023.⁵

NIGERIA

May 14, 2023

Between Bunza and Kamba, Kebbi State, Nigeria. Border with Niger and Benin.



On the Kamba-Bunza road, customs intercepted a truck loaded with 414 bags of donkey hides and meat. Other inspections on the same road led to the seizure of 55 bales of used clothing. The State customs commander deplored that trucks carrying the goods seized at customs headquarters had been attacked and hijacked by insurgents from Bunza (population 121,461 at last census, 2006). Peoples Gazette, May 19, 2023; Daily Post (Nigeria), May 20, 2023; Vanguard, May 20, 2023.⁶

May 19, 2023

Kebbi State, Nigeria

The roads of Kebbi are definitely being used by the donkey skin and meat trade going between Benin and Niger. A new seizure of smoked donkey meat, estimated by customs to be worth 200 million naira (437,000 US\$). The truck was traveling north to supply the popular Ochanja Market in Onitsha (population 1.69 million), south of Anambra State (750 km away).

The president of the Donkey Dealers Association of Nigeria protested against this latest customs seizure, calling it a power grab that endangers the livelihoods of at least 3 million Nigerians. "Seizing goods belonging to donkey dealers by the Kebbi State Command of the Nigeria Customs Service is the height of man's inhumanity to man at a time like now in Nigeria."

P.M. News, May 28, 2023.⁷

HIPPOPOTAMUSES



Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*). Photo jorge1884

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

Mid-March 2023

Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province, South Africa

"She was roaming around the village as if it was a cow," said Azwihangwisi Tshandamule, one of those involved in the slaughter. After villagers, they said, suffered several sleepless nights from an unknown, dangerous wild animal roaming in close proximity, they went after a female hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) accompanied by a calf. After killing the mother, they dragged her out of the river. They then butchered and distributed the meat. The fate of the victim's teeth is unknown.

Independent Online, March 14, 2023.¹

MALI

January to April 2023

Bafoulabé, Kayes Region, Mali

Bafoulabé, where 2 tributaries of the Senegal River meet, is an emblematic place for hippopotamuses (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II). Until now, the aquatic pachyderms have been respected, but since the beginning of 2023, 4 have been killed with violence signifying that the truce between them and humans is over.

Bamada, April 15, 2023.²

NAMIBIA

March 4, 2023

Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region, Namibia. Border with Zambia.

The 20-year-old suspect was carrying 4 hippopotamus teeth (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II). Hippopotamus ivory is very popular. The lot is estimated at 100,000 Namibian dollars, i.e. 5,400 US\$ and 1,350 US\$ per tooth.

New Era, March 6, 2023.³

March 11, 2023

Muyako, Zambezi Region, Namibia. Border with Botswana.

Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) poaching continues throughout the upper Zambezi valley. They are blamed, rightly or wrongly, for devastating crops. One hippopotamus was shot dead on Saturday night. When police arrived on scene, his butchering and distribution of meat to the Muyako population (160 inhabitants in 2015, 45 km from Katima Mulilo) was already underway but the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism ordered that the meat be donated to the Kyaracen village (25 km from Katima Mulilo), where an indigenous community lives in abject poverty. 90% of its inhabitants are unemployed and destitute. Its mayor Jim Ben expressed his gratitude to the government and called on Namibians to spare the country's riches and avoid unnecessarily killing wild animals.

The Namibian, March 13, 2023; Windhoek Observer, March 14, 2023.⁴

May 5, 2023
Sikunga Conservancy, Zambezi Region,
Namibia. Border with Zambia.



Call for witnesses or information to find the person(s) responsible for the shooting death of a hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) whose body was floating in the Zambezi and was spotted on Friday at 10 a.m. by tourists near the Mubala lodge.

The Namibian, May 9, 2023.⁵

UGANDA

April 1, 2023

Kiryandongo District, Western Region, Uganda

Bernard Enying, 29, Eston Nyitu, 33, and John Onek, 47, respectively living in Kigumba, Kibiramatu and Nanda, were arrested in possession of 45 kg of suspected hippopotamus ivory (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II).

The Independent (Uganda), April 4, 2023.⁶

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Beginning of May 2023

Tshuapa Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

A hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) was shot. Rumour has it that the culprits were members of the military, and the excuse of a human/animal conflict does not always match reality.

Adams Cassinga, May 9, 2023.⁷

Hippopotamuses, see also page 7 ref. 6, page 11 ref. 9, page 17 ref. 2 and page 23 ref.31.

BUFFALOES, BANTENGS AND GAURS



Gaur (*Bos gaurus*). Photo Nikhil Vilas Jambhale

ASIA

INDIA

March 15, 2023

Kami, Amreli District, State of Gujarat, India

This serial killing was premeditated on State-owned farmland. With 4 plastic tanks full of water mixed with urea as bait, 10 nilgais (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) were poisoned. No other carcasses have been found, and experts fear that lions from the Gir sanctuary may be among the collateral victims. Three farmers from Kami (population 561 according to the last census in 2011) are currently being questioned. A tractor, 3 motorcycles and the tanks used to carry out the crime are sealed. The Indian Express, March 16, 2023.¹



March 15, 2023

Nandgad, Belagavi District, State of Karnataka, India

David Figer and Hasan Bepari, 2 alleged gaur (*Bos gaurus*, Appendix I) poachers, were arrested by police while trying to sell 8 kg of raw gaur meat and 3 kg of cooked meat. The animal was reportedly poached on the night of Tuesday, March 14th. Given that a gaur can contain several hundred kilos of meat to be butchered and sold, it is possible that a gaur gang is at work in Nandgad (population 16,000) and the district. Deccan Herald, March 15, 2023.²

April 9, 2023

Kalchini Community Development Block, Alipurduar District, State of West Bengal, India

A dead gaur (*Bos gaurus*, Appendix I) was found partially butchered in the forest, sparking a local investigation. A canine brigade traced it to Sukhman Rai and Santa Bahadur Rai, both farm workers at whose homes officials uncovered a homemade firearm and gaur meat. The Telegraph India, April 11, 2023.³

May 19, 2023

Kanamala, Kottayam District, and Edamulakkal, Kollam District, State of Kerala, India

On Friday May 19, a gaur (*Bos gaurus*, Appendix I) is said to have deliberately killed 2 people, Purathel Chackochan and Thomas Plavinamkuzhiyil. The former was tapping rubber trees on a plantation, the latter was reading a newspaper. Residents blocked the Erumely-Pampa road for 8 hours in protest. The police were deployed to restore order. The forestry services investigated the incident and concluded that the gaur had been attacked by poachers.

"We have received convincing evidence on the presence of poachers in the locality and are ascertaining whether it is in some way connected to the unusual aggression by the wild gaur, who is usually docile." "There is a purported attempt to turn the public against the forestry services by some people engaged in poaching and other illegal activities under the banner of a fake farmers." The district authorities have announced a compensation payment of one million rupees (12,226 US\$) to each of the grieving families.

.../...

Police and forest officials have been ordered to kill the fleeing gaur if he approaches the homes before 10 a.m. on Monday.

Gaurs in Kerala and neighbouring States, see "On the Trail" n°4 p.86, n°6 p.119 (ref.78), n°8 p.91 (ref.2), n°12 p.100 (ref.22), n°26 p.99 (ref.18), n°30 p.84 (ref.6 and 9), n°32 p.119 (ref.5 and 6) and p.248 (ref.105), n°33 p.124 (ref.3), n°37 p.89 (ref.3) and n°38 p.94 (ref.1).

The Hindu, May 19 and 22, 2023.⁴

NEPAL

May 12, 2023

Jaleshwar, Mahottari District, Madhesh Province, Nepal. Border with India.



Authorities seized 566 yak tails (*Bos mutus*, Appendix I if wild; *Bos grunniens* if domesticated) that had just been loaded into the luggage compartment of a bus. They were caught while being loaded onto a tricycle trailer. The Indian market of Bhitthamore is located 500 meters from the border between Nepal and the Indian State of Bihar. Yak tails are sought after in Arti, a Hindu ritual in which lit candles coated with camphor or ghee (clarified butter) are offered to deities. Adherents in monasteries also use yak tails as fans. The total value of the seizure is estimated at 2.83 million Nepalese rupees or 21,728 US\$ on the domestic market. Depending on size, condition and wild or domestic provenance, a tail sells in India for between 2,000 (24 US\$) and 25,000 Indian rupees (306 US\$). The Rising Nepal, May 14, 2023.⁵



Yack (*Bos mutus*)

THAILAND

April 30, 2023

Laem Klat, Trat Province, Thailand



A gaur (*Bos gaurus*, Appendix I) on the edge of the Khao Saming Forest Reserve was found dead. An improvised explosive device had severed his right front leg. He was buried on-site in a pit lined with quicklime.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, April 30, 2023.⁶



MUSK DEER, ROE DEER, DEER AND ELK



White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). Photo Daniel H

AFRICA

MOROCCO

Night of Sunday, May 21, 2023 Tazekka National Park, Fès-Meknès Region, Morocco

Arrest by the forest rangers, the Royal Gendarmerie, and the Oued Amlil authorities of 4 people who, armed with rifles and knives, were poaching Barbary stag (*Cervus elaphus barbarus*, Appendix III in Algeria and Tunisia) in conspiracy.

Today, Tazekka Park covers 13,000 hectares, with medium-sized and diverse species such as Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*), evergreen oak (*Quercus rotundifolia*), cork oak (*Quercus suber*), Portuguese oak (*Quercus faginea*), and kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*). They are all threatened by loggers for firewood and handicrafts. Barbary stags, who disappeared from the northern Middle Atlas mountains 200-300 years ago, have been the subject of a reintroduction attempt since 1994, based on a core group of 4 females and 2 males originally from Tunisia. Today there are just a few dozen. They are poached to supply the bushmeat market. The park is also home to birds of prey, porcupines, golden jackals, horseshoe bats, striped hyenas, and caracals.

LeVert.ma, May 22, 2023.¹

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

May 10, 2023 El Maitén, Province of Chubut, border with the province of Rio Negro, Argentina

Route S1 40. Detention of a Fiat Strada. Seizure of 48 deer antlers (family Cervidae) and horse meat. The antlers were not stamped and the driver had no traceability documents. They were apparently purchased in Norquín (35 km from El Maitén). The city's police force also reminds the public that it is forbidden to bring meat into the city outside the veterinary circuit and without the precautions imposed by the Food Code. The provinces of Chubut and Rio Negro are home to Patagonian huemul (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*, Appendix I) and marsh deer (*Blastocercus dichotomus*, Appendix I), as well as introduced species such as red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and spotted deer (*Axis axis*).

Diario Jornada, May 11, 2023.²

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IDAHO

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 2023

Arco, State of Idaho, United States of America

The men in the Curtiss family hunted elk (*Cervus canadensis*) like it was war.

On November 2, 2021, Donald Curtiss shot at elk while his son, Travis, drove a pick-up truck. At the same time, Travis' son, Eben, shot at elk from a dumpster. The 3 men killed a female rag horn, a spike deer, and 2 large males. Afterwards, they cut off only the largest victims' heads and parts, leaving the rest to rot.

Travis Curtiss was sentenced to 850 US\$ in fines and 495 US\$ in court costs; a 10-year suspension of all his hunting and trapping licences; a 72-month ban on accompanying another hunter; 72 months' probation, and 100 hours of community service for Idaho Fish and Game or an organisation dedicated to wildlife conservation.

Eben Curtiss was sentenced to 550 US\$ in fines and 330 US\$ in court costs; a 5-year suspension on all his hunting and trapping licences; a 24-month ban on accompanying another hunter; 48 months' probation, and 100 hours of community service for Idaho Fish and Game or another wildlife conservation organisation.

Donald Curtiss was sentenced to 850 US\$ in fines and 495 US\$ in court costs; a 10-year suspension of all his hunting and trapping licences; a 72-month ban on accompanying a hunter; 72 months' probation, and 100 hours of community service for Idaho Fish and Game or an organisation dedicated to wildlife conservation.

The 3 Curtiss men must jointly pay 6,000 US\$ in restitution.

Idaho Fish and Game, May 16 and June 13, 2023.³

ILLINOIS

Beginning of March 2023

Jefferson County, State of Illinois, United States of America

- A white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) head with antlers is seized.

- Another antlered head of a white-tailed deer is seized. Several white-tailed deer were shot from an all-terrain vehicle and poached.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, March 15, 2023.⁴

Beginning of March 2023

Crawford County, State of Illinois, United States of America

A Nevada resident poached several white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) using the hunting licence of an accomplice living in Illinois. During an investigation, officials seized several trophies.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, March 15, 2023.⁵

End of March 2023

Perry County, State of Illinois, United States of America

The trophy of an 8-point white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), shot without a permit in 2021, is seized.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, March 31, 2023.⁶

MICHIGAN

Beginning of March 2023

Antrim County, State of Michigan, United States of America

Officials recover the meat of a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) freshly poached by a woman, as well as the antlers she had just brought to a local taxidermist.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources, March 18, 2023.⁷

REPEATED OFFENCE

Beginning of March 2023

Lake County, State of Michigan, United States of America

Officials search and seize several firearms from a previously convicted man forbidden from possessing any. He admits to baiting and killing an 8-point white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*).

Michigan Department of Natural Resources, March 18, 2023.⁸

MONTANA

May 2023

Glacier County, State of Montana, United States of America

Sheriffs are promising a reward for witnesses after an elk (*Cervus canadensis*) was poached and his antlered head left on the side of expressway 358.

Glacier County Sheriff's Office, May 10, 2023.⁹

OHIO

April 2023

Vinton County, State of Ohio, United States of America



A group of poachers was fined a total of 3,000 US\$ for killing several white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) in June 2022. Five velvet antlered heads were discovered during the investigation.

Bluffton Icon, May 2, 2023.¹⁰

May 2023

Madison County, State of Ohio, United States of America

An employee of a meat-processing company is fined 4,693 US\$ in damages and court costs for poaching at least 2 white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). He is also banned from hunting for 2 years. He had brought the carcasses to work with false tags. Investigators seized the meat and antlers. Bluffton Icon, May 18, 2023.¹¹



OREGON

March 2023

Oregon, United States of America

A California resident feigned military service for 3 years to benefit from military discounts on hunting licences, fishing permits and tags. A wildlife officer interrogated the military personnel database and received a report denying the suspect's past or present involvement with the armed forces. Over the years, by posing as an active-duty military member and then as a veteran, the man saved more than 2,800 US\$. He also had an elk trophy (*Cervus canadensis*), 10 horns and a white-tailed deer trophy (*Odocoileus virginianus*) made at a taxidermist in California, all of which were seized.



Oregon State Police, March 2023.¹²

REPEATED OFFENCE

April 7, 2023

Clackamas County, State of Oregon, United States of America

After 2 searches, Norman Jones was charged for possession of antlers, deer skulls (genus *Odocoileus*), owl legs (*Strigiformes*, Appendix I or II), 60 spare parts from poached wild animal corpses, a 308-caliber Winchester and a 22-caliber Marlin, both firearms found with sophisticated accessories. The following trophies were seized: 3 antlers of spike deer, 17 two-point deer, 19 three-point deer, 18 four-point deer, 2 Bull elk (a 5x5 and a 4x4) (*Cervus canadensis*) and owl parts, including wings and legs.

Jones is infamous in Clackamas, Yamhill and Clatsop counties. Over the course of 30 years, he racked up dozens of misdemeanours in possession of drugs, driving without insurance and poaching shellfish. KMTR NBC 16, May 23, 2023; Outdoor Life, May 24, 2023.¹³

PENNSYLVANIA

May 25, 2023

Franklin County, State of Pennsylvania, United States of America

Between August 2022 and January 2023, 3 20-year-olds and 3 minors poached between 100 and 200 white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). They have just been charged. In the dead of night, they would blind the deer, including fawns, with spotlights from their vehicles and shoot them at close range with a .22 Magnum. Some deer were killed instantly, while others, wounded or spared, fled into the meadows and forests. The gang will have the opportunity to explain their motives at their local Greencastle adult and juvenile courts. Echo Pilot, May 26, 2023; Franklin County Free Press, May 26, 2023.¹⁴

TEXAS

April 2023

McLennan County, State of Texas, United States of America

After spotting an illegal fire by the lake, the patrol approached and overheard gossip about a poached white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). Three drunk miners admitted to poaching him with a gun, and the corpse with the antlers removed was found in a large drainpipe.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, April 26, 2023.¹⁵

WISCONSIN

April 11, 2023

Waupaca, State of Wisconsin, United States of America

Eric A. Feavel, 40, and Travis J. Vander Heiden, 37, made their first court appearance. These two, already known to the law and prison guards, spent their free time traversing the county's highways and byways at night, blinding white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) from the passenger seat of their pick-up truck and shooting them with a bow and arrow. They would later return to the crime scene to decapitate the dead or dying deer and throw their heads in the dumpster. Under a search warrant, the 6 DNR (Department of Natural Resources) investigators recovered 37 photos of them poaching deer and the aftermath: deer heads on tarps or in garbage cans, carcasses hanging in garages, and triumphant poses brandishing bloodied heads. During the investigation, they admitted to having shot arrows at roughly 30 deer in autumn 2022. Only 5 were found.

Feavel and Vander Heiden had been in cahoots since 2019. Vander Heiden says in the investigation file that he only blinded and shot deer with Feavel. They were occasionally accompanied by Vander Heiden's ex-girlfriend.

Waupaca County News, April 12, 2023.¹⁶

ASIA

CHINA

May 4, 2023
Off Hong Kong, China



Seizure of 1,600 kg of deer antlers in 43 parcels, with an estimated market value of 21 million Hong Kong dollars (2.67 million US\$ or 1,670 US\$/kg), in a powerful motorized boat bound for mainland China. Two arrests.
The Epoch Times, May 5, 2023.¹⁷

INDIA

March 16, 2023
North shore of Lake Loktak, Bishnupur District, State of Manipur, India

Two hog deer (*Axis porcinus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) were discovered after being shot dead. According to villagers, a gang armed with silenced rifles, dogs and nets stalked the deer at night. Their meat attracts a high price on the local market. The 2 deer had managed to escape after being attacked and seriously wounded. Dr. Rebecca Chanu warns that this rare species of deer will face the threat of extinction in the State if retaliatory measures are not quickly taken against poachers.
Imphal Free Press, March 17, 2023; Northeast Now, March 17, 2023.¹⁸

March 28, 2023
Kottooli, Kozhikode District, State of Kerala, India

Abdul Salam, Haris Puthiyaveetil and Mustafa were caught by police carrying dried kasturis, the vernacular for the preputial glands of musk deer (*Moschus* spp., Appendix I for species found in India). Are found in India Alpine musk deer (*Moschus chrysogaster*), black musk deer (*Moschus fuscus*), Kashmir musk deer (*Moschus cupreus*) and Himalayan musk deer (*Moschus leucogaster*).
Mathrubhumi, March 29, 2023.¹⁹

April 15, 2023
Loktak Lake, Bishnupur District, State of Manipur, India

Nasir Khan fired a single barrel gun at a female "kharsa", or hog deer (*Axis porcinus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), while she was showering. The poacher just missed killing a male.
E-Pao!, April 15, 2023.²⁰

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 26, 2023
Bhopal, Bhopal District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India



Pyare Miyan and his son were sentenced to 3 years in prison and each fined 25,000 rupees (306 US\$) for keeping "barasingha", or swamp deer (*Rucervus duvaucelii*, Appendix I), trophies in their home.
The Free Press Journal, May 27, 2023.²¹

PAKISTAN

March 19, 2023
Changa Manga Forest Park, Province of Punjab, Pakistan

A deliberate fire set by poachers drove wildlife into exodus and burned alive 2 hog deer (*Axis porcinus*, Appendix III in Pakistan).
Dawn, March 20, 2023.²²

EUROPE

GERMANY

Sunday, March 26, 2023
Herrieden, Bavaria Land, Germany

One shot. A headless European roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) in the meadow.
PIRSCH, April 1, 2023.²³

April 11, 2023
Herrieden, Bavaria Land, Germany
New discovery in Herrieden of a decapitated European roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*). The perpetrator is wanted in the Ansbach district.
PIRSCH, April 13, 2023.²⁴

Sunday, May 28, 2023
Durach, Bavaria Land, Germany. Border with Austria.

The body of a decapitated red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) was discovered on Sunday afternoon at a rest area on the A7 freeway.
Bild, May 29, 2023.²⁵

FRANCE

Mid-March 2023

Clairmarais, Department of Pas-de-Calais, France

Two European roe deer heads (*Capreolus capreolus*) were found in the parking lot for hikers in the Clairmarais forest. Big game hunting has been banned since the end of February. Reactions and hypotheses abound. The mayor was indignant and evoked Bambi. The OFB is astonished. A distracted poacher might have forgotten them, but on the roe deer it's the legs that are typically amputated. It could be a case of simple waste abandonment, an offence punishable by a fine, or of dumping a dead animal or part of a dead animal into the environment, punishable by a fine under the French Rural Code.

La Voix du Nord, March 17, 2023.²⁶

RUSSIA

April 3, 2023

Sretensky District, Zabaykalsky Krai, Russia

A man was crossing the frozen Shikla River on foot. He had a rifle slung over his shoulder and was seen by a fisherman. He had a Siberian musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*, Appendix II) in his bag, which he justified as necessary. He would have had an urgent need to eat. The damage is estimated at 60,000 rubles (780 US\$).

Chita.ru, April 3, 2023.²⁷

GUANACOS AND VICUNAS

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

March 3, 2023

Chipaite, Department of Cochinocha, Province of Jujuy, Argentina

Squadron 21 must've smelled it. When they stopped a Toyota Hilux and its 2 occupants on provincial road n°11, they seized 20 vicuña skins (*Vicugna vicugna*, Appendix II) and 73,843 pesos, or 377 US\$.

Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, March 4, 2023.¹

April 2, 2023

Jaramillo, Province of Santa Cruz, Argentina

National road 3. South/north direction. Seizure of 7 bags containing the meat of 6 guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*, Appendix II). Arrest of 3 men aged between 30 and 50. The meat was burned in a rubbish dump in the presence of the poachers and under the supervision of authorities. The scene was photographed to attest to its destruction.

La Vanguardia Noticias, April 3, 2023.²

April 17, 2023

Perito Moreno, Province of Santa Cruz, Argentina

520 kg of guanaco meat (*Lama guanicoe*, Appendix II) in the pick-up. An adult guanaco weighs 60 kg. Driver and 2 passengers arrested. None has a hunting or meat transport permit.

Guanacos have almost disappeared from Paraguay, Bolivia, and Peru. They are under pressure in

Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, with a density of 2 to 5 individuals per km²: pressure from ranchers who see this wild herbivore as a competitor for livestock, pressure from fencing and fragmentation of the ranges of this all-terrain camelid adapted to high-altitude deserts, mountain meadows, and temperate forests, pressure from meat wholesalers and butchers, pressure from poaching, pressure from wind and solar farms, and pressure from the motorway network. Guanacos are South America's forgotten species. Argentina and Chile are in no hurry to set up a plan to protect and enhance the value of guanaco wool, along the lines of the Vigogne Convention in the central Andes, which covers Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Ecuador. The guanaco is central to the ecosystems of southern South America. They are hunted by pumas, and in this sense indirectly serve as a shield for sheep herds. When the guanaco is gone, the puma becomes a shepherd's haunt. The remains of guanacos feed birds of prey and other scavengers, helping to clean up the environment. The guanaco is an auxiliary in the fight against forest fires. Herbivores and brushcutters, they reduce the volume and density of dry plant matter that starts or spreads fires, and help to slow the spread of the blaze. Like vicuñas, they scatter piles of dung around their habitats, stimulating the recolonization of degraded soils with vegetation, and they maintain the fertility of superficial soils with their padded hooves, while domestic herds trample, graze, and sterilize them. Ahora Calafate, April 18, 2023.³



Guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*). Photo Jennifer Clifford

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 18, 2023

Puerto Madryn, Province of Chubut, Argentina

Provincial roads 4 and 8 at dawn. At the end of a chase, a Chevrolet pick-up was stopped. In the cab, the 38-year-old driver, stained with blood, tried to escape. Next to him was his 13-year-old brother. In the truck bed were 2 dead guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*, Appendix II) and 3 roosters.

Diario Jornada, May 18, 2023.⁴

End of May 2023

Department of San Antonio, Province of Rio Negro, Argentina

On National Route 3, officials seized 8 guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*, Appendix II) and one rhea (*Rhea americana*, Appendix II, or *Pterocnemia pennata*, Appendix I or II) cut into quarters inside a pick-up truck.

Rio Negro Police, May 30, 2023.⁵

PERU

April 19, 2023

Lampa and Pucara Districts, Province of Lampa, Department of Puno, Peru

Seizure of 2 vicuñas (*Vicugna vicugna*, Appendix II) in captivity. They were handed over to rural communities authorized by the government to raise vicuñas in semi-captivity for the sustainable exploitation of their wool.

Serfor, April 20, 2023.⁶

May 13, 2023

La Rinconada, Province of San Antonio de Putina, Department of Puno, Peru

Discovery of 40 vicuña skins (*Vicugna vicugna*, Appendix II), clothing, and cartridges in an abandoned encampment. The wool was shorn by poachers and the meat was sold at markets.

Jujuy al Momento, May 13, 2023.⁷



Common squirrel monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*). Photo patrickdebeuf

NORTHERN AFRICA

SUDAN

Beginning of March 2023 Khartoum, Khartoum State, Sudan

The tantalus monkey (*Chlorocebus tantalus*, Appendix II) had been held in captivity from an early age. He had managed to escape from his prison but was unable to free himself from the rope around his waist, and as he grew, the rope gradually became embedded in his flesh. Reported by a local resident, he was finally rescued by the NGO Sudan Animal Rescue.

Sudan Animal Rescue, March 2 and 3, 2023.¹

WESTERN AFRICA

COTE D'IVOIRE

April 2023 Abidjan, Autonomous District of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

A green monkey (*Chlorocebus sabaeus*, Appendix II) is transferred to the Akatia shelter after being found in the Marcory suburb of zone 4, in the expatriate and party district. The alleged owner denied any connection with the animal. Monkey possession is illegal in the country.

Akatia, April 25, 2023.²

April 2023

Bouaké, Vallée du Bandama District, Côte d'Ivoire

A female patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*, Appendix II), who lived tied up in a dirty cage with barely any room to move, is transferred to the Akatia sanctuary.

Akatia, April 26, 2023.³

End of April to beginning of May 2023

Yapo-Abbe Sanctuary, Lagunes District, Côte d'Ivoire

Transfer to the Akatia Sanctuary of a female chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) of an unknown age held for years on a farm.

Akatia, October 11 and November 30, 2022, April 28 and May 2, 2023.⁴

May 12, 2023

Guiglo, Mountain District, Côte d'Ivoire

The distressing sight of above-ground photos of a small chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) tied up, wearing jeans and sports pumps, sometimes sipping Fanta or Coke, had provoked laughter from many and ire from a few. Thanks to cooperation between the Ministry of Water and Forests and the NGO EAGLE, the 3-year-old puppet chimpanzee was handed over to the NGO Akatia, which has the onerous task of rehabilitating him and giving him a future.

Akatia, May 19 and June 25, 2023; Linfodrome, May 20, 2023.⁵

GUINEA

April - may 2023

National Park of Upper Niger, Faranah and Kankan Regions, Guinea

The psychological restoration and growth of the orphaned chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) that has been in the Chimpanzee Conservation Center's refuge for a few weeks is well underway. Chimpanzee Conservation Center, April 24, May 5 and 26, 2023.⁶

LIBERIA

March 2023

Warkolor Forest, Margibi County, Liberia

After a long period of rewilding at the Libassa sanctuary, 24 sooty mangabeys (*Cercocebus atys*, Appendix II) were released into the Warkolor forest. The operation received financial and technical support from USAID and Born Free UK, as well as assistance from veterinarians in both Zambia and Liberia. The FDA (Forestry Development Authority) oversees forest protection, and local communities have been involved in the project.

Mangabeys are preferably arboreal, but sometimes come ashore in search of food, leading to conflicts with local farmers. Sooty mangabeys are the only ones to have a black-grey, reddish-white coat.

The Warkolor coastal forest covers 1,844 hectares. Nearby, Lake Piso and its banks are home to fruit-eating Diana monkeys and manatees.

West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development, March 28, 2023; Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary, March 29, 2023.⁷

May 1 and end of July 2023

Monrovia, Montserrado County, Liberia

Bobby Domah Parker was fined 150 US\$ for illegally keeping a chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) for one year after buying him for 350 US\$ from an unknown person, and for cruelty to animals. He made the chimpanzee drink alcoholic beverages. Parker will have to serve 3 months in prison if he doesn't pay the fine on time.

Liberia Public Radio, May 24, 2023; FrontPage Africa, July 27, 2023.⁸

Beginning of May 2023

Monrovia, Montserrado County, Liberia

The Special Wildlife Investigation Unit arrested a man in possession of a 3-year-old female chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I). The operation was executed in cooperation with the NGO Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection, which cared for the chimpanzee in its sanctuary. Focused Conservation, May 5, 2023.⁹

May 14, 2023

Marshall, Margibi County, Liberia

A new arrival at the chimpanzee refuge (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I). She had been kidnapped in a national park and was recovered by rangers.

Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection, May 15, 2023.¹⁰



NIGERIA

January to March 2023

Seme Border Area, Lagos State, Nigeria. Border with Benin.

Customs seized 34 monkey skins (Primates, Appendix I or II). Benin is home to 13 monkey species, including chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I), olive baboons (*Papio anubis*, Appendix II), tantalus monkeys (*Chlorocebus tantalus*, Appendix II) and monkeys of the genus *Cercopithecus* (Appendix II).

The Tide, April 12, 2023.¹¹

SIERRA LEONE

March 2023

Kabala, Northern Province, Sierra Leone

Another rescue of a chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I). Aged 3, he was tied by a rope to a house and was covered in wounds and scars.

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, January to March, 2023.¹²

End of March 2023

Loma Mountains National Park, Northern Province, Sierra Leone

Alert. A villager is holding a male chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) aged around 2 years. He claims to have taken him in. The little chimpanzee had apparently been abandoned by his family who were fleeing a pack of dogs. Chimpanzee protectors find this romance implausible. A veterinary examination showed that 3 bullets were lodged in the little martyr's right arm.

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, March 21, 23, and 25 and April 2, 2023.¹³

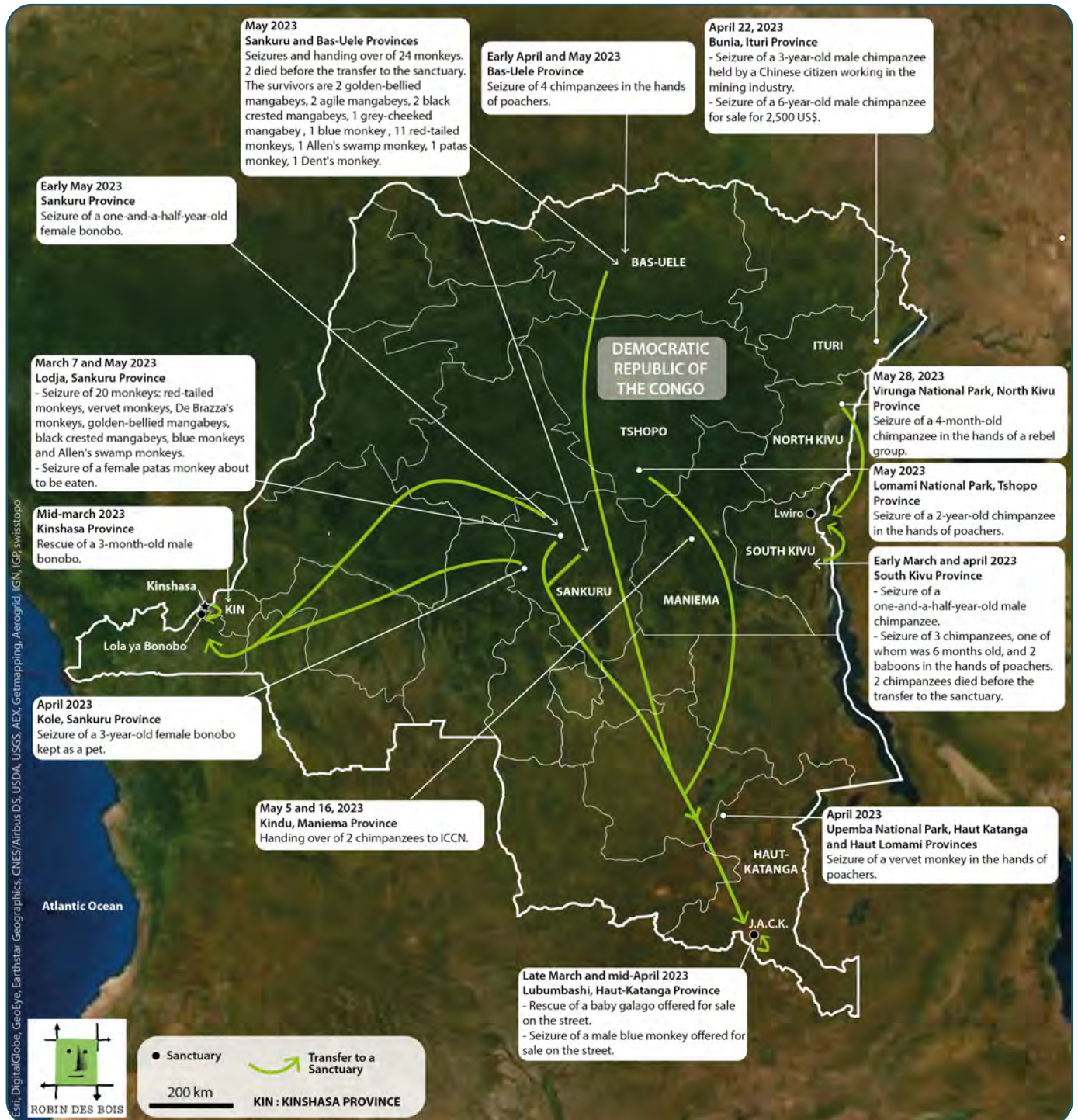
Mid-April 2023

Pitaya, Northern Province, Sierra Leone

The "owner" of a one-year-old chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) stubbornly refused to hand him over to members of the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary. They stuck around until a backup team arrived, accompanied by an agent from the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA). The baby chimpanzee was eventually seized and transferred to the NGO's sanctuary.

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, April 30, May 2 and June 8, 2023.¹⁴

Democratic Republic of the Congo Seizures, handing over and rescues of primates between March 1 and May 31, 2023



Sources, see page 257.

- Red-tailed monkey (*Cercopithecus ascanius*, Appendix II)
- Baboon (*Papio* spp., Appendix II)
- Bonobo (*Pan paniscus*, Appendix I)
- Monkey (Cercopithecidae, Appendix I or II)
- Blue monkey (*Cercopithecus mitis*, Appendix II)
- Allen's swamp monkey (*Allenopithecus nigroviridis*, Appendix II)
- De Brazza's monkey (*Cercopithecus neglectus*, Appendix II)
- Dent's monkey (*Cercopithecus denti*, Appendix II)

- Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I)
- Galago (Galagidae, Appendix II)
- Grey-cheeked mangabey (*Lophocebus albigena*, Appendix II)
- Golden-bellied mangabey (*Cercocebus chrysogaster*, Appendix II)
- Agile mangabey (*Cercocebus agilis*, Appendix II)
- Black crested mangabey (*Lophocebus aterrimus*, Appendix II)
- Patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*, Appendix II)
- Monkey (*Chlorocebus* spp., Appendix II)
- Vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*, Appendix II)



© Upemba National Park

April 2023
Upemba National Park, Haut Katanga and Haut Lomami Provinces



© Friends of Bonobos

April 2023
Kole, Sankuru Province



© JACK Congo

March 7, 2023
Lodja, Sankuru Province, Mbuji-Mayi, Kasai-Oriental Province, and Lubumbashi, Katanga Province



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Beginning of May 2023
Sankuru Province



© Lwiro Primates

May 28, 2023
Virunga National Park, Nord-Kivu Province



© Lwiro Primates

April 2023
Difficult transfer to Lwiro, Bukavu, South Kivu Province



© Friends of Bonobos

Mid-March 2023
Lola ya Bonobo Sanctuary, Kinshasa Province



© Conservy Congo

April 22, 2023
Bunia, Ituri Province

CAMEROON

April-June 2023

Limbe, South West Region, Cameroon

A greater white-nosed monkey (*Cercopithecus nictitans*, Appendix II) and a mona monkey (*Cercopithecus mona*, Appendix II) were transferred to the wildlife centre refuge. They were previously kept as pets with great resentment, as evidenced by their behaviour toward humans.

Limbe Wildlife Centre, April to June 2023.¹⁵

EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA

April 19, 2023

Oloiden Camp, Nakuru County, Kenya

Report by a tourist of a vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*, Appendix II) caught in a trap. Although the 2 wounds on the front leg and armpit were deep, the vets' prognosis after anaesthesia and treatment was favourable. SWT/KWS Rift Valley Mobile Veterinary Unit, April 2023.¹⁶



MADAGASCAR

March 31, 2023

Manambolo and Maroantsetra, Analanjirofo Region, Madagascar

The "varika", vernacular for brown lemur (*Eulemur fulvus*, Appendix I), is protected by law and decree. Harming one is punishable by 2 years in prison and a fine of 11,000 US\$. A poacher in Manambolo was issued a one-year suspended prison sentence and fined 9 US\$ for committing this act.

Lemurs in Madagascar, see "On the Trail" n°14 p.36, ref.5, n°20 p.56, ref.3, n°21 p.49, ref.4, n°31 p.97, ref.13 and n°36 p.105, ref.19.

Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Madagascar), April 6, 2023; Midi Madagasikara, April 13, 2023.¹⁷



MALAWI

Beginning of April 2023

Kasungu National Park, Central Region, Malawi

Release of a dozen orphaned vervet monkeys (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*, Appendix II) who had been in care and rewilding in the Lilongwe Refuge for several months or years. They have been transferred to Kasungu National Park, where the wet season offers them maximum water and food resources, elevating their chances of survival. They will be under observation for 2 weeks. They feed on fruit, flowers, leaves, seeds, and roots, as well as on small animals and eggs.

Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, March 28 and April 11, 2023.¹⁸

MAURITIUS

March 2023

Jin Fei Industrial Zone, Pamplémousses District, Mauritius

- On Friday, March 17th, inside a warehouse, police and veterinary services discovered 446 long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II), between 6 and 8 months old, in 80x40 cm cages without water, food, light or ventilation. Empty packages of ketamine, listed under the Dangerous Drug Act, were scattered about. Shafeeck Jhummun, director of Hammer Head International, allegedly administered ketamine to the macaques to prevent them from gesticulating. "Mo pran zot swin, mo tir zot li pou e osi gete si zot ena tiberkiloz" ("I take care of them, remove their lice and check if they have tuberculosis").

- On Saturday, March 18th, the monkeys were placed under the care of NGOs and the Veterinary Department of the Agro-Industry Ministry. The warehouses were guarded overnight to prevent clandestine transfers.

- Shafeeck Jhummun was released on bail of 15,000 rupees (320 US\$) after signing an IOU for 50,000 rupees (1,080 US\$). He was charged with animal cruelty, and fights tooth and nail to defend himself. He claims to have already initiated regulatory procedures to obtain a permit to breed long-tailed macaques and export them worldwide for animal experimentation. "It's a big business and the big exporters are trying to put obstacles in my way." According to him, Jin Fei's vacant warehouses were just a temporary housing site until they could build an official site on land leased from the State-owned sugar company, Rose-Belle State Board. His macaque exportation project requires an investment of 600 million rupees (13 million US\$) over 4 years, and he has already spent 50 million rupees (1 million US\$). Shafeeck Jhummun is always ready to jump on any opportunity in wildlife trafficking, and then play the victim and claim injustice. Once presenting himself as a specialist in the harvest, processing and exportation of "barbaras", the local name for sea cucumbers, he previously complained to the Anti-Corruption Commission that Arvin Boolell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was allegedly engaging in favouritism in allocating sea cucumber breeding permits. In 2014, on his Facebook account, he lashed out at an elected representative from Rodrigues Island for allegedly thwarting his project to capture and butcher sharks. Today, regarding his project to capture and breed long-tailed macaques, he claims to have been torpedoed by the competition. Police were notified by a tip-off from an executive at Bio Culture, one of the 5 government-approved farms.

.../...

- Jhummun has taken legal action against the Ministry of Agro-industry to return the macaques. Mauritius has become one of the main suppliers of monkeys to laboratories in the United States and the United Kingdom. European Union countries and China may also be on the list. Defimedia.info, March 18, 21, 25 2023; Le Mauricien, March 20 2023; L'express (Maurice), April 9 2023.¹⁹

UGANDA

May 12, 2023

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Western Region, Uganda. Border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Rescue of an adult female mountain gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*, Appendix I) whose right arm was caught in a trap. Extrication and treatment were carried out under anaesthetic. The ape's behavior was then observed by Gorilla Doctors veterinarians and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) spotters to check her agility and the healing of the wound. Gorilla Doctors, August 1, 2023.²⁰

RWANDA

May 3, 2023

Volcanoes National Park, Northern Province, Rwanda. Border with Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Officials rescued a golden monkey (*Cercopithecus kandti*, Appendix II) whose leg got caught in a bamboo trap.

Golden monkeys only live in the Gishwati forest in northern Rwanda and in the Virunga Massif, divided amongst Volcanoes National Park, Virunga Park (Democratic Republic of Congo) and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (Uganda). Golden monkeys are tree-dwelling apes. The Virunga population feeds mainly on bamboo. There are around 4,600 golden monkeys in Volcanoes National Park, far more than in Gishwati Forest (170 individuals) and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (less than 1000 individuals). No estimates are available for the total population in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Gorilla Doctors, May 9 and 10, 2023.²¹

ZAMBIA

**April 14 and beginning of July 2023
Kichile and Mufumbwe, North Western Province, Zambia**



Adrian Kadimbili was sentenced to 5 years in prison, while his accomplice, Sydney Kapan'ga, has yet to be sentenced. On April 14, 2023, they were caught carrying 7 kg of baboon (*Papio* spp., Appendix II) and blue duiker (*Philantomba monticola*, Appendix II) meat. Solwezi Radio, July 7, 2023.²²

April 2023

Lusaka, Lusaka Province, Zambia

Officials seized a 4-year-old female vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*, Appendix II) who was illegally held for a year. Her "owner", who claimed to have bought her for 200 kwachas (10 US\$), was arrested. After receiving necessary treatment, she will be transferred to Kafue National Park for rehabilitation.

Zambia Primate Project, April 15, 2023.²³

SOUTHERN AFRICA

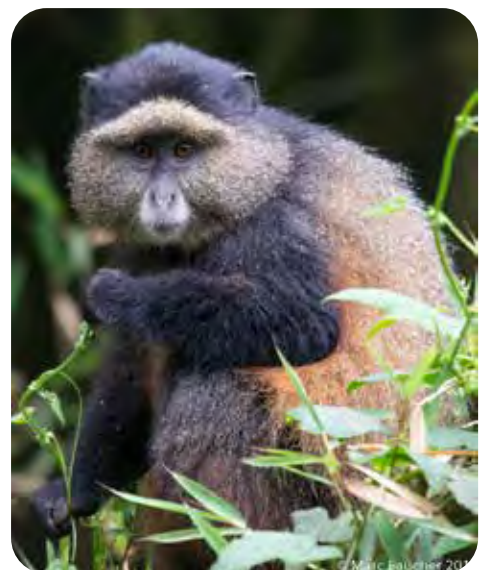
SOUTH AFRICA

March 3, 2023

Van Rooyens Gate border post, Free State Province, South Africa. Border with Lesotho.

A vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*, Appendix II), captured near Carletonville, was recovered from a vehicle. He was found inside a cage, without water or anything to eat, blocked by a 20 cm-long chain. The 2 passengers were about to smuggle him into Lesotho to be used in traditional medicine or witchcraft. The monkey had travelled 500 km and crossed 2 provinces without police detection. He is now under the care of the Bloemfontein SPCA.

Bloemfontein SPCA, March 3, 2023.²⁴



Golden monkey (*Cercopithecus kandti*)

March 7, 2023

Umkomaas, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

A juvenile male vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*, Appendix II) was pierced by a crossbow bolt. A passer-by took him in. He died on the way to the veterinary clinic. Tracy Rowles Umsizi, founder of the NGO Umsizi Umkomaas Vervet Rescue Centre, was outraged: "There are psychopaths living amongst us and no one reports them or does anything. What happens when your pet or child are shot with a crossbow, pellet gun or gun - will you do something then?"

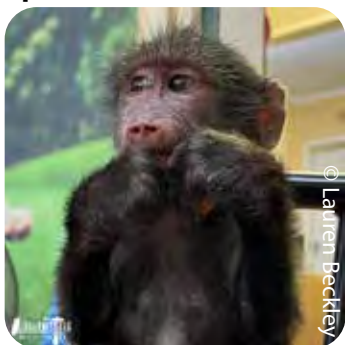
Tracy Rowles Umsizi, March 7, 2023.²⁵

Beginning of March 2023

Upington, Northern Cape Province, South Africa

A very young chacma baboon (*Papio ursinus*, Appendix II) whose mother was killed in the Kalahari desert and who was taken to the Upington veterinary clinic, in the company of a surrogate mother, was later adopted by the Johannesburg clinic, 800 km away, and finally transferred to the CARE (Centre for Animal Rehabilitation and Education) shelter.

Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, March 10, 2023.²⁶



March 29, 2023

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

A few weeks before the cancellation of the management and scaring program in the metropolis (see "On the Trail" n°36 p.106-107, ref.25), and in the absence of a temporary plan, violence against chacma baboons (*Papio ursinus*, Appendix II) is rising. Numerous organised, hierarchical, supportive and bargain-hunting troops lie on the outskirts of Cape Town, and more and more baboons are being shot on sight. A juvenile female was shot between her shoulder blades in an upscale Cape Town neighbourhood which borders Cecilia Forest. The shot hit her spinal cord. The SPCA has taken in 15 chacma baboons within the past 6 months. Only 2 were cared for and released back into their respective troops. All the others were euthanized.

Baboons were persecuted in South Africa between 1925 and 1927. Anyone who killed one and had the body as proof was offered a bounty. In 2 years, 200,000 baboons were shot dead, not counting those poisoned. Today, baboons have no more natural predators in South Africa, and resist human encroachment on their habitats.

Chacma baboons measure between 1-1.5 meters in length, including their tails, and generally weigh between 15 and 35 kg, depending on sex. They represent the largest baboon species and have an ash-grey coat, the darkness of which depends on the individual. They live in troops of 20 to sometimes 80 individuals. Omnivorous and opportunistic, they spend much of their time foraging for food, as well as grooming each other. They can live up to 30 years in the wild.

Daily Maverick, March 31, 2023.²⁷

Beginning of May 2023

Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa



A Mohol galago (*Galago moholi*, Appendix II) was delivered to the Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital by the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Tshwane SPCA. Held illegally, the animal suffered from hyper-obesity and died a few days later.

Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, May 10, 2023.²⁸

May 29, 2023

Owl Rescue Centre, Hartbeespoort, North West Province, South Africa

A baby chacma baboon (*Papio ursinus*, Appendix II) arrived at the refuge a few days after his mother was shot. He is quickly adopted by a female baboon who has just lost her young. Caregivers hope that they will integrate into a troop and relearn how to live in the wild.

Owl Rescue Centre, May 30 and June 10 2023.²⁹

NORTHERN AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 2023

Lexington, State of Kentucky, United States of America

Handing over of a long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II). He was handed over to the Nicholasville Primate Rescue Center, which is supposed to provide chimpanzees retired from animal testing and other monkeys victimized by the pet trade with acceptable housing conditions for the rest of their lives. The spokesman for Kentucky's US Fish and Wildlife says that over the past year, the exotic animal trade has been on the increase. The diversity, complexity, and lack of posting of laws on the possession, transport, and sale of pets favours the dispersion of trafficking in all States. The long-tailed macaque in Lexington was finally transferred to a facility in Texas.

LEX 18, April 17, 2023.³⁰

REPEATED OFFENCE

May 19, 2023

Dry Ridge, State of Kentucky, United States of America

New primate seizure in Kentucky. The marmoset (Callitrichidae, Appendix I or II) owned by a 58-year-old woman was seized and deliberately killed by the authorities. He had bitten a child, and post-mortem tests are required to verify that he was not carrying rabies.

FOX 19 NOW, May 23, 2023.³¹

LATIN AMERICA

BOLIVIA

March 1, 2023

El Alto, Province of Pedro Domingo Murillo, Department of La Paz, Bolivia. Border with Peru and Chile.

The Pofoma (Policía Forestal Medio Ambiental) seized a juvenile tufted capuchin (*Cebus apella*, synonymous with *Sapajus apella*, Appendix II) from a woman trying to sell him. "Los animales silvestres no son mascotas."

La Voz de la Naturaleza, March 1, 2023.³²

Mid-March 2023

Mapiri, Province of Larecaja, Department of La Paz, Bolivia

After receiving an alert, La Voz de la Naturaleza intercepted 2 tufted capuchins (*Cebus apella*, synonymous with *Sapajus apella*, Appendix II) from a private home and transferred them to a GADLP (Gobierno Autónomo Departamental de La Paz) centre. They will soon be entrusted to a suitable facility.

La Voz de la Naturaleza, March 31, 2023.³³

March 23, 2023

Bolivia

Chavo Salvatierra, a motorcycle rally driver, is famous in Bolivia. He posted a video on TikTok of a black spider monkey (*Ateles chamek*, Appendix II), handling him like a stuffed toy and shampooing him in the shower. He publicly glorified this cruelty to his many followers, some of whom admire and try to emulate him. Bolivia prohibits the domestic possession of nationally and internationally protected wild animals, as well as animal abuse. Following the publication of this article, La Pofoma said it had tried to contact the biker to recover the monkey, but both his parents, who live in a bunkered residence, and the KTM garage he owns make him untouchable. According to his fans and entourage, he is currently competing in Mexico.

La Voz de la Naturaleza, March 23 and 25, 2023.³⁴

Beginning of April 2023

Department of La Paz, Bolivia

The 4-month-old Azara's night monkey (*Aotus azarae*, Appendix II) was for sale online. Recovered in a cat box, he was transferred to the center of the Secretaria Departamental de Derechos de la Madre Tierra in La Paz. The seller fled the scene.

Azara's night monkeys are found in Bolivia and in Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul in Brazil. They are frugivorous, eating leaves and flowers, and incidentally insectivores. They are confronted with the expansion of soybean crops and cattle farms, forest fires, and the fragmentation of their habitats. In Bolivia, they are also used as bait for fishermen and as pets. In the genus *Aotus*, they belong to the "red neck" group, which includes 4 other species. At birth, they weigh around 90 grams, reaching adulthood at around 1 kg, and even more for males. They are called "mirikiná" by the Tupi Native Americans.

La Voz de la Naturaleza, April 11, 2023.³⁵



May 3, 2023
Province of Punata, Department of Cochabamba, Bolivia



Seizure of a juvenile tufted capuchin (*Cebus apella*, synonymous with *Sapajus apella*, Appendix II) kept as a pet in a private home. He was handed over to a wildlife rescue centre. Government of Cochabamba, May 3, 2023.³⁶

May 31, 2023
Vinto, Province of Quillacollo, Department of Cochabamba, Bolivia
The Azara's night monkey (*Aotus azarae*, Appendix II) was exhibited for sale. The Pofoma came to seize him and handed him over to a wildlife rescue center. La Voz de la Naturaleza, May 31, 2023.³⁷

BRAZIL

April 13, 2023
Dourados, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil
Rescue during the night by the PMA (Polícia Militar Ambiental) and firefighters of a capuchin monkey (*Cebus* spp., synonymous with *Sapajus* spp., Appendix II) hiding in a tree. He was dragging a rope and wearing a diaper, and rescuers deduced that he had escaped from a nearby residence. He was taken into the care of the CRAS (Centro de Reabilitação de Animais Silvestres) in Campo Grande. RCN 67, April 14, 2023.³⁸

May 8, 2023
Brasilia, Federal District, Brazil
After receiving a report via the hotline, a team from the PMDF (Polícia Militar Distrito Federal) rescued a black-tufted-ear marmoset (*Callithrix penicillata*, Appendix II) that had just been captured. After a health check by IBAMA (Instituto brasileiro do meio ambiente e dos recursos naturais renováveis) experts, the marmoset was released near a group of fellow marmosets. The poacher is subject to the Environmental Crimes Act. Military Police of the Federal District, May 8, 2023.³⁹

COLOMBIA

March 10, 2023
San Rafael, Department of Antioquia, Colombia
A martyred silvery-brown tamarin (*Saguinus leucopus*, Appendix I), perforated by bullets like a puppet at a fairground, was found on the public highway. Despite the care of the CAV (Centro de Atención y Valoración de Fauna Silvestre) and the Cornare (Corporación Autónoma Regional de las Cuencas de los Ríos Negro y Nare), it was not possible to save him. Silvery-brown tamarins provide a valuable ecosystem service by dispersing seeds. They are the most important contributors to reforestation and are preyed upon by many wild species. Regional Autonomous Corporation of the Rios Negro and Nare, March 10, 2023.⁴⁰

March 22, 2023
Caldas, Department of Antioquia, Colombia
A red howler (*Alouatta seniculus*, Appendix II) with open fractures to the chest was abandoned by a family in a veterinary practice. He died of injuries of unknown origin. Juan David Palacio Cardona (Director of the Metropolitan Area of Valle de Aburrá), March 23, 2023; Metropolitan Area of Valle de Aburrá, April 18, 2023.⁴¹

April 20, 2023
San Rafael, Department of Antioquia, Colombia
The red howler (*Alouatta seniculus*, Appendix II) suffered a long martyrdom in the village of La Cumbre. He was in critical condition when the police and a vet arrived on the scene. To say, as the local press did, that the victim was saved is premature. No news of his torturers. MiOriente, April 21, 2023; Alerta Paisa, April 24, 2023.⁴²

ECUADOR

May 12, 2023
Baeza, Napo Province, Ecuador



Seizure of a South American squirrel monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*, Appendix II) and a white-tailed titi (*Plecturocebus discolor*, Appendix II) from a van on the Guaguayacu-Baeza road. The 3 Ecuadorian nationals were taken into custody at Archidona Prison. The 2 juvenile primates are emaciated and suffering from the after-effects of their capture. They are under observation and will undergo a program of relearning to live in the wild in the hope of being released. Min. of Water and Ecological Transition, May 12, 2023.⁴³

FRANCE (GUIANA)

April 24, 2023

Bellevue, Territorial Collectivity of Guiana, France

Seizure of a common squirrel monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*, Appendix II) whose possession is prohibited, even though hunting is conditionally authorized. The pocket monkey is an orphan. Gendarmerie of Guiana, May 13, 2023.⁴⁴

MEXICO

March 3, 2023

Cancun, State of Quintana Roo, Mexico

A Geoffroy's spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*, Appendix II) was held captive in a breezblock and tin shed. The monkey is around 4 years old and his owner is very evasive about his origin. He is liable for illegal possession of a protected species and animal abuse. He has been reported.

PROFEPA, March 3, 2023; 24 Horas Quintana Roo, March 4, 2023.⁴⁵



March 24, 2023

Mexico City, Mexico

An alert about a monkey cloistered in an iron duplex inside a middle-class house enabled the specialised services to identify a common squirrel monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*, Appendix II) and estimate his age at 9/10-years-old. The owner was unable to provide any certified paperwork from the Semarnat (Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales) proving that the animal had not been stolen, captured in a forest or bought on the black market, but he authoritatively opposed the seizure. PROFEPA lodged a complaint.

Common squirrel monkeys live mostly in treetops. They are so light and camouflaged that leaves falling from trees are the only sign that a troop is up there, hunting beetles, midges or butterflies. Deforestation is their biggest worry, but they also have to watch out for birds of prey.

PROFEPA, March 24, 2023.⁴⁶

Beginning of April 2023

Tulancingo, State of Hidalgo, Mexico

Abandonment of a 3 to 4-month-old female Guatemalan howler (*Alouatta pigra*, Appendix I) in a suitcase at the gates of the zoo, which handed her over to biologist Adriana Martín del Campo, who was authorized to entrust her to a specialised facility in Palenque, Chiapas, where she is originally from, with the goal of releasing her.

Hidalgo Hoy, April 5, 2023; PROFEPA, April 6, 2023.⁴⁷

May 20, 2023

Tarímbaro, State of Michoacán, Mexico



A baby spider monkey (*Ateles* spp., Appendix I or II) newly arrived in a private home through illegal channels was freed and taken to a specialised shelter.

PROFEPA, May 20, 2023.⁴⁸

End of May 2023

Amatitán, State of Jalisco, Mexico

Seizure in the enclosure of a restaurant near the Guadalajara-Tepic highway of one tufted capuchin (*Cebus apella*, Appendix II) and 2 dromedaries (*Camelus dromedarius*), all brutalized.

PROFEPA, May 5, 2023; Fiscalía General de la República, May 24, 2023.⁴⁹

PERU

March 13, 2023

Nauta, Province of Loreto, Department of Loreto, Peru

A "choro" (woolly monkey, *Lagothrix lagotricha*, Appendix II) was seized along the premises of the Jaen interprovincial transport company. The operation is credited to Gerfor (Gerencia Regional de Desarrollo Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre).

Loreto Regional Forestry and Wildlife Development Management, March 13, 2023.⁵⁰



EASTERN ASIA

TAIWAN

Mid-March-March 27, 2023 Taoyuan Special Municipality, Taiwan

An attempt to recover an olive baboon (*Papio anubis*, Appendix II) wandering around the city and showing no signs of aggressiveness ended badly. He was killed by a firearm when, in accordance with Ministry of Agriculture protocol, he should have been anaesthetised with a syringe gun or caught in a net. The unfortunate animal was the target of a licenced hunter returning from a bird hunt, who, excited by the affair and the exceptional nature of the target, couldn't resist firing. He even claims to have acted in self-defense, to protect the inhabitants of a house where the baboon was about to take refuge. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, 10 olive baboons are registered at Taipei Zoo, 30 km from Taoyuan, 5 Hamadryas baboons (*Papio hamadryas*, Appendix II) at Kaohsiung Zoo, and 150 yellow baboons (*Papio cynocephalus*, Appendix II), 8 Hamadryas baboons, and 5 olive baboons at Lefoo Village Zoological Amusement Park, 33 km from Taoyuan. No requests for olive baboons have been received from private individuals. All baboons are native to Africa. The range of the olive baboon extends from Guinea in the west to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania in the east. The victim was 8 or 9 years old and weighed around 20 kg. The hunter and a dozen agents from the Ministry of Agriculture and Lefoo Village mobilized to gently capture the baboon are being heard by the courts to determine all the players and factors that contributed to the baboon's escape and violent death in breach of article 37 of the Wildlife Conservation Act. Taiwan News, March 23 and 28, 2023.⁵⁴

SOUTHEASTERN ASIA

CAMBODIA

April 26, 2023 Pou Char, Mondulhiri Province, Cambodia. Border with Viet Nam.

Arrest by military police and the First Intervention Battalion of Sorn Kob, who was transporting 9 macaques (*Macaca* spp., Appendix II) locked in bags on a motorcycle. After this operation, 2 opinions clashed. The provincial environment director, Chhao Bunthoeun, says that thanks to the prescribed trap dismantling campaigns, poaching for the bushmeat trade is on the decline. In contrast, Kroeung Tola, coordinator of the NGO ADHOC, says that bushmeat consumption in urban areas is still very active despite rising prices. He adds that poachers should be severely punished by the courts. Khmer Times, April 27, 2023.⁵⁵

Mid-March 2023

Soritor, Province of Moyobamba, Department of San Martín, Peru

At a woodcutter's bivouac, 2 white-fronted capuchins (*Cebus albifrons*, Appendix II) were seized.

In the wild, they live in forests at the Amazon basin and in the woods of the Andes at altitudes of 1,600 to 2,000 meters. They only come down from treetops to drink. Adolescent capuchins lead the dance through the trees and, like squirrel monkeys, drip urine onto their hands and feet to trace their route through the canopy.

Neotropical Primate Conservation, March 14, 2023.⁵¹

Mid-April 2023

Moyobamba, Province of Moyobamba, Department of San Martín, Peru



A baby San Martin titi monkey (*Plecturocebus oenanthe*, Appendix II) was found inside a cardboard box one morning in front of an animal welfare office. Favourable prognosis. Officials are looking into a suitable accommodation for the monkey, and given his size, transport costs should not be too high.

Neotropical Primate Conservation, April 14, 2023.⁵²

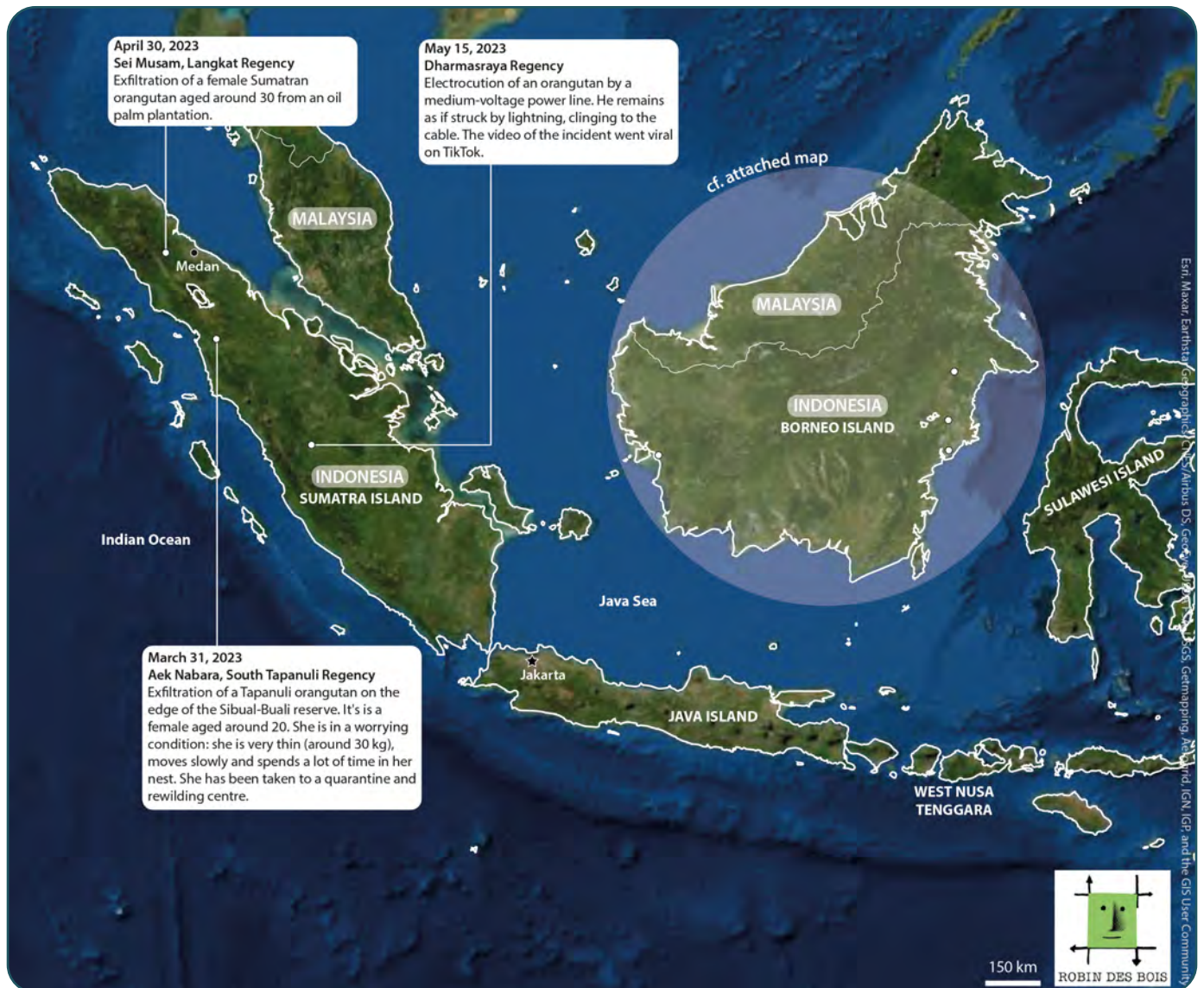
April 2023

Tarapoto, Province of San Martín, Department of San Martín, Peru

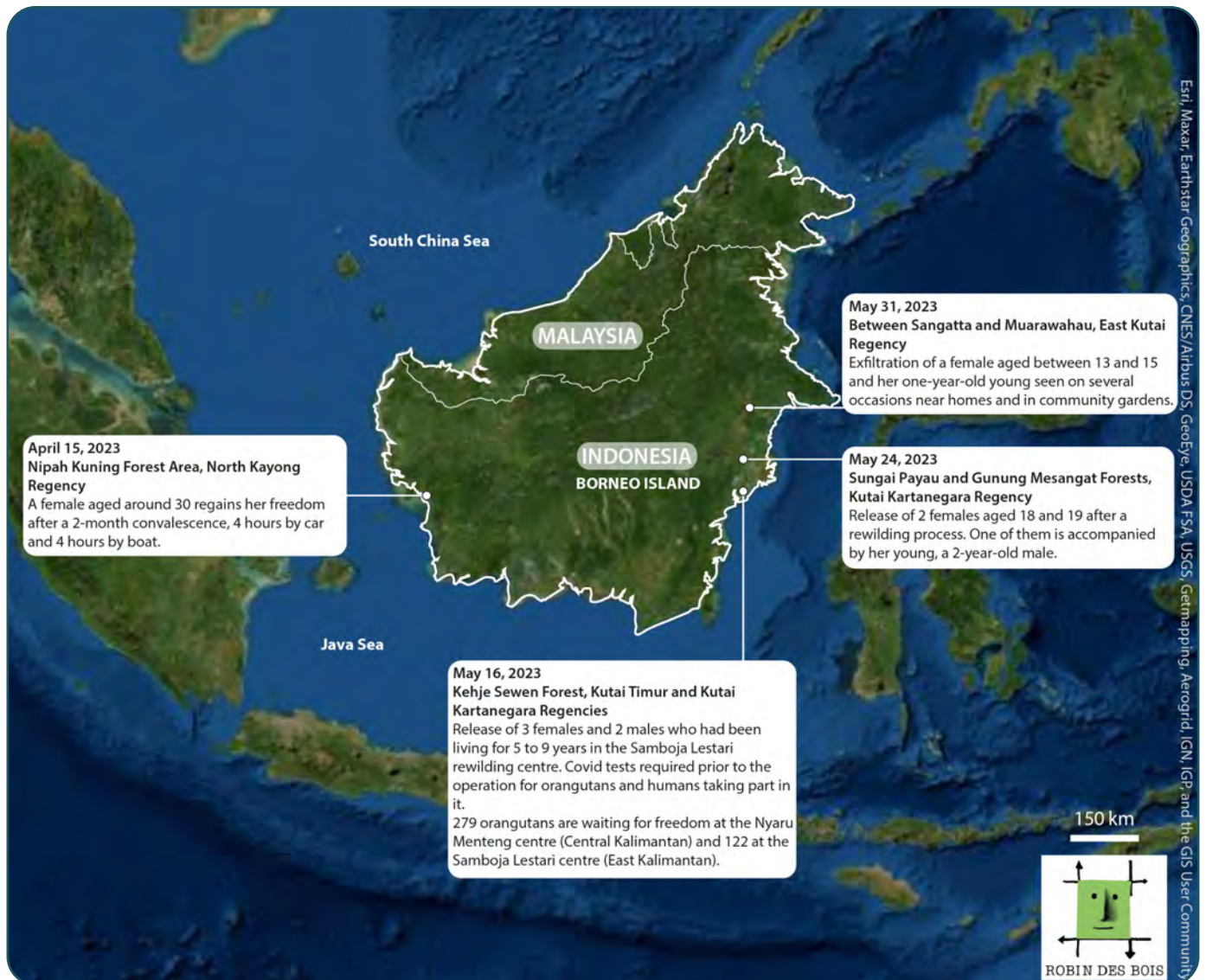
Market seizure of 2 young woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix* spp., Appendix I or II) and transfer to Lagunas to a facility specialising in the recovery and reintroduction into the wild of spider monkeys and woolly monkeys. After quarantine, they will gradually be introduced to a group of peers rescued from trafficking and awaiting release. Two species of woolly monkeys are present in Peru: Peruvian yellow-tailed woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix flavicauda*, synonymous with *Oreonax flavicauda*, Appendix I) and common woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagotricha*, Appendix II).

Neotropical Primate Conservation, April 21, 2023.⁵³

Orangutans March 1 - May 31, 2023



Orangutans (*Pongo* spp., Appendix I).
Sources, see page 257.



May 16, 2023
 Kehje Sewen Forest, Kutai Timur and Kutai Kartanegara Regencies, East Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island



May 31, 2023
 Between Sangatta and Muarawahau, East Kutai Regency, Eastern Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island

March 21, 2023

Sijambi, City of Tanjungbalai, North Sumatra Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

Popo, a macaque (*Macaca* spp., Appendix I or II) from a line of coconut climbers, was handed over to the BKSDA. Age 12, he was becoming cumbersome, and one or 2 bites were attributed to him. He was put in a transit cage and deemed fit for release without delay, despite his long years in captivity. Leaving the village at midday, he found himself in the protected forest of the Simalungun Regency. Directorate General of Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation, March 24, 2023.⁵⁶

March 29, 2023

Sipange, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

Handing over to BKSDA agents of a slow loris (*Nycticebus coucang*, Appendix I) that Togi Sitompul claims to have "found" on the side of a road. The "kukang" was a juvenile male. He was released back into the forest that evening.

Directorate General of Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation, April 17, 2023.⁵⁷

April 9, 2023

Port of Lembar, West Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Lesser Sunda Islands, Indonesia

Two teenage members of the Vespa community were arrested in the port area. They were carrying a macaque (*Macaca* spp., Appendix I or II) and a dog. The animals were seized and quarantined. The 2 adventurers had come from Jakarta, nearly 2,000 km from Lembar, and their final destination was Sape on the island of Sumbawa, 500 km from Lembar, an endless road movie interspersed with car ferry journeys. The Vespa community is fanatic about the 98cm3 Piaggio engines salvaged from Vespas of the 1970s. After doping them up, they mount them on customised multi-wheeled machines. Vice Indonesia, which has looked into the matter, talks of "Frankenstein monster machines" and "shining testimonies to the ingenuity and creativity of the Vespa community members".

Mataram Agricultural Quarantine Center, April 9, 2023.⁵⁸

May 1, 2023

Sampit, East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island, Indonesia

Handing over to the BKSDA of a Bornean white-bearded gibbon (*Hylobates albibarbis*, Appendix I) held since 2019 by a shopkeeper in the damp backrooms of a store, away from the sun and natural light. He suffers from alopecia. He has been entrusted to the Kalaweit Foundation in Palangka Raya.

Garda Animalia, May 2, 2023.⁵⁹

March 6, 2023

Near Samrit, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand

Seizure in the back of an SUV of 47 juvenile long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II) crammed into 6 plastic crates. The driver claims to have been paid 17,000 baht (480 US\$) to transport them from Khao Ta Khrong National Park tin Laos (700 km). The presumed final destination was China, where they would be sold on the animal testing market, which since the Covid-19 crisis has been experiencing a shortage of "material." In Asia, the price of a macaque has risen from 30 to 300 US\$ in 3 years.

Bangkok Post, March 6, 2023; Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, March 6, 2023; The Nation Thailand, March 7, 2023.⁶⁰

March 9, 2023

Su-ngai Kolok, Narathiwat Province, Thailand. Border with Malaysia.

Seizure of 2 baby rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*, Appendix II) from Ms. Afikah Binti, a Malayan national.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, March 10, 2023.⁶¹



Beginning of March 2023

Khao Chong Phran, Ratchaburi Province, Thailand

In his sidecar, the 28-year-old man was carrying 3 knives, a net, and a macaque (*Macaca* spp., Appendix I or II) he had just captured. The man was believed to be a procurer for a wholesaler of macaques for animal experimentation.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, March 16, 2023.⁶²

April 1, 2023

Near Wat Khao Nor, Nakhon Sawan Province, Thailand

Officials seized 6 anaesthetised long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II) from inside a van. Mme Patcharin, 33, Mlle Patcharaporn, 17, and M. Phumthanin, 16, were arrested. All are members of the Khao Nor temple syringe gang (see "On the Trail" n°39 p. 80, ref.37). The 6 macaques, each less than a year old, weighed between 1.2 and 1.5 kg. Five were found lying down in an apparent state of unconsciousness, while the 6th was sitting up. They were given an IV and revival antidote, and should be released in Khao Nor-Khao Kaew. Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, April 1, 2023.⁶³

April 6, 2023

Phetchaburi Province, Thailand

Long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II) are being captured by all possible means, including nets and anaesthetics. They often swarm around temples, drawn in by the discarded food from tourists and worshippers. Following an undercover investigation, police located 3 suspicious pick-up trucks near Thong Chai temple. The 6 passengers admitted to capturing roughly 10 macaques by casting nets, throwing them into plastic bags, and selling them for 2,000 baht (58 US\$) each to a middleman in Chachoengsao province for smuggling into China. Thai Public Broadcasting Service, April 7, 2023.⁶⁴

April 17, 2023

Mueang Lopburi, Lopburi Province, Thailand

The 3 passengers, one woman and 2 men, of a luxury car registered in Uthai Thani, 170 km from Mueang Lopburi, were luring macaques (*Macaca* spp., Appendix I or II) with bait and anaesthetising them before seizing them. The maneuver was inspired by the capture of macaques around monasteries. The macaques are said to be destined for animal experimentation in China, or for the tasting of certain organs reputed to be aphrodisiacs. The scene was filmed. The kidnappers are wanted. Thai PBS, April 19, 2023.⁶⁵

April 24, 2023

Kaeng Krachan National Park, Phetchaburi Province, Thailand

A patrol alerted by gunshots summoned 2 poachers to surrender and attempted to disarm them. An exchange of gunfire ensued. The 2 poachers were wounded and transported on a makeshift stretcher for treatment. On site, 6 Phayre's leaf monkey (*Trachypithecus phayrei*, Appendix II) carcasses were seized as evidence. According to a former park official, Phayre's leaf monkey meat sells for around 250-400 baht/kg (7-11 US\$/kg) in nearby towns. Thai Public Broadcasting Service, April 25, 2023.⁶⁶

April 25, 2023

Nong Han District, Udon Thani Province, Thailand

Police stopped a Toyota Avanza on the expressway leading to the Laos border and recovered 45 long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II). The driver, Boonchuay Thanapim, claims he was paid 5,000 baht (146 US\$) to deliver them to Saraburi province, a 460 km journey. The online media site Mgronline.com states that the final destination was China, either for animal experimentation or to be cut up. The brains of long-tailed macaques and other monkeys are still considered a tonic for sexual and intellectual activity. Mgronline.com, April 25, 2023; Thai Public Broadcasting Service, April 26, 2023; The Thaiger, April 26, 2023.⁶⁷

May 2, 2023

Khao Somphot Wildlife No Hunting Area, Lopburi Province, Thailand

Seizure of 3 empty anaesthetic syringes from a getaway car and rescue of a lethargic male macaque (*Macaca* spp., Appendix I or II). Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, May 2, 2023.⁶⁸

May 12, 2023 and May 18, 2023

Thongchai and Ban Khao Mainual, Phetchaburi Province, Thailand

Once again, the Muang District is hit. A gang from Sa Kaeo, a 5-hour drive away, was arrested on a hillside with 10 long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II) more or less asleep. The group consisting of 4 men and 2 women aged between 20 and 47 were driving a Ford Ranger, Toyota Prius, and Toyota Wish. Seizure of 80 anaesthetic syringes and bags of food to bait the victims. It's a sinister collective raid that the long-tailed macaques have had to endure since the eruption of Covid-19. Mixed and intergenerational gangs bait them, stuff them with sedatives, and sell them, or try to sell them, to brokers offering to buy them for 30-60 US\$ each, depending on their weight and condition. All vehicles have been seized.

- Six days after the traffickers were arrested, 14 dead macaques and 5 survivors deprived of food and water were discovered in a rented house 55 km from Thongchai. The province's Wildlife Protection Department intervened after a neighbour reported a rotting smell.

Bangkok Post, May 12 and 19, 2023.⁶⁹

VIET NAM

March 2023

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam



A Northern white-cheeked gibbon (*Nomascus leucogenys*, Appendix I) had been living in Ho Chi Minh City for 5 years under the control of Thai Minh Duong. Tired of looking after him and fearful of being caught for abusive possession of an endangered species, he handed him over to police in hopes of his returning to the forest and freedom. Unfortunately, this was not a possibility as the gibbon grew so deformed and distorted under Thai Minh Duong's care. Zing News, March 21, 2023.⁷⁰

Mid-March 2023

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Handing over of a female long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II) and a male Northern pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca leonina*, Appendix II) kept as pets for 6 and 4 years respectively. They were transferred to the Cu Chui shelter. ENV, March 18, 2023.⁷¹

March 21, 2023

Cao Loc, Lang Son Province, Viet Nam. Border with China.

Nong Quang P. and Hoang Van C. had been under house arrest since November 7, 2022 for capturing a Bengal slow loris (*Nycticebus bengalensis*, Appendix I) in a tree for Nong and buying him for 300,000 dongs (12.60 US\$) for Hoang. The 2 subjects benefited from extenuating circumstances for having loyally recounted the facts during the investigation and at the trial, with a special mention for Nong, whose father was awarded a certificate of merit for his worthy contribution to the building of the homeland. Nong, who committed the most serious act, was sentenced to one year and 6 months in prison and to pay the 300,000 dongs got out of the sale of the loris to the State. Hoang, who was Nong's accomplice in buying the loris from him, was held less responsible because, realizing that he was acting illegally, he handed him over to the authorities on his own initiative some 10 days later. He was sentenced to a one-year suspended prison term with a 2-year probationary period. As Hoang and Nong had no financial assets, they were exempted from fines. They must each pay legal



fees of 200,000 dongs (8.40 US\$). The 2 cages in which the loris was confined, one made of metal, the other of bamboo, were destroyed. The loris was handed over to the Cuc Phuong National Park Rescue, Conservation, and Development Center. Thư viện pháp luật, March 21, 2023.⁷²

March 2023

Ha Nam Province, Viet Nam

Seizure of 2 lorises (*Nycticebus* spp., Appendix I) from a private individual. He claims that he bought them on the side of the road. ENV, March 23, 2023.⁷³



April 11, 2023

Tam Diep, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam



In the bamboo cage, there's a "coolie" scientifically known as the pygmy slow loris (*Nycticebus pygmaeus*, Appendix I) that To Van Cuong, on behalf of a sender in Kon Tum province, was going to deliver to a recipient in Hanoi. The distance between Kon Tum and Hanoi is over 1,000 km. To Van Cuong was paid one million dongs (42.50 US\$) for the transport. Lao Dong, April 13, 2023.⁷⁴

INDIA

March 6, 2023

Chennai International Airport, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Chennai's (formerly Madras) reputation as an exotic airport continues to grow. Upon the arrival of an AirAsia flight from Bangkok, 4 marmosets (Cebidae or Callitrichidae, Appendix I or II) from South or Central America were seized.

Chennai Customs, March 7, 2023; The Times of India, March 7, 2023.⁷⁵

March 19, 2023

Chennai International Airport, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Chennai is definitely a transit point for wildlife from all over the world. An AK 13 AirAsia flight from Kuala Lumpur carried 2 passengers whose luggage was closely examined by customs officers. They seized a De Brazza's monkey (*Cercopithecus neglectus*, Appendix II) and an eastern black-and-white colobus (*Colobus guereza*, Appendix II) from Central Africa, as well as 2 spider monkeys (*Ateles spp.*, Appendix I or II) from Central and South America. Chennai Customs, March 21, 2023; The Times of India, March 21, 2023.⁷⁶

Night of April 9 to 10, 2023

Debipur, Cachar District, State of Assam, India

It's getting worse. The Myanmar-Mizoram-Assam current of exotic animals is no longer a drought. This time, it's a Gulf Stream that has brought 7 red-faced black spider monkeys (*Ateles paniscus*, Appendix II) from French Guiana and neighbouring countries and 2 lemurs (*Lemuriformes*, Appendix I) from Madagascar to India. On Sunday night, the 2 cages in transit were discovered by the police in remote corner of Debipur. The immigrants were taken under escort to the Guwahati Zoo (325 km away), which is building up an attractive stock.

Odisha TV, April 10, 2023; The Times of India, April 11, 2023.⁷⁷

May 14, 2023

Garhmukteshwar Tehsil, Hapur District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Poisoning of around 40 rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*, Appendix II). Numerous watermelons and sugar cubes were found next to the mass grave, whose stench provoked complaints from the local population and the arrival of the forestry services. Post-mortem examinations are underway at the veterinary laboratory in Bareilly. New Delhi Television, May 15, 2023.⁷⁸



April and June 2023

Sri Lanka

- The Ministry of Agriculture is not opposed to exporting 100,000 toque macaques (*Macaca sinica*, Appendix II) to China. The financial terms of this potential trade have not been disclosed, but it would certainly benefit Sri Lanka as its government is declaring bankruptcy. The macaques would be destined for a thousand or so zoos and amusement parks in the best-case scenario, or alternatively, animal experimentation.

In the face of controversy, the Chinese Embassy in Sri Lanka denied any Chinese government involvement in the proposal, and Sri Lanka subsequently clarified that the proposal came from a private company.



For:

- Breeders' unions are in favour of the Chinese proposal. "We do not care which country the monkeys are exported to as they destroy our crops and raid our properties regularly, making life extremely difficult."

Against:

- Murali Vallipuranathan highlights, "Toque macaques are mainly frugivorous and involved in seed dispersing. Rapid decline of these monkeys may affect the spread of the plants feeding these monkeys. Rapid decline of macaques can lead to an increase in lizards and small birds because these monkeys are known to feed on them. On the other hand, leopards, fishing cats, pythons and mugger crocodiles are known to prey on these monkeys. A rapid decline of monkeys can lead these predators to look for alternative prey including domestic animals."

- According to Rohan Pethiyagoda, a taxonomist, naturalist, and former vice-president of the IUCN's Species Survival Commission: "exporting monkeys is not a good idea and there is no legal provision to do so" and "A government that permits this export is going to have egg — and a lot of monkey poop — all over its face."

.../...

- Sumith Pilapitiya, former General Director of the Department of Wildlife Conservation, points out that such conflicts between monkeys and human activities date back many years, and instead of simplistic solutions, Sri Lanka should act wisely to solve the problem. He points out that in 2015, a "Strategy to Conserve and Coexist with Sri Lanka's Monkeys — 2016 to 2026" was drawn up by numerous experts but never enacted.

- The NGO Rally for Animal Rights and the Environment underscores that the IUCN estimates toque macaque populations at 200,000, thus, exporting 100,000 would cause major imbalances in the ecosystem.

- Wolfgang Dittus, primate specialist at the Smithsonian Institution, estimates that toque macaque habitats have been reduced by 50-70% due to agricultural expansion, and that their populations have declined by a proportional amount. "However, the macaque population has had exponential growth around some human settlements due to the accessibility of food sources in the past 30-50 years linked to an upsurge in tourism and economic development. These population explosions are site-specific and not geographically widespread, and they have two negative consequences. First, macaques are most numerous near human habitations where they come into conflict with people. Second, in such places, macaques are very conspicuous and create a false impression of being overrun by too many macaques islandwide."

- In the face of mounting protests against the export project of toque macaques as well as legal action taken by 30 animal rights NGOs, the Ministry of Agriculture said it was abandoned. Colombo Telegraph, April 13, 2023; Mongabay, April 28, 2023; Dawn, June 27, 2023.⁷⁹

WESTERN EUROPE

FRANCE

March 2023

Department of Loir-et-Cher, France

Ten ring-tailed lemurs (*Lemur catta*, Appendix I) and 2 white-lipped tamarins (*Saguinus labiatus*, Appendix II) were stolen from Upie Zoo in south-east France in August 2021. Eight were found 7 days later in a van whose passengers refused to submit to a road check (see "On the Trail" n°33 p.144, ref.68). The ninth ring-tailed lemur has just been recovered by the OFB. He was wandering near Tours in central France. He has been handed over to the Upie caretakers. A lemur and the 2 tamarins are still missing.

Ouest-France, April 12, 2023; France Bleu Drôme Ardèche, April 13, 2023.⁸⁰

Mid-May 2023

Nogent-Le-Phaye, Department of Eure-et-Loir, France

Following a seizure, an unweaned common marmoset (*Callithrix jacchus*, Appendix II) between one and 2 months of age was entrusted to the La Tanière zoo-refuge. He had been kept by a private individual.

La Tanière, May 29, 2023.⁸¹

EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIA

April 13, 2023

Peno, Tver Oblast, Russia

At the prosecutor's request, the court banned access to a website selling large lemurs (Lemuridae, Appendix I), New World monkeys (Cebidae, Appendix I or II) and Old World monkeys (Cercopithecidae, Appendix I or II).

Tver Oblast Prosecutor's Office, April 13, 2023.⁸²

PACAS, CAPYBARAS, ARMADILLOS AND PECCARIES

AMERICA

BOLIVIA

April 9 and 10, 2023

Puerto Pailas, Province of Andrés Ibáñez, Department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia



Seizure of 32 kg of forest meat during a roadblock. Armadillos (family Dasypodidae) among other forest animals were butchered to be sold for cutting. Three arrests. Three years' imprisonment for the 3 poachers. The sentence was adjusted. They remain at liberty with the obligation to perform one month of community service without pay and to report to the sentence enforcement judge once a month. El Deber, April 11, 2023.¹

May 18, 2023

Santa Cruz, Province of Andrés Ibáñez, Department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Seizure at a market of 4 carcasses of nine-banded armadillos (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), one white-lipped peccary carcass (*Tayassu pecari*, Appendix II) and half of another carcass, a total of 32.5 kg of wild meat that Erlan Rojas Saavedra was selling. La Voz de la Naturaleza, May 19, 2023.²



BRAZIL

May 22, 2023

Almenara, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of an eviscerated and dismembered paca (*Cuniculus paca*, Appendix III in Honduras) and armadillo (family Dasypodidae) and a firearm from the back of a pick-up truck during a roadblock. Fined 5,288 reais (1,050 US\$). The meat was incinerated. G1 Vales de Minas Gerais, May 22, 2023.³



May 22, 2023

Planaltina, Federal District, Brazil



Seizure by the GOC (Grupamento de Operações no Cerrado) of 2 firearms, 52 cartridges, and a poached paca (*Cuniculus paca*, Appendix III in Honduras). The 2 occupants of the vehicle were transferred to the 16th police station.

Military Police of the Federal District, May 23, 2023.⁴

May 2023

Bariri, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Five arrests on the banks of the Tietê River, a tributary of the Paraná. Seizure of a poached capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*).

HORAH Notícia, June 22, 2023.⁵

COLOMBIA

May 30, 2023

Bajo Cauca Subregion, Department of Antioquia, Colombia

Seizure of 50 kg of smoked capybara meat (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) by the carabinieri and the canine brigade. The hunt for the 2 street vendors lasted several days.

Regional Autonomous Corporation of Central Antioquia, May 30, 2023; El Colombiano, May 30, 2023.⁶

PERU

March 13, 2023

San Lorenzo, Province of Datem del Marañón, Department of Loreto, Peru

During an unannounced visit to the town's main market, 7 kg of dried white-lipped peccary meat (*Tayassu pecari*, Appendix II) and 5 kg of dried collared peccary meat (*Pecari tajacu*, Appendix II) were seized and handed over to the Las Flores soup kitchen, which serves 45 people in need. As the uniformed Gerfor team approached, the sellers scurried away.

Loreto Regional Forestry and Wildlife Development Management, March 15, 2023.⁷

EUROPE

GERMANY

April 10, 2023

Aachen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. Border with Belgium.

The unrefrigerated van driven by an Ivorian with no identity papers or driver's licence came from Belgium and was on its way to Aachen full of fresh fish. A roadside check revealed several large smoked bats, probably of African origin, in the middle of the fish. Sankt Augustin Federal Police Department, April 12, 2023.¹



© Bundespolizeidirektion Sankt Augustin

OCEANIA

FRANCE (NEW CALEDONIA)

May 1, 2023

Koumac, North Province, Overseas Collectivity of New Caledonia, France

Until further notice, it is forbidden to hunt ornate flying foxes (*Pteropus ornatus*), Pacific flying foxes (*Pteropus tonganus*), New Caledonia flying foxes (*Pteropus vetula*), and New Caledonia blossom bats (*Notopterus neocaledonicus*) in any season. Previously, it was permitted to hunt them during weekends in April, on the condition that no more than 5 specimens were taken. But these regulations were misunderstood or misinterpreted by some members of the public. On Wednesday, April 26 in Koumac, 4 poachers were caught by nature guards with several flying foxes in their bags. The suspension of all hunting in all seasons also applies to "notous," scientifically known as goliath imperial pigeons (*Ducula goliath*). Goliath imperial pigeons (50 cm long) live in dense forests and feed on fruit and seeds. They are endemic to New Caledonia. Hunting bats in the North Province, see "On the Trail" n°8 p.93 (ref.13), n°10 p.70 (ref.27), n°11 p.89 (ref.17) and n°32 p.148 (ref.16). Nouvelle-Calédonie la 1ère, April 30, 2023.²

March 29, 2023

Koumac, Northern Province, Overseas Collectivity of New Caledonia, France

A poacher was caught red-handed with 9 poached fruit bats on Wednesday, March 29. Hunting is open on Saturdays and Sundays in April, and is limited to 5 bats per day. There are 4 species of bats in the province: ornate flying foxes (*Pteropus ornatus*), Pacific flying foxes (*Pteropus tonganus*), New Caledonia flying foxes (*Pteropus vetula*), and New Caledonia blossom bats (*Notopterus neocaledonicus*).

Demain en Nouvelle-Calédonie, April 6, 2023.³



Pteropus ornatus

© juju98



Ducula goliath

© Frédéric Desmouilins

OTHER MAMMALS

AFRICA

NIGERIA

January to March 2023

Seme Border Area, Lagos State, Nigeria. Border with Benin.

Customs seized 1,160 Gambian rats (*Cricetomys gambianus*) in Benin.



Gambian rats are either captured in their natural habitats or raised on farms, and happen to be a favourite among rural and urban dwellers. One rat sells for around 26 US\$. Breeding them is a big business, and hunting them is government-authorized until further notice. In the wild, Gambian rats or giant Gambian rats live in West Africa in savannahs or dry forests. They dig burrows between tree roots under rocks or on slopes. They are mainly vegetarians, though invertebrates such as ants, termites and beetles make up a small part of their diet. They roam their territory at night, collecting seeds, nuts, green debris, fruits and tubers in their cheeks, which they bring back to their living quarters and granaries. According to experts, they can also bring back inedible objects such as pencils, pieces of chalk, earrings and garbage, proof that at night they get close to human activities. From head to tail, they measure 60 to 90 cm in length and weigh between 1 and 1.5 kg.

See Africa Today, May 14, 2021; The Tide, April 12, 2023.¹

AMERICA

BOLIVIA

End of March 2023

Colcapirhua, Province of Quillacollo, Department of Cochabamba, Bolivia



Officials rescued 13 hedgehogs (family Erinaceidae), up for sale at a pet fair that's held every Sunday. The Public Prosecutor's Office interviewed one woman who was selling a hedgehog for 600 bolivianos or 85 US\$. She said that hedgehogs eat cat food and after a while, "they follow you like a dog". No species of hedgehog lives in the wild in America. However, hedgehogs are bred for pet markets in Bolivia, notably four-toed hedgehogs (*Atelerix albiventris*). La Voz de la Naturaleza, March 24, 2023; Opinión, March 20 and 24, 2023.²

BRAZIL

March 2, 2023

Río de Janeiro, State of Río de Janeiro, Brazil

Two men walking away from the Henrique Lage public garden hid a sloth (suborder Folivora) in their backpack, that they intended to sell for 1,500 reais (310 US\$) at the Duque de Caxias animal fair in the Baixada Fluminense (the lowlands of the State of Río de Janeiro). At the 14th police station, they admitted that they originally wanted to capture a capuchin (*Cebus* spp., synonymous with *Sapajus* spp., Appendix II) in the botanical garden, but gave up because of its increased surveillance. The Henrique Lage Public Garden is part of the Tijuca National Park, which the Chico Mendes Institute has administered since 2004. Tijuca extends over 40 km² in the mountains around the city of Río de Janeiro.

TV Globo, March 2, 2023.³

March 16, 2023
Barbalha, State of Ceará, Brazil



A young, tiny Southern tamandua (*Tamandua tetradactyla*) lay prostrate beside the cold corpse of his mother, killed for fun. Following alerts from good samaritans, members of the BPMA (Batalhão de Polícia do Meio Ambiente) rescued the tamandua. Military Police of Ceará, March 17, 2023.⁴

April 22, 2023
Ivinhema, State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil

The adult female South American tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) (270 kg) was dragging herself through the fields, obviously handicapped. The 73-year-old farmer called for help, and the environmental police in Batayporã, 67 km from the scene, found that the peaceful, massive mammal had been thirsty and wounded for several days by 2 bullets from a firearm. After 4 hours, the tapir was lifted into a trailer using a backhoe, then taken to a vet for emergency treatment, then to the CRAS (Centro de Reabilitação de Animais Silvestres) in Campo Grande.

Olhar Animal (with Roraima na Rede), April 25, 2023.⁵

COSTA RICA

April 1, 2023
Playa Carrillo, Guanacaste Province, Costa Rica

Seizure by the Sinac of 5 brown-throated three-toed sloths (*Bradypus variegatus*, Appendix II) also known as three-toed sloths, in a so-called ecotourism park on the Pacific Ocean. Their natural range extends from Honduras to northern Argentina in *Cecropia latiloba* forests, whose leaves, flowers, and fruit are their preferred and almost exclusive food. They do not do well in captivity. They are covered in dry, beige fur, 5 to 6 cm long. Sinac, April 1, 2023.⁶

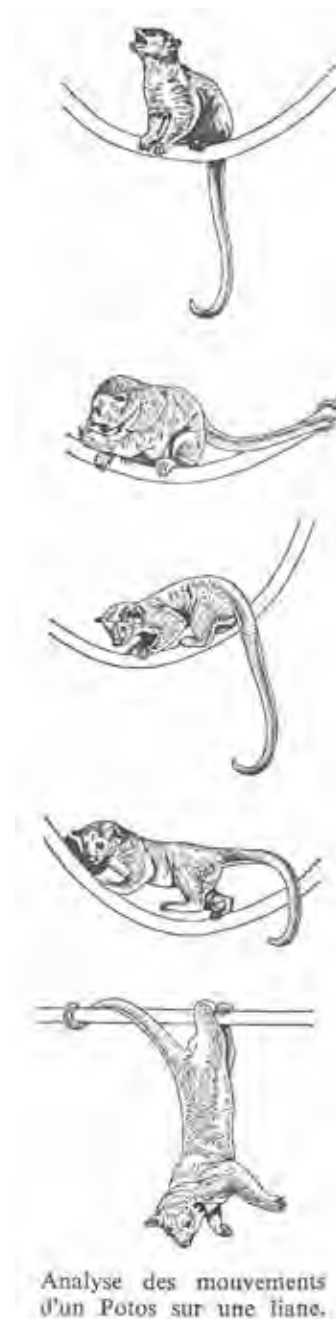
MEXICO

March 10, 2023
State of Michoacán, Mexico

A kinkajou (*Potos flavus*, Appendix III in Honduras) was captured, held in a pet shop in bad condition and about to be sold. The kinkajou was seized and handed over to a PIMVS (Predio Incorporado para el Manejo de Vida Silvestre Fuera de su Hábitat Natural) where his fate should be better.

Kinkajou, see "On the Trail" n°4 p.97, n°7 p.106 (ref.18), n°8 p.98 (ref.26), n°15 p.118 (ref.55bis), n°17 p.116 (ref.31), n°21 p.113 (ref.37), n°26 p.105 (ref.35), n°27 p.66 (ref.7), p.114 (ref.11) and p.126 (ref.71), n°33 p.146 (ref.6) and p.222 (ref.15), n°34 p.218 (ref.49), n°35 p.110 (ref.3) and p.176 (ref.12) and n°37 p.181 (ref.12).

PROFEPA, March 10, 2023.⁷



Analysis of a kinkajou's movements on a wool. Maurice Fontaine & Bernhard Grzimek (dir.). Le Monde animal en 13 volumes. Éditions Stauffacher, Zurich (1971-1975)

CHINA

March 24, 2023

Beijing-Daxing International Airport, Beijing Autonomous Municipality, China

Officials seized 46 common otter skins (*Lutra lutra*, Appendix I) inside an incoming passenger's luggage after X-rays highlighted "an abnormal image and a large number of unidentified masses."

Chinese Customs, March 24, 2023.⁸

May 2023

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of 8 common otter furs (*Lutra lutra*, Appendix I) from the luggage of an incoming traveler.

Chinese Customs, May 18, 2023.⁹

INDIA

Night of March 19 to March 20, 2023

Kadipur Border Outpost, Nadia District, State of West Bengal, India. Border with Bangladesh.

Each in his metal cage, the 4 small-clawed otters (*Aonyx cinerea*, synonymous with *Aonyx cinereus*, Appendix I) were being transported at night by traffickers. A BSF patrol seized them, while their carriers ran back to Bangladesh.

Border Security Force South Bengal, March 20, 2023 ; NE India Broadcast, March 20, 2023.¹⁰

End of March 2023

Kunnathur Taluk, Kollam District, State of Kerala, India

After poaching civets (family Viverridae, 8 species found in India), Ratheesh Kumar and Renjith Kumar then cooked them. Forestry services, acting on information, soon interrupted their agape. Civets contribute to seed dispersal and ecosystem balance, thus poaching them is punishable by 3 years in prison and/or a fine of 10,000 rupees (120 US\$).

There are 7 species of civet in India: the Asian palm civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*, Appendix III in India), large Indian civet (*Viverra zibetha*, Appendix III in India), small Indian civet (*Viverricula indica*, Appendix III in India), Malabar civet (*Viverra civettina*, Appendix III in India), brown palm civet (*Paradoxurus jerdoni*, Appendix III in India), small-toothed palm civet (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*) and masked palm civet (*Paguma larvata*).

Kerala Kaumudi, March 31, 2023.¹¹

Mid-May 2023

Chennai, Chennai District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Seizure by the forest department of 10,000 mongoose hair brushes (*Herpestes* spp., Appendix III in India and Pakistan) from the stall of 63-year-old Mohammed Rawther in the Pallavaram Market.

The Times of India, May 14, 2023.¹²

May 15, 2023

Yos Sudarso Port, Ambon, Maluku Province, Maluku Archipelago, Indonesia

Seizure on board the *Dobonsolo* of 7 grizzled tree-kangaroos (*Dendrolagus inustus*, Appendix II). Arrest of a crew member and a docker.

Seizure on the *Dobonsolo*, see "On the Trail" n°37, page 158, ref.41.

Grizzled tree-kangaroos measure between 80 and 90 cm long, weigh between 8 and 15 kg, and can live up to 10 years. They feed on leaves, fruit, and bark. They often take refuge at low altitudes, where hunters can easily grab them by the tail. They are sought after for the pet market and their meat. They are also threatened by deforestation. Grizzled tree-kangaroos, see "On the Trail" n°36 p.194 (ref.50).



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ROBIN DES BOIS INVESTIGATION



© Bastanta Lubis

September 29, 2020

Dobonsolo. IMO 9032147. Ferry equipped to transport small vehicles and shipping containers. Its official capacity is 1,908 passengers. Length 146.50 meters. Indonesia flag. Indonesia Government Ministry of Sea Communications. Built for the Indonesian Ministry of Shipping in 1993 in Papenburg (Germany) by Jos. L. Meyer Werft. Inter-island ferry operated by PELNI (Pt. Pelayaran Nasional Indonesia), owner and/or manager of some 40 vessels. It usually links Jakarta (Java) to Jayapura (Papua) in 8 days, via Surabaya (Java), Makassar (South Sulawesi), the ports of the Moluccas (Bau Bau, Ambon), and Papua (Sorong, Serui, Nabire). The crossing from Jakarta to Jayapura costs 1,265,000 rupiah (80 US\$).

BKSDA Maluku, May 16, 2023.¹³

THAILAND

March 5, 2023

Nong Khai Border Post, Nong Kom Ko, Nong Khai Province, Thailand. Border with Laos.

Seizure of 30 dead smoky flying squirrels (*Pteromyscus pulverulentus*). Vegetarian, arboreal, sleeping during the day before busying themselves at night in tree cavities 3 to 4 meters high, the species is threatened with extinction, once again due to deforestation and poaching.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, March 6, 2023.¹⁴

VIET NAM

March 14, 2023

Tong Cot Border Post, Cao Bang Province, Viet Nam. Border with China.

Seizure at 12:30 a.m. of 72 live masked palm civets (*Paguma larvata*, Appendix III in India) from a truck taking side roads to cross the border with China. The driver claims to have been recruited for the border crossing without being informed of the exact nature of the cargo. The species is nocturnal, arboreal, and vegan, and to defend themselves from predators they project the contents of their anal glands a few meters away.

Dantocmiennui.vn, March 16, 2023; Báo Công Thương, March 17, 2023.¹⁵



March 21, 2023

Tay Ninh Province, Viet Nam

Some people love otters (*Lutrinae*, Appendix I or II) as hats, slippers or frills, and some love them as pets. An individual selling live specimens over the Internet was busted by police just as he was about to deliver one.

ENV, March 21, 2023.¹⁶

EUROPE

SPAIN

March 27, 2023

Ciudad Rodrigo, Province of Salamanca, Autonomous Community of Castile and León, Spain



The European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), a useful insectivore in the countryside, gardens and mountains, is protected by the Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, to which Spain is a signatory. Yet that didn't stop a man from spending all month posting tutorials on how to capture them, strip them of their quills and cook them. The man is now being torched by the Guardia Civil.

Hoycyl.com, April 3, 2023.¹⁷

FRANCE

March 14, 2023

Etampes, Department of Essonne, France



Two members of the Traveller community have been arrested. At midnight, they were caught walking in the thicket around rue des Lys with a dog, carrying 4 adult European hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*). They reminded police that hedgehogs are a popular cultural dish, especially in times of mourning. But they also are a mammal protected by law in France and the European Union. The police contacted the NGO "Les P'tits Kipik", whose director, Sara Stahl, advised releasing them into the area where they were captured, which authorities did the following night. The hedgehogs spent 24 hours in police custody. The 2 men were fined 400 € (420 US\$) and now face an impending trial.

Essonne National Police, March 15, 2023; Le Parisien, March 16, 2023.¹⁸



April 4, 2023

Maurepas, Department of Yvelines, France

Two American red squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) and a Eurasian red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) were seized in a Traveller camp. According to them, they were acquired in Belgium as birthday presents for a little girl. Travellers' culinary traditions include recipes based on hedgehogs, ground squirrels, and squirrels. 78actu, April 5, 2023.¹⁹



Eurasian red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*).

April 7, 2023

Niort, Department of Deux-Sèvres, France

Twelve European hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) in the trunk. Initially, the young man from the Traveller community said he was transporting them to set them free. Later he admitted that they were intended to be eaten. The individual will be summoned by the courts and the 12 hedgehogs have indeed been released.

La Nouvelle République, April 7, 2023.²⁰

April 11, 2023

Angoulême, Department of Charente, France

On the Champ-de-Mars in the early evening, surveillance cameras caught a man mistreating a European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*). He was arrested. Carrying jewels and foreign currency, he was also wanted for evading a previous conviction and was placed under arrest, without the hedgehog, who was released.

Charente Libre, April 13, 2023.²¹

ROMANIA

Sunday, March 26, 2023

Timisoara, Timis County, Romania

Herein marks the first ever mention of European ground squirrels (*Spermophilus citellus*) in "On the Trail". Populations of these small, burrowing rodents, commonly known as "ground squirrels", are plummeting as human development overtakes their natural habitats. Their new habitats - golf courses, airports, military campsites and vineyards - are not exactly hospitable.



There, European ground squirrels are subject to the goodwill, indifference or repression of the operators. It is well known that Travellers are capturing them to eat them, just as they do hedgehogs for festivals and other ceremonies. Most ground squirrels now live in Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia and Romania where for some time now, in Timisoara, they have been confronted with a new scourge. According to testimonies gathered by ASPADA (Asociației pentru susținerea, promovarea și aplicarea drepturilor animalelor, Association for the support, promotion and application of animal rights), Vietnamese workers at the Semaco concrete factory spend their free time digging and terracing nearby lawns to capture ground squirrels in their burrows to bring back to their factory's dining halls. A complaint has just been lodged with the Timis county court. Ziu de Vest, March 27, 2023.²²



European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*)

UNITED KINGDOM

May 30 and June 18, 2023

Old Catton, Norfolk County, England, United Kingdom

Two witnesses who wish to remain anonymous caught a gang of girls between the ages of 10 and 15 hitting and kicking a European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and later scared them off. The defenceless little martyr was entrusted to the "Hedgehog Haven". He escaped and was released 18 days later.

Norfolk Bea, May 31, 2023; Eastern Daily Press, June 20, 2023.²³

RUSSIE

Saturday, May 20, 2023

Gorokhovetsky District, Vladimir Oblast, Russia

An individual faces a fine ranging from 5,000 to 7,000 rubles (61-85 US\$), depending on the victim's sex, for poaching a European mink (*Mustela lutreola*). The most damage is inflicted on the species when a female is lost. Between April and June, females will give birth to 2 to 7 young weighing around 10 grams. The suckling period lasts around 10 weeks. This poaching took place at a critical time. The remaining European mink in Russia are confined to Siberia, in the centre and south near Georgia. A rough estimate suggests that there are 20,000 individuals throughout the Federation.

Zebra TV, May 24, 2023; Gubernia-33, May 28, 2023.²⁴

No HORIZON

The European mink (*Mustela lutreola*) has fallen victim to the American mink (*Neovison vison*). There is no better example of an invasive exotic species supplanting a native species in just a century throughout all of Eurasia. Compared to European mink, American mink have 2 major physical advantages: they weigh 20-30% more and have higher reproductive rates. Their morphology also makes them more resilient swimmers, and their pursuit of food sometimes occurs away from semi-aquatic habitats. The American minks have driven the European minks away from their preferred habitats. The male can't tolerate a European mink being within a 200-meter distance. According to the Plan National d'Actions en faveur du Vison d'Europe (France), European mink have been fatally attacked by American mink. When the 2 species cohabit, the American mink always wins in the long run and the European mink moves on. American mink farming began in Germany in 1920 and spread over the decades to Western Europe and the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). American mink fur, which is longer and denser than that of European mink, saw huge demand in the fur industry. Tens of thousands of "escapees", followed by farms voluntarily releasing American mink at the request of trappers and waterfowl dealers, led to the entire European continent being invaded by the "alien" species imported from North America.

Other threats to the European mink include draining wetlands, river and lake artificialization, and road collisions on bridges and embankments. The European mink is heading for extinction. They had disappeared from Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldavia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Their remaining populations in France, Spain, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine are isolated and wavering.

Maran, T., Skumatov, D., Gomez, A., Pödra, M., Abramov, A.V. & Dinets, V. 2016. *Mustela lutreola*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2016; Direction Régionale de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement (DREAL), Groupe de Recherche et d'Investigation sur la Faune Sauvage (GRIFS), Cistude Nature, Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB). October 2021. National Action Plan for the European Mink (*Mustela lutreola*) 2021-2031.²⁵





Grey peacock-pheasant (*Polyplectron bicalcaratum*). Photo Benjamynweil

NORTHERN AFRICA

ALGERIA

April 9, 2023

Oran and Djebel K'har Forest, Oran Province, Algeria

Release of a kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*, Appendix II) by the NGO ChafiaAllah in the forest. It had been rescued by the NGO at Oran's weekly El Hamri bird market. The seller had agreed to dispose of it. He was liable to a fine for infringement of Decree 12/235, which lists protected non-domestic animal species.

Algérie Presse Service, April 11, 2023.¹

WESTERN AFRICA

COTE D'IVOIRE/SENEGAL

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 11, 12, and 20, 2023

Abidjan, Autonomous District of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and Dakar, Dakar Region, Senegal

- Tuesday, April 11, 2023, Abidjan. In the morning, seizure of 92 parrots. One arrest. In the afternoon, seizure of 23 parrots. One arrest.

- Wednesday April 12, Dakar. Seizure of 11 parrots. A total of 126 parrots were seized as part of a coordinated investigation between Ivorian and Senegalese authorities, including 110 grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I), 13 timneh parrots (*Psittacus erithacus timneh*, Appendix I), and 3 Cape parrots (*Poicephalus robustus*, Appendix II) from



South Africa. The grey and timneh parrots were captured in Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon, grouped together in Cameroon, and delivered by truck to Côte d'Ivoire, with an extension to Senegal. The 5 suspects are Thanoh N'Gouan of Ghanaian nationality, Moustapha Wade, Vieux Aly Wade, Serigne Abdou Aziz Wade, and Boubou Wade of Senegalese nationality. Due to his age and the state of health, Boubou Wade is the only one to have been granted provisional release. The operation is credited to the UCT (Transnational Organised Crime Unit) of Côte d'Ivoire, the Directorate of Water and Forest Police, the Ministry of Water and Forests of Senegal, and the Interpol offices in Abidjan and Dakar, with support from the NGOs EAGLE Côte d'Ivoire and EAGLE Senegal.

- On Thursday April 20, the Dakar court handed down a 3-month suspended prison sentence to Boubou Wade, Abdou Aziz Wade, and Vieux Aly Wade. The network had been operating for some 30 years.

Grey parrots in Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, see "On the Trail" n°2 p.9, n°6 p.26, n°7 p.103 (ref.6), n°8 p.20 (ref.1), n°16 p.28 (ref.1), n°25 p.38 (ref.38), n°27 p.116 (ref.3), n°29 p.111 (ref.3), n°30 p.104 (ref.3), n°31 p.114 (ref.6), n°33 p.151 (ref.8 and 9), n°34 p.139 (ref.9) and p.140 (ref.13 and 15), n°35 p.114 (ref.7) and n°38 p.124 (ref.2).

Fraternité Matin, April 19, 2023; EAGLE, April 2023; EAGLE Côte d'Ivoire, April 2023; EAGLE Sénégal, April 2023.²



LIBERIA

End of May 2023

Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary, Margibi County, Liberia

Just after 48 timneh parrots (*Psittacus erithacus timneh*, Appendix I) were rescued from a crate measuring one metre long, 69 cm wide and 23 cm high, they arrived at the sanctuary. One of them died. The trafficker was given a 3-month suspended prison sentence. Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary, May 30, 31 and June 20, 2023.³



EASTERN AFRICA

FRANCE (REUNION)

Week of March 20, 2023

Department of Réunion, France

Seizure by OFB agents of Réunion bulbuls (*Hypsipetes borbonicus*) from private individuals. Réunion bulbuls, also known as “merles pays” or “merles péi” in Creole, are dark grey passerines (average length: 20 cm, average weight: 50 grams). They live only in the dense forests of Réunion Island, in flocks of around ten individuals. They are hunted but also sought after as pet birds.

Société d'Etudes Ornithologiques de La Réunion, March 22, 2023.⁴



KENYA

May 23, 2023

Oi Pejeta Conservancy, Laikipia County, Kenya

The Rüppell's vulture (*Gyps rueppellii*, Appendix II) showed coordination disorders in its movements compatible with the consequences of agricultural toxic poisoning. It was transferred to the veterinary clinic in Laikipia, where it was observed for 2 days. Moreover, shrapnel and fractures were observed in the pelvis via X-rays. Given the 2 assaults he had suffered and the very poor prognosis, it was decided to put it down. SWT/KWS Mount Kenya Mobile Veterinary Unit, May 2023.⁵



UGANDA

March 10 and 29, 2023

Katakwi, Eastern Region, and Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

Conviction of David Okot to a fine of 5 million shillings (1,340 US\$) or an alternative sentence of 3 years in prison if not paid immediately or according to a planned schedule. He was found to be in possession of 6 ostrich eggs (*Struthio camelus*, Appendix I in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan). In his defense, Okot claimed to have found the eggs in his garden. An ostrich egg sells for between 20 and 50 US\$, and 3 times more if the egg is about to hatch. Okot, a soldier in the UPDF (Uganda People's Defence Force), requested leniency from the court, pointing out that he was the only one in the family to work and be able to feed his 12 children. New Vision, March 30, 2023; The Independent (Uganda), March 31, 2023.⁶



ZIMBABWE

May 2023

Bumi Hills, Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe. Border with Zambia.

A campaign led to the dismantling of an unprecedented 95 iron traps and, alas, the discovery of 4 impalas (*Aepyceros melampus*) and a young white-backed vulture (*Gyps africanus*, Appendix II), fatally captured and having given up the ghost after several minutes or hours of suffering. Bumi Hills Foundation, May 31, 2023.⁷



SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

May 31, 2023

Manyoni Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

It's the big day of release for 4 white-backed vultures (*Gyps africanus*, Appendix II) after an attempted poisoning and 6 months of recovery in the Raptor Rescue Rehabilitation Centre (see “On the Trail” n°38 p.125, ref.10).

Wildlife ACT, June 13 2023; News24, June 18 2023.⁸

NORTHERN AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 3, 2023

Enumclaw, State of Washington, United States of America

The certified raptor rescuer at Featherhaven Bird Sanctuary immediately went to the scene after receiving a report of a bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Appendix II) on the ground, unable to move except to spread its wings in desperate jerks. When he arrived on the scene, he found that its legs and talons were



paralyzed and it was in intense pain. The bird was transferred to the Pine Tree Veterinary Clinic where an x-ray confirmed that it had been shot in the chest and spinal cord. The only option was to put it down.

Featherhaven, March 8, 2023.⁹

Sunday, March 12 and 28, 2023

Santa Ana, State of California, United States of America

- Theft of a grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I) from the driveway of a Sycamore Street villa. Cameras captured the scene of the crime. The 2 thieves are being actively sought.



- The bird was found on Douglas Street at the home of a criminal who was absent at the time. Santa Ana Police Department, March 24, 2023; NBC Los Angeles, March 28, 2023.¹⁰

Mid-March 2023

Dade County, State of Florida, United States of America

A woman who applied for permission to keep a kangaroo was unpleasantly surprised when an agent from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission turned up at her home. She had 2 cages containing a painted bunting (*Passerina ciris*) and an indigo bunting (*Passerina cyanea*). The birds were released.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, March 28, 2023.¹¹

Mid-March and April 28, 2023

Barren River Lake, State of Kentucky, United States of America

- A bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Appendix II) was discovered on the shore of the 41 km² man-made lake. It was immediately transferred to RRO-KI (Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky, Inc). Caretakers noted multiple bleeds, and X-rays revealed 2 bullets in the neck, 2 in the right leg, one in the chest, and one in the right wing. The prognosis was very poor.



The prognosis was very poor.

- After more than a month's care, it was released and its flight is promising. RROKI notes that the number of attacks on eagles has been rising since 2022. In 2022, the refuge took in and cared for 23 eagles. The figures for 2023 will be higher.

Raptor Rehabilitation of Kentucky, Inc. March 22 and April 29, 2023.¹²

March 21, 2023

Lawndale, State of California, United States of America

Hold-up at Birds & More in the suburbs of Los Angeles. Two men entered the store of Karen Allen, known as "The Parrot Lady", at 11 a.m. and seized 2 grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I) and a yellow-headed amazon (*Amazona oratrix*, Appendix I) from the 2 padlocked cages, twisting the front door just right, before putting them in a bag. Just before the robbery, they put on protective gloves to avoid bites. "In the 1980s and '90s, macaws, with their gravelly squawks, were all the rage. The draw for many owners, at least initially, centered on aesthetics: The birds were coveted for vibrant feathers that often served as a bright complement to home décor." "If a person could afford a hyacinth macaw [*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*, Appendix I], it was like a status symbol," .../...

Today, grey parrots have taken over, thanks to their ability to imitate and memorize human and non-human language. "In the 2000s you could buy a hand-fed African grey parrot for 1,500 US\$ and now they're over 6,000 US\$." "So there's this draw for people who want to steal because they can turn around and sell the birds for several thousand dollars," says Teresa Mico, a veterinarian specialising in birds at Rancho Palos Verdes.

Some whistle "Bridge on the River Kwai" or the song from "The Addams Family," bark like dogs, or swear like sailors. Some even imitate wolves. Parrot lovers will do anything to find their favourite parrots, even going so far as to consult "pet psychics" who specialise in clairvoyance about missing pets, or to pay hundreds of dollars to swindlers who claim to know the whereabouts of the missing parrot. In an attempt to curb "bird mania," Congress passed the Wild Bird Protection Act in 1992, prohibiting the import of exotic birds except under exceptional circumstances. Breeders who stimulated bird reproduction by introducing pairs of wild birds were faced with a drop in fertility in their flocks. The drop in supply contributed to an increase in demand and prices, and encouraged theft.

Orange County Register, March 25, 2023; Los Angeles Times, May 10, 2023.¹³

March 23, 2023

Hilo and Kea'au, State of Hawaii, United States of America

A woman was seen by numerous witnesses capturing a Hawaiian goose (*Branta sandvicensis*, Appendix I) and putting it in a bag. The licence plate and profile of her vehicle were communicated in real time to the police and Meiqin Chen was intercepted in Kea'au 16 km from the Wailoa River State Recreation Area where the hold-up took place. The Hawaiian goose was found in an onion bag in the back of the vehicle and authenticated on the spot by a DOWAW (Division of Forestry and Wildlife) expert. Chen has been cited for the capture, possession, and transportation of a protected species.

Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, March 23, 2023.¹⁴

March 23, 2023

Miami International Airport, State of Florida, United States of America

Rescue in extremis. A Taiwanese passenger on a Taca Airlines flight from Managua, Nicaragua, was just about to pass through customs when a customs officer heard squeaking and squawking coming from his luggage. Wu was carrying a box equipped with a thermometer and fan, containing 29 incubating eggs. Eight eggs had just hatched or were about to hatch. Within hours, an incubator and nursery had been set up in the airport quarantine. The trafficker's origin meant that rare birds were being trafficked, although the species could not immediately be identified.



24 chicks survived, and both experts and DNA analysis determined that 21 were yellow-naped amazons (*Amazona auropalliata*, Appendix I) and 3 were red-lored amazons (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II). After 45 days of careful monitoring, care, and feeding, the chicks, which had become fledglings and were about to learn to fly on the airport grounds, were transferred to Loxahatchee (125 km from Miami) to a center dedicated to saving and training endangered birds for life in the wild, under the auspices of FIU (Florida International University). Generous opportunists offered to adopt them, seeing this as a way to inexpensively acquire birds which, on the legal market for approved breeding specimens or the illegal markets for birds smuggled into the US, sell for over 2,000 US\$. The offers were rejected. The prospect is to enter into talks with foundations or NGOs in their countries of origin to take in the miraculous yellow-naped and red-lored amazons, teach them to live independently in semi-freedom, and then release them in their preferred habitats. Their range covers Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. According to the director of the Loxahatchee Conservatory, it is by no means certain that the eggs and parrots are native to Nicaragua. "There is a pipeline of wildlife trafficking that includes multiple countries. Quite often the birds are consolidated and fly out of Nicaragua because the customs and border protection measures are weak, and the smugglers know that." In his depositions, Szu Ta Wu stated that he had been recruited and paid by a friend to go to Managua and wait in a hotel for the eggs to be delivered, with the mission of bringing them back to Taiwan. In Asia, yellow-naped and red-lored amazons sell for 5 to 10 times more than in the United States.

Miami New Times, March 29 and May 25, 2023; The Palm Beach Post, June 2, 2023.¹⁵

**Beginning of April 2023
Hillsborough County, State of Florida, United States of America**

On patrol, an officer notices a caged bird in a home and rings the doorbell. A man claims to be harboring a painted bunting (*Passerina ciris*) entrusted to him by a friend, whose contact details he gives. The bird is released and its "owner" receives a summons. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, April 19, 2023.¹⁶

**FAMILY AFFAIRS
Beginning of April 2023
Miami, State of Florida, United States of America**



10 individuals were indicted: Alain Armando Hernandez, Daniel Hernandez Matos, Alejandro Hernandez Valero, Julio Cesar Santana Menduina, Andres Hernandez Rivera, Felix Yoan Diaz Montesinos, Yoander Cruz Sardina, Conrado Torres Aleman, Armando Espino Gonzalez and Onelio Rene Hernandez Jr. They captured over 500 songbirds, violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act from 1918. Using all kinds of traps and bait, they captured indigo buntings (*Passerina cyanea*), blue grosbeaks (*Passerina caerulea*), rose-breasted grosbeaks (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), painted buntings (*Passerina ciris*), Northern cardinals (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) and lazuli buntings (*Passerina amoena*). The poacher-traffickers were on their way to deliver the birds to customers wishing to decorate their homes. The USFWS (United States Fish and Wildlife Service) did its utmost to release as many as possible in the best possible conditions. U.S. Attorney's Office - Southern District of Florida, April 6, 2023.¹⁷

**Mid-April 2023
Hillsborough County, State of Florida, United States of America**



- Dismantling of a trapping device in front of a house where 7 painted buntings (*Passerina ciris*) were caged. The owner claimed he thought they were canaries, and was charged with violating the Migratory Bird Treaty.
- New patrol, new mission. This time, there were 2 painted buntings, 2 indigo buntings (*Passerina cyanea*), and a Northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) held in captivity. Their owner was also charged with violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, April 26, 2023.¹⁸

**Mid-April 2023
Lincoln, State of Nebraska, United States of America**

The osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*, Appendix II) was euthanized after being collected by the Raptor Conservation Alliance near a pond in a public garden next to the Nebraska Parkway. One wing had been shattered by rifle fire. An appeal for witnesses was launched. The Nebraska Wildlife Crime Stoppers program welcomes anonymous tips. Klin, May 1, 2023.¹⁹

**April 16, 2023
Stroudsburg, State of Pennsylvania, United States of America**



A 27-year-old red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II) was shot at the Waste Management Property in Pen Argyl and transferred to the Pocono veterinary refuge. It died just days after showing signs of recovery and even wellbeing. It was among the eldest of all birds with identification bands in the USA.

Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center, April 4, 6, 10 and 16, 2023; WNEP, April 16, 2023.²⁰

**April 26, 2023
Jackson, State of Tennessee, United States of America**



Jason Perkins, previously convicted of felonies, was sentenced to 24 months in prison followed by 3 years of probation for poaching a bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Appendix II) in March 2021. The seizure of 2 firearms from him and his father along with corroborating testimony convinced the court of his guilt. U.S. Attorney's Office - Western District of Tennessee, April 26, 2023.²¹

REPEATED OFFENCE

April 26, 2023

Newark, State of New Jersey, United States of America



Mario Maldonado was sentenced to a 3,000 US\$ fine, 3 years' probation, and 500 hours of community service for shooting a red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II) from his yard, capturing it and boiling it alive in a pot. "On the Trail" n°37 p.121 (ref.25) already mentioned that Maldonado was "a habitual torturer of birds." Environmental Crimes Monthly Bulletin, April 2023.²²

April 28, 2023

Near Pyatt, State of Arkansas, United States of America

More than 2 years after the crimes, the USFWS is offering a 5,000 US\$ reward to anyone who can identify and arrest the perpetrator(s) of the fatal shootings of 4 bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Appendix II) in February 2021 in Marion County. They were probably shot from Route 3021. In the same area, the bodies of several red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II), a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), and a domestic dog were found.

Arkansas Democrat Gazette, May 3 and 8, 2023.²³

April 29, 2023

Hidalgo Port of Entry, State of Texas, United States of America. Border with Mexico.



Seizure by CBP (US Customs and Border Protection) during a secondary vehicle inspection of 5 yellow-headed amazon chicks (*Amazona oratrix*, Appendix I) in a pillow and 5 others under a front seat. Fine for the driver. The legal maximum is 1,000 US\$ per CITES-listed animal, the minimum is 300 US\$.

US Customs and Border Protection, May 3, 2023.²⁴

REPEATED OFFENCE

End of April 2023

Volusia County, State of Florida, United States of America

Indictment of an individual caught shooting cedar waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). A rapid investigation established that he had engaged in this type of activity on at least 2 previous occasions. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, May 4, 2023.²⁵

May 2, 2023

Saint Louis, State of Missouri, United States of America

Michael Amato pleads guilty to fraudulently importing taxidermied birds, 67 in all, from Malta, the UK, Germany, and other countries between 2018 and 2021. At his home in September 2021, authorities seized trophies of owls (Strigiformes, Appendix I or II), buzzards, eagles and harriers (Accipitridae, Appendix I or II), and cranes (Gruidae, Appendix I or II).

U.S. Attorney's Office - Eastern District of Missouri, May 2, 2023.²⁶

May 4, 2023

San Diego, State of California, United States of America. Border with Mexico.



Pedro Vargas Rendon was sentenced to 4,140 US\$ in restitution and 3 years' probation. He tried introducing 2 keel-billed toucans (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*, Appendix II) into California (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.128, ref.30). Environmental Crimes Monthly Bulletin, May 2023.²⁷

May 10, 2023

Madison, State of Wisconsin, United States of America



Jorge Luis Iglesias, a Cuban national, was fined 1,750 US\$ and placed on probation for one year for selling yellow-faced grassquits (*Tiaris olivaceus*) (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.126, ref.13). Environmental Crimes Monthly Bulletin, May 2023.²⁸

May 12, 2023

Rockland Key, State of Florida, United States of America



Seizure of 10 bird traps in the gardens of Daniel Richard Acevedo, 77 years old. He was in violation of the 104-year-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Acevedo was targeting painted buntings (*Passerina ciris*) and other small, multicolored songbirds migrating from the Caribbean islands. The pet and show bird market is very active in South Florida.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, May 16, 2023; Local 10 News, May 16, 2023; The Key West Citizen / keysnews.com, May 17, 2023.²⁹

May 12, 2023

Mount Pleasant Township, State of Pennsylvania, United States of America

Two days after a bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Appendix II) was found shot dead in a field, Rodney Thomas turned himself in to the police. The photo of his SUV near the poaching site had been forwarded to the OGT (Operation Game Thief) program.

Operation Game Thief, Pennsylvania Game Commission, May 13 and 15, 2023; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, July 19, 2023.³⁰



LATIN AMERICA

ARGENTINA

Mid-March 2023

San Miguel and Ituzaingó, Iberá National Park, Province of Corrientes, Argentina

- Release of a pair of red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II) seized in Buenos Aires and re-trained for life in the wild.

- Release of 2 more red-and-green macaws, which were raised in the Temaikèn Foundation Park and deemed ready to face the demands of life in the wild.

Fundación Rewilding Argentina, March 19, 2023; Télam, March 19, 2023.³¹

April 12, 2023

Monte Chingolo, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina



Seizure of 20 native birds, including red-crested cardinals (*Paroaria coronata*, Appendix II), hooded siskins (*Spinus magellanicus*), seedeaters (genus *Sporophila*), and finches (genus *Sicalis*). The search was carried out under judicial authority, and the seizure was carried out by specialists from the Ministry of the Environment and the BCA (Brigada de Control Ambiental).

Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, April 12, 2023.³²

Mid-May 2023

Exaltación de la Cruz, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Seizure in an alleged agricultural operation and a shed 19 birds including a scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*, Appendix I), red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), a hybrid of scarlet macaws and blue-and-yellow macaws, a hyacinth macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*, Appendix I), blue-fronted amazons (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II), a toco toucan (*Ramphastos toco*, Appendix II), Indian peafowls (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), a plush-crested jay (*Cyanocorax chrysops*), 22 kg of marijuana flowers, a small kilo of cocaine, 6 state-of-the-art firearms, and 4 vehicles. Two arrests.

Pilar de Todos, May 18, 2023.³³

Mid-May 2023

Tapelbicuá, Province of Corrientes, and Tres Arroyos, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

- National Road 14. Nine Atlantic canaries (*Serinus canaria*) in a cage covered with a burlap sack in the back of the van.

- National Road 3. 20 monk parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*, Appendix II), 12 Atlantic canaries (*Serinus canaria*), and 30 tortoises (Testudinidae, Appendix I or II) in the trailer of the truck.

Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, May 16, 2023.³⁴

May 21, 2023

Comodoro Rivadavia, Province of Chubut, Argentina

Route 37. Search of a Volkswagen. In the back seat, 2 greyhounds. In the trunk, a dead and bloody Darwin's rhea (*Pterocnemia pennata*, Appendix I or II). Two arrests.

LA17, May 21, 2023.³⁵

End of May 2023

South Pampayasta, Province of Córdoba, Argentina



Seizure in 2 houses of 15 cages and 4 traps, which were destroyed, and 38 birds, including yellow cardinals (*Gubernatrix cristata*, Appendix II), red-crested cardinals (*Paroaria coronata*, Appendix II), double-collared seedeaters (*Sporophila caerulescens*), saffron finches (*Sicalis flaveola*), grassland yellow finches (*Sicalis luteola*), black-backed grosbeaks (*Pheucticus aureoventris*), grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii* or *Cyanoloxia glaucocaerulea*), seedeaters (genus *Sporophila*), and plush-crested jays (*Cyanocorax chrysops*) which were transferred to the Tatú Carreta bird rescue station in Casa Grande.

Weekend, May 23, 2023.³⁶



BOLIVIA

March 3, 2023

Potosí, Province of Tomás Frías, Department of Potosí, Bolivia

Locked in its iron cage, wings clipped and tail shortened, the beautiful aplomado falcon (*Falco femoralis*, Appendix II) had no chance of escape, were it not for an alert received by Pofoma of "a seriously injured bird in a private house in Villa Copacabana." It was transferred to a veterinary clinic.

Bolivian pólíce, March 3, 2023.³⁷



Aplomado falcon (*Falco femoralis*)

March 12, 2023

Santa Cruz, Province of Andrés Ibáñez, Department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia

The blue-fronted amazon (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II) was being sold online. It was seized by 2 Pofoma agents and taken to the GADSC (Gobierno Autónomo Departamental de Santa Cruz) shelter. La Voz de la Naturaleza, March 12, 2023.³⁸

End of March 2023

Cochabamba, Province of Cercado, Department of Cochabamba, Bolivia

Officials seized 7 blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), a chestnut-fronted macaw (*Ara severus*, Appendix II) and a roadside hawk (*Rupornis magnirostris*, Appendix II) at city markets. Opinión, March 28, 2023; La Razón (Bolivia), March 31, 2023.³⁹



April 6, 2023

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Province of Andrés Ibáñez, Department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Seizure in the central market of 2 orange-fronted conures (*Eupsittula canicularis*, Appendix II). Secretariat for Sustainable Development and the Environment, April 6, 2023.⁴⁰

April 8, 2023

Arque, Province of Arque, Department of Cochabamba, Bolivia

Rescue in the municipality (10,597 inhabitants according to the last census in 2012) of a female Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*, Appendix I), emaciated and in a state of collapse. X-rays revealed a fractured leg. It is assumed that it had been in captivity and was abandoned. It was handed over to the Agroflori Bird Park for a health check and, if possible, a speedy recovery.

Government of Cochabamba, April 8, 2023.⁴¹



April 14, 2023

La Paz, Province of Pedro Domingo Murillo, Department of La Paz, Bolivia

Someone informs La Voz de la Naturaleza of the attempted online sale of a pair of blue-crowned parakeets (*Aratinga acuticaudata*, Appendix II). La Voz informs the appropriate party. A joint team from Pofoma and the forest police caught the trafficker, and the birds with clipped wings are being observed and cared for.

La Voz de la Naturaleza, April 14, 2023.⁴²

April 17, 2023

Tarija, Province of Cercado, Department of Tarija, Bolivia

Alerted by La Voz de la Naturaleza, the forest police and the Pofoma rescued green-cheeked conures (*Pyrrhura molinae*, Appendix II), monk parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*, Appendix II), and white-eyed conures (*Aratinga leucophthalma*, Appendix II) from the Internet trade. To avoid prosecution, the female trafficker voluntarily handed over the birds to the intervention team. They were then transferred to the city's biopark (population 272,600) for evaluation.

La Voz de la Naturaleza, April 17, 2023.⁴³

April 20, 24 and 29, 2023
Yesera, Province of Cercado,
Department of Tarija, Bolivia



- Poisoning of a mountain caracara (*Phalcoboenus megalopterus*, Appendix II) and a pair of Andean condors (*Vultur gryphus*, Appendix I). The male is dead and the female is undergoing treatment. This is the same area where 34 condors were poisoned in February 2021 (see "On the Trail" n°32 p.156, ref.39).



- Senator Rodrigo Paz expressed his dismay and recalled that the condor protection bill had been blocked for 5 months in the National Assembly due to opposition from ruling party deputies.
 - The Pofoma confirmed that the dog carcass found nearby had been laced with pesticide.
 La Voz de la Naturaleza, April 24, 2023; El País (Tarija), April 29, 2023.⁴⁴



April 23, 2023
Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Province of Andrés Ibáñez, Department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia

During a traffic stop on the city's third ring road, seizure of a chestnut-fronted macaw (*Ara severus*, Appendix II).
 Santa Cruz Police - Frequency 101.8, April 23, 2023.⁴⁵

May 3, 2023
La Guardia, Province of Andrés Ibáñez, Department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Seizure of 2 blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) in the "Campestre Argentino" restaurant where they were being exhibited. The manager was reminded that it is forbidden to keep wild animals.
 Frecuencia policial Santa Cruz, May 3, 2023.⁴⁶

BRAZIL

April 22, 2023
Santa Cruz do Xingu, State of Mato Grosso, Brazil

The harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*, Appendix I) hit in the left wing and muscles with a firearm died 5 days after being admitted to the veterinary clinic. The range of harpy eagles extends from Central America to Brazil. They live along rivers and valleys. They fly from treetop to treetop, attacking capuchins and sloths. In clearings, they catch juvenile agoutis and birds in their talons and take flight with their one-metre wingspan, despite weighing between 3 and 10 kg. Grzimek, in his Animal Life Encyclopedia, says that in French Guiana, the Indians who caught harpy eagles enjoyed a status of respectability and were able to make money by bartering the feathers. Primeira Pagina, April 22, 2023.⁴⁷



Aigle harpie (*Harpia harpyja*)

May 13, 2023
Florianópolis, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil



On appeal, a man's sentence of 1 year and 2 months in prison was commuted to community service. On December 4, 2020, at his Joinville home, environmental police found 12 mistreated wild birds without identification rings. He was selling them on Facebook for 80 to 800 reais (15-150 US\$) per bird. SCC10, December 4, 2020; Santa Catarina Judicial Court, May 12, 2023.⁴⁸



Brazil

Seizure of 3,099 birds between March 1 and May 30, 2023



Sources, see page 257, details page 133.

3,099 birds seized in Brazil
Map details

273 saffron finches (<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>)	5 vinaceous-breasted amazons (<i>Amazona vinacea</i> , Appendix I)
236 yellow-bellied seedeaters (<i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>)	5 caatinga parakeets (<i>Aratinga cactorum</i> , Appendix II)
197 chopi blackbirds (<i>Gnorimopsar chopi</i>)	5 red-rumped parrots (<i>Psephotus haematonotus</i> , Appendix II)
163 red-cowled cardinals (<i>Paroaria dominicana</i>)	4 blue-fronted amazons (<i>Amazona aestiva</i> , Appendix II)
125 plumbeous seedeaters (<i>Sporophila plumbea</i>)	4 red-and-green macaws (<i>Ara chloropterus</i> , Appendix II)
108 green winged saltators (<i>Saltator similis</i>)	4 purple-throated euphonias (<i>Euphonia chlorotica</i>)
106 parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II)	3 hooded siskins (<i>Spinus magellanicus</i>)
104 lined seedeaters (<i>Sporophila lineola</i>)	3 rufous-bellied thrushes (<i>Turdus rufiventris</i>)
99 double-collared seedeaters (<i>Sporophila caerulescens</i>)	2 red-tailed amazons (<i>Amazona brasiliensis</i> , Appendix II)
73 ultramarine grosbeaks (<i>Cyanocompsa brissonii</i>)	2 ringed teals (<i>Callonetta leucophrys</i>)
67 campo troupials (<i>Icterus jamacaii</i>)	2 grey monjitas (<i>Xolmis cinereus</i>)
35 rufous-collared sparrows (<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>)	2 solitary caciques (<i>Cacicus solitarius</i>)
34 chestnut-bellied seed finches (<i>Oryzoborus angolensis</i> , synonymous with <i>Sporophila angolensis</i>)	2 toucans (famille Ramphastidae)
33 chestnut-capped blackbirds (<i>Chrysomus ruficapillus</i>)	2 thrushes (genus <i>Turdus</i>)
30 caatinga cacholotes (<i>Pseudoseisura cristata</i>)	1 lovebird (<i>Agapornis</i> spp., Appendix II)
30 black-throated grosbeaks (<i>Saltator fuliginosus</i>)	1 orange-winged amazon (<i>Amazona amazonica</i> , Appendix II)
26 white-throated seedeaters (<i>Sporophila albogularis</i>)	1 hyacinth macaw (<i>Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus</i> , Appendix I)
25 copper seedeaters (<i>Sporophila bouvreuil</i>)	1 scarlet macaw (<i>Ara macao</i> , Appendix I)
23 cockatiels (<i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>)	1 white-eyed conure (<i>Aratinga leucophthalma</i> , Appendix II)
20 yellow cardinals (<i>Gubernatrix cristata</i> , Appendix II)	1 yellow-rumped cacique (<i>Cacicus cela</i>)
16 violaceous euphonias (<i>Euphonia violacea</i>)	1 dove (genus <i>Columbina</i>)
13 thrushes (family Turdidae)	1 wattled jacana (<i>Jacana jacana</i>)
10 great-billed seed finches (<i>Sporophila maximiliani</i>)	1 picazuro pigeon (<i>Patagioenas picazuro</i>)
9 yellow-chevroned parakeets (<i>Brotogeris chiriri</i> , Appendix II)	1 green-billed toucan (<i>Ramphastos dicolorus</i> , Appendix III in Argentina)
9 silver-beaked tanagers (<i>Ramphocelus carbo</i>)	1 seedeater (genus <i>Sporophila</i>)
8 blue-and-yellow macaws (<i>Ara ararauna</i> , App.II)	1 white-bellied seedeater (<i>Sporophila leucoptera</i>)
8 variable orioles (<i>Icterus pyrrhopterus</i> synonymous with <i>Icterus cayanensis pyrrhopterus</i>)	1 black-and-white seedeater (<i>Sporophila luctuosa</i>)
7 tanagers (genus <i>Thraupis</i>)	1 burnished-buff tanager (<i>Stilpnia cayana</i>)
6 bananaquits (<i>Coereba flaveola</i>)	1 blue-black grassquit (<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>)
6 ruddy ground doves (<i>Columbina talpacoti</i>)	1,122 unidentified birds
6 grey pileated finches (<i>Coryphospingus pileatus</i>)	
6 white-faced whistling ducks (<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>)	
6 greater rheas (<i>Rhea americana</i> , Appendix II)	



Ultramarine grosbeak (*Cyanoloxia brissonii*)



7 birds including 1 parrot (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II).
March 6, 2023. Itapipoca, State of Ceará



2 red-tailed amazons (*Amazona brasiliensis*, Appendix I).
Beginning of March 2023. Ilha Comprida, State of São Paulo



16 parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II).
March 13, 2023. Tauá, State of Ceará



161 birds including parrot chicks (family Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) and weapons. April 11, 2023.
Fortaleza and Parambu, State of Ceará



1 parrot (family Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), 15 kilos of cocaine, 69 .357 caliber cartridges, three scales and a drone.
Mid-May 2023. Sinop, Sate of Mato Grosso

COLOMBIA

March 15, 2023

El Carmen de Viboral and Guatapé, Department of Antioquia, Colombia

- Seizure of 2 orange-winged amazons (*Amazona amazonica*, Appendix II), a tropical mockingbird (*Mimus gilvus*), a red-footed tortoise (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II), a red-tailed squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*), and 2 four-toed hedgehogs (*Atelerix albiventris*) illegally held.

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

Both interventions were well done by Cornare (Corporación Regional Autónoma Corporación of Rios Negro and Nare) and the departmental police. Regional Autonomous Corporation of Rios Negro and Nare, March 16, 2023.⁴⁹

March 15, 2023

Puerto Salgar, Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia

Seizure in a vehicle on the road from Puerto Salgar, Department of Cundinamarca, to La Dorada, Department of Caldas, of 9 yellow-crowned amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II).

Regional Autonomous Corporation of Cundinamarca, March 15, 2023.⁵⁰

Mid-March 2023

San Francisco and Nocaima, Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia

- Seizure of 7 American flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*, Appendix II) with discolored plumage on a farm.

- Handing over of a further 4 American flamingos. They were handed over to the CAV (Centro de Atención y Valoración) in Tocaima for first aid (deworming) and to assess their ability to live in the marshes of the Department of Cundinamarca, which is 950 km away. In the meantime, a diet in line with their needs should enable their plumage to regain its natural pink-red color.

Regional Autonomous Corporation of Cundinamarca, March 17 and 28, 2023.⁵¹

March 26, 2023

Puerto Salgar, Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia

New seizure on the road from Puerto Salgar to La Dorada (Department of Caldas) of 17 yellow-crowned amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II) and 3 macaws (*Ara spp.*, Appendix I or II). Two arrests. Easter week is approaching. Cases of wildlife trafficking are multiplying. Puerto Salgar and La Dorada are 3 km apart.

Regional Autonomous Corporation of Cundinamarca, March 26, 2023.⁵²

March 28, 2023

Mosquera, Fusagasugá and Girardot, Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia

Seizures of a yellow-crowned amazon (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II), orange-chinned parakeet (*Brotogeris jugularis*, Appendix II), and rufous-vented chachalaca (*Ortalis ruficauda*) with the help of the national police. "Nuestra casa no es la suya."

Regional Autonomous Corporation of Cundinamarca, March 28, 2023.⁵³

April 21, 2023

Girardot, Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia



Authorities recovered 2 orange-winged amazons (*Amazona amazonica*, Appendix II), a yellow-crowned amazon (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II), 2 Venezuelan troupials (*Icterus icterus*), 3 Colombian chachalacas (*Ortalis columbiana*) and a red-footed tortoise (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II) in very poor condition. They were handed over to the CAV (Centro de Atención y Valoración de Fauna).

Regional Autonomous Corporation of Cundinamarca, April 21, 2023.⁵⁴

FRANCE (GUIANA)

March 2, 2023

Cayenne, Territorial Collectivity of Guiana, France

Seizure of a cage and bird from the terrace of an apartment. The blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) was placed in a care center. The operation was carried out jointly by the OFB and the OCLAESP (Office central de lutte contre les atteintes à l'environnement et à la santé publique, Central Office for Coordinating Environmental and Public Health Crime).

French Biodiversity Agency in Guiana, June 2023.⁵⁵

MEXICO

End of April 2023

Tizayuca, State of Hidalgo, Mexico

Following a tip-off, PROFEPA agents arrested a street vendor carrying 2 orange-fronted conures (*Eupsittula canicularis*, Appendix II) in a box. The birds were handed over to the UMA (Unidad de Manejo para la Conservación de la Vida Silvestre). PROFEPA, April 26, 2023.⁵⁶

May 13, 2023

Comonfort, State of Guanajuato, Mexico

Seizure of 87 birds from a traveling salesman's trailer, including a white-fronted amazon (*Amazona albifrons*, Appendix II), a brown-backed solitaire (*Myadestes occidentalis*), northern mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*), cardinals (genus *Cardinalis*), and black-headed grosbeaks (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*). PROFEPA, May 13, 2023; Prensa Animal, May 15, 2023.⁵⁷

PERU

March 23, 2023

Huaraz, Province of Huaraz, Department of Ancash, Peru



Another magnificent aplomado falcon (*Falco femoralis*, Appendix II) with its black tears and clipped wings, trapped in a cage instead of roaming the skies and meadows of the Andes. The keepers claim to have "found" it nearby. Serfor says it was recently captured because it is very wary of humans. In the medium term, its release into the wild cannot be ruled out.

Aplomado falcons are found from the southwestern United States to Tierra del Fuego in South America. Like hobby falcons, they feed on insects, small reptiles, and mammals. They are used at airports and agricultural plantations to scare away rodents and other birds. The global population, estimated at 200,000 individuals, is declining outside the United States.

Serfor, March 25, 2023.⁵⁸

March 29, 2023

Yurimaguas, Province of Alto Amazonas, Department of Loreto, Peru

Gerfor (Gerencia Regional de Desarrollo Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre) seized in the night 41 birds and one monkey protected by national and international law: 3 scarlet macaws (*Ara macao*, Appendix I), a red-and-green macaw (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), 4 orange-winged amazons (*Amazona amazonica*, Appendix II), a yellow-crowned amazon (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II), 30 white-winged parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolurus*, Appendix II), a tui parakeet (*Brotogeris sanctithomae*, Appendix II), and a white-bellied spider monkey (*Ateles belzebuth*, Appendix II). They were transferred to the Laguna Rescue Center for observation and an assessment of their condition.

Loreto Regional Forest and Wildlife Development Management, March 29, 2023.⁵⁹

April 17, 2023

Carhuapaccha, Province of Huancayo, Department of Junín, Peru



A few days after being rescued from wandering in Huancayo's central market by Serfor and the police, a black-chested eagle (*Geranoaetus melanoleucus*, Appendix II) was found fit for release by ornithology expert Carlos Jesús Vallejos Lizárraga after examination and care. It had recently been captured and was wearing a raffia tie on one leg, intended to keep it in captivity. Its release took place in the Mantaro Valley, where reports attest to the species' presence.

Serfor, April 19, 2023.⁶⁰

SURINAME

Sunday, April 16 and April 25, 2023

Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport, Zanderij, Para District, Suriname



Seizure in the carry-on luggage of P.L. and U.T. bound for the Netherlands of 32 songbirds, large-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus crassirostris*) and chestnut-bellied seed finches (*Oryzoborus angolensis*). After each paying a fine of 10,000 Suriname dollars per bird (270 US\$), P. L. and U. T. were released. The Suriname police statement says that several attempts to smuggle songbirds in toothpaste boxes or toilet paper rolls have already been thwarted. Suriname Police, April 28, 2023; Suriname Communication Service, May 29, 2023.⁶¹

VENEZUELA

Mid-April 2023

Sucre, State of Miranda, Venezuela

Seizure of 89 exotic birds, including 67 lovebirds (*Agapornis* spp., Appendix II except *Agapornis roseicollis*) from Africa, 16 budgerigars (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) from Australia, and 6 parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II). They were transferred to a zoo in Caracas. An arrest.

Sumarium, April 13, 2023.⁶²

CENTRAL ASIA

UZBEKISTAN

April 27, 2023

Uzbekistan

Following an alert from the media outlet ekolog.uz, Ministry of Natural Resources officials have opened an investigation into the sale of 2 Eurasian eagle owls (*Bubo bubo ruthenus*, Appendix II) for 100 US\$ on the classified ads site olx.uz. The posting was dated April 24.

ekolog.uz, April 27, 2023; Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, April 27, 2023.⁶³

May 19, 2023

Ohangaron District, Tashkent Region, Uzbekistan

Caught with 11 nightingales (genus *Luscinia*) just captured in the mountains, A.N. was fined 6.93 million soums (607 US\$). His rifle was seized and the birds were immediately released. Uzbekistan is home to both the thrush nightingale (*Luscinia luscinia*, Appendix III in Ukraine) and the common nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*, Appendix III in Ukraine).

Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, May 19, 2023.⁶⁴



End of May 2023

Tashkent Independent City, Uzbekistan. Border with Kazakhstan.



Seizure from A. T. of 2 falcons (*Falco* spp., Appendix I or II) and 2 white storks (*Ciconia ciconia*), all of them juveniles. He was trying to sell them. They were handed over to the municipal zoo and the trafficker was fined 3.3 million soums (290 US\$).

Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, May 30, 2023.⁶⁵

EASTERN ASIA

CHINA

April 14, 2023

Hengqin Border Post, Zhuhai Prefecture, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Macau.



Seizure in the vehicle of a Macau resident of 35.9 kg of "bird's nests," i.e. between 2,565 and 11,960 nests weighing between 3 and 14 grams. Gongbei Customs, April 20, 2023.⁶⁶

April 2023

Huanggang Border Post, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Hong Kong.

Bird's nests were found concealed in a van's central armrest. Total weight: 12.6 kg. Chinese Customs, April 15, 2023.⁶⁷

May 2023

Huanggang Border Post, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Hong Kong.



Seizure of 230 eggs from a traveler's luggage. They were in 2 iron boxes lined with a towel and cotton. According to expert reports, the eggs were sun conure eggs (*Aratinga solstitialis*, Appendix II) from northeastern South America. Chinese Customs, May 18, 2023.⁶⁸

CAMBODIA

March 2, 2023

O'Am, Mondol Kiri Province, Cambodia. Border with Viet Nam.

Border arrest of a car suspected of wildlife smuggling for several months. It came from Viet Nam. The driver was Cambodian and the passenger was Vietnamese. Seizure of 5 vultures (Accipitridae, Appendix I or II). Four species are present in Viet Nam and Cambodia: red-headed vultures (*Sarcogyps calvus*, Appendix II), oriental white-backed vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*, Appendix II), cinereous vultures (*Aegypius monachus*, Appendix II) and slender-billed vultures (*Gyps tenuirostris*, Appendix II). Khmer Times, March 3, 2023.⁷²

INDONESIA

March 2, 2023

Bandar Lampung, Lampung Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia



Sentencing of Iswendi Bin Ismet, Jumono Bin Suwandi, and Zainal Abidin Bin Rusli to 18 months' imprisonment and a fine of one million rupiah (65 US\$) and to pay 2,000 rupiah (0.13 US\$) in court costs for attempting on December 1, 2022 to smuggle 17 blue-crowned hanging parrots (*Loriculus galgulus*, Appendix II), 6 hill mynas (*Gracula religiosa*, Appendix II), 37 lesser green leafbirds (*Chloropsis cyanopogon*), 25 blue-winged leafbirds (*Chloropsis cochinchinensis*), 20 blue-masked leafbirds (*Chloropsis venusta*), 11 greater green leafbirds (*Chloropsis sonnerati*), 2 crested jays (*Platylophus galericulatus*), 2 common green magpies (*Cissa chinensis*), 2 Sumatran treepies (*Dendrocitta occipitalis*) and 2 Sumatran laughingthrushes (*Garrulax bicolor*) stacked in 19 cardboard boxes and 4 plastic crates. The 3 convicted were the coach driver, his assistant, and the ticket seller.

Garda Animalia, December 1, 2022; FLIGHT - Protecting Indonesia's Birds, February 16, 2023; Directory of Decisions - Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, March 2, 2023.⁷³

May 2023

Wuhan Tianhe International Airport, Hubei Province, China

15.3 kg of bird's nests seized from the luggage of a passenger from overseas. Chinese Customs, May 30, 2023.⁶⁹

May 2023

Xiamen-Gaoqi International Airport, Fujian Province, China



Customs seized 116 peafowl feathers (*Pavo muticus*, Appendix II or *Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) from the luggage of 4 passengers disembarking from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Xiamen Customs, June 6, 2023.⁷⁰

May 2023

Dongxing, Fangchenggang Prefecture, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. Border with Viet Nam.



Customs intercepted 8 stuffed peafowls (*Pavo muticus*, Appendix II or *Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) in 8 packages declared to contain "decorative metal objects", "car dashboards", "slippers" and other miscellaneous items. Chinese Customs, June 6, 2023.⁷¹



2 king birds-of-paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*, Appendix II). March 2, 2023. Port of Muruhum, Baubau, Southeast Sulawesi Province, Sulawesi Island



More than 500 birds. May 22, 2023. Between Terbanggi Besar and Bakauheni, Lampung Province, Sumatra Island



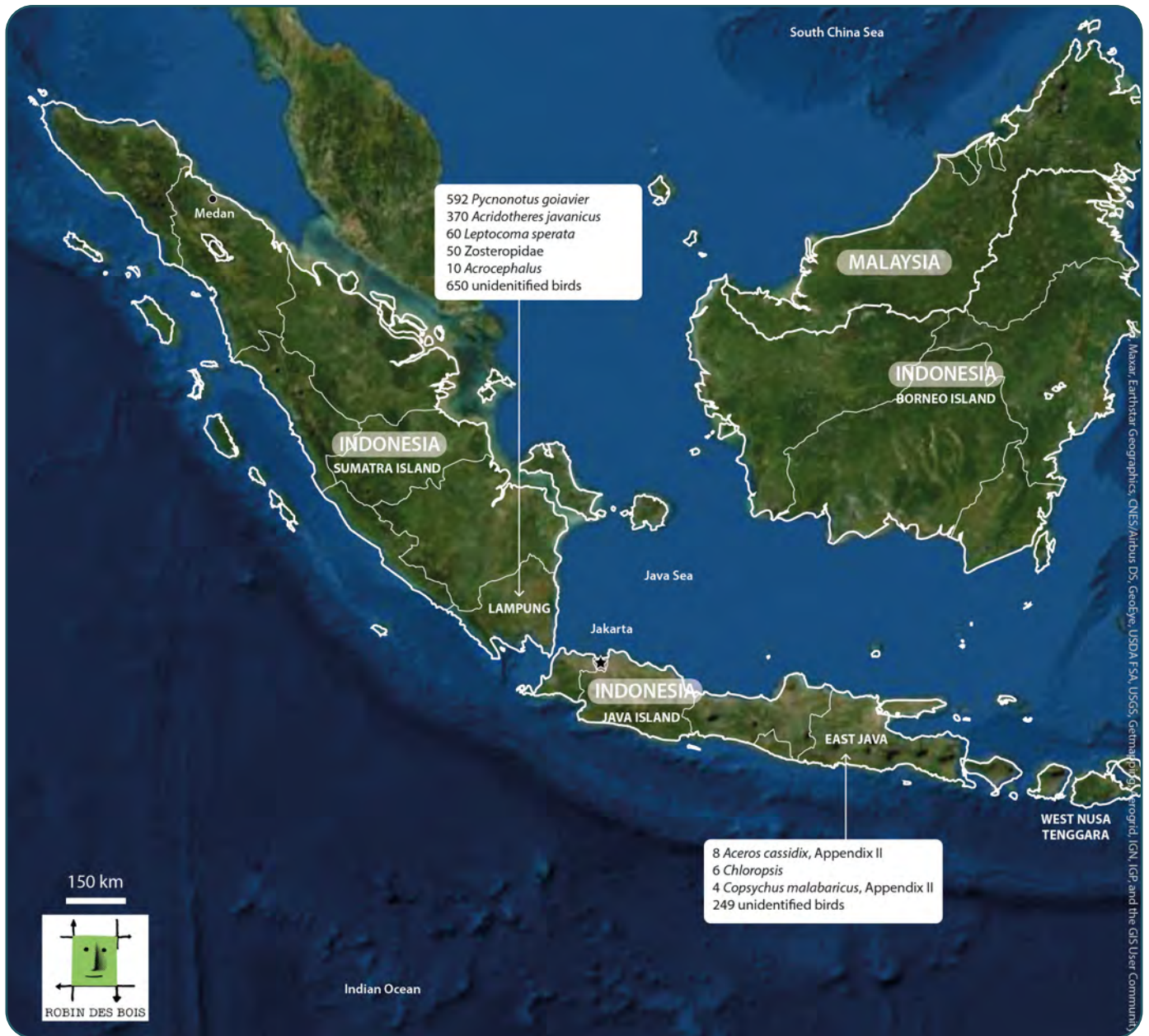
12 birds including 7 lovebirds (*Agapornis* spp., Annexe II). May 2023. Port of Jayapura, Province of Papua, Island of New Guinea. Border with Papua New Guinea



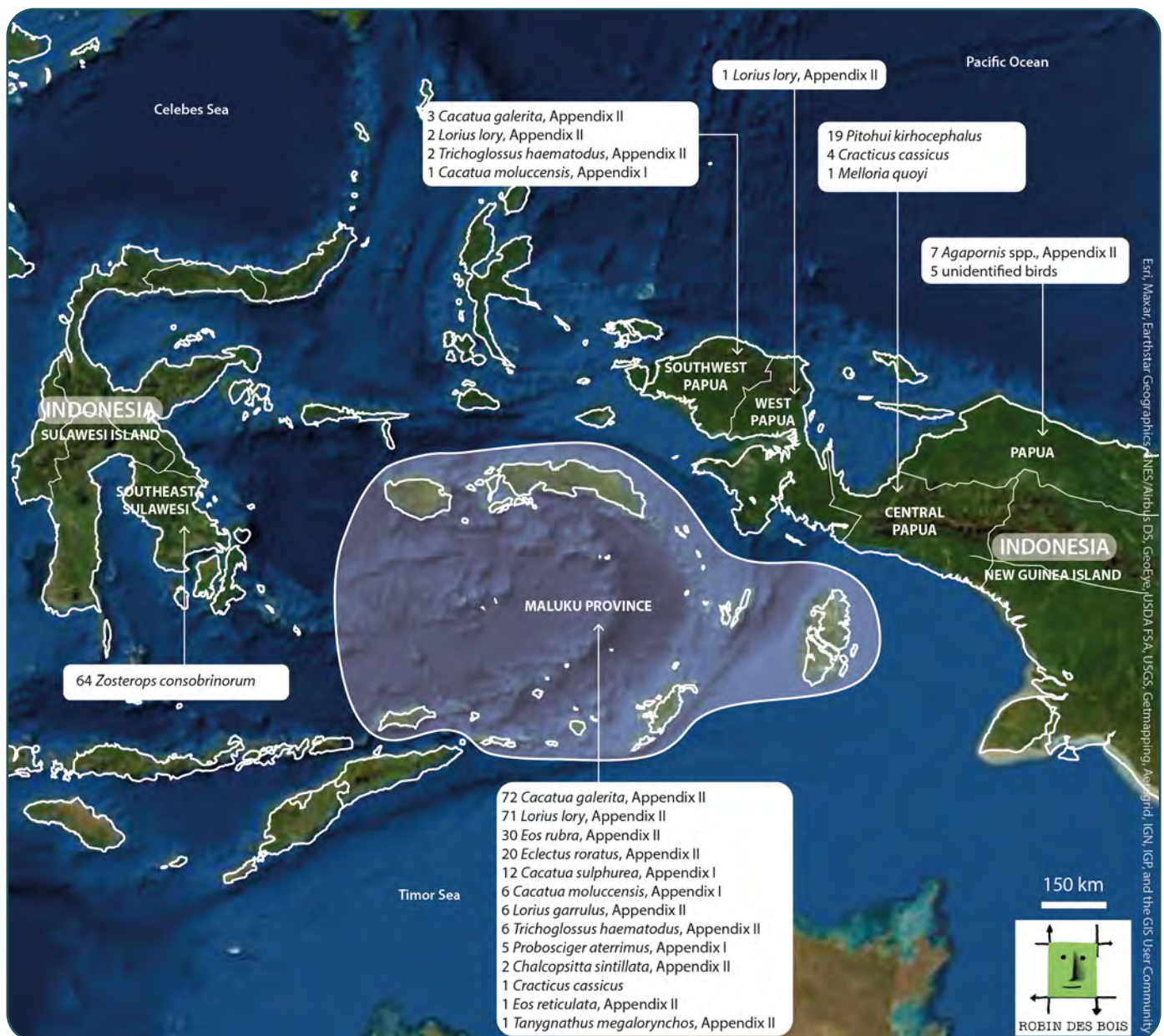
5 salmon-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*, Appendix I), one yellow-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*, Appendix I). May 11, 2023. Maluku Province, Maluku Archipelago

Indonesia

Seizure of 2,894 birds between March 1 and May 30, 2023



Sources, see page 257, details page 141.



Maps details

592 yellow-vented bulbuls (*Pycnonotus goiavier*)
 370 Javan mynas (*Acridotheres javanicus*)
 154 white-rumped shamas (*Copsychus malabaricus*, Appendix II)
 150 greater green leafbirds (*Chloropsis sonnerati*)
 150 olive-winged bulbuls (*Pycnonotus plumosus*)
 74 sulphur-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*, App. II)
 74 black-capped lorries (*Lorius lory*, Appendix II)
 64 pale-bellied white-eyes (*Zosterops consobrinorum*)
 60 purple-throated sunbirds (*Leptocoma sperata*)
 50 white-eyes (famille Zosteropidae)
 37 great hanging parrots (*Loriculus stigmatus*, App. II)
 30 red lorries (*Eos rubra*, Appendix II)
 20 eclectus parrots (*Eclectus roratus*, Appendix II)
 19 variable pitohuis (*Pitohui kirhocephalus*)
 13 ornate lorikeets (*Trichoglossus ornatus*, Appendix II)
 12 yellow-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea*, Appendix I)

10 warblers (genus *Acrocephalus*)
 8 knobbed hornbills (*Aceros cassidix*, Appendix II)
 8 coconut lorikeets (*Trichoglossus haematodus*, Appendix II)
 7 lovebirds (*Agapornis* spp., Appendix II)
 7 salmon-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*, Appendix I)
 6 leafbirds (genus *Chloropsis*)
 6 chattering lorries (*Lorius garrulus*, Appendix II)
 5 hooded butcherbirds (*Cracticus cassicus*)
 5 palm cockatoos (*Probosciger aterrimus*, Appendix I)
 2 yellow-streaked lorries (*Chalcopsitta sintillata*, App. II)
 2 king bird-of-paradises (*Cicinnurus regius*, Appendix II)
 1 white cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*, Appendix II)
 1 blue-streaked lory (*Eos reticulata*, Appendix II)
 1 black butcherbird (*Melloria quoyi*)
 1 great-billed parrot (*Tanygnathus megalorynchos*, Appendix II)
 954 unidentified birds

March 7, 2023

Kalianda, South Lampung Regency, Lampung Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia



Sentencing of Mamat Rahmat Bin Nurhari, Wahyuddin Bin Darwin Lubis, and Ahmad Gian Riski Bin Ahmad Ginta to 7 months' imprisonment and a fine of 10 million rupiahs (655 US\$) with a further 2 months' imprisonment in the event of non-payment and to pay court costs (5,000 rupiahs each or 0.33 US\$). They attempted to smuggle 191 songbirds from Sumatra to Java, including 25 black-naped orioles (*Oriolus chinensis*), 20 greater green leafbirds (*Chloropsis sonnerati*), 20 blue-masked leafbirds (*Chloropsis venusta*), 10 sooty-headed bulbuls (*Pycnonotus aurigaster*), 9 brown-cheeked bulbuls (*Alophoixus bres*), 6 doves (genus *Streptopelia*), 6 bar-winged prinias (*Prinia familiaris*), 5 long-tailed shrikes (*Lanius schach*), 3 grey-chinned minivets (*Pericrocotus solaris*), 3 purple-throated sunbirds (*Leptocoma sperata*), 2 Oriental magpie-robins (*Copsychus saularis*), Asian fairy-bluebirds (*Irena puella*), 2 crested jays (*Platylophus galericulatus*), and a blue-winged leafbird (*Chloropsis cochinchinensis*) stacked in 18 used cardboard boxes and 8 plastic crates in the luggage hold of an Antar Lintas Sumatera coach. Directory of Decisions - Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, March 7, 2023; FLIGHT - Protecting Indonesia's Birds, March 21, 2023.⁷⁴

March 31, 2023

Yasa Mulya, Merauke Regency, Papua Province, New Guinea Island, Indonesia



Seizure of several dozen black-capped lorries (*Lorius lory*, Appendix II). The husband caught them, and the wife sold them on their doorstep, but due to a lack of customers, she started selling them online for 500,000 to 550,000 rupiahs (33 to 36 US\$). Antara News, April 4, 2023.⁷⁵



Black-capped lory (*Lorius lory*)

MALAYSIA

OPERATION BERSEPADU KHAZANAH

May 3, 2023

Sibu, State of Sarawak, Malaysia



Seizure at 4 assembly and transit sites before sea export of 883 kg of "bird's nests" with an estimated black market value of 2.5 million rupiahs (560,170 US\$ or 630 US\$/kg) and corresponding to 63,000 or 294,220 nests based on a weight per nest of 3 to 14 grams. Four arrests.

Sarawak Forestry Corporation, May 5, 2023; The Star (Malaysia), May 5, 2023.⁷⁶

May 31 and June 7, 2023

Johor Bahru, State of Johor, Malaysia. Border with Singapore.



- Systematic inspections of Singapore-registered vehicles at the Johor Bahru border post. Seizure in an SUV of a yellow-headed amazon (*Amazona oratrix*, Appendix I), 3 scarlet macaws (*Ara macao*, Appendix I), 3 blue and yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), and 4 other macaws (*Ara* spp., Appendix I or II).

The driver was fined 80,000 ringgits (17,125 US\$) and sentenced to 7 days in prison. He had been in custody since May 31.



Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia, June 21, 2023; The Star (Malaysia), June 21, 2023.⁷⁷

PHILIPPINES

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 9, 2023

Pasay, National Capital Region, Philippines

A woman and her husband, Fe Anita Dulay and Wilson Qua, are arrested in possession of 29 sun conures (*Aratinga solstitialis*, Appendix II). They were trying to sell them online.

Manila Bulletin, March 24, 2023.⁷⁸

THAILAND

March 15, 2023

Ta Kong, Nakhon Pathom Province, Thailand



Under a search warrant, members of the Wildlife Crime Unit (Wild Hawk), Forest Fire Prevention Service, Environmental Police and Provincial Police raided a private home and seized 27 white-breasted waterhens (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*), a white-crested laughingthrush (*Garrulax leucolophus*), a barred buttonquail (*Turnix suscitator*) and 3 watercocks (*Gallicrex cinerea*).

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, March 15, 2023.⁷⁹

April 3, 2023

Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

A passenger bound for Mahé, capital of the Maldives Islands, had 25 birds seized from their luggage including black kites (*Milvus migrans*, Appendix II), buffy fish owls (*Ketupa*, Appendix II), barred eagle-owls (*Bubo sumatranus*, Appendix II) and hornbills (family Bucerotidae), torn from their parents, packed in salad bowls and doomed to probable death at the end of their solitude and hours-long journey. The commercial value of the 25 chicks is estimated at 100,000 baht (2,920 US\$).

Bangkok Post, April 4, 2023; The Nation Thailand, April 4, 2023.⁸⁰



VIET NAM

March 6, 2023

Pa Tan, Lai Chau Province, Viet Nam. Border with China.

Arrested in flagrante delicto for transporting a pair of grey peacock-pheasants (*Polyplectron bicalcaratum*, Appendix II). He had just captured them in the forest or bought them from poachers, and had already sold them online for 5 million dong (210 US\$).

Polyplectron bicalcaratum, see "On the Trail" n°17 p.36 (ref. 60), n°34 p.155 (ref. 70), n°37 p.144 (ref. 126) and n°38 p.146 (ref. 91).

Lao Dong, March 7, 2023.⁸¹

March 2023

Cao Bang Province, Viet Nam

Officials arrested Nguyen Van Son and confiscated 132 wild animals from a car bound for Hanoi, including 15 grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I) and yellow-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea*, Appendix I). This case is serious; the 2 species are exogenous, one from Africa, the other from Indonesia. The "extended" investigation touted by police in their press release should uncover an international network.

Báo Bao ve pháp luật, March 28, 2023.⁸²

Beginning of April, 2023

Vinh Phuc Province, Viet Nam

Seizure of a grey peacock-pheasant (*Polyplectron bicalcaratum*, Appendix II) kept in a cage on the premises of a private company. It was transferred to the Hanoi Refuge. The manager claimed not to know that the species is endangered.

ENV, April 6, 2023.⁸³

April 8, 2023

Tong Cot Border Post, Cao Bang Province, Viet Nam. Border with China.



Arrest of Luong Van Cao, Luong Van Ken, and Hoang Van Huong in flagrante delicto for transporting 22 parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), including red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), which they were preparing to smuggle into China. Báo Biên phòng, April 11, 2023.⁸⁴

REPEATED OFFENCE
April 2023
Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam



Seizure of 2 changeable hawk-eagles (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*, Appendix II) that a man was offering to sell online. He had already been detected for similar offences in 2020.
 ENV, April 17, 2023.⁸⁵

Beginning May 2023
Huế, Thua Thien Hué Province, Viet Nam

He was nabbed in October 2022 thanks to ENV's (Education for Nature – Vietnam) work. He was offering for sale in his stall 9 red-whiskered bulbuls (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) and a white-eye (family Zosteropidae). He was fined 47 US\$.
 ENV, May 7, 2023.⁸⁶



May 2, 2023
Quang Nam Province, Viet Nam

Seizure of 25 red-whiskered bulbuls (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) from an Internet seller. He is said to have sold several hundred since December 2021. He was fined 180 US\$.
 ENV, May 2, 2023.⁸⁷



May 2023
Diên Biên Phu, Diên Biên Province, Viet Nam. Border with Laos.

Seizure of 7 Chinese hwameis (*Garrulax canorus*, Appendix II), 2 white-rumped shamas (*Copsychus malabaricus*, Appendix II), and an Oriental magpie-robin (*Copsychus saularis*), which were released. Fines for the trafficker equal to 53 US\$ for publishing offers for sale on the Internet and 745 US\$ for possessing endangered wildlife.
 ENV, May 20, 2023.⁸⁸



SOUTHERN ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

May 2023
Maymana, Faryab Province, and Bagram District, Parwan Province, Afghanistan

- Provincial rangers spotted an owl (Strigiformes, Appendix I or II) being sold on the street.



- Five poachers, including teenagers, were in possession of 11 birds, including 3 European sparrowhawks (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II) and 6 passerines.
 - Seizure of 8 birds from a poacher, including a saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*, Appendix II) and 2 owls.
 - With Allah's blessing, the 20 birds were released back into the arms of nature in front of the poachers and traffickers, who pledged not to capture or smuggle any more into the country.
 National Environmental Protection Agency, May 21, 23 and 29, 2023.⁸⁹

BANGLADESH

FAMILY AFFAIRS
March 22, 2023
Barakapan, Moulvibazar District, Sylhet Division, Bangladesh



Death by poisoning of 13 oriental white-backed vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*, Appendix II), 4 Bengal foxes (*Vulpes bengalensis*, Appendix III in India), and several dogs and cats. Bottles of insecticide were seized near the mass grave. "This time of the year is considered the breeding season for vultures. The death of so many vultures at this time is a serious blow to the conservation of this creature," laments the Bangladesh correspondent of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Vulture Project. Farmers in the district have taken to scattering poisoned bait to harm Bengal foxes and prevent them from attacking chickens and kids.
 The Business Standard, March 23, 2023; Kalerkantho, March 24, 2023; Dhaka Tribune, March 25, 2023.⁹⁰

May 21 2023
Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport,
Dhaka Division, Bangladesh

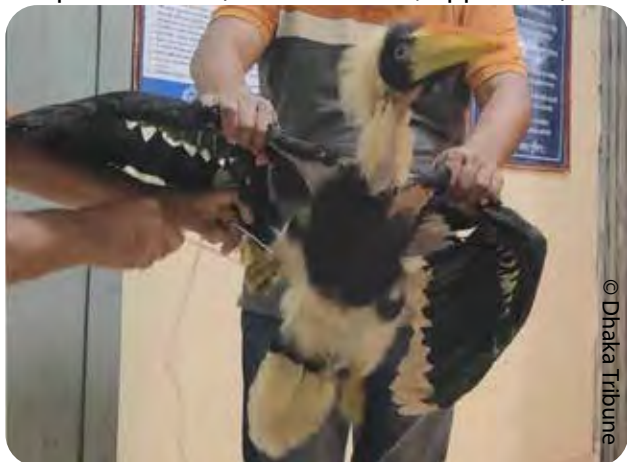


Seizure of 69 birds in cardboard boxes with holes in them, lined with seeds and droppings of Lear's macaws (*Anodorhynchus leari*, Appendix I) from Brazil, lovebirds (*Agapornis* spp., Appendix II) from continental Africa and Madagascar, eagles (Accipitridae, Appendix I or II), tawny frogmouths (*Podargus strigoides*) from Australia, Tasmania, and New Guinea, and toucans (family Ramphastidae). The consignee was fined 7.2 million takas (67,000 US\$).

The Business Standard, May 21 and June 25 2023.⁹¹

Thursday 25 and Monday 29 May 2023
Gunagari and Gachhbaria, Chittagong District,
Chittagong Division, Bangladesh

- Arrest on Thursday night of an autorickshaw driver, Md Salim, who was transporting 4 concave-casqued hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*, Appendix I).



- Md Mizanur Rahman was sentenced to 4 years in prison. He was in possession of 2 concave-casqued hornbills (*Buceros bicornis*, Appendix I) in a bus on the Chittagong- Cox's Bazar road and had just been arrested following a confidential tip-off. Dhaka Tribune, May 29, 2023.⁹²



May 30, 2023
Sabujbagh, Dhaka District, Dhaka Division,
Bangladesh

Officials recovered Alexandrine parakeets (*Psittacula eupatria*, Appendix II), a hornbill (family Bucerotidae), myna (family Sturnidae), cuckoos (family Cuculidae) and other birds from 22-year-old Shakil Ahmed after he listed them for sale online. Bangladesh Post, May 31, 2023.⁹³

INDIA

March 7, 2023
Gurugram, Gurugram District, State of
Haryana, India



On the outskirts of the city of Gurugram (formerly Gurgaon, around 1.2 million inhabitants), 5 Indian peafowls (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) died of poisoning. A few days ago, it was the turn of nilgai. "They do it to sell the meat", says Vaishali Rana Chandra, a wildlife activist, with no concern for the health of the buyers. The Times of India, March 8, 2023.⁹⁴

March 5, 6 and 7, 2023
Pulangam, Madurai District, State of
Tamil Nadu, India



The 39 Indian peafowls (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), 17 males and 22 females, bear no marks of bullets or arrows. It is as if they had fallen from the sky. In fact, they came across poisoned grain scattered by a farmer on the run.

The New Indian Express, March 8, 2023; The Times of India, March 8, 2023.⁹⁵

March 13, 2023
Periyagoundanur, Coimbatore District,
State of Tamil Nadu, India



He was suspected of stealing coconuts. His schemes were soon spotted by the locals. Instead of coconuts, Surya was collecting Indian crows (*Corvus splendens*), 25, which he had just poisoned. He claimed to be the heir to a traditional know-how and wanted to use the crows to make medicines to treat skin diseases. The Times of India, March 15, 2023.⁹⁶

Mid-March 2023
Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar District, State
of Assam, India



Thanks to a report from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), a certain Jahid Lifestyle, a YouTuber by profession, has been arrested. In his videos, he and his accomplices go into forests, climb trees, remove the Alexandrine parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*, Appendix II), plum-headed parakeet (*Psittacula cyanocephala*, Appendix II) or rose-ringed parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) chicks, catch them and feed them a mixture of sugar and biscuits to give advice worth a nickel and a dime to future buyers. Deccan Herald, March 14, 2023; PETA India, March 14, 2023.⁹⁷

March 15 and 21, 2023
Govindpur Border Outpost, Nadia District, State of West Bengal, India. Border with Bangladesh. Border with Bangladesh.



Elements of the 82nd Battalion used their thermal imaging cameras to detect the approach of 4 to 5 heavily laden intruders on Wednesday 15th. Taking advantage of the night, the gang fled. They retreated to Bangladesh, leaving behind 2 dwarf cassowaries (*Casuarius bennetti*) in wooden boxes. The same thing happened again on Tuesday 21st. Adult dwarf cassowaries weigh between 60 and 80 kg and stand a metre high. They are native to Papua New Guinea. They live in forests at altitudes of up to 3,000 metres and swim in marshes and rivers. They are frugivorous most of the time and carnivorous. Domesticated as juveniles, they are playful with village children. As adults, they are not exactly easy to get along with, and the cassowaries must be surrounded by good quality fences over 1.5 metres long until they die after 20 to 30 years of loneliness. Cassowaries do not breed in cages. Border Security Force South Bengal, March 16 and 22, 2023; NE India Broadcast, March 16 and 22, 2023.⁹⁸

April 3, 2023
Chilapata Reserve Forest, Alipurduar District, State of West Bengal, India

Arrest of Rajen Rava and Punai Oraon. They had just captured a concave-casqued hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*, Appendix I) in the Chilapata forest. They were coming back to their village of Chakwakheti. They are being held in police custody for 5 days while the case is developed and the perpetrators identified.

The Telegraph India, April 4, 2023.⁹⁹

April 12 and 13 and May 19, 2023
States of Odisha and Madhya Pradesh, India



Cruelty to birds knows no bounds on social networks.

- The trainer of an Alexandrine parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*, Appendix II) forced it to jabber a few words. "We checked the video from his YouTube channel thoroughly and found that the bird has been tortured and inhumanly portrayed through the video" says the forest department. Chinmay Mohanto was arrested in Kendujhar district on Wednesday 12 April. "I had bought the parrot from the market. I had seen such types of videos on YouTube earlier. Hence, I made a video with my parrot and uploaded it on YouTube. It was my fault. I promise not to repeat it again in the future."

- On Thursday 13 April in Taramakanta in the same district, a man was arrested after torturing an Alexandrine parakeet by coating its ears with mustard oil and making it bite iron bars to extract a few words of pain. The inhuman scenes were shown on YouTube.

- Three crazy people, including a certain Atul and a smiling groupie, filmed themselves plucking a live Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) and adorning their hair with blue braids. The peafowl died. Thanks to the number of a motorbike found on one of the videos, a hunt was launched for Atul. He lives in Rithi in the Katni district.

Odisha TV, April 13, 2023; The Times of India, April 14, 2023; The New Indian Express, May 21, 2023.¹⁰⁰

April 16, 2023
Betai Border Outpost, Nadia District, State of West Bengal, India

It is the turn of the 84th Battalion to show its vigilance in the face of the new migratory threat. A trafficker from Bangladesh attempting to enter India with a black curassow (*Crax elector*) from Colombia, Brazil or Guiana, and a horned curassow (*Pauxi unicornis*) from Bolivia or Peru, abandoned them in 2 boxes as the patrol approached. Like other species in the family Cracidae, they are threatened with extinction. They have a very low reproduction rate in the wild and a zero rate in captivity.

Border Security Force South Bengal, April 16, 2023; NE India Broadcast, April 16, 2023.¹⁰¹

May 7, 2023
Verna, South Goa District, State of Goa, India

Seizure of 120 Alexandrine parakeets (*Psittacula eupatria*, Appendix II) by Goa environmental police and WCCB.

WCCB, May 8, 2023.¹⁰²

PAKISTAN

May 11 and 13 and 19/20, 2023 States of Kerala and West Bengal, India

Circuses take a hit

- On Thursday 11 May, the magistrate of Thrissur in Kerala, informed by the city's veterinary services of the abuse inflicted on 2 red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) and a yellow-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*, Appendix I), ordered their seizure from the cages of the "Great Bombay Circus".

- On Saturday 13 May, the birds were handed over to the Thiruvananthapuram Zoo. The court order requires the travelling circus to contribute 500,000 rupees (6,100 US\$) towards the cost of transporting and caring for the birds. The Great Bombay Circus had already been fined in Mysore for cruelty to animals in October 2022.

- In Birbhum, West Bengal, it was the turn of the travelling circus "Tarzan" to be permanently separated from its 3 grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I) whose wings had been clipped. On 20 May, following a court ruling, they were transferred to a birdhouse known to the government.

Red-and-green macaws, blue-and-yellow macaws, yellow-crested cockatoos and grey parrots are all exotic birds in India. They originate from South America, Indonesia and Africa. PETA has identified numerous breaches of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in Indian circuses, and Tarzan Circus does not have a permit from the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) to use animals in its performances.

PETA India, May 15 and 20, 2023; The New Indian Express, May 16, 2023; International Business Times (India), May 20, 2023.¹⁰³

NEPAL

March 13 and 14, 2023 Surroundings of Kawasoti, Nawalpur District, Gandaki Province, Nepal

Fatal poisoning of 9 oriental white-rumped vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*, Appendix II).

Twelve others are in critical condition. A golden jackal carcass (*Canis aureus*, Appendix III in India) was found nearby. It was undoubtedly poisoned with an agricultural toxicant. A post-mortem examination should confirm this hypothesis within 3 weeks. Volunteers and forestry officers are combing the forest and the Kerunge River to find any other mass poisoning victims and prevent a further cascade of deaths. Survivors have been taken to the "vulture restaurant" in Pithauli forest, where a community association maintains an artificial feeding site. Nepal is home to 9 of the 23 vulture species worldwide, including oriental white-rumped vultures, slender-billed vultures (*Gyps tenuirostris*, Appendix II) and red-headed vultures (*Sarcogyps calvus*, Appendix II), which are considered critically endangered, Egyptian vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*, Appendix II), which are considered endangered, and Himalayan griffons (*Gyps himalayensis*, Appendix II).

The Rising Nepal, March 13, 2023; The Kathmandu Post, March 13 and 15, 2023.¹⁰⁴



April 1, 2023

Wanda Banochi Check Post, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan



Seizure of 42 demoiselle cranes (*Anthropoides virgo*, Appendix II) seized from a car. A pair of demoiselle cranes may be offered to newlyweds as a symbol of fidelity. They are captured on their migration from Siberia.

Demoiselle cranes in Pakistan, see "On the Trail" n°28 p.53 (ref.74) and n°32 p.177 (ref.141). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department, April 1, 2023; Dawn, April 2, 2023.¹⁰⁵

April 2, 2023

District of Barkhan, Province of Balochistan, Pakistan

Seizure of 40 demoiselle cranes (*Anthropoides virgo*, Appendix II) from the back of a pick-up truck coming from Zhob and heading towards Punjab, a journey of 400 km.

24 News HD, April 2, 2023.¹⁰⁶

WESTERN ASIA

ARMENIA

Beginning of March 2023

Tsamakasar, Aragatsotn Region, Armenia

Officials seized 9 calandra larks (*Melanocorypha calandra*, Appendix III in Ukraine) and a 12-gauge shotgun from a poacher.

Aravot, March 6, 2023.¹⁰⁷

April 15, 2023

Mount Yeranos, Ararat Region, Armenia

The griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*, Appendix II) was discovered by hikers. It was in very bad shape. Foam and blue mucus were coming out of its beak. Other vultures circled in the sky above Mount Yeranos. Somewhere there must have been a sheep carcass or some other poisoned bait intended to eliminate wolves or stray dogs. The hikers went back down to the valley and took it to the vet. Despite treatment, the griffon vulture died. Karen Aghababyan (Armenian Ornithological Society), April 16, 2023; Protection of Endemic and Endangered Species, April 18, 2023.¹⁰⁸



FINLAND

Beginning of May, 2023

Joukokylä, Region of Kainuu, Finland



All that was found of Jykä was its satellite collar, cut off with a knife. The 7-year-old white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I) was found exhausted and wounded in 2020 in Kuusamo, 140 km from Joukokylä. It was treated and resumed its flight with its geolocator around its neck. It was reported in summer 2020 in northern Finland and in winter near Stockholm, as well as in 2021 and 2022. Ornithologists hoped that Jykä had found a mate during this period of sexual maturity. An unknown poacher put an end to its peregrination. The police are appealing for witnesses.

BirdLife Suomi, May 9, 2023; Police of Finland, May 9, 2023.¹⁰⁹

LITHUANIA

Beginning of March and October 25, 2023

Kaunas, Kaunas County, Lithuania

- Seizure of 3 yellow-collared lovebirds (*Agapornis personatus*, Appendix II), 2 Fischer's lovebirds (*Agapornis fischeri*, Appendix II), 7 parrotlets (*Forpus* spp., Appendix II), 2 Bourke's parrots (*Neopsephotus bourkii*, Appendix II), 10 Java sparrows (*Lonchura oryzivora*, Appendix II), 4 parrots (*Neophema* spp., Appendix I or II), 4 parakeets (*Pyrhura* spp., Appendix I or II), and 2 red-rumped parrots (*Psephotus haematonotus*, Appendix II) from a private home.

- The owner of the animals challenged the legality of the seizure in court, pointing out that they were domestic birds purchased in Lithuania, some with typical hybridization colors unknown in the wild, thus concluding that they should not be considered wild animals. The court rejected his claim, pointing out that the owner had been unable to produce documents certifying and tracing the origin of the birds, that regulations make no exception for animals with color mutations, and that the spread of parasites from the birds and their droppings was harming the health of the entire building where they were housed.

Environmental Protection Department, March 13 and November 8, 2023.¹¹⁰



March 2023

Boston, Lincolnshire County, England, United Kingdom



Indictment of Jamie Harrison, age 53, for the poisoning of a red kite (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II) in 2020 (see "On the Trail" n°32 p.182, ref.170).

Raptor Persecution UK, April 15, 2023.¹¹¹

March 31, 2023

Inverness, Highland Council, Scotland, United Kingdom



Rory Parker, a 24-year-old gamekeeper, has been fined 1,575 £ (1,885 US\$), to be paid within 3 months, for shooting and killing a Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II) on September 16, 2021 (see "On the Trail" n°34 p.161). He had used an owl-shaped decoy, a well-known technique for attracting sparrowhawks, which pounced on it to scare off what they thought was a competitor. Parker is the 56th Scottish gamekeeper to be found guilty of some form of persecution of birds of prey since 1990.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, March 31, 2023; Raptor Persecution UK, April 1, 2023.¹¹²

April 27, 2023

Seaham, Durham County, England, United Kingdom

Discovery by a resident of an adult common blackbird (*Turdus merula*, Appendix III in Ukraine with reservation from the United Kingdom) and western jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) shot on Mount Stewart Street.

BBC, April 29, 2023.¹¹³

May 9, 2023

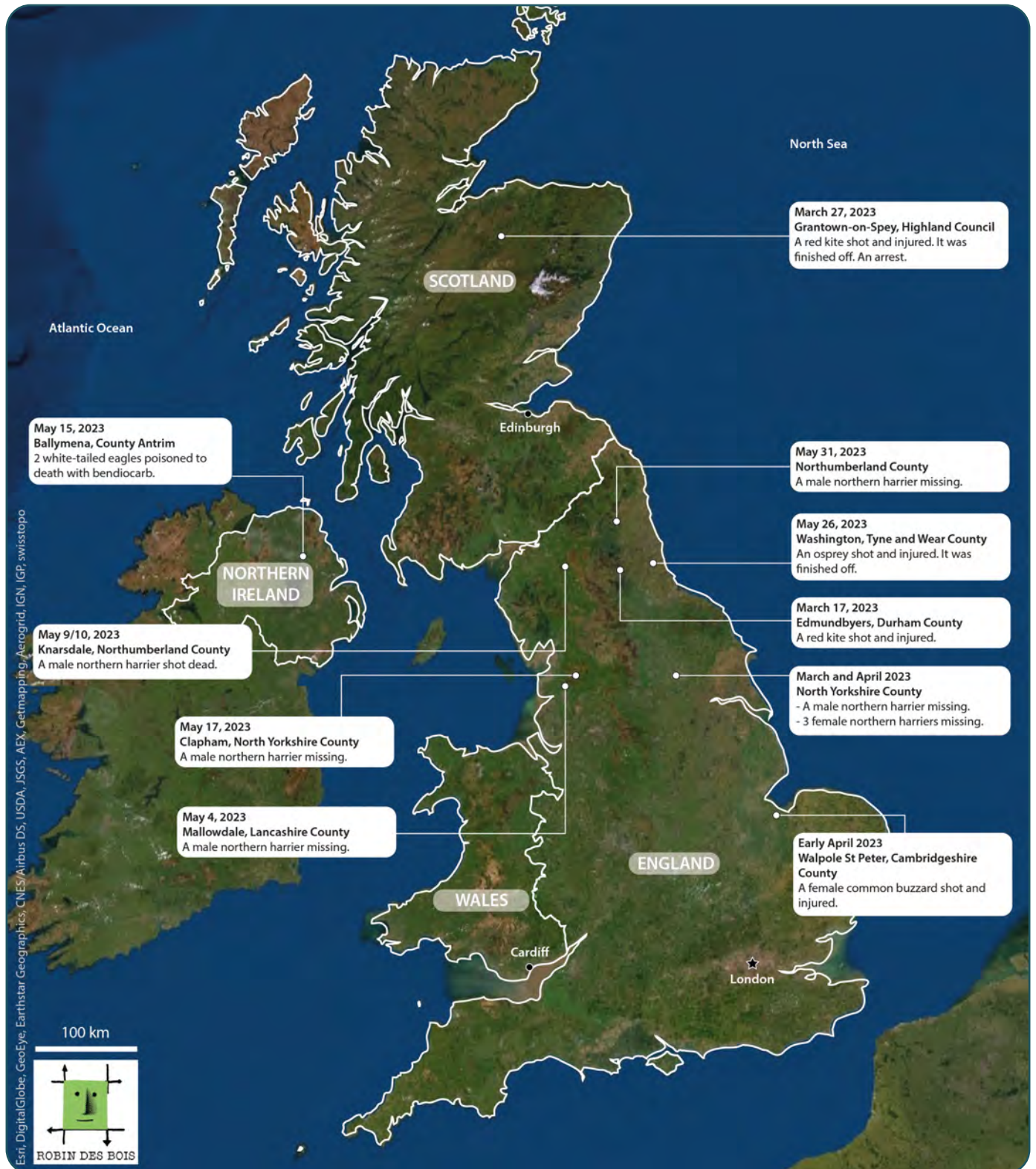
South Somercotes, Lincolnshire County, United Kingdom



Call for witnesses. A pair of mute swans (*Cygnus olor*) have been killed and the eggs in their nest stolen.

BBC, May 12, 2023.¹¹⁴

United Kingdom Poaching of raptors (14) between March 1 and May 31, 2023



Sources, see page 257.

"Missing": bird with a GPS that stopped transmitting
 8 northern harriers (*Circus cyaneus*, Appendix II)
 2 white-tailed eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I)
 2 red kites (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II)
 1 osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*, Appendix II)
 1 common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II)

May 16, 2023
Colburn, North Yorkshire County, England, United Kingdom



Call for witnesses. 185 km from South Somercotes, a male mute swan (*Cygnus olor*) was mortally wounded and the eggs in the nest were again stolen. North Yorkshire Police, May 19, 2023.¹¹⁵

May 19, 2023
Dumfries, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scotland, United Kingdom



Barry Nicolle, age 67, was sentenced to 216 hours of community service. He was found guilty of killing 5 red kites (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II) and 10 rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*) between spring 2019 and February 2020. An owner of exotic and ornamental birds that he wanted to “protect,” he had prepared baits sprayed with pesticides, but he hadn’t thought that using the remains of an Asian Mandarin duck would draw attention to his farm. At his home, investigators found significant quantities of aldicarb, bendiocarb, phostoxin, as well as traps.

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, May 19, 2023; Police Scotland, May 19, 2023; The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, May 19, 2023.¹¹⁶

WESTERN EUROPE

GERMANY

March 6, 2023
Laberweinting, Bavaria Land, Germany



Another victim of carbofuran, a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II) was discovered on the ground in the woods, on its belly, in the typical position of birds of prey seized in mid-flight by convulsions. Initially, poisoning was the obvious hypothesis, and the surrounding area was combed to prevent more animals from falling victim to the toxic bait. After a few days, the post-mortem analysis confirmed it was carbofuran.

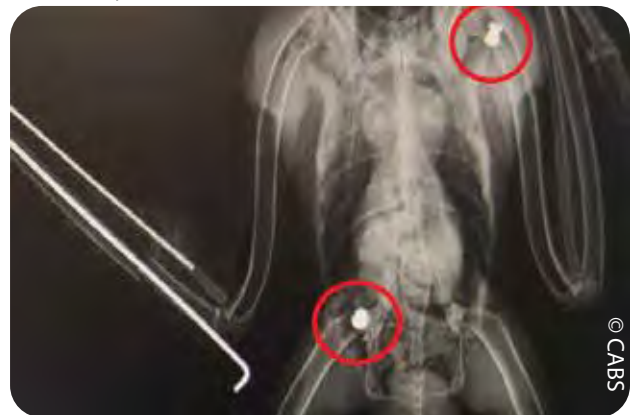
Bavarian Police, March 7 and May 24, 2023; Landesbund für Vogel- und Naturschutz, May 25, 2023.¹¹⁷

Beginning of March 2023
Upper Palatinate District, Bavaria Land, Germany



- A white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I) died from rat poison (brodifacoum).
- Two red kites (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II), a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II) and a Eurasian eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*, Appendix II) died by carbofuran poisoning.
- There is no evidence to suggest that these raptors were targeted. Fishermen view otters as their competitors and will try to poison them. Raptors which eat their carrion can be collateral victims of the war on otters.
Tatort Natur, June 9, 2023.¹¹⁸

March 2023
Cologne, North Rhine-Westphalia Land, Germany



Transfer to the Bergische Greifvogelhilfe care centre for birds of prey of a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II) wounded by 2 pellets. It had crashed in the middle of the town centre, breaking a wing. Committee Against Bird Slaughter, March 23, 2023.¹¹⁹

March 2023
Germany

A Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II) for sale on eBay for 700 € (740 US\$), as well as European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine) and black redstarts (*Phoenicurus ochruros*). Committee Against Bird Slaughter, May 10, 2023.¹²⁰

Saturday, April 1, 2023

Between Reken and Lembeck, North Rhine-Westphalia Land, Germany

ebay

The carcass of a white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I) was found on the side of Route 608. At first sight, it looked like a collision, but the truth soon became clear. The eagle was headless and had lost all its legs. An autopsy revealed a 22 Long Rifle bullet. The body could have been left at the side of the road in a crude simulation of an unintentional collision. The bird of prey was part of an eagle reintroduction program on the shores of Lake Geneva. It was named after Sciez, a French village in Haute-Savoie. It was well known to schoolchildren, who tracked it from the time it hatched using a camera targeting its parents' nest, and then its migrations using a GPS beacon. White-tailed eagles feed mainly on fish, and secondarily on birds and carrion. They have disappeared from Lake Geneva for 131 years, victims of shoot-on-sight attacks and a bad conspiracy reputation. "We had considered all the scenarios for this period of dispersal, which sees young eagles set off to discover the world before returning after 2 or 3 years to nest in the place where they were born. We never anticipated that in 2023 there would still be cowards to shoot a young eagle. It just goes to show that we need to continue our information work to better protect these fishing eagles, and we want the death of 'Sciez' to serve at least that purpose," says Jacques-Olivier Travers, head of the reintroduction program.

Les Aigles du Léman, April 10 and 11, 2023; Allgemeine Zeitung, August 9, 2023.¹²¹

Sunday, April 2, 2023

Ahlen, North Rhine-Westphalia Land, Germany



Once again in Bavaria, a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II) was found riddled with lead pellets and had to be finished off. At least this time, police immediately arrested the suspect, thanks to witness intervention.

Committee Against Bird Slaughter, April 3, 2023.¹²²

End of April 2023

Ilse, Lower Saxony Land, Germany



An adult white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I) died by carbofuran poisoning. The bait was slaughterhouse waste anchored in the ground by a wire, according to Oliver Krone, head of the Rapace project at the Leibniz Institute in Berlin, which specialises in wildlife and zoo research.

Leibniz-IZW, Committee Against Bird Slaughter, June 9, 2023.¹²³

May 2023

Weil, Bavaria, Germany



Poisoning of a red kite (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II) with carbofuran.

Augsburger Allgemeine, May 16, 2023.¹²⁴

May 17, 2023

North Rhine-Westphalia Land, Germany



Poisoning of a female red kite (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II) in the bird sanctuary "Forests and meadows near Burbach and Neunkirchen" with parathion, banned in the European Union since 2002, and with diazion, banned since 2007.

The female was lying in the family nest. The male had disappeared. Two chicks were saved from the cold by the NGO Bergische Greifvogelhilfe.

Siegen-Wittgenstein Biological Station, June 1 and 30 and December 15, 2023.¹²⁵



AUSTRIA

April 5, 2023

Auerbach, Upper Austria State, Austria

This long-distance red kite (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II), monitored by the European Life Eurokite project, had left its nest in Sweden in summer 2022, flown over Germany in October, reached the south of France in December to spend the winter, and left for Austria at the beginning of March 2023. Its transmitter collar was found next to the remains of a pigeon. Its body was not found. This macabre scene leads us to believe that it was the victim of another pigeon keeper's revenge.

Kronen Zeitung, April 16, 2023; LIFE EUROKITE, April 19, 2023.¹²⁶

April 7, 2023

Sankt Roman, Upper Austria State, Austria

In the hamlet of Kössldorf, a member of the ecological hunting association discovered a long-eared owl (*Asio otus*, Appendix II) on the ground. He alerted the local nature conservation association. After a post-mortem examination by Vienna's veterinary university, the initial suspicion was confirmed: the owl had been shot. MeinBezirk.at, April 13, 2023.¹²⁷

FAMILY AFFAIRS

Sunday, April 23, 2023

Pram, Upper Austria State, Austria

At the end of a sunny day, 3 lunatics – a 67-year-old father and his 2 sons, ages 36 and 31 – shot and mauled a long-eared owl (*Asio otus*, Appendix II) and its 4 chicks perched atop a pear tree. Observed from afar by witnesses, the men were identified, arrested and charged. Their 2 rifles and semi-handcrafted murder weapon were seized. Kronen Zeitung, April 25, 2023; MeinBezirk.at, April 26, 2023.¹²⁸

BELGIUM

End of April 2023

Veurne, Province of West Flanders, Flemish Region, Belgium. Border with France.

Thefts of mute swan (*Cygnus olor*) pairs or eggs are on the rise at the Franco-Belgian border. The swans are then exploited in breeding farms, or the eggs are placed in artificial incubation. According to the NGO Natuurpunt, the chicks are sold at a high price as far away as Saudi Arabia.

De Krant van West-Vlaanderen, April 24, 2023.¹²⁹

May 3 and October 17, 2023

Antwerp, Province of Antwerp, Flemish Region, and Brussels, Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium



- December 29, 2018. A hunter shot a domesticated blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) as it performed a free flight under its owner's supervision near Antwerp, on farmland whose farmer gave his consent.



- In November 2021, Patrick V.d.H. was fined 4,000 € (4,640 US\$), ordered to pay 7,250 € (8,400 US\$) in damages to the macaw's owner, and ordered to forfeit his rifle. V.d.H. claims to have mistaken the macaw for an unwelcome exotic pest that could be

shot. The Antwerp court disagreed, ruling that the shot was thoughtless and impulsive, and deeming V.d.H.'s behavior dangerous.

- On Wednesday May 3, 2023, the Antwerp Court of Appeal overturned the initial ruling, acquitted the hunter and awarded all legal costs to Joseph Verdyck, the owner of the dead macaw.

- In October 2023, the Court of Cassation ruled that the hunter's acquittal constituted a violation of the Animal Protection Act, which prohibits unnecessarily killing animals. It also ruled that the macaw was incapable of surviving on its own in Belgium, it neither nests nor freely lays eggs there, that it was under its breeder's care, and that letting a bird fly briefly in supervised freedom is not the same as attempting to introduce an exotic species into national territory. The case of the blue-and-yellow Macaw, originally from Latin America, has been referred to the Ghent Court of Appeal. To be continued.

Gazet van Antwerpen, November 15, 2021 and May 4 and October 17, 2023.¹³⁰

Night of May 16 to 17, 2023

Liège, Province of Liège, Walloon Region, Belgium



In a dilapidated house on fire with no fire alarm which was difficult to access for the fire department, 100 parakeets, 27 parrots (Psittaciformes, Appendix I or II except 4 species) including grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I), Senegal parrots (*Poicephalus senegalus*, Appendix II) from Africa, and blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) from South America, a prairie dog (genus *Cynomys*) from North America, and Barbary macaques (*Macaca sylvanus*, Appendix I) from North Africa or Gibraltar, were burned or fatally asphyxiated. The death toll is uncertain. The wildlife stockpile was clandestine, and entry and exit registers, if they exist, are not yet in the hands of investigators. The presence of a serval (*Leptailurus serval*, Appendix II) among the animals has not been confirmed. The owner of the premises and operator of the illegal exotic animal trade has been charged with the illegal possession of firearms, which were found in the hovel, and with breaching the 1981 law on the keeping of animals. He was released under judicial supervision.

La DH Les Sports+, July 27, 2005; RTBF, May 17 and 18, 2023; RTL info, May 17, 2023; Sudinfo, May 18, 2023.¹³¹

FRANCE

March 2023

Bourg-en-Bresse, Department of Ain, France

The black stork (*Ciconia nigra*, Appendix II) was found on the banks of the Suran River. The autopsy showed that it had not died of avian flu, but of a shooting, the perpetrator of which has been identified and could theoretically face 3 years in prison and a fine of 150,000 € (158,310 US\$). Black storks spend the winter in Africa and return to Europe in the spring. There are thought to be around 100 breeding pairs in France.

Le Progrès, March 15, 2023.¹³²

March 21, 2023

Limoges, Department of Haute-Vienne, France

A young man of Macedonian origin admits having bought a European goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine) in Limoges and attempting to resell it for a profit online during the summer of 2022. He claimed to the police that the songbird had since died.

Le Populaire du Centre, March 21, 2023.¹³³

FAMILY AFFAIRS / REPEATED OFFENCE

March 23, 2023

Montpellier, Department of Hérault, France

The poacher of songbirds, first and foremost European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), had been caught several times "with his hands in the glue," as the local press put it. At first instance, he was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment which he appealed. He was then sentenced to 24 months' imprisonment, with a 4-year ban on visiting 2 public gardens in Montpellier, the regional capital, and the neighbouring commune of Pérols. See "On the Trail" n°35 p.137 (ref.111) and n°38 p.158 (ref.150).

Métropolitain, April 12, 2023.¹³⁴

March 2023

Lendou-en-Quercy, Department of Lot, France

The post-mortem of the red kite (*Milvus milvus*, Appendix II) that died in November 2022 proves that it was shot several times with a rifle, and that shortly beforehand it had eaten bait poisoned with bromadiolone, the anticoagulant used to kill rodents considered to be pests. According to the LPO (Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux - League for the Protection of Birds), the fatal shot was a kill shot. Whatever the means used and whoever was responsible, the dying kite, with its hallucinated gaze, was the victim of cruelty.

La Dépêche du Midi, April 9, 2023.¹³⁵

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 6, 2023

Bourges, Department of Cher, France

Sentencing of a bird "enthusiast" and taxidermist, bartering exotic species as if he were exchanging stamps or camembert box labels with other enthusiasts, to benevolent fines of 1,700 € (1,850 US\$), of which 1,000 € was suspended, for opening a breeding establishment without authorization and without a certificate of competence, illegal possession of protected species, failure to mark birds, sale of non-domesticated animals without an identification number, and non-compliant methods of possession. Of his 259 birds, including pied avocets (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), turtle doves and doves (family Columbidae), teals (family Anatidae), black geese (genus *Branta*), goldeneyes (genus *Bucephala*), and exotic birds such as spur-winged lapwings (*Vanellus spinosus*) sequestered by the OFB on his property, the enthusiast regained full ownership of 248 at the end of the trial. They all had their wings clipped to prevent them from flying away, an unnecessary precaution for a stuffed turtle dove originating from Oceania which is possibly extinct according to the OFB inspector's testimony, which the enthusiast had preserved at home following who knows what trickery.

His father, who was in a sense his partner, was acquitted of taking animals from their natural habitat without authorization. He was only fined 4 times 10 € (43.5 US\$).

Le Berry Républicain, June 24, 2018, February 2 and April 6, 2023.¹³⁶

Mid-April 2023

Thiron-Gardais, Department of Eure-et-Loir, France

The gendarmes of Eure-et-Loir are public writers, and we can only encourage them to continue in this vein. On their Facebook page, they explain under the heading "Caught with their hand in the cage!" that one of them from the Thiron-Gardais brigade on patrol with a colleague in the streets of the town was charmed by the song of a European goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine). Then, intrigued by a veritable concert of vocalizations, they located a cage full of birds in the courtyard of a pavilion. Our passerine connoisseurs point out that *Carduelis carduelis* are poached on a massive scale, with one specimen selling for 200 € (217 US\$), the same price per gram as cannabis resin. "On instructions from the Chartres public prosecutor's office, a search was carried out to ruffle the owner's feathers, with the help of the OFB, and 11 goldfinches were finally discovered." The gendarmes, who were always upbeat, pointed out that they were not convinced by the respondent's "ramblings," and that he was quick to admit that he had caught 9 of the birds and bought the other 2 under the table. "If he avoids tar and feathers, he is nevertheless summoned to appear before the public prosecutor's delegate for the acquisition, possession, transport, and capture of a protected animal species."

Gendarmerie of Eure-et-Loir, April 18, 2023.¹³⁷



FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 2, 2023

Bayonne, Department of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France



The whole family, brother, sister, mother!

It was a cousin who reported the traffic to the town hall in 2019. The 50-year-old resident of Sare, a registered self-employed entrepreneur, was keeping an aviary in a shed where around 50 red-billed leiothrixes (*Leiothrix lutea*, Appendix II), Eurasian bullfinches (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Appendix III in Ukraine), European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), common blackbirds (*Turdus merula*, Appendix III in Ukraine), song thrushes (*Turdus philomelos*, Appendix III in Ukraine), and unbanded domestic canaries (*Serinus canaria*) were sold via the Internet and word-of-mouth. He was given an 8-month suspended prison sentence, fined 1,450 € (1,600 US\$), ordered to pay 400 € (440 US\$) to Urssaf (Union de recouvrement des cotisations de Sécurité sociale et d'allocations familiales, Union for the collection of social security and family allowance contributions), and was banned from running a company for 5 years. The 77-year-old mother and 45-year-old sister, whose bank accounts laundered the proceeds of the trafficking (around 80,000 € or 88,340 US\$), were respectively sentenced to 3 months in prison and a 5,000 € (5,520 US\$) suspended fine.

Trafficking in red-billed leiothrixes in France, see "On the Trail" n°4 p.38, n°7 p.28 (ref.41), n°16 p.36 (ref.57), n°33 p.177 (ref.118) and n°38 p.157 (ref.139). Goldfinch trafficking in Pyrénées-Atlantiques, see "On the Trail" n°8 p.27 (ref.40) and n°24 p.46 (ref.90). France Bleu Pays Basque, May 2, 2023; Franceinfo (with AFP), May 2, 2023; Sud Ouest, May 2, 2023.¹³⁸

May 4, 2023

Troyes, Department of Aube, France



Sentencing of Sébastien Sauret to a 5-month suspended prison sentence and a 700 € (770 US\$) fine for killing a kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*, Appendix II) and other hunting violations. He is banned from hunting for 4 years. ASPAS, Autumn 2023.¹³⁹

Beginning of May 2023

Department of Eure-et-Loir, France

Seizure of 2 red siskins (*Carduelis cucullata*, Appendix I) from Venezuela, 3 European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), and 8 canary hybrids (*Serinus canaria*). Red siskins are in danger of extinction in Venezuela. Bred in France and other European Union countries, the males are hybridized with red siskins (*Carduelis cucullata*, Appendix I) to give them red plumage. The goldfinches have been released, while the tarins and canaries have been placed with approved agents to protect them from clandestine trade via the Internet.

Gendarmerie of Eure-et-Loir, May 10, 2023.¹⁴⁰

THE NETHERLANDS

March 1, 2023

Twenterand, Province of Overijssel, The Netherlands



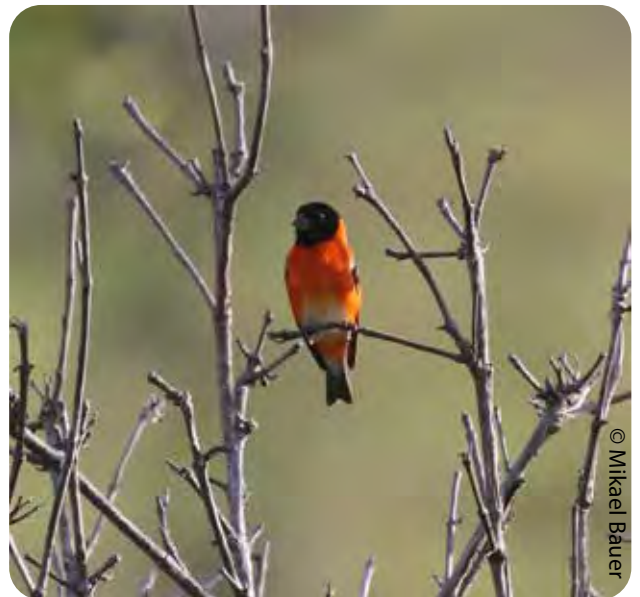
Seizure of 44 birds: European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), Eurasian siskins (*Carduelis spinus*, synonymous with *Spinus spinus*, Appendix III in Ukraine), redpolls (*Acanthis cabaret* or *Carduelis flammea*, synonymous with *Acanthis flammea*, Appendix III in Ukraine), Eurasian bullfinches (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Appendix III in Ukraine), a yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*, Appendix III in Ukraine) and chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*). Limesticks and trap cages were also found. Joint operation by the NVWA (Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit, Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority), the police, provincial and municipal officers and game wardens. Three arrests.

Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority, March 3, 2023.¹⁴¹

March 28, 2023

The Netherlands

Seizure of 53 birds with fraudulent rings: 7 European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), 16 Eurasian siskins (*Carduelis spinus*, synonymous with *Spinus spinus*, Appendix III in Ukraine), 7 common linnets (*Carduelis cannabina*, synonymous with *Linaria cannabina*, Appendix III in Ukraine) and 23 chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*). Inspecteur Natuur, March 28, 2023.¹⁴²



Red siskin (*Carduelis cucullata*)

May 10, 2023

Aa en Hunze, Province of Drenthe, The Netherlands

Seizure by NVWA (Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority) following a report of animal abuse of 20 live parrots (Psittaciformes, Appendix I or II except for 4 species) in cages and 9 dead behind a house whose occupant is suspected of wildlife trafficking.

National Police (The Netherlands), May 16, 2023.¹⁴³

SWITZERLAND

April 26, 2023

Chiasso, Republic and Canton of Ticino, Switzerland. Border with Italy.

Seizure of a scarlet-chested parrot (*Neophema splendida*, Appendix II) in the back of a Swiss-registered SUV driven by a British subject.

Federal Office of Customs and Border Protection, April 28, 2023; TicinOnline, April 28, 2023.¹⁴⁴

SOUTHERN EUROPE

CROATIA

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Neretva Delta, Dubrovnik-Neretva County, Croatia

Gipsy, a female hermit ibis (*Geronticus eremita*, Appendix I), is found dead in the Neretva Delta. The exact cause of death is unknown. The species is being reintroduced in Austria, Germany, Italy, and Central Europe. Two specimens had been poached in 2020 in the vicinity of Vrana Lake Nature Park. Gipsy's death in the Neretva Delta near the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina was a foregone conclusion. Data from its GPS tag shows that the day before it died, it made a 20 km round trip between Dubrovnik and the island of Šipan. On the morning of its death, it returned to feed on the banks of the Neretva. Hermit ibises feed on aquatic insects and their larvae, molluscs, crustaceans, and worms.

Preliminary evidence from the post-mortem examination carried out by the Croatian Veterinary Institute suggests that the death was caused by a severe blow to the back of the skull. Experts from the Bald Ibis Project funded by the European Union's LIFE program suspect that Gipsy was deliberately shot, or that after being poisoned and losing control while in flight, it collided with a building near its fatal landing place. "In consultation with the competent State attorney's office, it was established that there are no elements of a criminal offence in this particular case." Gipsy was familiar and exposed to malicious acts. It frequented terraces and gardens, as evidenced by photos taken by residents of Nerežišće, Komin and Opuzen.

The Croatian Veterinary Institute does not rule out poisoning and, like Biom, would like Gipsy's organs or tissues to be analyzed by a toxicology laboratory. Until the 18th century, the bald ibis was known across the Alpine valleys of Switzerland, Austria and Italy. It was well established in the fauna of Central Europe near rivers and the Adriatic. Grzimek and Fontaine, in their magisterial encyclopedia of the animal world, report that by the 17th century, the bald ibis had disappeared from the foothills of the Alps, despite warnings and protective measures taken by King Ferdinand and the Archbishop of Salzburg. Fledglings were caught in the nests, and the lords, royal courts, and clergy loved these roasted appetizer treats. Over 400 years ago, bald ibises were already "cooked." Today, the world population of bald ibis is estimated at 200-250 adult individuals. The last colonies are in Morocco and Yemen, and a few individuals migrate through Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Eritrea to spend the winter in Ethiopia.

Association Biom, March 9 and April 6, 2023.¹⁴⁵



Hermit ibis (*Geronticus eremita*)

GREECE

End of March 2023

Nea Michaniona, Region of Central Macedonia, Greece

A Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II) with its left wing wounded from a bullet was transferred to the Action for Wildlife rescue center. It died shortly after its arrival.

Action for wildlife, March 23, 2023.¹⁴⁶

**April to May 2023
Island of Zakynthos, Region of Ionian
Islands, Greece**



In spring, the island is teeming with traps and the sound of gunshots and electronic decoys from morning to night. While European turtle doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) are the first targets, raptors (Falconiformes, Appendix I or II), European golden orioles (*Oriolus oriolus*, Appendix III in Ukraine), bee-eaters (family Meropidae), and swallows (family Hirundinidae) are not spared. For their first bird protection camp in Greece, CABS members succeeded in arresting 3 poachers in cooperation with the police. Committee Against Bird Slaughter, May 3 and 19, 2023; iHunt.gr, May 3, 2023.¹⁴⁷

**April 18, 2023
Ano Korydallos, Region of Attica,
Greece**



Police and volunteers from PESYDAP, the inter-municipal environmental protection association of Athens and Piraeus, dismantle a network of nets on Mount Egaleo, targeting European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), common linnets (*Carduelis cannabina*, synonymous with *Linaria cannabina*, Appendix III in Ukraine), red crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*, Appendix III in Ukraine), European greenfinches (*Chloris chloris*), willow tits (*Poecile montanus*) and nuthatches (Sittidae family). On several occasions, PESYDAP has organised the seizure of hundreds of songbirds and their release back into the wild.

Trapping and seizures of songbirds in the Attica region, see "On the Trail" n°34 p.170 (ref.170 and 173), n°35 p.140 (ref.136, 138 and 139), n°36 p.149 (ref.119), n°38 p.161 (ref.169 and 171). Environmental Association of Municipalities of Athens and Piraeus, April 18, 2023.¹⁴⁸



ITALY

**Poaching and seizures of birds (182) between
March 1 and May 31, 2023**

Map details

- 88 European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine)
- 20 thrushes (family Turdidae)
- 14 European robins (*Erithacus rubecula*, Appendix III in Ukraine)
- 13 griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*, Appendix II)
- 11 chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*)
- 10 Eurasian siskins (*Carduelis spinus*, synonymous with *Spinus spinus*, Appendix III in Ukraine)
- 7 serins (*Serinus serinus*, Appendix III in Ukraine)
- 5 whinchats (*Saxicola rubetra*)
- 3 common buzzards (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II)
- 3 European pied flycatchers (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)
- 1 blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, App. II)
- 1 Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II)
- 1 kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*, Appendix II)
- 1 eclectic parrot (*Eclectus roratus*, Appendix II)
- 1 lesser whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*, Appendix III in Ukraine)
- 1 common grasshopper warbler (*Locustella naevia*)
- 1 great tit (*Parus major*)
- 1 European greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*)

Italy

Poaching and seizures of birds (182) between March 1 and May 31, 2023



Sources, see page 257. Details on previous page.

MALTA

Beginning of March to the beginning of May 2023

Malta and Gozo Islands, Malta

Dismantling by the EPU (Environmental Protection Unit) of 37 trap nets, 4 trap cages, and 15 electronic decoys, and rescue in conjunction with CABS (Committee Against Bird Slaughter) of over 100 recently captured finches (family Fringillidae). They are lured into the trap nets by live or electronic decoys, water troughs, or seed dispersal. Each one would have been sold for an average of 100 € (110 US\$) on the local black market. 27 arrests.

Newsbook, March 18, 2023; Gozo News, April 8 2023.¹⁴⁹



March 27, 2023

Valletta, South Eastern Region, Malta

Sentenced to one year in prison and a lifetime ban on hunting for poaching 4 greater flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*, Appendix II) during their migration in October 2021 at Qawra Point near Valletta, the archipelago's capital, Miguel Zammit has appealed. The court, noting that, according to the IUCN, flamingos are not threatened by imminent extinction, and hastily deducing that the damage inflicted on the species and the environment was minor, reduced the sentence to a one-year suspended prison sentence (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.144, ref.124).

Times of Malta, March 27, 2023.¹⁵⁰



End of March 2023

Valletta, South Eastern Region, Malta

In spring 2022, 11 poachers were arrested for trapping common linnets (*Carduelis cannabina*, synonymous with *Linaria cannabina*, Appendix III in Ukraine), European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine) and chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) (see "On the Trail" n°35 p.142 (ref.143)). Fines ranging from 1,000 € to 3,000 € (1,055-3,165 US\$) have been imposed, plus their trapping permits stripped for 2-3 years.

Committee Against Bird Slaughter, March 31, 2023.¹⁵¹



April 16 to 28, 2023

Żejtun and Kalkara, South-Eastern Region, Rabat, Northern Region, and Għasri, Gozo Region, Malta Update on monitoring by members of BirdLife Malta: 3 kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*, Appendix II) and one lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*, Appendix II) were shot by poachers during the hunting season for common quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and European turtle doves (*Streptopelia turtur*).

BirdLife Malta, June 16, 2023.¹⁵²

SERBIA

Beginning of April 2023

Paraćin, Pomoravlje District, Serbia

- Seizure in a restaurant cage of a European goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine). It was placed in the Jagodina Zoological Garden.

- Complaint against a 59-year-old man suspected of shooting dead a Eurasian eagle-owl (*Bubo bubo*, Appendix II).

Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, April 7, 2023.¹⁵³

EASTERN EUROPE

BULGARIA

April 17, 2023

Stara Planina, Stara Zagora Province, Bulgaria

- Rescue of an Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*, Appendix II) found paralyzed in a field. The poisoning was not deliberate. It is thought to have been caused by the unregulated dumping of banned or expired pesticides. Traces of alachlor were detected in the excrement and blood.



- Ten days after being taken in by the team from the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, the female vulture took to the skies again under the name of Victoria.

Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, May 2, 2023.¹⁵⁴

HUNGARY

April 20 and 21, 2023

Mórahalom, Csongrád-Csanád County, Hungary. Border with Serbia.

The case began with the discovery of 2 common buzzards (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II), but in the hours that followed, 6 marsh harriers (*Circus aeruginosus*, Appendix II) and a 3rd common buzzard were found, all in the typical position of poisoned birds of prey: legs entangled, heads thrown back. A Eurasian magpie (*Pica pica*) also fell victim to the poisoners.

Kiskunság National Park, April 25, 2023.¹⁵⁵



May 4, 2023

Gyula, Békés County, Hungary. Border with Romania.

Seizure of 54 birds, including 5 roseate cockatoos (*Eolophus roseicapilla*, Appendix II) and white cockatoos (*Cacatua alba*, Appendix II), 32 grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I), scarlet macaws (*Ara macao*, Appendix I), blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), red-and-green macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), 12 rheas (*Rhea americana* or *Pterocnemia pennata*, Appendix I or II), and 5 rhea chicks in an incubation box.



Zsolt H. purchased "his supplies" in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands. He claims to be consumed by a "passion" for birds. He also has a passion for dogs, of whom 86 unvaccinated specimens without identification chips were found in 24 kennels on his farm.

Hungarian Police, May 4, 2023.¹⁵⁶

POLAND

March 14, 2023

Celinów, Masovian Voivodeship, Poland



A white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I), a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II), and a tattered red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) lay close together in a field. There is no other explanation for this fatal encounter between 2 birds of prey and a terrestrial mammal than poisoning, the scenario and perpetrators of which remain to be discovered.

Directorate of Forests for Garwolin Forest District, March 15, 2023; eGarwolin, March 16, 2023; Radio dla Ciebie, March 17, 2023.¹⁵⁷

March 29, 2023

Rzeczyca, Lodz Voivodeship, Poland



The white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I) lies slumped in the middle of a vast field. Blanka Horbatowska, a volunteer with the NGO Amicus, took it in. The 3 to 4-year-old female had no strength left to move its 6 kg body. Poisoning is suspected. The prognosis is relatively favourable.

Głogów Nasze Miasto, March 30 and April 1, 2023.¹⁵⁸



Beginning of April 2023

Żmigród, Silesian Voivodeship, Poland



A pair of 7-year-old white-tailed eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I) were poisoned by a pesticide-contaminated fox carcass. The dose was so high that they died as if struck by lightning next to the trapped prey. Somewhere in the forest, eaglet chicks froze to death. The female had laid its eggs a few weeks ago. Adult white-tailed eagles have an average wingspan of 2.5 meters and weigh 7 kg. Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, April 3, 2023; Głogów Nasze Miasto, April 4, 2023.¹⁵⁹

April 2023

Szczecin, West Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland. Border with Germany.



Officials seized 5 great bustard feathers (*Otis tarda*, Appendix II) inside a parcel bound from China to Stargard (West Pomerania).

Tax Administration Chamber in Szczecin, April 21, 2023; Głos Szczeciński, April 21, 2023.¹⁶⁰

Saturday, May 6, 2023

Łącza, Silesian Voivodeship, Poland



The police and fire department rescued a northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*, Appendix II) trapped in a double-compartment cage baited with 2 live pigeons. The alarm had been raised by a forest ranger. The trap cage was destroyed.

Silesian Police, May 8, 2023.¹⁶¹



ROMANIA

April 10, 2023

Ilfov and Giurgiu Counties, Romania. Border with Bulgaria.



Following 17 searches in the 2 neighbouring counties, a brotherhood of poachers was unmasked. 42 greyhounds and 12 puppies were seized, along with spotlights, traps, electronic decoys, binoculars and other night vision devices, €10,000 (10,900 US\$) in cash and 120 birds, including European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine) living in cages. After examination by the Romanian Ornithological Society, they were released. The operation was carried out by the Directorate of Weapons, Explosives, and Dangerous Substances, acting in connection with a criminal case currently under investigation, local police, and forest rangers. Romanian Police, April 10, 2023.¹⁶²

April 25, 2023

Salonta, Bihor County, Romania. Border with Hungary.



A marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*, Appendix II) died from poisoning. Alongside the bird were eggs used as bait. Analysis revealed that they were injected with oxamil, a pesticide which is lethal in high doses. Officials are suspicious of the Crişana hunting society, whose members are notoriously relentless in their pursuit of birds of prey so that they can shoot as many pheasants, pigeons, other birds and rabbits as possible. Bihoreanul, April 26, 2023.¹⁶³

May 30, 2023

Dărăşti-Ilfov, Ilfov County, Romania

Seizure at the home of a 58-year-old man of 15 recently captured birds: Eurasian siskins (*Carduelis spinus*, synonymous with *Spinus spinus*, Appendix III in Ukraine), common linnets (*Carduelis cannabina*, synonymous with *Linaria cannabina*, Appendix III in Ukraine), European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*), and common quails (*Coturnix coturnix*). Ilfov County Police Inspectorate, May 30, 2023.¹⁶⁴

RUSSIA

Beginning of March 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

Seizure of 2 tawny owls (*Strix aluco*, Appendix II) being exploited by photographers next to the Obratsov Puppet Theatre. One of them tried unsuccessfully to escape.

Moscow Government Information Centre, March 8, 2023.¹⁶⁵



Obratsov Puppet Theatre

Mid-March 2023

Aleysky District, Altai Krai, Russia



A Eurasian eagle-owl (*Bubo bubo*, Appendix II) unable to fly was taken to the Barnaoul veterinary clinic. It had been wounded by a shot. It underwent emergency surgery and is expected to recover, but its return to the wild remains uncertain.

Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology of Altai Krai, March 20 and 23, 2023 ; Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resources, March 21, 2023.¹⁶⁶

End of March 2023

Chereshnya, Krasnodar Krai, Russia. Border with Georgia.

In the span of 3 days, at least 15 black kites (*Milvus migrans*, Appendix II) returning from wintering in Africa were shot down in mid-air by hunters just a few dozen meters away from residences. Veterinary surgeons are treating the survivors.

Black kites are slightly smaller, stockier and darker than red kites. They average 60 cm in length with a wingspan of 180 cm and weigh between 630 and 940 grams. They live in flocks of up to a few dozen individuals. Opportunistic, they often feed in garbage heaps or in fields at harvest time, when small land animals flee. Some even nest in urban areas.

Interfax Tourism, March 29, 2023; Moskovski Komsomolets Sochi, March 29, 2023.¹⁶⁷

March 31, 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

The Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*, Appendix I) at the Moscow Zoo has been poisoned. That, at least, is the opinion of the vets and caretakers. It was struggling near a water trough. Like all poisoned animals, it was looking for a drink. After 24 hours of convulsions, it died. Born in the Andes, it had been at the zoo for 38 years. Its only compensation for being destined for the highest altitudes was the company of a female which arrived at the zoo at the same time as it did, and with which it conceived and raised its first chick in 1994.

According to Vladimir Romanov, condors have a highly selective diet and are not easy to mislead. The poison could therefore have been deceptively administered to the condor by feeding it fresh meat contaminated with a cockroach or rat repellent. Komsomolskaya Pravda, April 1, 2023; Pogoda 1, April 6, 2023.¹⁶⁸

April 7, 2023

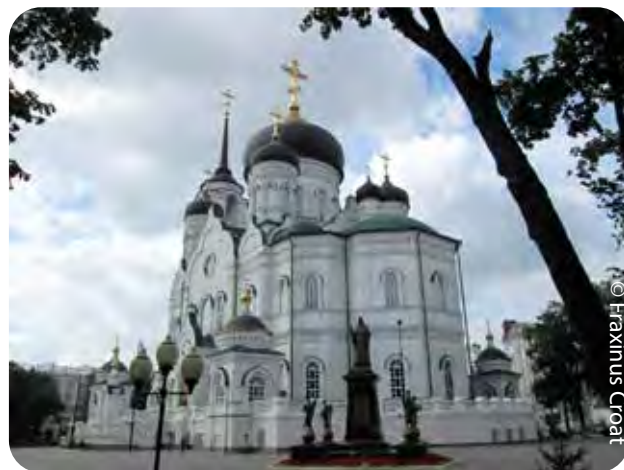
Voronezh, Voronezh Oblast, Russia

Every year in Voronezh (population over a million, 515 km from Moscow), on Annunciation Day, a religious holiday commemorating Archangel Gabriel's announcement to Mary of her maternity, Eurasian sparrowhawks (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II), goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), skylarks (*Alauda arvensis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), common blackbirds (*Turdus merula*, Appendix III in Ukraine), yellowhammers (*Emberiza citrinella*, Appendix III in Ukraine), common redpolls (*Carduelis flammea*, synonymous with *Acanthis flammea*, Appendix III in Ukraine), common linnets (*Carduelis cannabina*, synonymous with *Linaria cannabina*, Appendix III in Ukraine), siskins (*Carduelis spinus*, synonymous with *Spinus spinus*, Appendix III in Ukraine) and other songbirds fall victim to a cruel tradition that exploits the credulity of the faithful.



In front of the Annunciation Cathedral on Revolution Avenue, Intercession Cathedral on Soviets Square, Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on Lenin Avenue, Church of the Resurrection, Church of Saint Xenia of Petersburg and Church of All Saints, itinerant bird sellers, who have poached hundreds of birds over the winter, sell worshippers the right to release one for 100 to 300 rubles (1.30 to 3.90 US\$), with the guarantee that all their wishes will be granted. Sometimes, women pray for several minutes before releasing the bird carrying all their hopes, which in the best case manages to climb onto the branch of a nearby tree, and in the worst case, crawls under cars in parking lots. After weeks of captivity and rudimentary care, the birds are unable to return to their natural habitats. Members of the NGO Nasha Priroda ("Our Nature") are mobilizing the police to sanction this ritual infringement of biodiversity by issuing a fine.

RIA Voronezh, April 5, 2021; Vesti Voronezh, April 6, 2023; Komsomolskaya Pravda Voronezh, April 10, 2023.¹⁶⁹



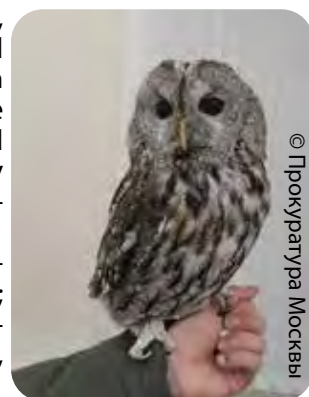
Annunciation Cathedral, Voronezh

Saturday, April 8, 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

A tawny owl (*Strix aluco*, Appendix II) with bald plumage was rescued on Maroseyka Street in the city center. A 33-year-old photographer illegally exhibited the owl to attract customers.

Moscow City Prosecutor's Office, April 8, 2023; Moscow Municipal Economic Complex, April 11, 2023.¹⁷⁰



April 9 and 10, 2023

Ternovsky District, Voronezh Oblast, Russia

A woman named Irina Timofeeva discovered a rough-legged buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*, Appendix II) with a twisted leg lying on the ground near a pond. Local solidarity ensued, and eventually the local newspaper, Savalskie Zori, organised its transfer to the Nasha Priroda NGO's refuge for injured wild animals, 200 km away in Voronezh. The NGO already had bats and 3 honey buzzards (*Pernis apivorus*, Appendix II) under its care. X-rays showed that one of the rough-legged buzzard's wings had been fractured by shrapnel. Unfortunately, the buzzard, which came from the Far North to protect itself from the cold, will not be able to return. It will remain in the Voronezh oblast for life, and the Savalskie Zori newspaper has launched an appeal to find it an adoptive home after undergoing the necessary care.

RIA Voronezh, April 11, 2023.¹⁷¹

Mid-April 2023

Dorofeevo, Tula Oblast, Russia



A 2.82 kg short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*, Appendix II) was shot once in the right wing and once in the left. The vets' prognosis is guarded. The fracture reduction promises to be complex. First Tula, April 13, 2023.¹⁷²

Mid-April 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

A long-eared owl (*Asio otus*, Appendix II) slaved by a street photographer near Lubyanka Square was seized and transferred to the local wildlife rehabilitation center.

Izvestia, April 15, 2023; Vechernyaya Moskva, April 15, 2023.¹⁷³

April 18, 2023

Sovetsky District, Altai Krai, Russia

A saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*, Appendix II) of unknown origin was confiscated from a private individual. It is forbidden to keep a falcon or any animal on the red list of endangered species at home. The man was fined 2,500 rubles (32.50 US\$).

Altayskaya Pravda, April 18, 2023.¹⁷⁴



April 25, 2023

Ternovsky District, Voronezh Oblast, Russia

Rescue of a rough-legged buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*, Appendix II) shot several times with buckshot by a poacher or pigeon fancier mistakenly believing he was protecting his pigeons from a migratory predator. Rough-legged hawks feed on carrion. After treatment and a long recovery, the bird of prey is likely to be released by the NGO Nasha Priroda (Our Nature).

Obozrevatel.Vrn, April 25, 2023.¹⁷⁵

May 3, 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

Officials seized 2 long-eared owls (*Asio otus*, Appendix II) from a street photographer who used them as "live props". The man tried to fool police into believing that the birds were chipped by presenting false certificates. In addition to losing ownership of the owls, he is being prosecuted for falsifying documents.

BezFormata, May 3, 2023.¹⁷⁶

Beginning of May, 2023

Chelyabinsk, Chelyabinsk Oblast, Russia

The streets are lined with photographers displaying wild animals: a young girl with 2 emaciated barn owls (*Tyto alba*, Appendix II), their eyes squinted and their wings clipped; a young man with a boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix I or II) on his shoulders; and a man with a fox in a portable cage. In exchange for 300 rubles (3.60 US\$), they offered passers-by the chance to pose with their prisoners and working tools. The police, alerted, do not react. There are no officers to arrest street photographers and no shelters to house the seized animals. Komsomolskaya Pravda Chelyabinsk, May 11, 2023.¹⁷⁷



May 13, 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

After a nocturnal report on the “Save the Owls” message board, a tawny owl (*Strix aluco*, Appendix II) was seized from a photographer on a busy street in central Moscow and handed over to the wildlife rehabilitation center.

Moscow Municipal Economic Complex, May 13, 2023.¹⁷⁸

May 2023

Republic of Sakha, Russia

National Guard operation. Fifteen hunters checked. Seizure of 4 firearms, 80 rounds of ammunition, and a Baikal teal (*Anas formosa*, Appendix II) killed after the end of the waterfowl hunting season.

SakhaPress, May 29, 2023.¹⁷⁹

SLOVAKIA

March 10, 2023

Between Trebatice and Krakovany, Trnava Region, Slovakia



A white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I) fed on the carcass of a fatally poisoned red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). This piscivorous scavenger became a secondary victim of the European-wide aversion to foxes among farmers and other country folk. The bird of prey is being treated by Trnava vets. Prognosis guarded. Piešťanský denník, March 17, 2023.¹⁸⁰

April 1-2, 2023

Slovakia



Thanks to a tip-off, members of Raptor Protection of Slovakia freed a raptor (Accipitridae, Appendix I or II) trapped in a cage. In another trap, a kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*, Appendix II), a long-eared owl (*Asio otus*, Appendix II) and a common starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) died of starvation.

Raptor Protection of Slovakia, April 4, 2023.¹⁸¹

CZECHIA

March 13 and 23, 2023

Capital City of Prague, Czechia

The woman was keeping 9 parrots, including a grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I) and a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) in 40 square meter area. The conditions were dangerous for the animals, for herself, and for the other users of the building. The parrots were seized on March 13 and put in a safe place, and 10 dogs and 9 cats were due to be removed on March 23. By the time Prague’s environmental and animal protection services arrived with the necessary logistics and personnel, they had disappeared.

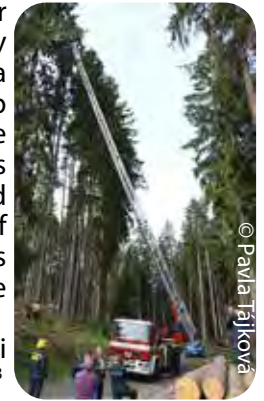
iDNES.cz, March 17, 2023; Blesk.cz, March 20 and 23, 2023.¹⁸²

Mid-May 2023

Touzim, Karlovy Vary region, Czechia



Carbofuran poisoning of a female white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*, Appendix I) with a 2.4-meter wingspan in a forest affected by logging. Firefighters climbed a ladder to its nest 35 meters up a tree and discovered a little eaglet barely clad in feathers and dead of starvation and cold. Since the beginning of 2023, 10 white-tailed eagles have been poisoned in the Czech Republic.



České společnosti ornitologické, May 17, 2023.¹⁸³



May 16, 2023

Štěpánkovice, Moravian-Silesian Region, Czechia

Walkers discovered a Montagu’s harrier (*Circus pygargus*, Appendix II). Its left wing was fractured. It was transferred to a rescue center for wild animals. X-ray examination shows the presence of a lead. The wound is several days old and the bird is too weak to undergo immediate surgery. Uncertain prognosis.

Wildlife Rescue Station in Bartošovice, May 19, 2023.¹⁸⁴

UKRAINE

April 12, 2023

Feldman Ecopark, Kharkiv Oblast, Ukraine

It’s springtime in Kharkiv, and like every year, the Feldman Ecopark releases 1,000 European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III), Eurasian siskins (*Carduelis spinus*, synonymous with *Spinus spinus*, Appendix III), Eurasian bullfinches (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Appendix III), hawfinches (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*) and pheasants (family Phasianidae) seized from poachers and pet shops or collected by thoughtful people in winter. Feldman Ecopark, April 13, 2023; Suspilne, April 13, 2023.¹⁸⁵



VARIOUS REPTILE SPECIES

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 18, 2023

Los Angeles, State of California, United States of America

Stephany Perez was sentenced to a 1,000 US\$ fine and one year of probation (see "On the Trail" n°35 p.148, ref.7). She pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor violation of the Lacey Act. From 2016 to 2022, she helped her brother Jose Manuel Perez smuggle reptiles between Mexico and the United States. This sentence is relatively light compared to the crime; the 1,700 reptiles she helped smuggle are worth over 700,000 US\$ on the black market. She and her brother listed them for sale on Facebook. Stay tuned for her brother's trial...

Environmental Crimes Monthly Bulletin, May 2023.¹



VENEZUELA

End of March 2023

Caracas, Capital District, Venezuela

The CICPC (Cuerpo de Investigaciones Científicas, Penales y Criminalísticas) intercepted 47 female and 32 male geckos (family Gekkonidae), 5 brown rainbow boas (*Epicrates maurus*, Appendix II), 3 royal pythons (*Python regius*, Appendix II) and a milk snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*) at a private home.

Sumarium, April 13, 2023.²

ASIA

CHINA

May 14, 2023

Hong Kong International Airport, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China

Seizure from a passenger traveling from Thailand of 18 live turtles and 3 juvenile black tree monitors (*Varanus beccarii*, Appendix II) with an estimated black market value of 160,000 HK\$ (20,380 US\$). The animals were wrapped and taped to his body. Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, May 15, 2023.³

INDIA

April 28, 2023

Chennai International Airport, State of Tamil Nadu, India

A passenger disembarking from an AirAsia flight from Kuala-Lumpur had 22 snakes inside his luggage, including 2 adult royal pythons (*Python regius*, Appendix II) measuring 2.40 m in length, anacondas (*Eunectes murinus*, Appendix II), corn snakes (*Pantherophis guttatus*) and Mexican black kingsnakes (*Lampropeltis getula nigrita*), as well as a chameleon (*Chamaeleonidae*, Appendix I or II). Officials confiscated the reptiles and remanded the trafficker in custody for 14 days for the purposes of the investigation. The snakes and the chameleon were returned to Malaysia on the same plane. We imagine that every precaution was taken to prevent the pythons from slithering their way between passenger seats and into the cockpit.

Chennai Customs, April 29, 2023; Kalinga TV, April 30, 2023; The Times of India, April 30, 2023.⁴

INDONESIA

April 6, 2023

Port of Sorong, Southwest Papua Province, New Guinea Island, Indonesia



Officials seized 244 reptiles aboard the *Ciremai*: 56 bevel-nosed boas (*Candoia carinata*, Appendix II with reservation from Palau), 56 blue tree monitors (*Varanus macraei*, Appendix II), 50 emerald monitors (*Varanus prasinus*, Appendix II), 42 green tree pythons (*Morelia viridis*, Appendix II), 17 white-lipped pythons (*Leiopython albertisi*, Appendix II), 16 mangrove monitors (*Varanus indicus*, Appendix II with reservation from Palau), 4 bluetail monitors (*Varanus doreanus*, Appendix II), a Papuan python (*Apodora papuana*, Appendix II), .../...

a scrub python (*Morelia amethystina*, Appendix II) and a crocodile monitor (*Varanus salvadorii*, Appendix II). "On the Trail" has already twice reported on wildlife trafficking aboard the *Ciremai* (see "On the Trail" n°33 p.165, ref.67, and n°35 p.122, map of birds seized in Indonesia pp. 140-141). The BKSDA led the operation and provisionally placed the animals under its care.⁵

ROBIN DES BOIS INVESTIGATION



Ciremai. IMO 9032135. Length: 146.50 m. Indonesia flag. Classification society: Biro Klasifikasi Indonesia. Built in 1993 in Papenburg (Germany) by Jos L. Meyer Werft GmbH. Owned by the Indonesian government. Operated by PELNI (Pt. Pelayaran Nasional Indonesia), the owner and/or manager of some 40 vessels, mainly carrying passengers, but also equipped for cargo transport. The Indonesian government commissioned the ship, which has always worked in Indonesia. The *Ciremai* was modified in 2012 to increase its cargo-carrying capacity. Its official capacity is 948 passengers, 1,700 small vehicles and 65 containers. She usually links Jakarta (Java) to Jayapura (Papua) via Surabaya (Java), Makassar (South Sulawesi), the ports of the Moluccan Islands (Bau Bau, Ambon) and Papua (Sorong, Manowakri, Biak). The crossing from Jakarta to Jayapura costs 1,265,000 rupiah (80 US\$). West Papua Natural Resources Conservation Center (BBKSDA Papua Barat), April 6, 2023.

April 7, 2023

Port of Manokwari, West Papua Province, New Guinea Island, Indonesia

Aboard the *Tidar*, officials recovered 43 black tree monitors (*Varanus beccarii*, Appendix II), 7 mangrove monitors (*Varanus indicus*, Appendix II with reservation from Palau) and a green tree python (*Morelia viridis*, Appendix II) stored in 13 plastic or cloth bags and 4 plastic bottles. This marks the 2nd time the *Tidar* has been involved in wildlife trafficking in Papua (see map of birds seized in Indonesia pp.140-141).⁶

ROBIN DES BOIS INVESTIGATION



Tidar. IMO 8700292. Length: 144 m. Indonesia flag. Classification society: Biro Klasifikasi Indonesia. Built in 1988 in Papenburg (Germany) by Meyer Werft GmbH. Owned by the Indonesian State. Operated by PELNI (Pt. Pelayaran Nasional Indonesia), the owner and/or manager of some forty vessels, mainly passenger carriers. She was commissioned by the Indonesian government and has always worked in Indonesia. The *Tidar* has an official capacity of 2,000 passengers; it can also carry up to 1,200 m³ of general cargo and 1,400 m³ of bulk cargo. She usually takes 3 days to sail from Makassar (South Sulawesi) to Nabire (Central Papua) via ports in the Moluccas (BauBau, Namlea, Ambon, Tual, Dobo) and Papua (Kaimana, Fakfak, Sorong, Manokwari). The crossing from Nabire to Makassar costs 847,000 rupiah (55 US\$) in economy class. West Papua Natural Resources Conservation Center (BBKSDA Papua Barat), April 8, 2023.

REPEATED OFFENCE

May 29, 2023

Ternate, Ternate Island, North Moluccan Province, Maluku Archipelago, Indonesia

Seizure of a mangrove monitor (*Varanus indicus*, Appendix II), 3 reticulated pythons (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II), a giant blue-tongued skink (*Tiliqua gigas*), and 3 Weber's sailfin lizards (*Hydrosaurus weberi*) in an abandoned shed in the port. The trafficker escaped police custody. This is the second time he has been involved in wildlife trafficking. In September 2022, he had already been arrested and lectured. He had signed an official undertaking stating that he would no longer keep wild animals. Giant blue-tongued skinks live in the rainforests of New Guinea and neighbouring small islands. They can grow up to 60 cm long and weigh up to one kg. Weber's sailfin lizards are agamas endemic to the Malukus. They can reach one meter in length and live between 10 and 15 years. Very little is known about them, but they are already sought after for the pet market and threatened by deforestation. BKSDA Maluku, June 2, 2023.⁷



Hydrosaurus weberi

ISRAEL/CZECHIA

End of May 2023

David Ben Gurion International Airport, Central District, Israel, and Václav Havel International Airport Prague, Capital City of Prague, Czechia

Over 70 infant reptiles, snakes, geckos and turtles were seized from an Israeli woman's suitcase, returning from Prague-Václav-Havel International Airport in the Czech Republic.

Israeli customs sent the suitcase to Prague-Václav-Havel airport with young snakes still buried in socks and other underwear, and turtles and geckos in plastic boxes. An examination revealed 8 royal pythons (*Python regius*, Appendix II), 5 green anacondas (*Eunectes murinus*, Appendix II), 20 milk snakes (*Lampropeltis triangulum*), 19 common

kingsnakes (*Lampropeltis getula*), 3 beauty rat snakes (*Elaphe taeniura*), a pine snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), 8 vipers (family Viperidae), 5 Hermann's tortoises (*Testudo hermanni*, Appendix II) and 4 crested geckos (*Correlophus ciliatus*, synonymous with *Rhacodactylus ciliatus*). All were purchased in the Czech Republic. The smuggler belongs to a network that specialises in smuggling reptiles and amphibians from the European Union to the Middle East.

Reptiles seized in David Ben Gurion airport, see "On the Trail" n°35 p.149 (ref.12) and n°39 p.125 (ref.6). Haskupim, June 1, 2023; The Times of Israel, June 1, 2023; The Customs Administration of the Czech Republic, June 2, 2023; Czech Environmental Inspectorate, March 5, 2024.⁸

EUROPE

BELGIUM

May 25, 2023

Liège, Province of Liège, Walloon Region, Belgium

Seizure at dawn in 2 private homes of 7 juvenile caimans (Alligatoridae, Appendix I or II), a python (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II), 23 exotic tortoises including Galapagos giant ones (*Chelonoidis niger*, Appendix I), Aldabra giant ones (*Aldabrachelys gigantea*, Appendix II) from the Seychelles and African spurred ones (*Centrochelys sulcata*, Appendix II), 10 iguanas (family Iguanidae) and a tarantula, which were handed over to the NGO Carapace ("Shell"). 55 Hermann's tortoises (*Testudo hermanni*, Appendix II) were identified and left on site. 700 kg of animal feed imported from the United States of America with an unknown composition and labelling that did not comply with European standards were seized. The 4 arrests included an old acquaintance of the judiciary, even though he is only in his thirties. Sébastien Banken, who had already spent 11 years in prison, had just set up the company Nutrii Zoo, which enabled him and his associates to complete the circle and sell the exotic reptiles with adulterated food to feed them.

Sudinfo, May 26 and 27, 2023; Pairi Daiza, June 5, 2023.⁹

TORTOISES AND FRESHWATER TURTLES

Most important seizures :

680 Meso-American sliders (*Trachemys venusta*)
200 Indian flapshell turtles (*Lissemys punctata*, Appendix II)



Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*). Photo Vinny Pellegrino

AFRICA

MADAGASCAR

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 1, 2023

Ihosy, Ihorombe Region, and Toliara, Atsimo Andrefana Region, Madagascar

Officials seized 54 juvenile spider tortoises (*Pyxis arachnoides*, Appendix I), 2 of which had died, and arrested 2 men and a woman.

For more information on spider tortoises, see "On the Trail" n°4 p.17.

2424.mg, April 6, 2023; Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Madagascar), April 6, 2023.¹

April 7 and May 6, 2023

Toliara, Atsimo-Andrefana Region, Madagascar

- On Saturday night, police seized 43 radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*, Appendix I) from a private home and arrested 4 people. They are suspected of stealing the turtles from the Village des Tortues in Mangily-Toliara, Madagascar, which houses poached and seized turtles.

- The trial began on May 6, but was quickly adjourned at the request of Turtle Survival Alliance

(TSA), which runs the other rescued turtle refuge in Itampolo, a few kilometres from Tuléar. TSA is calling for further investigation, as one of the suspects is an ex-employee with intimate knowledge of the site and how to get in without being caught. TSA has already been a victim of thefts.

Turtle Survival Alliance in Madagascar, see "On the Trail" n°5 p.17, n°10 p.13 (ref.3), n°13 p.16 (ref.8), n°26 p.22 (ref.1), n°29 p.133 (ref.2), n°32 p.200 (ref.2), n°34 p.184 (ref.2 and 5), n°35 p.151 (ref.1) and n°36 p.162-163 (ref.4, 5 and 6).

2424.mg, April 8, 2023; Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Madagascar), April 8, 2023; Midi Madagasikara, May 6, 2023.²

MAURITIUS

May 20, 2023

Sir-Seewoosagur-Ramgoolam International Airport, District of Grand Port, Mauritius

Officials recovered 20 Indian (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I) and Burmese (*Geochelone platynota*, Appendix I) star tortoises from a 78-year-old Mauritian, who claims to have bought them for 500 rupees (6 US\$) a pair in Surat, Gujarat, India, to keep as pets. The anti-narcotics brigade suspects her of wanting to trade them.

Defimedia.info, May 22, 2023.³

NORTHERN AMERICA

CANADA

April 12, 2023

Saskatoon, Province of Saskatchewan, Canada

Williamson, a breeder-seller of Greek tortoises (*Testudo graeca*, Appendix II), was fined 3,000 \$ (2,215 US\$) for shipping a tortoise in July 2021. In June 2021, the WAPPRITA (Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act) added the Greek tortoise to its list of pets whose interprovincial trade is prohibited. Williamson, who lives in British Columbia, sold the tortoise on Kijiji for 400 dollars (325 US\$) to a buyer in Saskatchewan. Unaware of the challenges facing Greek tortoises, Williamson, his lawyer and The Star Phoenix were also unaware that the reptile is listed in Appendix II of CITES.

CTV News, April 13, 2023; The Star Phoenix, April 13, 2023.⁴



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Mid-March 2023

Sumter County, State of Florida, United States of America

This gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*, Appendix II) had a narrow escape. It was discovered at a roadside check, trapped in a bucket, then immediately set free. The driver has been charged with illegal protected species possession. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, March 22, 2023.⁵

Saturday, April 1, 2023

San Diego, State of California, United States of America. Border with Mexico.

A man attempted to steal a desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*, Appendix II) during an adoption fair organised by the San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society. He was cited. The San Diego Turtle and Tortoise Society's mission is to find adoptive homes for freshwater and terrestrial turtles that have been abandoned or rescued from trafficking. Applicants must be approved by the Adoptions Committee.

Desert tortoise, see "On the Trail" n°1 p.39, n°3 p.21, n°8 p.99 (ref.29), n°18 p.19 (ref.4), n°21 p.113 (ref.37) and p.114 (ref.40), n°25 p.110 (ref.53), n°32 p.229 (ref.7) and n°33 p.190 (ref.8).

Times of San Diego, April 1, 2023; FOX 5 San Diego, April 2, 2023.⁶

April 12 and July 26, 2023

Alexandria, State of Virginia, United States of America

Stanlee Fazi, a Louisa resident, plead guilty and admitted to earning 13,000 US\$ over 3 years from selling Eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina carolina*, Appendix II) captured in forests.

He would sell each for around 200 US\$, and charge even more for those with expressive geometric markings on their shells. In the trade, they're known as "screamers". Fazi's lawyer describes him as a turtle lover who acted without brutality and resold them only to respectful customers in California, Wisconsin, Maryland, New Jersey and Texas. The FedEx shipping arrangements, however, were not business-class. With 3 or 4 turtles packed together inside a cardboard box, the turtles spent several days in transit by plane or truck. Some were stuffed into socks. Virginia enacted a law in 2021 prohibiting the use of Eastern box turtles as pets.

- Fazi was sentenced to 6 months in prison and to a ban from owning, possessing, buying or selling live animals that can only be lifted by the judge for the enforcement of sentences. A monitoring program will be installed on any computer he owns, and he will be subject to random, unannounced searches of those computers by law enforcement officers.

U.S. Department of Justice - Office of Public Affairs, April 24, 2023; WTVR CBS 6, April 25, 2023; The Washington Post, April 26, 2023; Southwest Ledger, August 1, 2023.⁷



April 22, 2023

St. Cloud, State of Florida, United States of America

A gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*, Appendix II) is in critical condition after being shot 4 times by a stranger. The shot penetrated its shell, punctured a lung, grazed its heart and damaged its stomach. The prognosis is very guarded. The Rehab Center where it was admitted states, "Turtles seem impenetrable, as if protected by armour, but underneath there are vital bones and organs."

Gopherus polyphemus, see "On the Trail" n°6 p. 14, n°14 p. 19 (ref. 7), n°26 p. 33 (ref. 2), n°35 p. 152 (ref. 5), n°36 p. 164 (ref. 14, 16, 17 and 18), n°37 p. 181 (item 14) and n°38 p. 174 (item 9).

Swamp Girl Adventures Reptile Rehabilitation, April 22, 2023; WFTV Channel 9, April 23, 2023.⁸

End of April 2023

Havana, State of Illinois, United States of America

Acting on a tip, a DNR agent goes to the home of an individual suspected of having captured a snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*, Appendix II). A woman opens the door. She indicates that the turtle is still alive in a trash can in her garage, and calls her companion who admits the facts. The turtle is released.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, April 30, 2023.⁹

Beginning of May 2023

Sylvan Glen Lake, State of Michigan, United States of America

The snapping turtle season (*Chelydra serpentina*, Appendix II) opens on July 15. An impatient fisherman was a little early, but was surprised by a guard. He admitted that he intended to eat it that evening and received a summons.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources, May 13, 2023.¹⁰

May 7, 2023

McDonough County, State of Illinois, United States of America

A summons for the out-of-season capture of a snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*, Appendix II).

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, May 15, 2023.¹¹

End of May 2023

Putnam County, State of Florida, United States of America

Acting on a tip, officers discover an illegally held gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*, Appendix II), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*, a galliform bird) in a private home. The owner agrees to hand them over and receives a summons.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, May 31, 2023.¹²

BOLIVIA

March 12, 2023

Santa Cruz, Province of Andrés Ibáñez, Department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Two yellow-headed sidenecks (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II) that were circling in an aquarium waiting to be sold on social media were seized by the Pofoma in violation of the Penal Code and the Law of Mother Earth (Ley Madre Tierra). "No al Mascotismo."

La Voz de la Naturaleza, March 14, 2023.¹³

May 31, 2023

La Paz, Province of Pedro Domingo Murillo, Department of La Paz, Bolivia

With the help of environmental activists, a Pofoma team seized 2 yellow-headed sidenecks (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II) and 2 South American river turtles (*Podocnemis*, Appendix II) listed for sale online. They were entrusted to a care centre run by the Secretaria Departamental de Derechos de la Madre Tierra (departmental secretariat for Mother Earth rights).

La Voz de la Naturaleza, June 1, 2023.¹⁴

COLOMBIA

OPERATION SAINT FRANCOIS D'ASSISE

Beginning of March 2023

Majagual, Department of Sucre, Colombia

Following "semana mayor", the week of Easter celebrations, officials recovered 680 Meso-American sliders (*Trachemys venusta*) and a white-faced capuchin (*Cebus capucinus*, Appendix II) destined for food markets in the department of Sucre (population 949,000) and across all of Sucre, 2,000 Meso-American sliders were seized, according to a report by Colonel William Castaño Ramos of the Environmental Police Department.

El Espectador, March 9, 2023.¹⁵

PERU

May 20, 2023

Juliaca, Province of San Roman, Department of Puno, Peru

In the dentist's waiting room stood an aquarium containing 4 "taricayas," yellow-headed sidenecks (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II). Following a report, they were seized by Serfor (Servicio Nacional Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre) and a police environmental unit.

Serfor, May 23, 2023.¹⁶

ASIA

CHINA

March 1, 2023

Gongbei Border Post, Zhuhai Prefecture, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Macau.

A traveller from Macau tried clearing customs using the “I have nothing to declare” excuse. In his shopping bag were 4 juvenile Aldabra giant tortoises (*Aldabrachelys gigantea*, Appendix II), 3 of which were enclosed in cookie boxes.

Chinese Customs, March 22, 2023.¹⁷

April 24, 2023

Dongxing, Fangchenggang Prefecture, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. Border with Viet Nam.

In the early morning, border police seized 68 adult big-headed turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*, Appendix I) in bags on the road between China's Guangxi and Viet Nam's Quang Ninh province. The largest measures 36 cm and weighs around 550 grams, while the smallest measures 28 cm and weighs around 400 grams.

China National Radio, April 28, 2023.¹⁸

May 14, 2023

Gongbei Border Post, Zhuhai Prefecture, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Macau.

Customs recovered 9 live turtles and an additional 4 others hidden in 9 black socks from an incoming passenger's luggage. There were 11 leopard tortoises (*Stigmochelys pardalis*, Appendix II) and 2 very young red-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II).

Gongbei Customs, June 1, 2023.¹⁹

INDIA

OPERATION WILEP

March 5, 2023

Ballia, Ballia District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

From Calcutta (Kolkata) to Azamgarh, it's 750 km and 19 hours by rail. Baki Mandal, Mahendra Pratap Shah and Hemant were the latest victims of Operation Wilep, the Railway Protection Force's official campaign to rid passenger trains of wildlife trafficking. They were arrested with their bulky luggage on a platform at Ballia Station. 97 Indian flapshell turtles (*Lissemys punctata*, Appendix II) were the lucky beneficiaries of the operation.

Outlook India, March 6, 2023; Railway Protection Force, March 6, 2023.²⁰

OPERATION WILEP

March 5, 2023

Balurghat, Dakshin Dinajpur, State of West Bengal, India

A Railway Protection Force (RPF) patrol discovered 9 abandoned bags containing 12 large dead Indian softshell turtles (*Nilssonina gangetica*, Appendix I) (total weight 124 kg) in a passenger carriage of regional train 05421 from Malda to Balurghat.

Railway Protection Force North East Frontier Railway, March 6, 2023 ; East Mojo, March 11, 2023.

²¹

Sunday, March 19, 2023

Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur District, State of West Bengal, India

Gautam Tantia, a local member of Peoples for Animals, had his eye on something. At the Siliguri More crossroads, he observed 2 young men. Flies were swirling around their bags, so he suspected something fishy and asked the traffic wardens to intervene. In the bag were 12 Indian flapshell turtles (*Lissemys punctata*, Appendix II), which Anil Kumar Sahani and Amit Kumar, originally from Bihar, intended to sell at the weekly market in Shibbari, 65 km away.

The Telegraph India, March 20, 2023.²²

OPERATION WILEP

March 22, 2023

Kolkata, Kolkata District, State of West Bengal, India

“Save the turtles... Save the planet” proclaims the tweet from RPF, which is doing what it can. Another 19 turtles seized at Central Station. How many of the 32 inter-State trains that stopped at or terminated in the megalopolis went unnoticed on Wednesday? Railway Protection Force Eastern Railway, March 22, 2023.²³



April 6, 2023

Udaipur, Udaipur District, State of Rajasthan, India

Seizure of 20 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I) and arrest of 2 men, thanks to information provided by the WCCB. WCCB, April 13, 2023.²⁴

Night of April 20-21, 2023

Kahalgaon, Bhagalpur District, State of Bihar, India

RPF recovered 20 kg of freshwater turtle meat on a train bound for West Bengal. A man claims to have received 2,000 rupees (25 US\$) in Uttar Pradesh to transfer the consignment to Rampurhat (220 km from Kolkata). At least 50 turtles were killed. The Indian softshell turtle (*Nilssonina gangetica*, Appendix I) and the Indian flapshell turtle (*Lissemys punctata*, Appendix II) represent the most targeted freshwater turtles in Uttar Pradesh for international trafficking.

Railway Protection Force Eastern Railway, April 21, 2023; View19, April 21, 2023.²⁵

Night of April 20-21, 2023

Gorakhpur, Gorakhpur District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Near the main railway station, officials seized 34 adult Indian flapshell turtles (*Lissemys punctata*, Appendix II) from 4 men in a vehicle overnight. They were on their way to deliver them to an intermediary in Bangladesh. A single Indian flapshell turtle carries an economic value of 30,000 to 40,000 rupees, or 365 to 487 US\$. Newsday Express, April 21, 2023.²⁶

May 10, 2023

Jagdishpur, Udham Singh Nagar District, State of Uttarakhand, India

A turtle weighing over 40 kg was discovered and seized in a car coming from Dabur and heading towards Jagdishpur. The 2 occupants fled across the fields, but Mukesh was caught and he revealed the identity of his accomplice. He is said to be Mahipal, a resident of Mirganj District, Uttar Pradesh. Belaag News, May 10, 2023; The Times of India, May 11, 2023.²⁷

May 20, 2023

Anantram Toll, Etawah District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

STF seizure of 2 Indian softshell turtles (*Nilssonina gangetica*, Appendix I) and 11 Indian narrow-headed softshell turtles (*Chitra indica*, Appendix II), each weighing between 50 and 70 kg. The 3 occupants of the luxury vehicle, Rajesh Chauhan, Shubham Sana, and Uttam Das, are natives and residents of Uttarakhand. According to SCON (Society for Conservation of Nature), softshell turtle meat sells for around 500 rupees/kg (6 US\$/kg). The Times of India, May 22, 2023.²⁸

May 27, 2023

Sasdanga, North 24 Parganas District, State of West Bengal, India. Border with Bangladesh.

The jawans spotted the suspicious movements of 2 individuals in the village and got it in their heads that they were about to foment a gold or wild animal smuggling operation. The 2 suspects took advantage of the night to make a run for it. While combing the area, the jawans discovered 2 bags containing 140 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I). The smuggling attempt to Bangladesh was thwarted.

Asian News International, May 27, 2023; Border Security Force South Bengal, May 27, 2023.²⁹

End of May 2023

Vadodara, Vadodara District, State of Gujarat, India

A resident alerts the NGO Wildlife SOS-GSPCA (Gujarat Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals): 2 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I) are being kept in captivity at the Blue Star Aquarium, a pet shop. In collaboration with forestry officials, a bogus buyer shows up and declares his interest. As soon as the deal was closed, the owner was arrested. He admitted to possessing 4 additional Indian star tortoises. They were taken in by the Forest Department.

The Times of India, May 24, 2023; Wildlife SOS, June 5, 2023.³⁰

May 29, 2023

Dineshpur, Udham Singh Nagar District, State of Uttarakhand, India

Seizure of 57 Indian flapshell turtles (*Lissemys punctata*, Appendix II) from the trunk of a car whose driver fled the scene. Uttaranchal Deep, May 30, 2023.³¹

MALAYSIA

March and September 22, 2023

Kuala Lumpur, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



A retired man was sentenced to one day in prison and fined 130,000 ringgits (nearly 30,000 US\$) for housing without a permit in March 2023 a spotted pond turtle (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*, Appendix I), Southern river terrapin (*Batagur affinis*, Appendix I), African spurred tortoise (*Centrochelys sulcata*, Appendix II), leopard tortoise (*Stigmochelys pardalis*, Appendix II), Asian giant tortoise (*Manouria emys*, Appendix II), red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), and a yellow-bellied slider (*Trachemys scripta scripta*). He faced up to 3 years in prison.

The Star (Malaysia), March 24 and September 23, 2023.³²

SINGAPORE

End of March 2023

Singapore

Four African spurred tortoises (*Centrochelys sulcata*, Appendix II) were seized at a community charity farm for chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys. The galliformes pecked fiercely at the bleeding shells. The Straits Times, April 1, 2023.³³

VIET NAM

March 2023

Thua Thien Hue Province, Viet Nam

The operator of an aquarium store was hit with an administrative fine of one million dong (42 US\$) after 18 freshwater, Chinese stripe-necked turtles (*Mauremys sinensis*, Appendix III in China) were seized there. ENV, March 17, 2023.³⁴



March 27, 2023

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Seizure of 2 big-headed turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*, Appendix I) that the man had tried to sell on social media. He was preparing to deliver them. He had agreed with a buyer on a price of 2 million dong (84 US\$) for the lot. ENV, March 27, 2023.³⁵

Beginning of April 2023

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Seizure of 5 Chinese stripe-necked turtles (*Mauremys sinensis*, Appendix III in China) and 8 red-eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) being sold on the roadside. ENV, April 11, 2023.³⁶

End of April 2023

Phu Quoc Island, Kien Giang Province, Viet Nam

At a market stall, 36 Reeves' turtles (*Mauremys reevesii*, Appendix III in China), 8 Chinese stripe-necked turtles (*Mauremys sinensis*, Appendix III in China) and 29 red-eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) were seized. ENV, April 28, 2023.³⁷

May 2023

Hai Duong, Hai Duong Province, Viet Nam

Seizure of 97 live yellow pond turtles (*Mauremys mutica*, Appendix II) and one Chinese stripe-necked turtle (*Mauremys sinensis*, Appendix III in China), and 2 dead turtles from an illegal breeding operation. The live turtles were entrusted to the turtle conservation centre in Cuc Phuong National Park.

ENV, May 23, 2023.³⁸

EUROPE

BULGARIA

End of March 2023

Vratsa and Oryahovo, Vratsa Province, Bulgaria

Police rescued 55 Hermann's tortoises (*Testudo hermanni*, Appendix II) and a European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*, Appendix III in Ukraine) from a deceased person's 2 homes. They were transferred to the Stara Zagora rescue center, over 200 km from their place of captivity.

Regional Environment and Water Inspectorate - Vratsa, April 7, 2023; Vratsa Guide, April 10, 2023.³⁹

SPAIN AND FRANCE

March 10 and April 26, 2023

Bordeaux, Department of Gironde, France, and Autonomous Community of Catalonia, Spain

After French customs seized 17 Mediterranean turtles (*Mauremys leprosa*) from a Dutch trafficker's vehicle during a roadside check in the Gironde department, the turtles were released into a suitable habitat in Spain. The operation was carried out by the ART (Association du Refuge des Tortues)* in the Haute-Garonne department and the CRARC (Centre de Recuperació d'Amfibis i Rèptils de Catalunya), with the help of the Occitanie DREAL (Direction régionale de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement) and customs authorities.

Mediterranean turtles are freshwater turtles. Their range includes northern Africa, the Iberian peninsula and the Pyrénées-Orientales. A few hundred specimens remain in the Occitanie region. They are trafficked internationally for the pet market, but are not listed in Appendix II of CITES.

* On 24 April 2024, the director of ART and 2 employees were placed under judicial supervision. They are suspected of selling endangered species, releasing invasive species and misappropriating funds. Le Refuge des Tortues, May 1, 2023; France 3 Occitanie, May 2, 2023.⁴⁰



Mediterranean turtle (*Mauremys leprosa*)

ITALY

Mid-March 2023

Soverato, Province of Catanzaro, Region of Calabria, Italy

Seizure of a Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*, Appendix II) aged around 4 years held by a private individual. It was handed over to the CRAS (Centro Recupero Animali Selvatici) of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Park in Catanzaro.

QuiCosenza.it, March 20, 2023.⁴¹

Beginning of April 2023

Metropolitan City of Cagliari, Autonomous Region of Sardinia, Italy

Officials seized 8 Hermann's tortoises (*Testudo hermanni*, Appendix II) and marginated tortoises (*Testudo marginata*, Appendix II) and issued 3 charges for their possession and sale. The 8 specimens were handed over to the Forest Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in Monastir (South Sardinia). Sardinia Region Forestry and Environmental Surveillance Corps; La Provincia del Sulcis Iglesiente, April 8, 2023.⁴²

April 18, 2023

Vanzago, Metropolitan City of Milan, Region of Lombardy, Italy

A Greek tortoise (*Testudo graeca*, Appendix II) wandering in an elementary school playground was rescued and transferred to the town's wildlife refuge.

La Provincia Di Varese, April 21, 2023.⁴³

POLAND

Mid-May 2023

Korczoa Border Post, Subcarpathian Voivodeship, Poland. Border with Ukraine.

The Horsfield's tortoise (*Testudo horsfieldii*, Appendix II) was traveling in the passenger's seat next to a 31-year-old Ukrainian woman who wanted to enter Poland. It was seized and handed over to the Zamość Zoological Park.

Tax Administration Chamber in Rzeszów, May 17, 2023.⁴⁴

SNAKES

AFRICA

KENYA

April 20, 2023

Kenya

Thanks to a tip from Big Life, an approximately 4-meter-long python skin (*Python* spp., Appendix II) was seized and one individual arrested.

Big Life Foundation, April 2023.¹

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 29, 2023

Babylon, State of New York, United States of America

The discovery of a dead, 4-5 meter-long reticulated python (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II) on the side of a public road in Meford caused a stir (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.134, ref.5) and triggered a search for domesticated pythons. A 1.8-meter-long specimen was seized from a West Babylon resident, who will be summoned to the Suffolk County Court. The snake has been transferred to a reptile sanctuary outside of New York State.

Department of Environmental Conservation, April 13, 2023.²

April 6, 2023

Sunrise, State of Florida, United States of America

US Fish and Wildlife agents in Florida gruesomely killed 34 Burmese pythons (*Python bivittatus*, Appendix II) and reticulated pythons (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II) in accordance with a recent law prohibiting their sale and possession, as well as a boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II) by mistake. USARK (United States Association of Reptile Keepers) is calling on the Florida government to suspend the "hunt" for banned snakes and instead redirect USFWS services to bigger problems, including the endangerment of manatees, leopards, gopher tortoises and diamondback terrapins, and the spraying of pesticides. Pythons are considered invasive and detrimental to biodiversity, particularly in the Everglades.

The owner of the female boa, who witnessed the massacre, intends to seek compensation for moral and financial damages. An autopsy showed that it was carrying 32 fetuses. Each of the babies would have had a commercial value of 3,500 US\$.

USARK Florida, April 10, 2023; The Palm Beach Post, April 11, 2023.³

ASIA

CHINA

March 2023
Port of Tianjin Xingang, Tianjin Autonomous Municipality, China



Chinese customs know the drill. When they opened a suspicious-looking container, they uncovered 116 erhus made of Burmese python (*Python bivittatus*, Appendix II) skin. The total value is estimated at 270,000 yuan or 38,830 US\$, with 335 US\$ per instrument.

Chinese Customs, March 24, 2023.⁴

Beginning of April 2023
Beilun District, Ningbo Prefecture, Zhejiang Province, China

Officials confiscated 73 erhus with a resonance box made of python skin (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II).

For erhus and python skins, see "On the Trail" n°10 p.18 (ref.2), n°12 p.23 (ref.6), n°24 p.25 (ref.4), n°25 p.29 (ref.4) and p.112 (ref.73), n°31 p.155 (ref.10), n°32 p. 210 (ref.16, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23) and p.241 (ref.62), n°33 p.199 (ref.16), n°34 p.194 (ref.7) and p.195 (ref.9), n°35 p.160 (ref.14 and 15), n°36 p.172 (ref.6 and 7) and n°37 p.163 (ref.9, 11 and 12).

Chinese Customs, April 13, 2023.⁵



May 2023
Bao'an International Airport, Guangdong Province, China



Confirmed: 10 skins, 3.5 meters-long and 0.4 meters-wide, each weighing 3.5 kg, are reticulated python skins (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus* Appendix II). Chinese Customs, May 16, 2023.⁶

INDIA

March 4, 2023
Narsampet Mandal, Warangal District, State of Telangana, India

Badavat Narya was arrested at his home on Saturday in possession of a sand boa (*Eryx spp.*, Appendix II), which he planned to resell to another man in Narsampet. He was part of a gang that stole boas from their natural environments to sell in trafficking circles (see "On the Trail" n°34. p. 195, ref. 11). Telangana Today, March 4, 2023.⁷

March 7, 2023
Bokaro District, State of Jharkhand, India

One day before Holi, also known as the Festival of Colours, a Hindu festival celebrated at the spring equinox, a brown sand boa (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II) was seized from 2 snake charmers by forest officers and set free in the mountains. In addition to the many superstitions surrounding "two-headed" snakes, the skins are used for leather goods. Current Bokaro, March 9, 2023; The Times of India, March 10, 2023.⁸

Friday, March 10, and Wednesday, April 5, 2023
Kainoor and Arakkonam, Ranipet District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Ages: 21, 21 and 33 years old. Occupations: electricians. They are accused, with supporting filmed material, of pulling a checkered keelback (*Xenochrophis piscator*, Appendix III in India) out of the water and decapitating it with their teeth. They were arrested in their hiding places thanks to the diligence of the cyber police. They are in prison for the time being. The Hindu, April 6, 2023.⁹



Oriental rat snake (*Ptyas mucosa*). Photo Brandon Sideleau

Night of April 1 to 2, 2023

Bijnor District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Two men and 2 brown sand boas (*Eryx johnii*, Appendix II). The former are in custody for at least 11 days, while the latter were released after a medical examination. Abrar Ahmed, an authoritative wildlife specialist in Uttar Pradesh, paints the following portrait of sand boas: "Until recently, the red [brown] sand boa snake did not face any serious threat and was sought after by snake charmers who showcased them as a 'double-headed' snake (the reptile has a thick tail resembling a second head). However, of late, some new-found superstitions have landed this reptile in trouble. While some say they bring good luck, others believe the snake contains iridium, a rare element in the Earth's crust". As for the official services who intercepted the traffickers on the road from Seohara to Noorpur, they say that these boas are not poisonous, that they are used in alternative medicine and black magic rites and that demand is very high on the international market.

Hindustan Times, April 3, 2023; The Times of India, April 4, 2023.¹⁰

April 11, 2023

Rauni Harjipur, Muzaffarnagar District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Rauni Harjipur, population nearly 7,000, was the scene of a distressing incident. Abad Ahmed and 2 others ostentatiously killed a female oriental rat snake (*Ptyas mucosa*, Appendix II) and destroyed its eggs. The species is not venomous. The oriental rat snake is an "enfant terrible" of the colubrid family. Sometimes arboreal to the point of catching birds in treetops, sometimes terrestrial to the point of catching rodents at lightning speed in landfills, they have a false appearance of cobras and are sometimes used as understudies by snake charmers. It was perhaps this apparent resemblance that led to the violent death of the oriental rat snake at Rauni Harjipur. They are listed in Appendix II of CITES and in India in Appendix II of the Wild Life (Protection) Act. Vigilance is required over the fate of this species, which in its exclusively Asian range is subject to a variety of uses, including food, snake wine, leather goods and charlatanism. Apart from humans, its main predators are birds of prey and cobras.

The Times of India, April 15, 2023.¹¹

Monday, May 1, 2023

Pahanpara Area, Dakshin Dinajpur District, State of West Bengal, India. Border with Bangladesh.

The mystery of king cobra venom stamped “Made in France” under the brand name “Red Dragon” re-emerged on Monday afternoon. Two men who had just crossed the border with Bangladesh on foot were told to stop by members of the 137th Battalion of the BSF (Border Security Force). They ran off, leaving behind the precious cup full of 2.01 kg of a liquid which, if it really is cobra venom, is worth 13 million rupees, or 158,933 US\$ and 79,071 US\$/kg.



Border Security Force North Bengal, May 1, 2023; News9Live, May 1, 2023; PiPa News, May 1, 2023; Hindusthan Samachar, May 2, 2023.¹²

ISRAEL

May 18, 2023

Mevaseret Zion, Jerusalem District, Israel

Seizure of 2 Burmese pythons (*Python bivittatus*, Appendix II) and a reticulated python (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II) from the home of a young man aged 22. He was trying to sell them and, according to the police, they were being held in “ignominious” conditions.

The Jerusalem Post, May 21, 2023.¹³

May 25, 2023

Tur'an, Northern District, Israel

Seizure of 80 exotic animals, including pythons (*Pythonidae*, Appendix I or II), from a young man aged 27.

Israel Nature and Parks Authority, May 26, 2023.¹⁴

April 18, 2023

Singapore

The NGO ACRES (Animal Concerns Research and Education Society) is outraged by a scene of torture posted on social networks where a reticulated python (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II) in Boon Lay market is dragged by the tail by several men, kicked, and decapitated with a cleaver in front of seemingly indifferent witnesses. “Such incidents involving killing or hurting snakes have been happening repeatedly, and we hope that this case will result in prosecuting the individuals involved.” Cruelty to animals is punishable by a fine of 15,000 dollars (11,290 US\$) and/or 18 months’ imprisonment. Penalties are increased in the event of a repeat offence. In Singapore, adult reticulated pythons live on the coast, in mangrove swamps, and they often adapt to urban outskirts. They are not poisonous and provide a service to the human community by consuming rats.

Channel News Asia, April 19, 2023.¹⁵

VIET NAM

March 4, 2023

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Mr. Dung, a resident of Tan Tao A, handed over a female Burmese python (*Python bivittatus*, Appendix II) (4.2 meters long, 38 kg) he had purchased back in 2018 to forestry services. At the time of the purchase, it weighed 10 kg. Fearing that the python might escape and wanting it to live a normal life, Dung decided to dispose of it legally. The python is under observation in Cu Chi.

Thanh Niên, March 4, 2023.¹⁶

Mid-April 2023

Truong Tay, Tay Ninh Province, Viet Nam

Van Minh Luan was carrying 9 king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*, Appendix II) in a polystyrene box.

Ho Chi Minh City Law Journal, April 18, 2023.¹⁷

Mid-May 2023

Tam Diep, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam

Nguyen Van Th. was carrying a king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*, Appendix II) in a cardboard box when police officers arrested him. He admitted to having bought the snake for 3 million dong or 128 US\$ in the district of Cam Thuy, province of Thanh Hoa, and to having brought it back to Tam Diep (70 km) to sell it to customers for 6.5 million dong or 277 US\$.

Bao Dân Viet, May 21, 2023.¹⁸

EUROPE

FRANCE

March 16, May 3, 9, and October 27, 2023 Paris, France

At the end of October 2023, the Moulin Rouge, "aware of societal developments in animal welfare", announced that its "Féerie" show would be ending immediately. It featured 5 Asiatic rock pythons (*Python molurus*, Appendix I) or Burmese pythons (*Python bivittatus*, Appendix II), reticulated pythons (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II), and a nude charmer in a glass aquarium.

Thanks to the City of Paris relaying pressure from the PAZ (Paris Animaux Zoopolis) association, the exhibition and mistreatment of the 5 pythons is set to end.

During the circus act, show organisers tape the pythons' snouts to prevent biting and plug their cloacae to prevent excrement. Every day, the 5 pythons make the 100 km round trip by van in padded trunks between the cabaret and kennel. A total of 20 other pythons also live in this kennel in Seine-et-Marne, thanks to a certificate of capacity issued by the prefecture, which outwardly supports the establishment, run by a 78-year-old Romanian national. The premises are in good condition, and each python is fed 3 live rabbits a week.

The show ended in March 2024. Prior to involving pythons, the Moulin Rouge employed 2 dolphins in the aquarium. They were withdrawn from the show in 1985.

Le Parisien, March 16, May 5 and 9 and October 29, 2023.¹⁹

End of April 2023

Figeac, Department of Lot, France

A woman sells boas constrictors (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix I or II) on the Internet. The police went to her home and found 3 boas and 2 corn snakes (*Pantherophis guttatus*). She will be summoned to court for the criminal nature of the sale and for lacking a permit for one of the 5 snakes. The animals were not seized. The gendarmerie even praised the holding conditions, which "guarantee the animals' well-being". One of these winters, abandoned boas may be found dead in a town square.

Gendarmerie of Lot, April 21, 2023.²⁰

May 18, 2023

Cerisières and Provençères-sur-Marne, Department of Haute-Marne, France

The month of May, the month of holiday weekends and long weekends, was fatal for the reticulated python (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II). Like many boas and other bulky and demanding exotic pets, it was abandoned during holiday periods and prolonged absences. It died of cold and hunger. Spotted on the 6th by people on bikes, it was found dead by a forest guard.

France 3 Grand Est, May 19, 2023; Le Journal de la Haute-Marne, May 24, 2023.²¹

POLAND

March 7, 2023

Chelm, Lublin Voivodeship, Poland

An elderly woman calls the police for help. Her son had left the apartment a few weeks ago, abandoning 3 reticulated pythons (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II), an African rock python (*Python sebae*, Appendix II) and an anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*, Appendix II), all juveniles, without care or instructions. A stench was perceptible in the stairwell when the city's animal protection brigade and members of the NGO Epicrates arrived on the scene. The heat-deprived snakes were bathing in crates amidst excrement, rotten water and food.

ONG Epicrates, see "On the Trail" n°33 p.183 (ref.142) and n°37 p.151 (ref.14).

Epicrates Foundation, March 7, 2023; Stowarzyszenie Chełmska Straż Ochrony Zwierząt, March 8, 2023; Dziennik Wschodni, March 11, 2023; Nowy Tydzień, March 17, 2023.²²

March 2023

Medyka Border Post, Subcarpathian Voivodeship, Poland. Border with Ukraine.

Another Ukrainian who tried to enter Poland with items made from python skin (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II). This time it was a 28-year-old man wearing a jacket and 3 pairs of shoes.

Tax Administration Chamber in Rzeszów, March 22, 2023.²³

End of May 2023

Medyka Border Post, Subcarpathian Voivodeship, Poland. Border with Ukraine.

Seizure of a jacket made of python skin (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II). It was in the luggage of the driver of a bus coming from Ukraine. Since the beginning of the year, this is the third seizure of python-skin clothing in Medyka (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.135, ref.12, and above).

Tax Administration Chamber in Rzeszów, May 29, 2023.²⁴

RUSSIA

Beginning of March 2023

Roshchino International Airport, Tyumen Oblast, Russia

The Russian was returning from Thailand with a tropical souvenir, perhaps unknown throughout the oblast (160,000 km²). The bottle was full of a wine made from checkered keelback (*Xenochrophis piscator*, Appendix III in India) and scorpion (order Scorpiones) with an herbal note of ginseng (genus *Panax*). The exact composition of the beverage is unknown. No doubt the scorpions and snakes were bathed in rice alcohol.

SIA-Press, March 3, 2023; Virtual Customs, March 6, 2023.²⁵

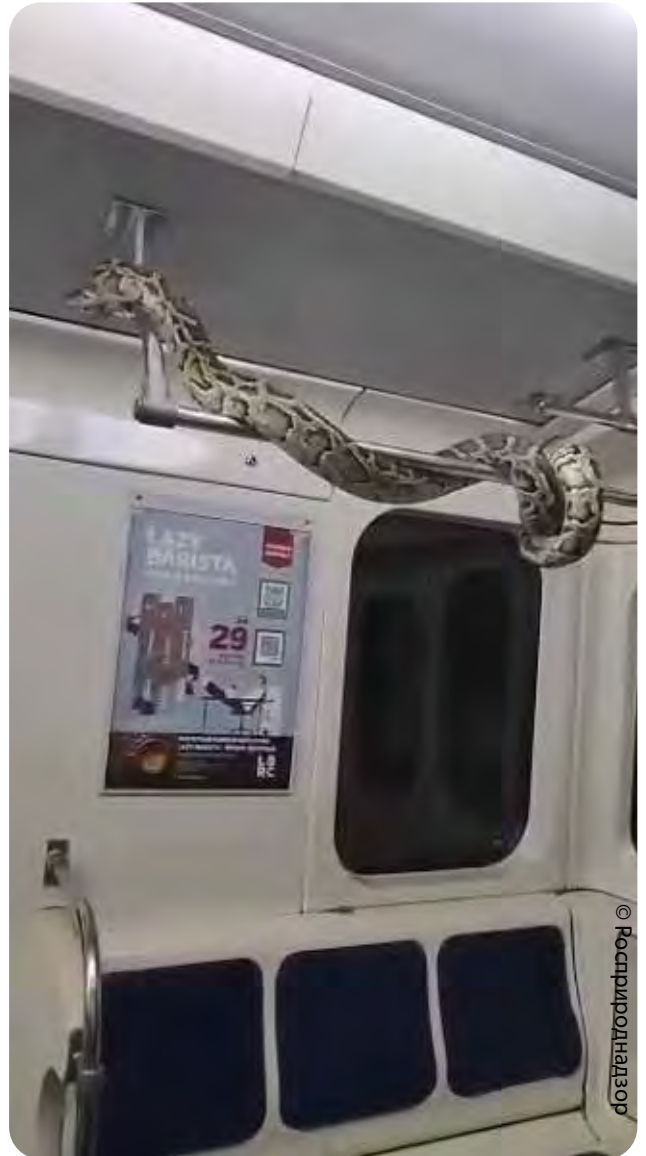


The checkered keelback lives in and around lakes and rivers in Asia. It is hunted for its skin and meat.

April 13, 2023

Federal City of Saint Petersburg, Russia

Between the Volkovskaya and Bukharestskaya stations, a passenger let a boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II) exercise in the train car. Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resources, April 13, 2023.²⁶



SERBIA

End of March 2023

Crna Bara, Macva District, Serbia

Seizure at M.V.'s home of a royal python (*Python regius*, Appendix II) and a raccoon (genus *Procyon*) that it did not have time to swallow. They were entrusted to Palić Zoo.

Telegraf, March 26, 2023.²⁷

IGUANAS, GECKOS, MONITOR LIZARDS, CHAMELEONS, SKINKS ...



Namib web-footed gecko (*Pachydactylus rangei*). Photo swsankt

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

End of March 2023
Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa



Seizure of an Eastern Cape dwarf chameleon from the Ruwenzori Mountains (*Bradypodion ventrale*, Appendix II). It had been brutalised. It was in the hands of a street vendor. The Ruwenzori dwarf chameleon lives in the south-east of South Africa. It can grow up to 14 cm long. It lives in dense bushes. Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, March 30, 2023.¹

AMERICA

BRAZIL

April 11, 2023
Chuí, State of R o Grande do Sul, Brazil. Border with Uruguay.



A cardboard parcel sent from the Porto Alegre bus station to the Chu  bus station was declared to contain "an automobile part". When searched, it turned out to be a leopard gecko (*Eublepharis macularius*) native to South Asia. Federal Revenue Service, April 12, 2023; G1 RS, April 12, 2023.²

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Beginning of April 2023

Santa Rosa County, State of Florida, United States of America

Seizure of green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II) from a truck. The driver was booked into jail for lack of transport permit and violation of the transport conditions of the species.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, April 12, 2023.³

May 16, 2023

Sullivan County, State of New York, United States of America

A two-banded monitor (*Varanus salvator*, Appendix II) over 1.6 meters long is for sale for 1,400 US\$. Price negotiable. After a little haggling, the fake customers and the seller agree on 1,000 US\$. At the moment of exchange, and once the monitor is in their hands, the agents reveal their true identity. The seller was charged with the illegal sale of a wild animal, and the monitor was transferred to a specialised facility.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, June 22, 2023.⁴

ASIA

CHINA

April 2023

Dalian, Liaoning Province, China



Customs seized 2 monitor lizard skins (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II) in a package from abroad. Chinese Customs, April 20, 2023.⁵

INDIA

March 17, 2023

Salganga, Cachar District, State of Assam, India

Tortured to death, a two-banded monitor (*Varanus salvator*, Appendix II) was discovered by locals. During the floods of 2022, several double-banded monitor lizards were washed down the Barak Valley, and since then they have been attacked by hunters for bushmeat or monitor blood, which is reputed by some of the population to be regenerative.

Barak Bulletin, March 18, 2023.⁶

March 31, 2023

Bijni, Bongaigaon District, State of Assam, India

Two arrests and seizure from a car of 2 geckos (family Gekkonidae) by elements of the 15th battalion of the SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal).

India Today NE, March 31, 2023.⁷

April 7, 2023

Bhelakoba, Dhubri District, State of Assam, India

Seizure by elements of the 19th battalion of 3 tokay geckos (*Gekko gecko*, Appendix II). An arrest.

India Today NE, April 7, 2023.⁸

End of May 2023

Kotaladinne, Chikkaballapur District, State of Karnataka, India

Seizure of 3 Bengal monitor lizards (*Varanus bengalensis*, Appendix I), one measuring 1.02 meters and weighing 2 kg, the second measuring 76 cm and weighing 1.2 kg, and the third measuring 81 cm and weighing 1 kg. Depending on their weight, monitor lizards are sold for between 3,000 and 8,000 rupees (37 to 98 US\$). The meat and oil are said to cure rheumatism and other ailments. The blood is considered to be a sexual tonic by the younger generation working in the Internet and communications spheres.

Deccan Herald, May 26, 2023.⁹

TAIWAN

April 9, 2023

Zhongpu, Chiayi County, Taiwan

Authorities seized 51 green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II) from a resident who claims to have been unaware that their captivity was subject to registration. Experts are concerned about the proliferation of green iguanas in the Bazhang River and the negative impact this could have on aquatic species diversity.

Taiwan News, April 9, 2023.¹⁰

THAILAND

May 19, 2023

Sinakharin Dam National Park, Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand

Arrest by a patrol of a poacher in possession of 2 dead Bengal monitor lizards (*Varanus bengalensis*, Appendix I), a 22-caliber rifle and 8 22-caliber ammunition.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, May 20, 2023.¹¹

EUROPE

AUSTRIA

May 23, 2023

Vienna International Airport, Vienna State, Austria

Seizure of 25 Koch's geckos (*Pachydactylus kochii*), 6 Namib web-footed geckos (*Pachydactylus rangei*), 48 geckos of the genus *Ptenopus*, 6 Bibron's geckos (*Chondrodactylus bibronii*), 2 snakes, all juveniles, and 2 scorpions threaded in socks or put in plastic boxes in the luggage of a Czech national getting off a plane from Addis Ababa. On the market, a gecko sells for between 250 and 600 €, or 275 to 660 US\$. The overall value is estimated at 47,000 € or 51,900 US\$. The range of the seized species includes South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and southern Angola.

The smuggler was peacefully passing through the "nothing to declare" lane when he was targeted by customs officers. He stated that all these saurians were worth nothing and that he intended to feed them to his snakes. Schönbrunn Zoo took in the animals, many of which were dehydrated and lacked agility. The Minister of Finance praised customs and their will to fight environmental crime.

Federal Ministry of Finance, June 20, 2023.¹²



OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

March 13, 2023

Sydney, State of New South Wales, Australia

Colin Warwick pleads guilty and he would be hard pressed to do otherwise. In June 2018, he attempted to ship 14 Eastern Pilbara spiny-tailed skinks (*Egernia ephisolus*, Appendix III in Australia) to Sri Lanka by mail disguised as a "second-hand computer." The package was intercepted by Colombo customs. On 5 other occasions, Warwick attempted to send blue-tongued skinks (genus *Tiliqua*) by mail, including shingleback lizards (*Tiliqua rugosa*, Appendix III in Australia) to Sri Lanka again, and also to Hungary and Hong Kong in boots, milk powder cans, and fish oil packages. In each case, the packages had been dispatched from different post offices. This didn't stop Australian customs from seizing them. Warwick had been caught by surveillance cameras. On October 30, 2019, his home in Terrigal was searched and 138 reptiles were seized, including blue-tongued skinks and shingleback lizards.

The Sydney Morning Herald, March 15, 2023.¹³

OPERATION NEMO

May 12, 2023

Perth and Perth International Airport, State of Western Australia, Australia

A 26-year-old foreign national was arrested before flying to Hong Kong. He was trying to flee Australia. He was involved in an attempted export in conspiracy of shingleback lizards (*Tiliqua rugosa*, Appendix III) and northern blue-tongued lizards (*Tiliqua scincoides intermedia*, Appendix III) between January and March 2023.

The Canberra Times (with Australian Associated Press), May 14, 2023.¹⁴

ALLIGATORS, CROCODILES AND CAIMANS



Mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*). Photo Brandon Sideleau

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

April 20, 2023

Hartebeesfontein, North West Province, South Africa

Three men between the ages of 20 and 35 were charged with stealing a Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*, Appendix II) from a breeding farm. The 2.5 meter-long crocodile, worth an estimated 25,000 rand (1,385 US\$), was found tied up under a pile of branches and later returned to its rightful owner. SAPS, April 24, 2023.¹

CAMEROON

End of March 2023

Limbe, South West Region, Cameroon

An African dwarf crocodile (*Osteolaemus tetraspis*, Appendix I) was transferred to Limbe Wildlife Centre after being snatched from poachers. Bound by ropes, the crocodile was severely injured, and despite having a leg amputated and undergoing treatment, it did not survive.

Limbe Wildlife Centre, January to March and April to June 2023.²

NORTHERN AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CALIFORNIA

Beginning of April 2023

Sacramento, State of California, United States of America

A 2-meter-long American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II), formerly kept as a pet, dumped in a freezing river, and then captured by the services, died 3,500 km from its Florida marsh. Keeping an alligator in California is a criminal offence.

KCRA 3, April 7, 2023; FOX 40, April 10, 2023; Fox News Channel, April 14, 2023.³

FLORIDA

March 10 and 31 and April 28, 2023

Pasco County, State of Florida, United States of America

Four men attacked American alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) in Land o' Lakes and Five Mile Creek. They killed 2 with a .22-caliber pistol and a third with a machete, butchering the victims either for personal consumption or to sell the meat to friends and family.

Outdoor Life, May 10, 2023.⁴

Mid-March 2023

Citrus County, State of Florida, United States of America

An individual who captured an American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) near his home when it posed no danger or threat has been summoned.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, March 22, 2023.⁵

Mid-March 2023

Hendry County, State of Florida, United States of America

Outside hunting season, a man dragged a large American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) onto the rocks, grabbed a rifle and shot it at point-blank range. An officer, called in regarding the trespasser on private property, witnessed the killing. The suspect fled the scene, leaving behind the gator and pieces of evidence that will enable prosecutors to secure an arrest warrant.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, March 28, 2023.⁶

End of March 2023

Juniper Lake, State of Florida, United States of America

An American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) was captured in Juniper Lake under a management and conservation plan. It then waltzed from pick-up truck to pick-up truck, and eventually was discovered bound and muzzled in a wooded area near the one of the 3 suspect's residences. They were caught thanks to witnesses and surveillance cameras. The gator was released and 2 of the thieves were arrested.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, April 6, 2023.⁷

May 3, 2023

Holiday, State of Florida, United States of America

A witness saw 3 men attack and kill a 1.7-meter-long American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) with a machete. After alerting US Fish and Wildlife, the men were arrested and charged. They face 5 years in prison and a 5,000 US\$ fine.

Wesh 2, May 5, 2023.⁸

Beginning of May 2023

Levy County, State of Florida, United States of America

A man who admitted to killing an American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) in a private pond was indicted. The carcass was recovered and used as evidence.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, May 15, 2023.⁹

Mid-May 2023

Hendry County, State of Florida, United States of America

After receiving information about an American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) killing, agents Watson and Naules identified the suspect. He admitted to the crime and was found in possession of the gator, skinned and eviscerated, ready for consumption.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, May 24, 2023.¹⁰

ILLINOIS

Beginning of May 2023

Montgomery County, State of Illinois, United States of America

Arrest of a Litchfield resident in possession of an American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II).

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, May 15, 2023.¹¹

NEW YORK

Sunday, March 5, 2023

New York City, State of New York, United States of America

A Brooklyn resident calls for help. A friend entrusted him with a small alligator (*Alligator* spp., Appendix I or II) but never returned to pick it up. Keeping alligators as pets is prohibited in New York State.

Department of Environmental Conservation, March 29, 2023.¹²

April 16, 2023

New York, State of New York, United States of America



Godzilla, the martyred American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) spotted in a lake in Brooklyn in mid-February, died after its capture and transfer to the Bronx Zoo. It was stunted, infected and cold after some stranger threw it into the lake. For 2 months, the zoo's veterinarians tried to save it, and even managed to remove a rubber bathtub stopper, which it swallowed in captivity, from its ulcerated stomach. This marks the 6th alligator abandoned or seized in a New York apartment in 5 years.

Brooklyn Paper, April 21, 2023.¹³

PENNSYLVANIA

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Philadelphia, State of Pennsylvania, United States of America

A client at the fishing reserve spotted someone illegally dumping a caiman (*Alligatoridae*, Appendix I or II) into Pennsylvania's icy waters, thousands of kilometres from its natural habitat. The ACCT (Animal Care and Control Team) rescued the caiman but euthanized it several days later, as they lacked a suitable home for the caiman.

ACCT Philly, March 5 and 23, 2023; WPVI-TV/6abc, March 6 and 24, 2023.¹⁴



April 2023

Philadelphia, State of Philadelphia, United States of America

Big Mack, the 57-kg American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II), was handed over to authorities. It spent 13 years in illegal captivity, though repentant owners are generally not prosecuted so as to encourage the handing over of exotic animals. Big Mack returned to Florida and was transferred to the JAWS (Jupiter Alligator and Wildlife Sanctuary) near Miami, more than 1,000 km south of Philadelphia.

WPVI-TV/6abc, April 22, 2023.¹⁵

April 28, 2023

Allentown, State of Pennsylvania, United States of America

The mini, 30 cm-long American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) was most definitely flushed from a private home and miraculously spotted in the Allentown sewage treatment plant amidst a frenzy of wipes, protection, sanitary towels and lubricant. After undergoing emergency treatment for an infected eye and flayed mouth, it was transferred to a nearby reptile park.

WNEP, May 1, 2023.¹⁶

TEXAS

March 3, 2023

Buda, State of Texas, United States of America

An American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) was recovered from a lady's yard. She apparently kept it for over 20 years. She stole an alligator egg back when she volunteered at the Animal World and Snake Farm Zoo. The 2.5-meter-long alligator was returned to its original zoo. An alligator egg measures 7.5 cm tall and weighs around 100 grams. The lady faces a 1,000 US\$ fine for illegal possession of an alligator. Charges for stealing the egg are past the statute of limitations. KSAT12, March 3, 2023.¹⁷

Sunday, March 12, 2023

Los Fresnos, State of Texas, United States of America

Jesus Rios, 18, killed an American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) with a .22 calibre pistol on a private property in Bayview, trespassing. The scene was immediately reported to Texas Parks and Wildlife agents, who thereafter seized the alligator's head from a freezer in Rios' home. He was released under a 1,000 US\$ bond.

CBS 4 News Rio Grande Valley, March 15, 2023.¹⁸

May 2, 2023

Cherokee County, State of Texas, United States of America

Officials are offering a 1,000 US\$ reward to anyone who can help identify and convict those who shot an American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II) in the head with 2 small-calibre bullets. The alligator was left to die near Highway 2907, 11 km from Alto.

Operation Game Thief (Texas), May 11, 2023.¹⁹

LATIN AMERICA

BOLIVIA

Mid-March 2023

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Province of Andres Ibañez, Department of Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Seizure of 100 kg of yacare caiman (*Caiman crocodilus yacare*, Appendix II) meat on the fish market on Virgen de Cotoca Avenue.

BnNoticiasTv, March 21, 2023.²⁰

BRAZIL

April 13, 2023

Araguari, State of Mina Gerais, Brazil



The gag of the century. This taxidermist goes for the comical and the heavy-handed. Officials seized caiman (*Alligatoridae*, Appendix I or II) on a farm, imposed a 46,000 reais fine (9,015 US\$), and confiscated 2 firearms. G1 Triângulo, April 14, 2023.²¹



ASIA

CHINA

April 2023

Chengdu-Shuangliu International Airport, Sichuan Province, China

Customs officers confiscated a 147-cm-long crocodile skin (*Crocodylia*, Appendix I or II), a bag, a wallet and 2 crocodile skin belts in the luggage of a passenger from abroad.

Chinese Customs, April 28, 2023.²²

April 2023

Nanning Wuxu International Airport, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China

Seizure of 12 crocodile (*Crocodylidae*, Appendix I or II) skin belts in the luggage of 2 incoming passengers. Chinese Customs, May 9, 2023.²³

May 11, 2023

Xiamen-Gaoqi International Airport, Fujian Province, China

Customs seized 10 belts, 2 bags made of crocodile skin (*Crocodylidae*, Appendix I or II) and 10 crocodile feet mounted as key rings from a passenger's carry-on luggage returning from abroad.

Chinese Customs, May 12, 2023.²⁴

May 2023

Nanning Wuxu International Airport, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China

Seizure of 7 and 5 crocodile skin belts (*Crocodylidae*, Appendix I or II) in the luggage of 2 passengers from abroad.

Nanning Customs, May 19, 2023.²⁵

May 2023

Lanzhou Zhongchuan International Airport, Gansu Province, China

Seizure of a crocodile skin belt (*Crocodylia*, Appendix I or II) in the luggage of a passenger from Thailand.

Gansu Daily, June 2, 2023.²⁶

May 2023

Nantong, Nantong Prefecture, Jiangsu Province, China

Seizure of 11 crocodile skin belts (*Crocodylia*, Appendix I or II). Total weight: 2,560 grams.

Chinese Customs, June 5, 2023.²⁷

INDONESIA

April 30, 2023

Sumberjaya, Pandeglang Regency, Banten Province, Java Island, Indonesia

Lynching of a salt-water crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*, Appendix II). The population went to get it from a trap cage that the BKSDA had set to keep it away from the bay and the risk of conflict with the locals. They say that the crocodile they caught had attacked a fisherman. The BKSDA does not confirm this accusation.

Garda Animalia, May 5, 2023.²⁸

EUROPE

FRANCE

REPEATED OFFENCE

March 23, 2023

Amiens, Department of Somme, France

Kevin X (name withheld) was fined 1,000 € (1,055 US\$) for illegally breeding a spectacled caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*, Appendix I or II) in his apartment and throwing it out the window just before the OFB search. This was on February 12, 2021 (see "On the Trail" n°32 p.221, ref.15). The reptile froze to death. He claimed on the stand that he didn't know the reptile and that someone had left it under his windows to get him into trouble. The court was hardly convinced by his argument. It should be noted that at the time of the search and its aftermath, the OFB's initial identification referred to a Cuvier's smooth-fronted caiman (*Paleosuchus palpebrosus*, Appendix II), also known as Cuvier's dwarf caiman. Kevin has since moved to Aisne.

Courrier picard, March 24, 2023.²⁹



POLAND

Beginning of April 2023

Korczowa Border Post, Subcarpathian Voivodeship, Poland. Border with Ukraine.



A 61-year-old Ukrainian passenger entering Poland has a bag made of the head and skin an American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*, Appendix I or II) seized from his luggage. He said he found it at a flea market and intended to gift it to his sister.

Tax Administration Chamber in Rzeszów, April 11, 2023.³⁰

RUSSIA

May 13, 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

Sequestration of a juvenile caiman (Alligatoridae, Appendix I or II) exhibited in a terrarium in a private club on Kudrinskaya Square following a report of mistreatment. If the documents proving its origin are not produced to the authorities within a short period of time, it will be seized and handed over to the Moscow wildlife rehabilitation centre.

Moscow City Prosecutor's Office, May 13, 2023.³¹

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

April 12, 2023

Cow Bay, State of Queensland, Australia

A saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*, Appendix II) was found decapitated on a beach. The initial hypothesis of a fight with a fellow crocodile was soon discarded. The decapitation was fresh, and machete wounds were visible on the victim's back. Stuffed saltwater crocodile heads sell for over 3,000 US\$ in the Northern Territory, where hunting is conditionally authorized.

7NEWS, April 18, 2023; State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Science), April 19, 2023.³²

Sunday, April 30, 2023

Umina Beach, State of New South Wales, Australia

Rescue of an Australian freshwater crocodile (*Crocodylus johnstoni*, Appendix II) in the suburbs of the city 2,500 km south of its natural habitat. It had been abandoned and was wandering around the suburbs until it became trapped in the courtyard of a house. It is illegal for individuals to keep crocodiles in New South Wales.

The Sydney Morning Herald, May 1, 2023.³³

May 18, 2023

State of Queensland, Australia

The pro-croco community is worried. After the decapitation of a male crocodile on a beach in Cow Bay (see above), a female saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*, Appendix II) has been butchered on the banks of the Daintree River. The slaughter was discovered by David White, an organiser of scientific and educational trips, and his guides. White only shared the information with the Queensland Department of Environment and Science for a few days, so as not to compromise the investigation and post-mortem findings. All that remained of the 2.7-metre-long female in its forties was its head and spinal cord. White is full of praises and tenderness for the one many admirers called Lizzie: "She remained with the creche for 5-6 months instead of the 1-3 months average." "She also adopted a baby in a year she didn't nest and sat with it every day." "It was the best mom of any croc on the river."

Live Science, June 7, 2023; State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Science), June 8, 2023.³⁴

AMPHIBIANS



Asiatic toad (*Bufo gargarizans*). Photo Shiguangshi

See also page 199 ref. 40, page 205 ref. 76, page 208 ref. 92 and page 210 ref. 99.

AFRICA

CAMEROON

April 2023

Mangamba, Littoral Region, Cameroon

Goliath frogs (*Conraua goliath*) are the largest frogs in the world, measuring 17- to 32 cm-long and weighing 600 grams to 3.25 kg. They are captured for human consumption or shipped all over the world to zoos and private homes. They were common in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. Goliath frogs are threatened by deforestation, river sedimentation, and locally organised hunting efforts. André Nkoudi describes himself as a goliath frog hunter turned protector. He informs villagers, woodcutters and farmers of the usefulness of goliaths, which rid surrounding areas of many stinging insects. He says, "We just had to walk from there to there to catch even 15, and I went home. Now I walk miles and I don't even see one." "I have 2 kids in college. It was the money from those frogs that allowed me to send them to school." Goliath frogs remain a mainstay food in Mangamba and other villages in the Nkeba and Dibombé basins. They are sold live on the markets for between 2,000 and 6,000 CFA francs (3.40 to 10 US\$). Locally, goliath races with bets would be organised.

Africanews, April 14, 2023.¹



ASIA

CHINA

April 2023

Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of a 20-cm long axolotl (*Ambystoma mexicanum*, Appendix II) from a water bag hidden in a passenger's luggage.

Chinese Customs, May 3, 2023.²

Mid-April 2023

Hunchun District, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province, China. Border with North Korea.

Seizure of 1,454 *Bufo gargarizans* or *Strauchbufo raddei* toads and 11 trap cages. Four arrests. X1 caught them and sold them to X2 for 10 yuan (1.45 US\$) per specimen. X2 sold them to X3 for 25 yuan (3.6 US\$) and X3 extracted a total of 1.25 kg of toad "venom" used for its supposed healing or narcotic properties.

For more information on *Bufo gargarizans*, see "On the Trail" n°37 p.177 (ref.4).

Chinanews, April 26, 2023.³

Beginning of May 2023

Nantong, Nantong Prefecture, Jiangsu Province, China

In the hands of 2 poachers who blinded them and caught them with miners' lamps, 1,036 Asiatic toads (*Bufo gargarizans*) were seized and saved.

Gdtnv.cn, May 11, 2023.⁴



Spanish moon moth (*Graellsia isabellae*). Photo eldelatempla

ASIA

CHINA

March 6, 2023

Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China

Customs seize 344 butterflies belonging to 5 different species, including *Papilio ulysses* endemic to Australia, from an overseas parcel. Chinese Customs, March 10, 2023.¹



© China Customs



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March 12, 2023

Changsha, Changsha Prefecture, Hunan Province, China

Likely butterfly trafficking between France and China. Customs found in an incoming parcel 6 Spanish moon moths (*Graellsia isabellae*), which reside in the southern Alps, the Mercantour and Ecrins parks, and in the Pyrénées-Orientales. They live and breed in Scots pine forests and are threatened by deforestation, poaching and forest fires. They can be bought for 150 € (160 US\$) each. Spanish moon moths, see "On the Trail" n°24 p.33 (ref.5) and n°36 p.183 (ref.12).

Chinese customs, March 15, 2023.²

March 2023

Beijing International Airport, China

Instead of an "origami decoration made for a festival" that the incoming parcel supposedly carried, customs seized 23 tithonus birdwings (*Ornithoptera tithonus*, Appendix II) endemic to Indonesia.

Chinese customs, March 22, 2023.³



© China Customs

March 2023

Hefei, Anhui Province, China

Seizure in a package from a brood of 11 dead beetles, including *Chalcosoma atlas* originating from Southeast Asia and *Erythresthes bowringii*. Chinese Customs, March 25, 2023.⁴

March 2023

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

This time 2 live *Lucanus cervus* and 2 live *Prosopocoilus kannegieteri* were discovered in a package. The species originate from Europe and Southeast Asia respectively. Chinese Customs, April 3, 2023.⁵

Beginning of April 2023

Futian Checkpoint Station, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Hong Kong.

Failed attempt to import 13 live beetles, 10 beetles of the genus *Dynastes* including 3 Hercules beetles (*Dynastes hercules*) from Latin America, 2 giant stag beetles (*Dorcus titanus*), and a giraffe stag beetle (*Prosopocoilus giraffa*) from Asia. Chinese Customs, April 10, 2023.⁶

Beginning of April 2023

Zhengzhou, Henan Province, China

Instead of the “sweets, cookies, and snacks” they were supposed to contain, the 3 packages from abroad contained 132 butterflies including *Morpho godarti* (Appendix III in Bolivia), *Papilio thoas* which are also called “giant sailfish,” and *Heliconius doris* from Latin America. Chinese Customs, April 13, 2023.⁷



Papilio thoas

Beginning of April 2023

Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China



Seizure of 63 dead butterflies of 11 different species, including *Morpho luna*. Chinese Customs, April 14, 2023.⁸

April 2023

Beijing Autonomous Municipality, China

Customs seized 12 butterflies from abroad: 5 *Morpho helena*, 3 *Morpho menelaus*, 2 *Morpho deidamia*, one *Morpho menelaus occidentalis* and one *Morpho godarti* (*Morpho godartii lachaumei*, Appendix III in Bolivia). Beijing Customs, April 25, 2023.⁹

April 2023

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

Customs recovered 6 live beetles, including 2 *Dynastes hercules*, in a parcel from abroad. Chinese Customs, April 26, 2023.¹⁰

April 2023

Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, China

Customs seized 8 beetles, including 2 *Cyclommatus pasteuri*, native to Southeast Asia, in a parcel from abroad. Chinese Customs, April 28, 2023.¹¹

May 5, 2023

Gongbei Border Post, Zhuhai Prefecture, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Macau.



Seizure of 15 giant beetles, 14 *Serrognathus titanus yasuokai* and a *Serrognathus titanus palawanicus* originating from Indonesia and the Philippines, from the jacket and pockets of a man from Macau who looked like a Michelin man. Chinese Customs, May 12, 2023.¹²

May 8, 2023

Xiamen, Fujian Province, China

Inside a parcel from abroad were 23 beetles of 10 different species, including Hercules beetles (*Dynastes hercules*), *Dorcus curvidens* and *Hexarthrius davisoni*, 9 males and 14 females. Chinese Customs, May 8, 2023.¹³

May 25, 2023

Changsha, Hunan Province, China

Seizure of 10 goliath birdwings (*Ornithoptera goliath*, Appendix II) from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea in a package from abroad declared to contain "handicrafts." Changsha Customs, May 30, 2023.¹⁴



May 2023

Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China

Seizure of 4 live beetles from a parcel said to contain "decorative objects", 2 stag beetles (*Lucanus cantori*) and 2 rhinoceros beetles of the genus *Lycomedes* originating from Colombia and Ecuador. *Lucanus cantori* are found in India, Bhutan and Nepal. "Under the Biosecurity Act, no exotic species may be introduced into the country without special authorisation." Hangzhou Customs, May 23, 2023.¹⁵

May 2023

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

Noticing that the X-ray image showed "shapes very consistent with beetles", the customs officers opened the package with all the usual precautions and discovered 2 Hercules beetles (*Dynastes hercules*), 2 *Brachysiderus quadrimaculatus* and 2 *Casignetus spixi*, all originating from South America, in plastic boxes lined with sawdust. Chinese Customs, June 7, 2023.¹⁶

May 2023

Yantai, Yantai Prefecture, Shandong Province, China

Seizure of 6 live Hercules beetles (*Dynastes hercules*) from a package from abroad said to contain "noodles". Qingdao Customs, June 8, 2023.¹⁷

May 2023

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

Customs seized 4 *Prosopocoilus kannegieteri* originating from South-Eastern Asia, 4 *Brachysiderus quadrimaculatus* originating from Latin America and 2 *Dorcus nepalensis* originating from India and Nepal from a postal parcel from a foreign country. All 10 beetles were alive, but some were almost no longer. X-rays had returned images of moving shapes inside plastic boxes. Chinese Customs, June 9, 2023.¹⁸

EUROPE

POLAND

Week of April 17, 2023

Świętochłowice, Silesian Voivodeship, Poland

Police raided the apartment of a 33-year-old man who illegally bred tarantulas. He sold juveniles on the Internet in batches of 10 for 80 zlotys (18.50 US\$) each, and adults for 180 zlotys (42 US\$) each. The police seized 60 Indian ornamental tarantulas (*Poecilotheria regalis*, Appendix II) and fringed ornamental tarantulas (*Poecilotheria ornata*, Appendix II). Świętochłowice Police, April 25, 2023; TVN24, April 25, 2023.¹⁹



Indian ornamental tarantula (*Poecilotheria regalis*)



Arabian wolf (*Canis lupus arabs*). Photo Shachar Alterman

Events concerning among others elephants, rhinos, felines, bears or pangolins and their by-products are indicated by these pictograms:



Cases concerning exclusively pangolins, elephants, rhinos and hippos see page 17; elephants, felines, rhinos and sperm whales see page 37.

WESTERN AFRICA

BURKINA FASO

March 19, 2023

Ouagadougou, Kadiogo Province, Burkina Faso

Fortuitous discovery of a wild animal reserve in sector 27 of the capital. An escaped chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) sounded the alarm, spreading panic throughout the city. "A man claiming to be the chimpanzee's guardian came to capture him and take him back to his cage," reports Charles Dah of Omega Médias. Guided by neighbours, the municipal police and the gendarmerie entered the suspect's home and discovered in cages the fleeing chimpanzee, a baboon (*Papio spp.*, Appendix II), pythons (*Python spp.*, Appendix II) and sparrowhawks (*Accipiter spp.*, Appendix II). At this stage, it is not known whether this is a private collection, a clandestine zoo, or the stock of a buyer-seller of wild animals.

Omega Médias, March 19, 2023; FasoPiC, March 22, 2023.¹

SENEGAL

March 6, 2023

Blaise Diagne International Airport, Thiès Region, Senegal



Seizure by CAAT (Cellule Aéroportuaire Anti-traffics) of 29 python skin belts (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II), 4 crocodile skin bags (Crocodylidae, Appendix I or II), 2 elephant ivory bracelets and a pendant, and an ebony wood bracelet. The overall value is estimated at 2,926,000 CFA francs (4,700 US\$). Wang Jianbing and Jiang Liyan were released on bail for 2 million CFA francs (3,200 US\$).

EAGLE Senegal, March 2023.²

CENTRAL AFRICA

CAMEROON

March 14, 2023

Sangmélima, South Region, Cameroon

Albert Ndono Afang and Issah Adamou were jointly ordered to pay 500,000 CFA francs (800 US\$) in damages. Jules Tchangou and Mardoché Envoutou Afang were jointly fined 100,000 CFA francs (160 US\$) and ordered to pay 15 million CFA francs (24,130 US\$) in damages. They were involved in animal trafficking, including elephants, pangolins, and chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I). The facts date back to March 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°35 p.174, ref.1). LAGA, March 2023.³



Beginning of May 2023

Batoke, South West Region, Cameroon

Just 13 km from the Limbe seaside resort lay 90 carcasses of freshly skinned chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I), pythons (*Python* spp., Appendix II), porcupines (family Hystricidae), striped ground squirrels (*Xerus erythropus*) and blue duikers (*Cephalophus monticola*), captured in Mount Cameroon National Park. Three arrests were made. Reports and press articles, including one published by Mongabay on February 14, 2023, denounce the proliferation of illicit bushmeat markets in Douala and other cities. Poachers, "bayam sellam" (buyers and sellers), fishmongers who store the meat in cold rooms, as well as certain authority figures, constitute the main players in this trade, which garners hundreds of millions of US\$ every year. Cameroon Radio Television, May 3, 2023; News Ghana, May 7, 2023.⁴

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

March 12, 2023

Nyanga, Department of Niari, Republic of the Congo

Arrest of Jean Jacques Balenda. He had been sentenced in absentia to 5 years' imprisonment for trafficking elephant and chimpanzee meat (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I). A warrant was issued for his arrest (see "On the Trail" n°33 p.219, ref.5) and n°36 p.185, ref.8). Polele-Polele, March 24, 2023; PALF, March 2023.⁵



EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA

End of April 2023

Kibwezi, Makueni County, Kenya

With the support of Focused Conservation, the KWS arrested 3 traffickers selling leopard (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I), python (*Python* spp., Appendix II) and Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*, Appendix II) skin fragments, thanks to a tip from Big Life. Big Life Foundation, April 2023; Focused Conservation, May 3, 2023.⁶



UGANDA

March 5 and 29, 2023

Bweramule, Eastern Region, and Kampala, Central Region, Uganda. Border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sentencing of Clovis Mugume, Ibrahim Asimwe, and Joshua Kabagambe to pay a fine of 5 million shillings (1,340 US\$) each or 2 years' imprisonment in the event of non-payment or non-undertaking to pay. On March 5, 2023 they were caught illegally possessing and attempting to sell 102 crocodile eggs (*Crocodylidae*, Appendix I or II) and 12 hippopotamus canines and incisors (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) weighing 10.2 kg. There are 2 crocodile species in the country, the Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*, Appendix II) and the African dwarf crocodile (*Osteolaemus tetraspis*, Appendix I). The Independent (Uganda), March 31, 2023.⁷



TANZANIA

April 2023

Arusha Region, Tanzania. Border with Kenya.

The regional police commander announced to journalists the arrests of Richard Piniel, Japhet Philipo, Lameck Ezekiel (all from Ngusero), Peter Piniel and Laila Issa (both from Morombo). The suspects, whose ages range from 23 to 43, were caught in flagrante delicto transporting giraffe meat (*Giraffa camelopardalis*, Appendix II), zebra skins (genus *Equus*) and 2 zebra heads. With the help of soldiers trained in wildlife protection, they were arrested while travelling in a convoy and had their 5 motorcycles confiscated. Dar24, April 17, 2023.⁸

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

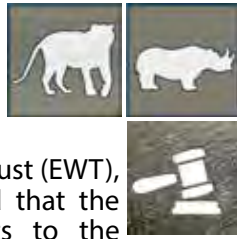
March 3, 2023

Pretoria, Gauteng Province, South Africa

At the request of the South African Hunters Association and the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), the Pretoria High Court ruled that the 2016 and 2019 amendments to the Animal Improvement Act were contrary to Article 24 of the Constitution, likely to alter the genetic heritage and adaptive strategies of wildlife, incompatible with wildlife conservation legislation, and disrespectful of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, which requires all stakeholders to be consulted before enacting laws or amendments to laws.

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development (DALRRD) had added to the law on improving the performance and profitability of domestic animals a list of 45 wild species, 11 of which are listed in CITES Appendices I and II or are in danger of extinction, namely the white rhinoceros, black rhinoceros, lion (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*, Appendix I), blue duiker (*Philantomba monticola*, Appendix II), bontebok (*Damaliscus pygargus pygargus*, Appendix II), sable antelope (*Hippotragus niger*), mountain reedbuck (*Redunca fulvorufula*), southern lechwe (*Kobus leche*, Appendix II), giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*, Appendix II), Burchell's zebra (*Equus quagga burchellii*), Cape mountain zebra (*Equus zebra zebra*, Appendix II), and Hartman's mountain zebra (*Equus zebra hartmannae*, Appendix II). The aim of the Department of Agriculture, via the Animal Improvement Act, is to use genetic manipulation, artificial insemination, and cross-breeding to improve yields and income from the agricultural sector.

Gauteng Division of the High Court of South Africa, March 3, 2023; South Africa Hunters and Game Conservation Association, March 6, 2023; News24, March 10, 2023.⁹



NORTHERN AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March-Mid April 2023

Wilkesville, State of Ohio, and Fort Pierce, State of Florida, United States of America

In March, Cyril Vierstra, fiscal officer for 9 years in Vinton County, was sentenced to 4 years and 11 months in prison for misappropriation of public funds estimated at 287,500 US\$, which were used mainly for the arrangement and the purchase of animals for his roadside zoo in Wilkesville. The 4 chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I) aged between 13 and 26 were transferred by road to the "Save the Chimps" sanctuary in Fort Pierce, Florida. The sanctuary is home to 220 chimpanzees retired from animal experimentation, seized from other roadside zoos, circuses or pet trade channels. Among the monkeys in the crook's zoo were ring-tailed lemurs (*Lemur catta*, Appendix I), spider monkeys (*Ateles* spp., Appendix I or II), Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*, Appendix II), tufted capuchins (*Cebus apella*, synonymous with *Sapajus apella*, Appendix II) and white-faced capuchins (*Cebus capucinus*, Appendix II). Two tigers (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I) were transferred to a facility in Minnesota. The fates of 2 snowy owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*, Appendix II) purchased in England and a wildebeest (genus *Connochaetes*) are unknown.

The Scioto Post, February 7, 2023; WQCS, April 17, 2023; abc6, April 19, 2023; Cleveland.com, April 20, 2023.¹⁰



April 5, 2023

Albany, State of Oregon, United States of America

Search of a resident's home. Seizure of a firearm, 3 trophies (puma (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II), elk (*Cervus canadensis*) and deer (genus *Odocoileus*)) and methamphetamine. Sentence to 30 days in jail, 3 years' probation, 3 years' hunting suspension and a compensatory fine of 7,500 US\$. Oregon State Police, April 2023.¹¹



April 6, 2023

Great Falls, State of Montana, United States of America

Preston Jay Spotted Eagle was sentenced to 5 years of probation, 250 hours of community service, and 16,860 US\$ in damages for stealing 4 grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*, Appendix II) claws, a necklace made out of grizzly bear claws, 26 golden eagle feathers (*Aquila chrysaetos*, Appendix II) and a pair of moccasins decorated with pearls, all of which honored the culture and heritage of the Blackfoot Tribe, from the museum at which he worked. KRTV, April 7, 2023.¹²



April 10 to 24, 2023
Salmon, State of Idaho, United States of America



Idaho Fish and Game is auctioning 120 goods seized by its anti-poaching officers, including grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) and bear (Ursidae, Appendix I or II) skins, stuffed pumas (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II), deer antlers (genus *Odocoileus*) and caribou skulls (*Rangifer tarandus*). It's a questionable practice, but one that doesn't concern American NGOs that, meanwhile, oppose the auction of ivory seized in Zimbabwe and other African countries. "It makes a little revenue for us. It puts animals into other people's hands that can utilize them," says Justin Williams on behalf of Idaho Fish and Game. Wears Auctioneering West, April 10, 2023; Boise State Public Radio, April 11, 2023; Idaho Fish and Game, April 14, 2023.¹³



End of April 2023
Hillsborough County, State of Florida, United States of America



Acting on a tip, agent Rivard goes to the home of a man suspected of illegally possessing a bobcat (*Lynx rufus*, Appendix II) and an American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Appendix II). On site, he found the 2 animals, but no trace of the suspect: he had meanwhile been arrested and incarcerated on other charges. However, he will not escape charges of illegal possession of wildlife and mistreatment. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, May 4, 2023.¹⁴

May 22, 2023
Los Angeles, State of California, United States of America



Typical of Americans' passion for the world's reptiles and venomous insects, David Sneddon, a truck driver living in Los Angeles and Las Vegas, was phished in 2020 by a USFWS informant during a Repticon show in Columbia, South Carolina, a traveling fair where he sold pythons (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II), boas constrictors (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix I or II), and rattlesnakes. Sneddon subsequently multiplied agreements with the informant by telephone conversations concerning the sale and delivery to Atlanta of a Southwestern speckled rattlesnake (*Crotalus pyrrhus*), puff adders (*Bitis arietans*), western diamondback rattlesnakes (*Crotalus atrox*), California ebony tarantulas (*Aphonopelma eutylenum*), Arizona Desert hairy scorpions (*Hadrurus arizonensis*), and a Gila monster (*Heloderma suspectum*, Appendix II). The

prosecutor, unsympathetic to the all-consuming passion for reptiles that Sneddon had allegedly contracted since the age of 4 and, concluding that the main motivation for trafficking was money, called for a prison sentence of 4 months. The judge simply sentenced him to 5 months' house arrest. Sneddon said he was satisfied with the ruling, hoping that the house arrest would be adjusted to allow him to take part in a Repticon show in June in Costa Mesa, where he and his nephew intend to legally display boas, pythons, colubrids, tarantulas, and other spiders for sale. Environmental Crimes Monthly Bulletin, June 2023; Los Angeles Times, May 23, 2023.¹⁵

May 23, 2023
Wailuku, State of Hawaii, United States of America



Seizure of sea turtle (Cheloniidae or Dermochelyidae, Appendix I) shells, cetacean (Cetacea, Appendix I or II) teeth, elephant and walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*, Appendix III in Canada) ivory in the shop operated by Shane Rosberg under the name "Antique Freak shop". Bail for Rosberg's release has been set at 13,000 US\$. Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, May 24, 2023.¹⁶

Saturday, May 27, 2023
Rhinebeck, State of New York, United States of America



It's the day of Barn Star's Antiques, a biannual sale of antiques. The agents get their hands on several dozen ivory and sea turtle shell objects. Seven sellers, both private individuals and professionals, are summoned. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, June 22, 2023.¹⁷

LATIN AMERICA

ARGENTINA

March 7, 2023
Carhué and Trenque Lauquen, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

- In a restaurant, a live black howler monkey (*Alouatta caraya*, Appendix II), marsh deer antlers (*Blastocerus dichotomus*, Appendix I), 2 red deer antlers (*Cervus elaphus*) and a stuffed caiman (*Caiman* spp., Appendix I or II) were seized.
- Recovery inside a house of a black howler monkey on a stake, an arboreal species that needs to move to develop its 4 limbs and activate its prehensile tail, which serves as a 5th limb.
- In both public and private areas, parrots (Psittaciformes, Appendix I or II except for 4 species) and monk parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*, Appendix II) were also seized. .../...

The 2 black howler monkeys were transferred to a primate recovery center in La Cumbre, Córdoba province, under the public prosecutor's order.

Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, March 8, 2023.¹⁸

Beginning of April 2023

Provinces of Santiago del Estero, Tucumán, Entre Ríos and Buenos Aires and Municipality of Buenos Aires, Argentina



Via 17 coordinated raids, the Ministry of the Environment and the Argentine Federal Police seized feline skins, dead animals, firearms and around 600 live wild animals, including 200 birds – 89 yellow cardinals (*Gubernatrix cristata*, Appendix II), red-crested cardinals (*Paroaria coronata*, Appendix II), finches (Thraupidae family), seedeaters (genus *Sporophila*), grosbeaks (*Cyanocompsa brissonii* or *Cyanoloxia glaucoerulea*), seedeaters (genus *Catamenia*), red pileated finches (*Coryphospingus cucullatus*), red-headed parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), blue-fronted amazons (*Amazona aestiva*, Appendix II), black-backed grosbeaks (*Pheucticus aureoventris*) and warbling finches (genus *Poospiza*) – plus 155 tortoises (Testudinidae, Appendix I or II), black-and-white tegus (*Salvator merianae*, Appendix II), iguanas (*Iguana* spp., Appendix II) and snakes. 15 arrests.

Following an illegal sale of exotic animals, the investigation began in 2021 through wiretapping and shadowing and gradually uncovered a trans-provincial criminal organisation. They also uncovered a network of transporting animals, captured in the mountains and forests of Santiago del Estero, Tucumán, and Entre Ríos, to Buenos Aires and its surrounding areas through trucks, light vehicles and long-distance coaches. The distances between Buenos Aires and the provinces of Santiago del Estero, Tucumán and Entre Ríos are, respectively, 1,000, 1,200 and 500 km. At least 30% of the animals died during the journeys.

"On the Trail" reported on 2 exotic animal seizures in this area in 2021: 300 live animals including tigers in a clandestine breeding operation in January (see "On the Trail" n°32 p.235, ref.19), and 68 birds including exotics in a specialised store in May (see "On the Trail" n°33 p.154, ref.23), both in the Buenos Aires province.

The network benefited from relays, online commercial services and delivery services. Investigators now possess various computers and accounting documents, enabling them to assess the scale of the trafficking and make further arrests. Most of the confiscated animals were in a poor state of health, particularly the birds, which were handed over to the care of the Temaikén Foundation and the NGO Pájaros caídos. The turtles and other victims seized in the Santiago del Estero province were transferred to a specialised facility for release. Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, April 10, 2023; TN, April 11, 2023.¹⁹

Beginning of May 2023

Tandil and Longchamps, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Federal police raided illegal cutlery workshops. Nandou legs (*Rhea americana*, Appendix II, or *Pterocnemia pennata*, Appendix I or II), armadillo tails (family Dasypodidae), blackbuck horns (*Antilope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Pakistan and Nepal) and over 2,500 spotted deer antlers (*Axis axis*) were seized. They had been cut to make handles. The seized goods carry an estimated worth of 7 million pesos (31,700 US\$).

0223, May 2, 2023.²⁰

BOLIVIA

Mid-March 2023

Puerto Villarroel, Province of Carrasco, Department of Cochabamba, Bolivia

Officials seized a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) and a capuchin (*Cebus* spp., synonymous with *Sapajus* spp., Appendix II) on the market.

La Patria, March 12, 2023.²¹

March 20, 2023

La Paz, Province of Pedro Domingo Murillo, Department of La Paz, Bolivia



A street vendor was arrested for selling 6 rattlesnake bells (genus *Crotalus*) and 2 fox tails on the sidewalk. Bolivian Police, March 20, 2023.²²

April 28, 2023

Bolivia

Relaying information from La Voz de la Naturaleza, "On the Trail" n°38 p.130 (ref.40) mentioned the presence and promotion of tamed wild animals in a Buena Vista hotel, designed to charm guests. Brown-throated three-toed sloths (*Bradypus variegatus*, Appendix II) Red-fronted macaws (*Ara rubrogenys*, Appendix I), red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) and Chilean flamingos (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*, Appendix II) were all part of the act. The Ministry of the Environment's General Directorate of Biodiversity and Protected Areas responded to citizens' reports with a site visit and a management plan. Failure to comply with the plan would result in sanctions. The hotel's management now must prevent any physical contact between the animals and guests, and refrain from using photos of guests or other clients touching or handling the animals for commercial purposes. Otherwise, they will face serious offences in court, punishable by financial or criminal penalties.

La Voz de la Naturaleza, May 3, 2023.²³

BRAZIL

Mid-April 2023

São Gabriel da Palha, State of Espírito Santo, Brazil

The environmental military police recovered a parrot (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) and a tatou (family Dasypodidae) after hearing them cry out from their shamefully small cages. "Policia Militar, herói protetor da sociedade" ("Military policeman, hero protector of society").

Environmental Military Police, April 19, 2023.²⁴



April 18, 2023

State of Amazonas, Brazil

Agenor Tupinambá, an agronomy student and social media "influencer", was fined 17,000 reais (3,330 US\$) for playing with parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), pacas (*Cuniculus paca*, Appendix III in Honduras), two-toed sloths (*Choloepus didactylus*), capybaras (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) and snakes in promotional videos. Behind the scenes, the animals were mistreated to the point of death, such as a two-toed sloth.

IBAMA, April 20 and 29, 2023.²⁵



April 25, 2023

Novo Airão, State of Amazonas, Brazil

The IBAMA, Chico Mendes Institute, military police and army seized 26 animal creatures in an amusement park, more than half of which are listed in the CITES Appendices: a scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*, Appendix I), a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), a white-eyed conure (*Aratinga leucophthalma*, Appendix II), 5 other parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), 2 anacondas (*Eunectes* spp., Appendix II), 3 boa constrictors (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix I or II), 6 tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonarius* or *Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II), a matamata (*Chelus fimbriatus*, Appendix II), 3 capuchins (*Cebus* spp., synonymous with *Sapajus* spp., Appendix II) and 3 arapaimas (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II). Fines totalling 234,500 reais (nearly 46,000 US\$).

Amazonas Institute for Environmental Protection, April 27, 2023.²⁶



April 27, 2023

Serra Alta, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil

A 6-month investigation led to the arrest of a hunting gang and its ringleaders, who, accompanied by a pack of violent, hungry dogs, stalked South American coatis (*Nasua nasua*, *Nasua nasua solitaria*, Appendix III), armadillos (family Dasypodidae) and hoary foxes (*Lycalopex vetulus*). The dogs were just as badly treated as the wild animals. A dead dog was found on a farm with dozens of porcupine quills in his mouth. The operation was carried out by civil police with the support of the NGO Ame Bicho.

Olhar Animal, April 28, 2023.²⁷

COLOMBIA

May 2, 2023

Indaiatuba, State of São Paulo, Brazil

Authorities seized a pampas deer (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*, Appendix I), 2 capuchins (*Cebus* spp., synonymous with *Sapajus* spp., Appendix II), 4 marmosets (*Callithrix* spp., Appendix I or II), a hyacinth macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*, Appendix I), 5 blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), 2 red-and-green macaws (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), 5 red-rumped parrots (*Psephotus haematonotus*, Appendix II), 3 other parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), a lovebird (*Agapornis* spp., Appendix II except *Agapornis roseicollis*), a green-billed toucan (*Ramphastos dicolorus*, Appendix III in Argentina), 23 cockatiels (*Nymphicus hollandicus*), 3 emus (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*), an ostrich (genus *Struthio*), 3 pheasants (family Phasianidae), a broad-nosed caiman (*Caiman latirostris*, Appendix II) and 2 snakes. Housed in huts, they served as attractions for restaurant customers. In the monkeys' cabin, beer cans, disposable cups and food leftovers were found.

The 25-year-old manager, who has been released on bail, issued a statement decrying his situation as a victim of injustice. "At the fishing center, we have unconditional affection and love for all animals."

G1 Campinas e Região, May 3, 2023.²⁸

May 4, 2023

Coari, State of Amazonas, Brazil

Authorities arrested 2 people and recovered 781 kg of meat from white-lipped peccaries (*Tayassu pecari*, Appendix II), pacas (*Cuniculus paca*), South American tapirs (*Tapirus terrestris*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*, *Odocoileus virginianus mayensis*, Appendix III in Guatemala) and curassows (family Cracidae), large birds from dense equatorial forests. The operation is credited to the Coari environmental police, the military police and local NGOs who sounded the alarm.

Amazonas State Public Security Secretariat, May 4, 2023; G1 AM, May 5, 2023.²⁹

May 11, 2023

Barra Velha, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil

At a resident's home, officials dismantled a cockfighting ring and seized 20 roosters, 2 marmosets (*Callithrix* spp., Appendix I or II) and 6 wild birds.

O Município Joinville, May 11, 2023.³⁰

May 13, 2023

São Paulo, State of São Paulo, Brazil

The rich also get bored and need company. Inside 2 houses in the upscale Avenida Miruna neighbourhood, a caiman (Alligatoridae, Appendix I or II), 77 turtles, 6 tarantulas and 2 snakes were permanent guests.

G1 São Paulo, May 13, 2023.³¹

March 9, 2023

Department of Antioquia, Colombia



On a farm in the Aburrá valley, officials seized a scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*, Appendix I), a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), a black-billed thrush (*Turdus ignobilis*), 2 cotton-headed tamarins (*Saguinus oedipus*, Appendix I), a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*, *Odocoileus virginianus mayensis*, Appendix III in Guatemala), a stuffed spectacled caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*, Appendix II) and a dead coral. A health assessment found that all the animals had multiple lesions and had lost their natural behaviours. The blue-and-yellow macaw suffers from a fractured femur and pecking problems. The 9.1 kg white-tailed deer suffers from skin lesions. In an outdoor cage, a black-billed thrush was lying in the rain, almost frozen to death. It could not be saved, despite being treated as an absolute emergency. The police and naturalists who took part in the operation describe the farm as a "sanctuary for illegal wild animal exploitation".

El Colombiano, March 9, 2023.³²

March 9 and 15, 2023

El Peñol and Guatapé, Department of Antioquia, Colombia



Another social media star showing off ridiculously precious animals: a small puma (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II) in a layette, 2 white-faced capuchins (*Cebus capucinus*, Appendix II) and a macaw (*Ara* spp., Appendix I or II). DJ Paisa de Medellín, whose real name is Metrioz Withz, chose to showcase her talents in promotional videos shot at a Canadian businessman's home in Guatapé.

Infobae, March 15, 2023; Regional Autonomous Corporation of Rios Negro and Nare, March 16, 2023; El Tiempo, March 21, 2023.³³



Week of March 27 – April 2, 2023
Bogotá, Colombia

Across different bus stations, officials recovered a red-footed tortoise (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II), 15 blue crabs (*Callinectes sapidus*), 3 birds, and meat from capybaras (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), Meso-American sliders (*Trachemys venusta*) and cormorans (genus *Phalacrocorax*). Secretary of the Environment of Bogotá, April 6, 2023.³⁴

April 5, 2023
Cachipay, El Colegio ans La Mesa, Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia



On the eve of Holy Week, when wild animals are caged or eaten as part of family celebrations, 2 blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), 2 yellow-crowned amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II), a tropical screech-owl (*Otus choliba*, Appendix II), a nightjar (genus *Uropsalis*), 2 boa constrictors (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix I or II), a mud turtle (*Kinosternon* spp., Appendix II) and 4 barely born opossums (genus *Didelphis*) were seized at the Cachipay, El Colegio and La Mesa markets, as well as during roadside checks. Regional Autonomous Corporation of Cundinamarca, April 5, 2023.³⁵

April 5, 2023
Sincerín, Department of Bolívar, Colombia

Acting on a search warrant, the 13th Marine Infantry Battalion and police seized 617 Meso-American sliders (*Trachemys venusta*), 62 birds including finches (genus *Sicalis*) and macaws (*Ara* spp., Appendix I or II), and 200 kg of snail meat from a wildlife wholesaler. One arrest. European brown snails (*Cornu aspersum*), which live in the wild in Europe, are bred in Colombia for food consumption. National Navy of Colombia, April 5, 2023.³⁶

Mid-April 2023
Bogotá, Colombia



The Environmental Authority and Police deplore the fact that Holy Week and Easter pose a high-risk period for biodiversity every year. Eggs and meat from turtles and iguanas are sought after for family banquets, while parrots and live monkeys are sought after for gifts. As an example, thanks to patrols and security cameras in the metropolis, 2 yellow-crowned amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala*, Appendix II), an orange-winged amazon (*Amazona amazonica*, Appendix II), a squirrel (family Sciuridae) and 4.5 kg of wild fauna meat were seized in railway stations, shopping centers and on the public highway. The Penal Code outlines prison sentences of 48 to 108 months for anyone who illegally appropriates, extracts, exploits, keeps or profits from wild animals. Semana, April 14, 2023.³⁷

OPERATION LIBERTAD
May 27, 2023

Calima el Darién and Ansermanuevo, Department of Valle del Cauca, Colombia

Thirty animals, including primates (Primates, Appendix I or II), a yellow-headed amazon (*Amazona oratrix*, Appendix I), macaws (*Ara* spp., Appendix I or II), a brown-throated conure (*Aratinga pertinax*, Appendix II), a red-footed tortoise (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II), ostriches (genus *Struthio*) and capybaras (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) were seized from 4 private properties. They had been taken from their natural habitats on the Pacific coast or from exotic farms, and were destined to feed Medellín's pet mania. Some were reportedly returned to the wild. The press release does not mention any arrests. Colombian National Police, May 27, 2023; Semana, May 30, 2023.³⁸

FRANCE (GUIANA)

April 24, 2023

Matoury, Territorial Collectivity of Guiana, France

Seizure of a red-and-green macaw (*Ara chloropterus*, Appendix II), 2 orange-winged amazons (*Amazona amazonica*, Appendix II), 2 peccaries (*Pecari tajacu* or *Tayassu pecari*, Appendix II) and 9 turtles. The turtle species commonly seized in French Guiana are yellow-headed sidenecks (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II), red-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II) and yellow-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II). The animals have been handed over to an approved wildlife shelter and will be examined by a veterinarian.

Gendarmerie of Guiana, May 6, 2023.³⁹

MEXICO

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 28, 2023

Tlalnepantla de Baz, State of Mexico, Mexico



At a flea market, officials seized 2 crocodiles (Crocodylidae, Appendix I or II), 2 iguanas (family Iguanidae), 8 turtles, axolotls (*Ambystoma mexicanum*, Appendix II) and hedgehogs (subfamily Erinaceinae) and arrested the sellers, the couple Jesús "N" and María Concepción.

Infobae, March 22, 2023; PROFEPA, March 28, 2023.⁴⁰

April 5, 2023

Huixquilucan de Degollado, State of Mexico, Mexico



On a rural property, 47 live animals were seized, including 25 wild animals: a lion (*Panthera leo*, Appendix I or II), a tiger (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), 2 pumas (*Puma concolor*, Appendix I or II), at least one jaguar (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I), birds, northern crested caracaras (*Caracara cheriway*, Appendix II), great horned owls (*Bubo virginianus*, Appendix II), Harris's hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*, Appendix II), Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), lemurs (Indridae, Lemuridae or Lepilemuridae, Appendix I), a Pampas fox (*Lycalopex griseus*, Appendix II) and a coyote (*Canis latrans*); 7 staged stuffed animals including a fox stalking a distraught deer, and 14 tonnes of diesel fuel. Though it was hypothesized, a wolf did not escape; rather, it was a Calupoh, a domestic breed that is not considered a wild animal. According to the public prosecutor, the estate was used as a clandestine service station that also sold stolen water, as a clandestine borehole operation is also suspected. Eight arrests.

El País, April 6, 2023; Aristegui Noticias, April 10, 2023; PROFEPA, April 10, 2023.⁴¹

April 22, 2023

San José de las Moras, State of Jalisco, Mexico



A Sedena (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional) patrol on a dirt road found posts and fences on a private estate and heard singing, shouting and growling, indicating a suspicious concentration of wildlife. Under a mandate by the Fedor (Fiscalía Especializada de Control Regional), the AIC (Agencia de Investigación Criminal) searched the property and seized 56 animals, including 10 tigers (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), 6 jaguars (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I), 5 lions (*Panthera leo*, Appendix I or II), 3 caracaras (*Caracara* spp., Appendix II), 2 Harris's hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*, Appendix II), 3 black vultures (*Coragyps atratus*), 9 red-rumped parrots (*Psephotus haematonotus*, Appendix II), 2 Eastern rosellas (*Platycercus eximius*, Appendix II), 4 rose-ringed parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*), 2 pelicans (family Pelecanidae), an emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*), a raven (genus *Corvus*), 2 antelopes (family Bovidae), 2 red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), a cacomistle (*Bassariscus sumichrasti*) and 2 raccoons (genus *Procyon*).

Aristegui Noticias, April 22, 2023.⁴²



PERU

March 30, 2023

Yurimaguas, Province of Alto Amazonas, Department of Loreto, Peru



A surprise inspection of the El Vado market paid off. South American river turtles (*Podocnemis expansa*, Appendix II), yellow-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II), parakeets (*Brotogeris* spp., Appendix II), a blue-headed parrot (*Pionus menstruus*, Appendix II) and a stuffed ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*, Appendix I) were seized. Loreto Regional Forest and Wildlife Development Management, March 30, 2023.⁴³

Mid-April 2023

Yurimaguas, Province of Alto Amazonas, Department of Loreto, Peru

In several homes in town, after an investigation and under the public prosecutor's supervision, the provincial forestry and wildlife management unit seized 7 white-winged parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolurus*, Appendix II), 4 cobalt-winged parakeets (*Brotogeris cyanoptera*, Appendix II), a dusky-headed conure (*Aratinga weddellii*, Appendix II), a lettered aracari (*Pteroglossus incriptus*) and 2 woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagotricha*, Appendix II). Loreto Regional Forest and Wildlife Development Management, April 18, 2023.⁴⁴

April 20 and 24, 2023

Huánuco, Province of Huánuco, Department of Huánuco, Peru



The 2 drivers and monitor of a bus were sentenced to 6 months in the Potracancha prison after their vehicle was inspected at a roadside check between Juanjui and Lima (825 km). Castro, Mendez and Esquivel, long-time wildlife traffickers, had cardboard boxes behind the driver's seat containing a common squirrel monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*, Appendix II), 3 tufted capuchins (*Cebus apella*, synonymous with *Sapajus apella*, Appendix II), a southern mealy amazon (*Amazona farinosa*, Appendix II) and a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II).

Tu Diario Huánuco, April 25, 2023; La República, April 30, 2023.⁴⁵

May 8, 2023

Puno, Province of Puno, and Juliaca, Province of San Roman, Department of Puno, Peru

Seizure of 11 Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*, Appendix I) feathers, 50 Darwin's rhea (*Pterocnemia pennata*, Appendix II) feathers, an Andean hairy armadillo (*Chaetophractus nationi*, Appendix II), 97 colpeo fox (*Lycalopex culpaeus*, Appendix II) legs and a viscacha (*Lagidium viscacia*) tail.

Seizure of 12 colpeo fox tails, 8 Andean condor feathers and 3 feather dusters made from Darwin's rhea feather duster.

Seizure of 6 stuffed Andean hairy armadillos and 2 feather dusters made from Darwin's rhea feathers.

The 184 animal parts were intended for traditional medicine.

Serfor, May 8, 2023.⁴⁶



Viscacha (*Lagidium viscacia*)

THE CARIBBEAN

FRANCE (GUADELOUPE)

May 11, 2023

Pointe-à-Pitre, Department of Guadeloupe, France



A man and a woman were fined and given community service for keeping and attempting to sell exotic monkeys (Primates, Appendix I or II) and parrots (Psittaciformes, Appendix I or II except 4 species) imported without authorisation from French Guiana. "Here in Guadeloupe, says the OFB, we often intervene to stop monkeys wandering, even though there are none in the natural environment."

RCI, May 12, 2023.⁴⁷

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

May 31, 2023

Diego Martin Region, Trinidad and Tobago



Seizure from a camp of traffickers opportunistically absent of 33 exotic birds, including 2 blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II), a red-billed toucan (*Ramphastos tucanus*, Appendix II), parrots or parakeets (Psittaciformes, Appendix I or II except 4 species) and passerines, a juvenile jaguar (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I), 3 caimans (Alligatoridae, Appendix I or II), turtles including 2 tortoises (Testudinidae, Appendix I or II) and other animals. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, an arrest is imminent. Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, June 1, 2023.⁴⁸

CENTRAL ASIA

UZBEKISTAN

May 1, 2023

Tashkent Independent City, Uzbekistan. Border with Kazakhstan.



At a market in the Olmazor district, officials seized 32 Horsfield's tortoises (*Testudo horsfieldii*, Appendix II), 5 European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine) and 6 Brandt's hedgehogs (*Paraechinus hypomelas*). The sellers, S.M. and O.H., were fined an unspecified amount.

Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, May 1, 2023.⁴⁹



Brandt's hedgehog (*Paraechinus hypomelas*)

May 18, 2023

Tashkent Independent City, Uzbekistan. Border with Kazakhstan.

Another raid on the market. This time, 40 European goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*, Appendix III in Ukraine), 15 turtles (order Testudines), and 10 Brandt's hedgehogs (*Paraechinus hypomelas*) were seized. The goldfinches were released, and the turtles and hedgehogs were entrusted to the zoo. Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, May 18, 2023.⁵⁰

EASTERN ASIA

CHINA

March 24, 2023

Tung Chung, Lantau Island, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China



Various goods seized on Hong Kong docks including narcotics, Wifi cameras and other electronic products, as well as "bird's nests", fish maw, a whole assortment representing a certain mainland Chinese-style lifestyle and the ability of networks to bring together valuable goods from industry or poaching in the world's 9th largest port. As customs approached, 6 to 8 men jumped into a powerful speedboat and disappeared into the night, leaving behind 26 boxes of contraband worth 38 million Hong Kong dollars (4.8 million US\$) in a van. Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, March 25, 2023.⁵¹

March 30, 2023

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Border Post, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Hong Kong and Macau.

Customs seized 139 kg of dried abalone, 59 kg of fish maw, 8.9 kg of "bird's nests" and 22 Canon lenses and cameras inside a van from Macau. Chinese Customs, April 8, 2023.⁵²

March 2023

Chengdu-Shuangliu International Airport, Sichuan Province, China



In the airport cargo area, customs recovered an incoming parcel containing 5 carved ivories (242 grams in total), 4 hawksbill turtle shell jewels (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, Appendix I) (46 grams), 10 red coral jewels (genus *Corallium*) (243 grams) and 3 giant clam shell jewels (Tridacnidae, Appendix II) (61.2 grams). Chinese Customs, April 1, 2023.⁵³

CAMBODIA

April 2023

Shenyang, Liaoning Province, China

All in one day, Shenyang customs officials seized 94 hawksbill turtle shells (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, Appendix I), 225 red corals (genus *Corallium*) and 39 carved ivory items from overseas mail. Shenyang Customs, April 23, 2023.⁵⁴



Beginning of May 2023

Wuhan, Hubei Province, China

Customs seized an umbrella with an ivory handle plus a hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, Appendix I) fan in a parcel from abroad. Chinese Customs, May 10, 2023.⁵⁵



Beginning of May 2023

Qingdao-Jiaodong International Airport, Shandong Province, China

Customs confiscated a stuffed sea turtle, objects made out of hawksbill turtle shells (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, Appendix I) including a fan, coral jewellery and ivory objects in the luggage of a passenger from abroad. Total weight: 5.423 kg. Chinese Customs, May 18, 2023.⁵⁶



May 4, 2023

Laoheishanzhen, Mudanjiang Prefecture, Heilongjiang Province, China. Border with Russia.

Seizure of 681 saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II) horns. The investigation began in November 2021 with the 2-step seizure of 130 saiga antelope horns, 24 brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) gall bladders and 10 musk deer (*Moschus* spp., Appendix I or II) preputial glands. Nine arrests. Shandong Cyber Police, May 6, 2023.⁵⁷



MONGOLIA

Beginning of May 2023

Darkhan-Uul Aimag, Mongolia

Seizure from M. of crocodile (Crocodylidae, Appendix I or II) skulls, a hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, Appendix I) shell and fossilised eggs and bones of dinosaurs that lived 70 million years ago and of woolly rhinoceroses (*Coelodonta antiquitatis*) who lived 15,000 years ago. Eagle News, May 3, 2023.⁵⁸

Mid-May 2023

Banlung, Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia

Seizure on the fresh market of 3 monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II) to be butchered, 5 kg of dried deer (family Cervidae) meat and 6.5 kg of wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) meat. The risks of biodiversity loss and the health risks for consumers are highlighted by the local authorities. Khmer Times, May 16, 2023.⁵⁹

INDONESIA

March 30, 2023

Surabaya, East Java Province, Java Island, Indonesia

Agus Suhariyono was sentenced to 11 months in prison and fined 10 million rupiah (655 US\$), with 3 additional months in prison in the event of non-payment, for attempting to introduce the following wildlife from New Guinea via the Surabaya port in February 2023: 2 yellow-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea*, Appendix I), a palm cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*, Appendix I), 3 eclectus parrots (*Eclectus oratus*, Appendix II), 3 little corellas (*Cacatua sanguinea*, Appendix II), 3 black-capped lorises (*Lorius lory*, Appendix II), 2 lesser birds-of-paradise (*Paradisaea minor*, Appendix II), 13 wompoo fruit doves (*Ptilinopus magnificus*), 3 long-beaked echidnas (*Zaglossus bruijni*, Appendix II), a crocodile monitor (*Varanus salvadorii*, Appendix II) and a white-lipped python (*Leiopython albertisii*, Appendix II). A little corella and the 3 black-capped lorises were already dead. Suhariyono must pay 5,000 rupiah (0.32 US\$) in legal costs. Directory of Decisions - Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, March 30, 2023.⁶⁰

Palm cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*)

May 9, 2023

Pontianak, West Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island, Indonesia

Le Van Hieu, captain of the Vietnamese-flagged cargo ship *Royal 06*, is sentenced to one year's imprisonment and a fine of 56 million rupiah (3,805 US\$), or a further 3 months' imprisonment in case of non-payment, for having transported on his ship and attempted to smuggle 36 animals collected by accomplices on the island of Borneo (see "On the Trail" n°38 p. 206, ref. 35). Garda Animalia, May 10, 2023.⁶¹



May 22, 2023

Sempu Island Nature Reserve, Malang Regency, East Java Province, Java Island, Indonesia

The Nature and Energy Department of the oil company PT Pertamina Patra Niaga is giving itself some cheap green paint by taking part in the release a Sunda pangolin, a crested serpent eagle (*Spilornis cheela*, Appendix II), 3 reticulated pythons (*Malayopython reticulatus*, synonymous with *Python reticulatus*, Appendix II) and 3 Sunda porcupines (*Hystrix javanica*). Radar Tuban, May 24, 2023.⁶²



MALAYSIA

May 16, 2023

Kota Kinabalu, State of Sabah, Malaysia

The Court of Appeal upheld the first instance verdict imposing on Chung En Kin one year's imprisonment and a total fine equal to 49,000 US\$ for trafficking in flying foxes (*Pteropus vampyrus*, Appendix II) and meat from banteng (*Bos javanicus*), sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*) and other protected species (see "On the Trail" n°30 p.168, ref. 58, and n°36 p.194, ref. 53). New Straits Times, May 16, 2023.⁶³



OPERATION KHAZANAH TREASURE)

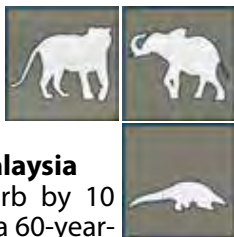
May 30, 2023

Kuala Lumpur, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Seizure in the Chow Kit suburb by 10 police officers in a shop run by a 60-year-old man specialising in traditional root-based medicine of 7 elephant tusks, pangolin heads, 5 fragments of skin, 71 teeth teeth and claws of tiger (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), hundreds of porcupine (family Hystricidae) quills, deer (family Cervidae) antlers and a deer bone cane and dried crocodile (Crocodylidae, Appendix I or II) organs. The total value of all these curiosities, believed to be intended for black magic rituals and charlatanism, is equal to 90,000 US\$.

Harian Metro, May 31, 2023; New Straits Times, May 31, 2023.⁶⁴

BERSEPADU (COMMON



PHILIPPINES

March 3, 2023

Bilar, Province of Bohol, Philippines

Clandestine zoo dismantled. Officials intercepted 78 animals including a Philippine eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*, Appendix I), owl (Strigiformes, Appendix I or II), Philippine hanging parrot (*Loriculus philippensis*, Appendix II), long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II), Philippine tarsier (*Tarsius syrichta*, Appendix II), Samar water monitor (*Varanus samarensis*, Appendix II) and Malayan civet (*Viverra zangalunga*). Rosalie Deguiño was arrested while Erlu Tabel managed to escape. The Bohol Chronicle, March 6, 2023.⁶⁵

THAILAND

March 22, 2023

Bo, Nan Province, Thailand

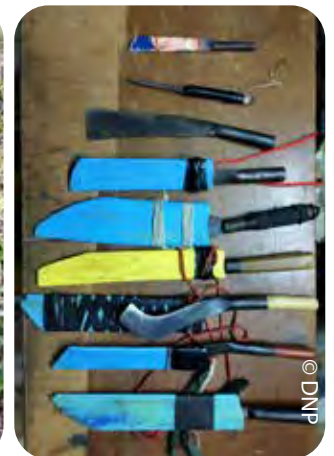
Across 5 market stalls, officials recovered 8 clouded monitors (*Varanus nebulosus*, Appendix I), 2.9 kg of Himalayan porcupine meat (*Hystrix brachyura*), and 10.2 kg of Sunda pangolin meat. Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, March 22, 2023.⁶⁶



May 6, 2023

Huai Sala Forest, Sisaket Province, Thailand. Border with Cambodia.

Seizure of a clouded monitor (*Varanus nebulosus*, Appendix I), an Asian palm civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*, Appendix III in India), a lesser mouse-deer (*Tragulus kanchil*) and a Himalayan porcupine (*Hystrix brachyura*) as carcasses, a porcupine stomach and of 2 rifles, ammunition, knives and other butchering items. Arrest of 10 poachers aged between 17 and 72. Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, May 8, 2023.⁶⁷



VIET NAM

April 4, 2023

Bac Hong, Nghe An Province, Viet Nam

- 34 live big-headed turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*, Appendix I) seized from Nguyen Trong Duc's car on National Route 1.



- After Nguyen Trong Duc's initial interrogation, police seized 35 turtles of the same species, 10 of which had died, and 3 scaled and eviscerated Sunda pangolins at Nguyen Van Dung's home. The 59 surviving turtles were transferred to the Pu Mat National Park refuge by the NGO SVW.

Dân tri, April 5, 2023; Customs News, April 6, 2023.⁶⁸

Beginning of April 2023

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

In the Buddhist temple, there was a long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*,



Appendix II), 13 yellow-headed temple turtles (*Heosemys annandalii*, Appendix II), 7 red-eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), 2 yellow-headed tortoises (*Indotestudo elongate*, Appendix II), an alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*, Appendix II) and a South Asian box turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*, Appendix II). The authorities came to get them and handed them over to the Cu Chui Refuge.

ENV, April 9, 2023.⁶⁹

April 18, 2023

A Luoi, Thua Thien Hue Province, Viet Nam. Border with Laos.

Seizure from Le Dinh H. of 2 dead pangolins and 43 other wild animals or parts of animals including bear (Ursidae, Appendix I or II) paws, monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), turtles and mustelids.

Bao Dân Viet, April 21, 2023.⁷⁰

Beginning of May 2023

Bo Trach, Quang Binh Province, Viet Nam

Five years in prison for having transported in his lorry



700 grams of pangolin scales, 8 Southern serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*, Appendix I) skeletons, 7 red-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nemaeus*, Appendix I) skeletons and 6 kg of unidentified monkey bones.

ENV, May 4, 2023.⁷¹

May 4, 2023

Cao Bang, Cao Bang Province, Viet Nam. Border with China.

Seizure of 140 passerines (family Sturnidae) and 2 monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II) by the traffic police in an SUV at 10.30 p.m. An arrest.

Traffic Police Department, May 8, 2023.⁷²

SOUTHERN ASIA

BANGLADESH

March 23, 2023

Barapakan, Moulvibazar District, Sylhet Division, Bangladesh



Cascading deaths of 13 oriental white-backed vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*, Appendix II), golden jackals (*Canis aureus*, Appendix III in India), jungle cats (*Felis chaus*, Appendix II) and stray dogs. The poisoned carcasses of a goat and chickens were used as bait. Bottles of insecticide were found in the mass grave. Two suspects have been identified. Md. Rokon Mia and Kachnu Mia allegedly acted in revenge for the loss of a young goat and chickens attributed to one or more foxes.

The Business Standard, March 23 and April 13, 2023; Eye News, March 25, 2023.⁷³

INDIA

March 6, 2023

Tualpui Junction, Road from Khawzawl to Rabung, Champhai District, State of Mizoram, India. Border Region with Myanmar.

During a random roadside check, police seized 17 exotic animals inside a vehicle coming from Myanmar, including 4 spider monkeys (*Ateles* spp., Appendix I or II), from Central and South America, 3 tarctic hornbills (*Penelopides panini*, Appendix II) from the Dinagat and Mindanao Islands in the Philippines, a rufous hornbill (*Buceros hydrocorax mindanensis*, Appendix II) from the Philippines, a writhed hornbill (*Aceros leucocephalus*, Appendix II) from the Philippines, and 2 flame bowerbirds (*Sericulus ardens*) from New Guinea. Based on black market resale value in the Union, the cargo is estimated to be worth 10 million rupees (120,000 US\$). The 2 occupants of the vehicle, including a minor, were questioned about the organisation of the international trade.

Flame bowerbirds are the directors of elaborate mating rituals. The males build arenas with fern fronds to attract the attention of the females, or put up masts or build huts with twigs or line the floors with moss and berries and perform their courtship displays at the top, on the threshold, or in the center.

Mizoram Police, March 7, 2023; Hindustan Times, March 8, 2023; Traffic, April 3, 2023.⁷⁴



Sericulus ardens. Photo Nik Borrow

March 14, 2023
Khaknar Tehsil, Burhanpur District, State of Madhya Pradesh, India

The 7 men, aged between 21 and 54, are hardy poachers of birds and small mammals, campers, and cooks, but they are not discreet enough to escape the attention and reports of a few locals. Feathers of Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan), bones of Indian hare (*Lepus nigricollis*), 3 homemade weapons, and cooking utensils were seized and the men were handed over to the Forest Department.

The Times of India, March 15, 2023.⁷⁵

FAMILY AFFAIRS

March 28, 2023
Mumbai, Mumbai City District, State of Maharashtra, India

Nandakumar Moghe and his son were illegally operating a kind of private zoo near the "Mahatma Gandhi" swimming pool, offering visitors, for 20 rupees (0.24 US\$), the right to watch on a constrained and signposted path, an Indian softshell turtle (*Nilssonina gangetica*, Appendix I), 5 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I), 3 plum-headed parakeets (*Psittacula cyanocephala*, Appendix II), indigenous animals, and a dozen exotic animals including a python (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II), a frog, a spider, and ornamental fish. Additional fees were charged for the right to take selfies with the animals or to touch some of them.

Hindustan Times, March 30, 2023.⁷⁶

April 8, 2023
Joraimore, Cooch Behar District, State of West Bengal, India

Seizure of gibbons (Hylobatidae, Appendix I) from South-Eastern Asia and binturongs (*Arctictis binturong*, Appendix III in India) from the trailer of a lorry on the border between Assam and West Bengal. The lorry had come from Guwahati, Assam, and was heading for Maharashtra, a journey of more than 1,700 km. Three arrests.

Trafficking in wild and farmed animals is rampant in Assam. On March 28, 2023, 2 lorries carrying stolen cattle were intercepted on the National Highway 37.

India Today NE, April 8, 2023.⁷⁷



Arctictis binturong

April 12, 2023

Bagalur, Bijapur District, State of Karnataka, India



Alerted by reliable testimonies, the Flying Forest Brigade quickly moved to the Sindagi bus stop and arrested Pawan Jaffar Bhonsle. The brigade intercepted 807 Bengal monitor lizard (*Varanus bengalensis*, Appendix I) hemipenes; 3 sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*, Appendix I) claws and 4 teeth; 2 jungle cat (*Felis chaus*, Appendix II) paws and claws; 4 blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Nepal and Pakistan) horns, 7 skins and 2 trophies; 32 Indian grey mongoose (*Herpestes edwardsii*, Appendix III in India and Pakistan) legs and jaws; 73 spotted little owl (*Athene brama*, Appendix II) feathers, 116 sea fans (order Alcyonacea), 28 Indian pond heron (*Ardeola grayii*) legs, and 26 wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) teeth.

Deccan Herald, April 12, 2023; The Hindu, April 13, 2023.⁷⁸



Mid-April 2023

Neyveli, Cuddalore District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Police confiscated 2 Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I), a parakeet (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II except 3 species), and an axis deer (*Axis axis*) skin and 4 antlers from P. Sridhar, an engineer with NLC India Limited, a State-owned lignite mining and power generation company.

The Times of India, April 20, 2023.⁷⁹

May 12, 2023

Vadodara, Vadodara District, State of Gujarat, India

Seizure at the home of Dharampur Rana of 2 live Indian star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*, Appendix I) and 23 marine animals stored in formalin, corals (order Anthozoa), small sharks, seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp., Appendix II), starfish, jellyfish and octopus. The alert was given by the NGO Wildlife SOS.

DeshGujarat, May 13, 2023; Wildlife SOS, June 5, 2023.⁸⁰

May 28 and 30, 2023

Hyderabad and Saidabad, Hyderabad District; Kukatpally, Medchal-Malkajgiri District, State of Telangana, India

It was "wild night" in the Xora Pub in Jubilee Hills, a fashionable district of Telangana's capital. A woman dances with a royal python (*Python regius*, Appendix II) draped over her shoulders, and an iguana (family Iguanidae) climbs a drinker's back. Cockatoos (Cacatuidae, Appendix I or II except *Nymphicus hollandicus*), a sun conure (*Aratinga solstitialis*, Appendix II), 2 sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*), Bengal leopard-cat hybrids (*Prionailurus bengalensis*, Appendix II), and domestic cats watched the noisy drinking in cages. 27 animals were seized. Charges were laid against the managers of the Xora Pub, a pet seller and renter operating under the Hyderabad Exotic Pets banner in Saidabad, and Karthik, operator of a pet shop in Kukatpally.

Telangana Tribune, May 30, 2023; The Times of India, May 31, 2023.⁸¹

PAKISTAN

April 18, 2023

Province of Punjab, Pakistan

Naveed Darzi was arrested after seizing 4 Altai argali (*Ovis ammon*, Appendix II), falcon (*Falco* spp., Appendix I or II) and Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III) trophies from one of his hideouts. Darzi is a notorious poacher who has long been wanted by the Department of Wildlife Protection. The operation is accredited to Wildlife Inspector Umeer Ali, Abdul Shakoore, Al-Nasr, Waseem, Imran and Jameel, under the direction of Chakwal Mirza Abid Hussain.

The Veterinary News & Views, April 19, 2023.⁸²

WESTERN ASIA

SAUDI ARABIA

Beginning of March 2023 Saudi Arabia

A cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*, Appendix I), Arabian wolf (*Canis lupus arabs*, Appendix II) and a python (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II) seized at a private home.



Arabian wolves are among the smallest wolves (just 66 cm at the withers). Their range mainly covers the Sultanate of Oman, Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia, with residual populations in Bahrain, Israel and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. They have fairly thin greyish-beige coats that enable them to better blend in with the desert.

National Center for Wildlife (Saudi Arabia), March 9, 2023; Gulf News, March 11, 2023.⁸³

Beginning of May 2023 Asir Province, Saudi Arabia

Seizure at an illegal zoo of 10 lions, 4 lionesses and 4 lion cubs (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), 5 tigers (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), 2 bears (Ursidae, Appendix I or II), 2 crocodiles (Crocodylidae, Appendix I or II) and an Arabian oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*, Appendix I). An arrest.



Gulf Online, May 11, 2023.⁸⁴

NORTHERN EUROPE

FINLAND

March 27, 2023 – March 5, 2024 Lapinlahti, Region of North Savo, Finland

Major poaching case in central Finland.

- On March 27, 8 suspects were identified, including a man with a senior position in the Finnish Hunters' Association, who was put in prison. Dozens of firearms were seized. The investigation began after a number of hunting scenes appeared on social networks, which viewers considered suspicious.

- By April, the number of suspects rose to over 20. The grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) Unna tracked at the Institute of Natural Resources was one of the victims, along with other wolves, Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*, Appendix II) and raptors (Accipitridae, Appendix I or II).

- By May, over 40 people were under suspicion, and Harri-Pekka Pohjolainen, Director of Investigations in Eastern Finland, expects even more to be arrested. By May 25, 2023, 12 wolf skins and a wolf skull, 3 lynx skins and 4 lynx skulls, and 2 stuffed lynxes had been seized.



- In March 2024, police announced that they had definitively identified 34 suspects between the ages of 30 and 75. They will soon be charged. They are responsible for dozens of poaching acts between 2019 and 2023. Most of the suspects claim to have acted in self-defense. They say large predator management policies and the procedure for obtaining a slaughter permit are flawed. Others admit to having acted for the "thrill".

Police of Finland, April 12, 2023 and March 5, 2024; Iltalehti, April 15, May 25 and August 4, 2023; Yle, September 16, 2023.⁸⁵

LITHUANIA

March 2023 Vilnius County, Lithuania

Seizure of a stuffed common otter (*Lutra lutra*, Appendix I), common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II) and marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*, Appendix II). They were offered for sale via the Internet.

Environmental Protection Department, March 27, 2023.⁸⁶

SWEDEN

Beginning of March 2023 Helsingborg, Scania County, Sweden

A lady was offering to sell 2 royal pythons (*Python regius*, Appendix II), tarantulas (family Theraphosidae), and a great tit (*Parus major*) soaked in alcohol or formaldehyde. She was fined 5,300 crowns (505 US\$).

Helsingborgs Dagblad, March 3, 2023.⁸⁷



WESTERN EUROPE

GERMANY

March 14, 2023 Leipzig/Halle International Airport, Saxony Land, Germany

Customs seized 2 channel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos vitellinus*, Appendix II) beaks and a necklace with 10 caiman (*Paleosuchus* spp., Appendix II) teeth from a parcel traveling from Brazil to the UK.

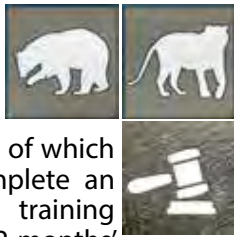
German Customs, April 3, 2023.⁸⁸



FRANCE

March 14 and 15, 2023

Troyes, Department of Aube, France



Sentencing of Luc Chapoutot to a fine of 4,000 € (4,220 US\$), of which 2,000 € is suspended, to complete an environmental citizenship training course within 6 months, or to 2 months' imprisonment in the event of failure to complete the training course. He was convicted of illegally acquiring and possessing 5 Siamese crocodile skulls (*Crocodylus siamensis*, Appendix I), 2 salt-water crocodile skulls (*Crocodylus porosus*, Appendix I or II), a mandrill skull (*Mandrillus sphinx*, Appendix I), 2 black bear skulls (*Ursus thibetanus*, Appendix I, or *Ursus americanus*, Appendix II), a polar bear skull (*Ursus maritimus*, Appendix II), a lion skull (*Panthera leo*, Appendix I or II), and a shark jaw. All animal parts are confiscated. Chapoutot was part of a network operating in several regions, including eastern France.

Troyes Court, March 15, 2023; France 3 Grand Est, March 16, 2023.⁸⁹

March 16, 2023

Besançon, Department of Doubs, France



Sentence of City of Besançon to a cheapened fine of 8,500 € (8,970 US\$). The offences and contraventions detected at the zoological park of the Citadelle Vauban museum were liable to a fine of 150,000 €:

- Presenting live specimens to the public in the absence of skilled staff, in particular Mexican pink beauties (*Brachypelma klaasi*, Appendix II) and Mexican redknee tarantulas (*Brachypelma hamorii*, Appendix II), and amphibians and reptiles without regulatory marking,

- Holding in a cold room without an administrative exemption or authorisation 45 specimens or parts of animals, including chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*, Appendix I), crowned sifaka (*Propithecus coronatus*, Appendix I), greater bamboo lemur (*Prolemur simus*, Appendix I), cotton-headed tamarin (*Saguinus oedipus*, Appendix I), grivet monkey (*Chlorocebus aethiops*, Appendix II), capuchin (*Cebus* spp., synonymous with *Sapajus* spp., Appendix II), lion (*Panthera leo*, Appendix I or II), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*, Appendix II), grey wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*, Appendix I), Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II), Darwin's rhea (*Pterocnemia pennata*, Appendix I or II), greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*, Appendix II), panther chameleon (*Furcifer pardalis*, Appendix II), veiled chameleon (*Chamaeleo calytratus*, Appendix II) and European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*, Appendix III in Ukraine).

- Keeping baboons (*Papio* spp., Appendix II) and Barbary sheep (*Ammotragus lervia*, Appendix II) in non-regulatory enclosures using the citadel's surrounding wall and electric fences.

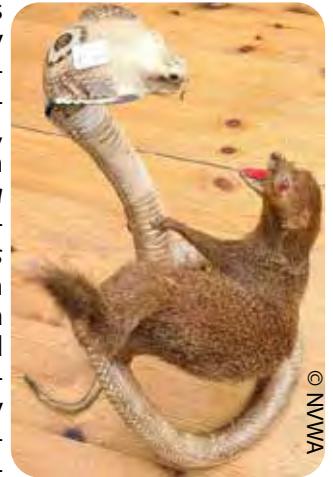
Besançon Court, February 21 and March 16, 2023; France 3 Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, May 12, 2023.⁹⁰

THE NETHERLANDS

Sunday, April 23, 2023

Province of North Brabant, The Netherlands

Displayed in 4 curious market stalls, a tawny owl (*Strix aluco*, Appendix II), a Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*, Appendix II), a South Asian box turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*, Appendix II), a serin (*Serinus serinus*, Appendix III in Ukraine), a stuffed cobra (family Elapidae) and mongoose (family Herpestidae) duo, a baby python (Pythonidae, Appendix I or II), a Madagascar gecko (*Phelsuma* spp., Appendix II), a spiny-tailed lizard (*Uromastix* spp., Appendix II) in formaldehyde, and the skull of a Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*, Appendix II) were seized by the NVWA (Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit, Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority).



Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority, April 24, 2023.⁹¹

SOUTHERN EUROPE

SPAIN

Mid-May 2023

Arona and San Cristobal de la Laguna, Tenerife Island, Province of Santa Cruz



de Tenerife, Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands, Spain

From 2 stores, police recovered heads of monkeys (Primates, Appendix I or II), grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II), crocodiles (Crocodylidae, Appendix I or II), and cobras (family Elapidae); presumed teeth from tigers (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I) and gorillas (*Gorilla* spp., Appendix I); elephant ivory, bats (order Chiroptera), birds of Cuban origin, toads (family Bufonidae), seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp., Appendix II) and presumed lion parts (*Panthera leo*, Appendix I or II). According to customs and police, the stuffed animals and their by-products were brought to the island by mail or through passengers arriving in the Canary archipelago by air or sea. The animal relics were intended for rituals of the Afro-Caribbean Santería religion, inspired by Catholic liturgy and Yoruba beliefs whose roots lie in the slave trade in Cuba. Police have arrested 3 people. El Digital Sur, May 22, 2023.⁹²

Mid-May 2023

Maçanet de la Selva, Province of Girona, Autonomous Community of Catalonia, Spain



A private individual held 20 stuffed animals, including a peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*, Appendix I), 4 eurasian eagle owls (*Bubo bubo*, Appendix II), 4 barn owls (*Tyto alba*, Appendix II), a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*, Appendix II), a scops owl (*Otus scops*, Appendix II), wildcat (*Felis silvestris*, Appendix II), Eurasian jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), Eurasian woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), beech marten (*Martes foina*), red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and common genet (*Genetta genetta*).

Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals, May 12, 2023; Europa Press, May 12, 2023.⁹³

ITALY

April 28, 2023

San Giorgio di Nogaro, Inter-municipal Territorial Union of Riviera - Bassa Friulana, Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy

As 2 individuals were driving back from Hungary to Campania with a few souvenirs in their car, police stopped them at a tollbooth at 7 a.m. and took them by the scruff of the neck. Inside their car, a sports bag held 4 marmosets (*Callithrix* spp., Appendix I or II) and a separate box held an eclectus parrot (*Eclectus roratus*, Appendix II) – neither of which are native to Hungary or its satellite countries – and in another box were 8 royal poodle puppies. None of the animals, wild or domestic, were microchipped or accompanied by any documents of origin. The 2 traffickers claim that they were gifts for family members. They were charged with smuggling species protected by CITES and animal abuse, and the animals have all been transferred to a veterinary clinic. The monkeys are a cause for concern; they are lethargic and may have been drugged to avoid turbulence and injury during the 600 km journey. Friuli Oggi, May 3, 2023.⁹⁴

May 5-17, 2023

Cocullo, Province of L'Aquila, Region of Abruzzo, Italy



In the space of 2 weeks, the death toll from poisoning in the migration corridor between the Abruzzo National Nature Park and the Sirente Velino Regional Nature Park has risen from 4 griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*, Appendix II) and 2 grey wolves (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) to 9 wolves and 8 griffon vultures, including 2 chicks in nests.

Rewilding Apennines, May 8 and 17, 2023; Il Messaggero, May 18, 2023; Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, June 15, 2023.⁹⁵

End of May 2023

Turin, Metropolitan City of Turin, Region of Piedmont, Italy

Seizure by the Carabinieri from 2 Romanians, aged 24 and 44, of a black-and-white tegu (*Salvator merianae*, Appendix II) and a blue-and-yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) locked in the dark and without freedom of movement.

Quotidiano Piemontese, May 31, 2023.⁹⁶

EASTERN EUROPE

POLAND

End of March 2023

Zabrze and Katowice International Airport, Silesian Voivodeship, Poland



Seizure of 3 postal parcels: one containing stony coral (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II), one containing organ-pipe coral (*Tubiporidae*, Appendix II), and one containing 2 Altai argali horns (*Ovis ammon*, Appendix II) and 2 Himalayan ibex horns (*Capra sibirica*, Appendix III in Pakistan). They came from Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and the United States. The recipients reside in Lesser Poland and Lower Silesia. Tax Administration Chamber in Katowice, March 28, 2023.⁹⁷

RUSSIA

March 24, 2023

Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia



Customs uncovered an international trafficking in conspiracy in parts of animals listed in the Red Book of the Russian Federation. A total of 36 skins and stuffed animals worth 1.4 million rubles (18,570 US\$) were shipped from a foreign country as "souvenirs". Authorities seized stuffed golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*, Appendix II), snowy owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*, Appendix II), griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*, Appendix II) and skins belonging to lions (*Panthera leo*, Appendix I or II), sables (*Martes zibellina*) and arctic foxes (*Vulpes lagopus*).

TASS Russian News Agency, March 24, 2023.⁹⁸

April 6, 2023

**Moscow Domodedovo International Airport,
Moscow Oblast, Russia**

A St. Petersburg resident returned from South Africa via Ethiopia with 350 live South African souvenirs concealed in plastic boxes in his luggage: 14 dwarf chameleons (*Bradypodion* spp., Appendix II), a skink (genus *Trachylepis*), 5 western leopard toads (*Sclerophrys pantherina*) endemic to the Western Cape, and to feed them numerous insects (sowbugs, giant millipedes, beetles, cockroaches) and snails. His "interesting" cargo, estimated to be worth 200,000 rubles (2,600 US\$), did not evade the attention of customs officials. He claimed to have captured them to keep at home in a terrarium, but customs officials soon discovered that he had already listed them for sale online. What's more, he was allegedly connected to a woman who was arrested in December 2022 at another Moscow airport while attempting to smuggle in 150 animals acquired in the Philippines.

Komsomolskaya Pravda in Moscow, April 6, 2023; RBC, April 6, 2023; Alta-Soft, April 7, 2023.⁹⁹



VARIOUS MARINE SPECIES

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

April 18, 2023

Boston, State of Massachusetts, United States of America

Grand Sea Boston LLC has just been fined 18,675 US\$ for violating the Seafood Import Monitoring Program. Grand Sea, which specialises in selling Asian food products, imported abalone and sea cucumbers under false names, deliberately evading the chain of custody for mollusks and echinoderms and the mandatory International Fisheries Trade Permit. The abalones were certainly poached in southern South Africa, in the typical nautical western way of the "Abalones" chapters of "On the Trail".

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, April 18, 2023.¹



May 9 and 12, 2023

San Diego, State of California, United States of America. Border with Mexico.

- May 9. Zifeng "Gabriel" Wu, a Chinese national, is charged with buying, importing and selling totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) swim bladders and other protected marine species such as shells and other parts of hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, Appendix I), seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp., Appendix II) and sea cucumbers (family Holothuroidea). Wu paid accomplices in Mexico to smuggle the protected species into California in their vehicles, along with various other goods, and then sold them around Los Angeles, elsewhere in the United States and in Asia. During the search of his home, 600,000 US\$ in cash was seized, along with 400,000 US\$ worth of protected species.

- May 12. Chin M. Wang, a woman also known as Summer Wang, and an accomplice based in Mexico are charged with completing the sale of 23 totoaba swim bladders for 247,000 US\$ or 10,740 US\$/bladder with an informant working for law enforcement services.

Environmental Crimes Monthly Bulletin, May 15 and September 15, 2023; The San Diego Union-Tribune, May 20, 2023.²

MEXICO

March 27 and April 13, 2023

Mexico

Mexico can continue to sell tarantulas worldwide and reptiles in the United States of America.

- November 13, 2022. During the 19th CITES plenary conference in Panama in November 2022, a resolution was passed requiring Mexico to produce by February 28, 2023 an operational plan to protect the **ZO** (Zero Tolerance Zone, Zona de Tolerancia Cero, 520 km²) and the **VRA** (Vaquita Refuge Area, Área de Refugio para la Protección de la Vaquita marina) in the Sea of Cortez (or Gulf of California) from intrusions by professional or recreational fishermen using nets to catch totoabas (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I), whose swim bladders are sold in China or to expatriate Chinese communities at an average price of 20,000 US\$/kg. Vaquitas (*Phocoena sinus*, Appendix I) and totoabas are listed in Appendix I of CITES. Vaquitas are regularly caught and drowned in totoaba nets. Vaquitas are the smallest porpoises in the world's oceans. They live only here.

- March 27, 2023. Considering that the plan proposed by Mexico is insufficient in the means implemented and in the deadlines for implementation, the CITES Secretariat notifies the 184 CITES contracting parties of a recommendation with immediate effect to suspend all trade with Mexico of species listed in the CITES Appendices.

- April 13, 2023. Considering that the urgently revised action plan proposed by Mexico on April 7, 2023 constitutes a major step forward and meets the requirements of its Standing Committee on Animals, the CITES Secretariat lifts with immediate effect the recommendation to suspend all international trade with Mexico.

- July 24, 2023. At Mexico's request, the CITES Secretariat is circulating the final version of the "totoaba action plan" to all member States. Among the measures promised by Mexico and endorsed by CITES are the reinforcement of surveillance and inspection resources in ports of departure, in the waters of the northern Gulf of Mexico and in ports of arrival, and the coordination of nautical, air, land, and judicial resources to prevent the continuous deployment of gillnets, including from vessels of less than 10.5 meters long, in the **ZO** and **VRA**, the removal of ghost nets, the immersion of concrete blocks to prevent the deployment of dragnets, the permanent updating of the inventory of fishing licences and vessels registered in the northern Gulf of California and, not least and most urgently, to update the inventory of vaquitas, if any remain. Mexico is also committed to reinforcing the effectiveness of its cooperation with China and the United States of America to counter the smuggling of totoaba swim bladders and dismantle the networks.

CITES, March 27, April 13 and July 27, 2023; Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (Mexico), April 13, 2023; Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (Mexico), November 15, 2023.³

Vaquitas, see "On the Trail" n°16 p.16 (ref.2), n°17 p.10 (ref.15) and p.11 (ref.14), n°19 p.15 (ref.1), n°22 p.19, n°27 p.20 (ref.27), n°32 p.301 (ref.7), n°33 p.282 (ref.7).

Contraband totoaba swim bladders, see "On the Trail" n°1 p.3, n°4 p.6, n°5 p.13, n°6 p.6 (ref.1, 2 and 4), n°7 p.5 (ref.5), n°8 p.5 (ref.4 and 5) and p.8 (ref.1), n°10 p.7 (ref.2 and 3) and p.8 (ref.12), n°11 p.6 (ref.2) and p.7 (ref.7), n°15 p.8 (ref.11), n°16 p.8 (ref.12, 13 and 14), n°17 p.4 (ref.1) and p.11 (ref.19), n°18 p.10 (ref.5), n°19 p.13 (ref.20), n°20 p.15 (ref.11), p.16 (ref.13, 14 and 15) and p.22 (ref.3), n°21 p.10 (ref.10, 11, 12 and 13) and p.18 (ref.1), n°22 p.11 and p.12, n°23 p.13 (ref.15, 16 and 17) and p.14 (ref.20), n°24 p.14 (ref.8), n°25 p.15 (ref.16, 18, 19 and 20) and 16 (ref.22, 24 and 25), n°26 p.15 (ref.10), n°27 p.20 (ref.28), n°29 p.172 (ref.18) and p.173 (ref.23), n°30 p.178 (ref.5), p.188 (ref.7), p.189 (ref.14) and p.191 (ref.21), n°31 p.208 (ref.21 and 22) and p.210 (ref.34), n°32 p.301 (ref.7), n°33 p.259 (ref.2), p.263 (ref.16), p.265 (ref.26) and p.282 (ref.7), n°34 p.38 (ref.128), p.232 (ref.2 and 3), p.249 (ref.14), p.250 (ref.17) and p.252 (ref.30), n°35 p.200 (ref.5), p.202 (ref.17 and 18) and p.203 (ref.24).

ASIA

CHINA

Beginning of March 2023

Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

A passenger had 3 giant clam shells (Tridacnidae, Appendix II) and 2 stony corals (Scleractinia, Appendix II) seized from their luggage.

Southern News Network, March 17, 2023.⁴

March 2023

Mangshi, Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China. Border with Myanmar.

Customs seized 10.13 kg of marine by-products including stony coral (Scleractinia, Appendix II) and a 1.65-kg horned helmet (*Cassis cornuta*) from the carry-on luggage of 2 travellers from abroad.

Chinese Customs, April 8, 2023.⁵

April 2023

Fuzhou Changle International Airport, Fujian Province, China

Seizure of 3 bracelets in hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, Appendix I) shell, 4 giant clam (Tridacnidae, Appendix II) shells and 5 bracelets in red coral (genus *Corallium*) from the luggage of incoming passengers.

Chinese Customs, May 6, 2023.⁶

Beginning of May 2023

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Stony coral (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) weighing 900 grams and 2 horned helmets (*Cassis cornuta*) weighing 2.4 kg were removed from an overseas passenger's luggage.

Chinese Customs, May 11, 2023.⁷

INDIA

March 15, 2023

Off Porbandar, Porbandar District, State of Gujarat, India



The *Davana's 2* was fishing off Porbandar, more than 1,000 km from its home port in Tamil Nadu. The Indian coast guard inspected it and discovered 4 bull sharks (*Carcharhinus leucas*, Appendix II) and 22 common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*, Appendix II) in the cold room, obviously harpooned. They could not be declared by the 10 crew members as unintentional catches. They say that the dolphin meat is used to bait whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*, Appendix II), whose fishing is banned but whose meat is still sold under the table in Maharashtra and no doubt in other States in the Union. Sharks and shark fins of several species are regularly trafficked within the Union and smuggled to Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Dubai, and Sri Lanka. In 2022, 500 kg of shark fins seized in 2021 were burned under the supervision of the Manipur State authorities. The shipment was probably destined for China via Myanmar.

Sharks in India, see "On the Trail" n°13 p.10 (ref.11), n°18 p.11 (ref.8), n°22 p.12, n°24 p.14 (ref.10) and p.89 (ref.44), n°25 p.16 (ref.26), n°29 p.174 (ref.26), n°30 p.191 (ref.25), n°35 p.189 (ref.3 and 4) and p.203 (ref.25 and 26).

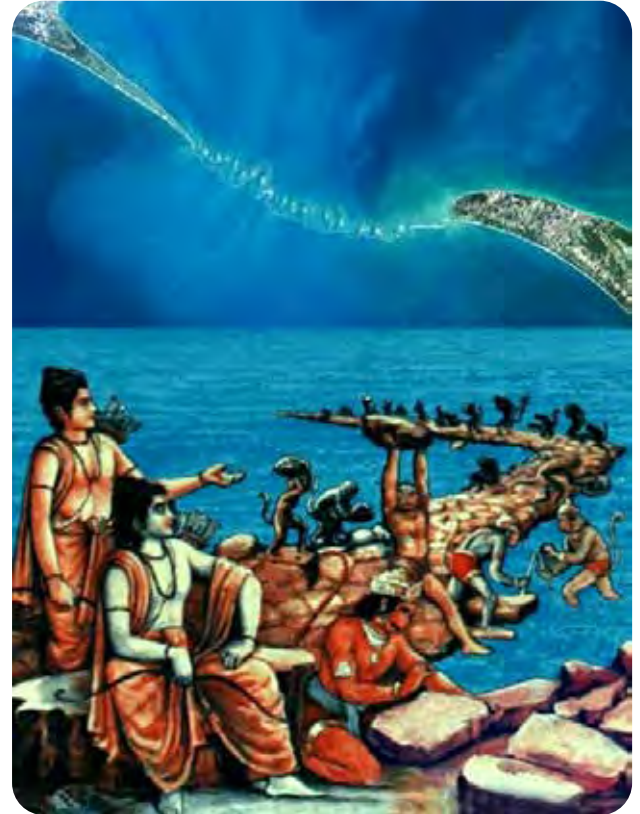
The Indian Express, March 16, 2023; Indiatimes, March 17, 2023; India Today, March 23, 2023; The Times of India, March 23, 2023.⁸

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 26, 2023

Tambaram, Chengalpattu District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

180 conch shells (family Strombidae), 4 kg of corals (class Anthozoa) and 3 fragments of Ceylon ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) were seized in a shop selling religious articles. The authenticity of the corals and conches needs to be checked. There are many fakes on the market.



According to the legend of the *Ramayana*, the king and god Rama used corals to build the Rama Setu (literally "Rama's bridge") linking the island of Pamban and the island of Mannar, to save his wife Sita, who had been abducted by Ravana, king of the island that is now Sri Lanka.

DT Next, April 28, 2023.⁹

INDONESIA

April 5, 2023

Tuanatuk, Rote Ndao Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Lesser Sunda Islands, Indonesia

Officials seized 600 kg of sea cucumbers and shark fins in the fishing village, ready to be shipped without a permit to China, and arrested a local fisherman and a Chinese citizen. The fins are currently being examined to determine the species. Merdeka.com, April 10, 2023.¹⁰

SRI LANKA

March 10, 2023

Negombo Fishery Harbor, Western Province, Sri Lanka

On docks, 15 kg of dried shark meat, 3.5 kg of fins, 14 kg of fresh dolphin meat, and 32 kg of fresh thresher shark meat (*Alopias vulpinus*, Appendix II) and whitetip shark meat (*Carcharhinus longimanus*, Appendix II) were seized. Six arrests.

Sri Lanka Coast Guard, March 10, 2023.¹¹

March 28, 2023

Dikovita Fishery Harbor, Western Province, Sri Lanka

A trawler that just arrived in the port had 8.65 kg of shark jerky, 1 kg of fins and 3 kg of dolphin jerky seized.

Sri Lanka Coast Guard, March 28, 2023.¹²

April 8, 2023

Off Akkaraipattu, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka



Officials recovered 3 kg of sea cucumbers, 8 conch shells (genus *Strombus*), scuba diving accessories and 2 boats, and arrested 4 people.

Sri Lanka Coast Guard, April 8, 2023.¹³

EUROPE

POLAND

Mid-April 2023

Dorohusk, Lublin Voivodeship, Poland. Border with Ukraine.



Officials seized a coral (class Anthozoa) weighing over 300 grams as well as 3 shells, one of which was a giant clam (*Tridacnidae*, Appendix II), from a traveler coming from Ukraine by bus.

Tax Administration Chamber in Lublin, April 14, 2023.¹⁴

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

Between March 1 and 14, 2023

Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia

Authorities confiscated 300 kg of sea cucumbers and 30 shark fins from 2 Indonesian fishing boats and fined them a total of 19,500 dollars (13,000 US\$ for 13 fishermen). The fins, sea cucumbers, fishing gear and boats were seized and destroyed, and the sailors repatriated to Indonesia.

This is a continuation of the operation begun on February 21 (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.157, ref.8).

Australian Fisheries Management Authority, March 14, 2023; Australian Border Force, March 28 and 30, 2023.¹⁵



AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 30, 2023**Los Angeles, State of California, United States of America**

Fines of 50,000 US\$ for Renaissance Aquatics Inc. and Lim Aqua-Nautic Specialist Inc., guilty of fraudulently importing at least 8 packages containing stony corals (Scleractinia, Appendix II) from Viet Nam between 2007 and 2013 (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.197, ref.1). Environmental Crimes Monthly Bulletin, April 2023.¹

**April 3, 2023****San Juan, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, United States of America**

A fine of 10,000 US\$, 300 hours of community service, 5 years of probation with a ban on operating an aquarium business, collecting and possessing aquatic organisms and scuba diving within a 200-mile radius of Puerto Rico. From 2014 to 2019, Adrian Ferrer-Rodriguez, under the cover of his Fish Outlet business in Rio Piedras, sold and exported to Illinois, New Jersey and other States corals of the genus *Ricordea* and zoanthid corals (order Zoantharia) in full knowledge of the Puerto Rican law prohibiting the commercial exploitation of these corals and their shipment outside the archipelago. Environmental Crimes Monthly Bulletin, avril 2023.^{1bis}

**April 4, 2023****Anchorage, State of Alaska, United States of America**

Velery V. Gorbounov, Colorado, Allen William Ockey, California, Derek M. Kelley, Indiana, James Knight, Michigan, Nathan C. Meisner, South Dakota, and Ricky A. Spires, South Carolina, were given 2 years' probation and banned from importing and selling corals. Each must also donate between 2,000 US\$ and 5,000 US\$ to a Philippine NGO dedicated to coral reef restoration. Between 2017 and 2018, they recruited a diver in the Philippines to illegally collect the corals and mail them under false names to Alaska, USA. They were then resold online by retailers across the country. Philippine outfitter Glenn Albert Binoya was charged by the Philippine courts after the US Fish and Wildlife revelations, but died before his trial could begin. See "On the Trail" n°36 p.203 (ref.1). U.S. Attorney's Office - District of Alaska, April 7, 2023.²



ASIA

CHINA

Beginning of March 2023**Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China**

Customs seize 4 stony corals (Scleractinia, Appendix II) from a passenger's luggage returning from abroad. Total weight: 2.79 kg. Chinese Customs, March 10, 2023.³

March 2023**Fangcheng Port, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China**

Customs seized 2 stony corals (Scleractinia, Appendix II) weighing a total of 1.315 kg from a crew member's suitcase aboard a foreign cargo ship that just arrived at the port. Chinese Customs, March 15, 2023.⁴

March 19, 2023**Riyue Bay, Wanning, Hainan Province, China**

A small naval battle took place overnight in Riyue Bay between customs and 2 boats that tried to escape, while plastic crates full of coral were thrown into the sea. Several were recovered by police. Two arrests.

Beijing Youth Daily, March 22, 2023.⁵

March 2023**Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China**

Customs seized 8 fragments of stony coral (Scleractinia, Appendix II) (580 grams) in a passenger's suitcase. Chinese Customs, March 26, 2023.⁶

March 2023

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of 3 red coral necklaces (genus *Corallium*) weighing a total of 67.88 grams in a package declared to contain "pearl necklaces" which was sent from abroad.

Chinese Customs, March 28, 2023.⁷

April 2023

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of 348 pieces of jewellery with red coral (genus *Corallium*) inlays in a package from abroad: earrings, necklaces, bracelets, brooches... weighing a total of 1,085.7 grams.

Global Times, April 29, 2023.⁸

April 2023

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Customs seized 13 pieces of stony coral (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) weighing 4.1 kg from an overseas passenger's luggage.

Chinese Customs, May 8, 2023.⁹

April 2023

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of 44 pieces of red coral (genus *Corallium*) jewellery, totalling 432.2 grams, from a parcel said to contain "make-up remover".

Chinese Customs, May 8, 2023.¹⁰

Beginning of May 2023

Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China

Two kg of stony coral (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) seized.

Chinese Customs, May 10, 2023.¹¹

May 2023

Port of Tianjin, China

Miraculous catch! Seizure of a stony coral (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) (106.49 grams) inside a package transported by container. Tianjin is the world's 7th largest port.

Tjyun.com, May 30, 2023.¹²

May 2023

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Customs recovered 22 stony coral (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) fragments weighing 1,185 grams from travellers' luggage from abroad.

Chinese Customs, May 11, 2023.¹³

May 2023

Nanjing Lukou International Airport, Jiangsu Province, China

Stony coral (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) weighing 3.15 kg seized from the luggage of an overseas passenger.

Chinese Customs, May 25, 2023.¹⁴

May 2023

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of 20 pieces of stony coral (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) wrapped in black plastic bags from the luggage of an overseas passenger. Total weight: 251 grams.

Chinese Customs, May 26, 2023.¹⁵

EUROPE

FRANCE

March 10, 2023

Brest, Department of Finistère, France

Handover by customs of 12 stony corals (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) (7.5 kg) to Océanopolis, an aquarium and scientific culture centre dedicated to the ocean. The corals, from Polynesia, had been seized in February 2020. They were offered for sale on Leboncoin and eBay.

French Customs, March 10, 2023.¹⁶

eBay

POLAND

Beginning of March 2023

Gdańsk International Airport, Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland



Seizure of 8 stony corals (*Scleractinia*, Appendix II) from a woman returning from Egypt.

Tax Administration Chamber in Gdańsk, March 15, 2023.¹⁷

RUSSIA

Beginning of March 2023

Aéroport International de Novossibirsk-Tolmachevo, Oblast de Novossibirsk, Russie

23 fragments of coral seized from the luggage of a resident of Novokuznetsk. He was returning from Dubai.

Virtual Customs, March 6, 2023; BFM-Novosibirsk, March 10, 2023.¹⁸

SLOVAKIA

Beginning of March 2023

Bratislava International Airport, Bratislava Region, Slovakia

Seizure of a fragment of stony coral (Scleractinia, Appendix II). Agents from Customs, the Ministry of the Environment, the Nature Protection Service and the Environmental Inspectorate were assisted by a detector dog.

Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, March 30, 2023.¹⁹

April 14, 2023

Bratislava International Airport, Bratislava Region, Slovakia

Attempts to import corals (class Anthozoa) from Egypt have resumed since the beginning of the year, following a post-Covid lull.

- 4 coral fragments found inside an Austrian passenger's luggage coming from Hurghada.

- A customs dog detects a coral fragment inside a 39-year-old Slovakian passenger's luggage, also from Egypt.

Financial Directorate of the Slovak Republic, April 14, 2023.²⁰

GIANT CLAMS, QUEEN CONCHES, GOOSENECK BARNACLES, DATE MUSSELS, HORNEDED HELMETS...

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Beginning of March 2023

State of Florida, United States of America

Seizure of around 136 kg of queen conch (*Strombus gigas*, Appendix II) and stone crabs (genus *Menippe*) in the middle of fish on a fishing vessel from the Bahamas.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, March 14, 2023.¹

ASIA

CHINA

Beginning of March 2023

Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China

Customs found a 1.375-kg queen conch (*Strombus gigas*, Appendix II) shell inside a package from abroad. X-ray left no doubt as to the nature of the merchandise.

Chinese Customs, March 9, 2023.²

March 2023

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

A 1.6-kg queen conch (*Strombus gigas*, Appendix II) shell is seized from an overseas passenger's luggage.

Chinese Customs, March 22, 2023.³

March 2023

Fuzhou Changle International Airport, Fujian Province, China

Seizure of a 1.6-kg horned helmet (*Cassis cornuta*) from the luggage of an overseas passenger.

Chinese Customs, March 26, 2023.⁴

March 2023

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of a horned helmet (*Cassis cornuta*) weighing 1.975 kg and 2 giant clam shells (Tridacnidae, Appendix II) weighing 6 kg from the suitcase of an overseas passenger.

Chinese Customs, April 4, 2023.⁵



March 2023
Beijing-Daxing International Airport, Beijing Autonomous Municipality, China

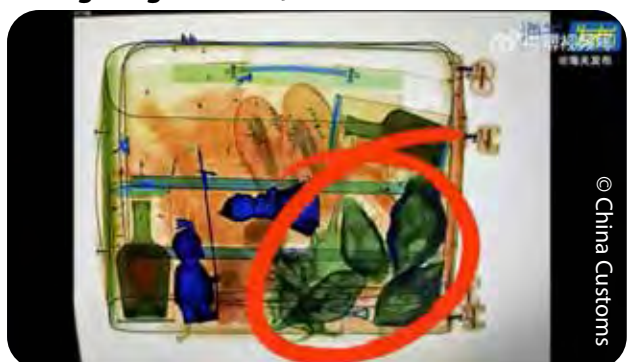


2.23 kg of giant clam shell bracelets, pearls, and other items (Tridacnidae, Appendix II) hidden in boxes of food supplements were seized from the luggage of an overseas passenger. Chinese Customs, April 6, 2023.⁶

Beginning of April 2023
Fuzhou Changle International Airport, Fujian Province, China

Passengers from abroad had a horned helmet (*Cassis cornuta*) and a triton's trumpet shell (*Charonia tritonis*) seized from their luggage. Total weight: 2.234 kg. Chinese Customs, April 12, 2023.⁷

April 2023
Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China



An overseas passenger had 4 giant clam (Tridacnidae, Appendix II) shells seized from his luggage. Chinese Customs, April 17, 2023.⁸

Beginning of May 2023
Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

A passenger from abroad could not get 5 giant clam shell bracelets and 3 giant clam shell pendants (Tridacnidae, Appendix II) past customs. Total weight: 1.27 kg. Chinese Customs, May 11, 2023.⁹

May 10, 2023
Nanjing Lukou International Airport, Province du Jiangsu

Customs confiscated 4 giant clam shell (Tridacnidae, Appendix II) items weighing 325 grams from an overseas passenger's luggage. Chinese Customs, May 16, 2023.¹⁰

May 2023
Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure of a fluted giant clam (*Tridacna squamosa*, Appendix II) shell (3.944 kg) in the luggage of a passenger from abroad. Chinese Customs, May 25, 2023.¹¹

EUROPE

SPAIN

Beginning of May 2023
Illa Gaianda, Province of A Coruña, Autonomous Community of Galicia, Spain

An eventful interception by the Guardia Civil of Arteixo in collaboration with the Cofradía (fishermen's guild) of La Coruña, which dispatched a boat and fishery guards to seize 15 kg of gooseneck barnacles (*Pollicipes pollicipes*) and arrest 3 poachers. La Voz de Galicia, May 8, 2023.¹²

FRANCE

REPEATED OFFENCE
May 3 and 5, 2023
Saint-Gildas-de-Rhuys and Vannes, Department of Morbihan, France



Cesar Mugica Teja, a Spanish national, was sentenced with immediate appearance to one year's jail under a detention warrant and one year's suspended jail, to a fine of 15,000 € (16,560 US\$), banned from entering France for 5 years and ordered to pay 13,000 € (14,350 US\$) to the departmental and regional fisheries committees for poaching 188 kg of gooseneck barnacles (*Pollicipes pollicipes*) with a market value of 37,000 € or 40,855 US\$ and 215 US\$/kg. Teja has already been convicted 12 times by the Spanish courts for illegal fishing, and in Brittany he has already been convicted 3 times for gooseneck barnacle trafficking. Since his arrival from Santander at the beginning of April, he had been trailed by the police. As a Gendarmerie maritime patrol boat approached, Teja tried to flee with all lights off in his rubber boat. At the same time, a car was driving along the quayside with its lights off. Two of Teja's companions were also arrested.

Gendarmerie of Morbihan, May 5, 2023; Le Télégramme, May 5, 2023; French Navy, May 15, 2023.¹³

ITALY

April 27, 2023

Trani, Province of Barletta-Andria-Trani, Region of Apulia, Italy

Officials seized 11.5 kg of date mussels (*Lithophaga lithophaga*, Appendix II) and the very chisels and hammers used to extract them from cracks in limestone rocks. The coastguards are worried: mollusc thefts are on the rise, often by gangs already known to the law for common crimes. Fishmongers and caterers will buy a kilo for 50 € (54 US\$/kg). The species is endangered, and its growth is infinitely slow. It takes 15 to 30 years to reach 5 cm in diameter and sexual maturity. Officials arrested 2 people and threw the loot back into the sea in front of the 2 poachers.

TraniViva, April 27, 2023.¹⁴

POLAND

March 7, 2023

Lublin, Lublin Voivodeship, Poland



Seizure of a queen conch shell (*Strombus gigas*, Appendix II) over 20 cm long in a parcel from the United States.

Tax Administration Chamber in Lublin, March 10, 2023.¹⁵

RUSSIA

April 2023

Novosibirsk Tolmachevo International Airport, Novosibirsk Oblast, Russia



Seizure of a giant clam shell (*Tridacna* spp., Appendix II) from the luggage of a woman returning from Sri Lanka. A similar seizure was made in February.

Sibkray.ru, May 16, 2023.¹⁶

ABALONES



Black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*). Photo oddcolo54

Haliotis spp.

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

March 1, 2023

Between Humansdorp and Saint Francis Bay, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Seizure of 2,108 abalones and scuba-diving equipment by SAPS canine brigades and private security guards in Humansdorp and Port Elizabeth. Arrest of 8 suspects who were also hiding in the thicket.

SAPS, March 3, 2023.¹

March 18, 2023

Muizenberg, Western Cape Province, South Africa

This Saturday, SAPS harvest on the N7:

- Seizure of 2,000 tablets of mandrax and methamphetamine worth over 16,000 US\$.
- Seizure of 194 abalones and arrest of 5 suspects aged between 23 and 45.

SAPS, March 19, 2023.²

March 21, 2023

Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Seizure of 3,460 abalones in 25 bags in the bushes at around 4 a.m., following an alert about divers operating in the Seaview area. The value of the batch is estimated to be worth 1,008,000 rand (54,675 US\$ or 16 US\$/ abalone). Diving equipment was also seized. No arrests have been made.

SAPS, March 21, 2023.³

March 22, 2023

Reddesburg, Free State Province, South Africa



Seizure of 700 abalones in 16 garbage bags in the sedan traveling from Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, to Bloemfontein, Free State Province (700 km). Arrest of the 26-year-old driver. SAPS, March 23, 2023.⁴

March 28 and April 11, 2023
Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa



- Following an alert on the Anti-Corruption Hotline (08600 701 701) and a 6-month investigation, the elite South African Police raided the premises of the Maitland flying squad (a suburb of Cape Town) and arrested 6 police officers. They are accused of reselling seized abalones that had not been declared to higher ups, and of transporting batches of drugs in police cars on behalf of a gang.

- Nolisihdo Carol Kondlo and Bayanda Ernest Matiwane were released on bail of 5,000 rand (280 US\$). The parole of the other suspects will be considered at a later date.

SAPS, March 28, 2023; Independent Online, April 13, 2023.⁵

April 11, 2023
Between Hermanus and Gansbaai, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Wandile Makwra was arrested for illegal possession of abalone near Jeffreys Bay on September 16, 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.203, ref.10). He was released on bail, yet failed to appear in court on September 22, 2022. He was arrested again at a roadside checkpoint on Route 43 between Hermanus and Gansbaai by the ORSU (Overstrand Rural Safety Unit).

Western Cape Government, April 13, 2023.⁶

April 18, 2023
Blaauwberg Nature Reserve, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Clean-up operation in the nature reserve, collecting garbage bags full of rotten abalone and hundreds of empty shells. The nature reserve is used as a shelling area for poached abalone. Melkbosstrand CSS (Community Safety and Support) members thank the police for keeping an eye on their vehicles during the clean-up operation.

Community Safety and Support, April 18, 2023.⁷



April 23, 2023
Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa



The Hawks raided an abalone processing plant in the suburbs of Century City after seizing 7 bags in an SUV, driven by a foreigner, and arresting 5 South African suspects in the following vehicle. The entire confiscation is valued at 2.8 million rand or 155,000 US\$.

Independent Online, April 25, 2023; SAPS, April 25, 2023.⁸

April 26, 2023
Jeffreys Bay, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

At half past midnight, 12 poachers between the ages of 19 and 38 were arrested while returning from sea with full bags. Officials confiscated 2,047 abalones from them as well as their diving equipment, altogether worth an estimated 409,400 rand or 22,685 US\$ and 11 US\$ per abalone.

SAPS, April 28, 2023.⁹

REPEATED OFFENCE

May 2, 2023
Graff-Reinet, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa



Another all-night rodeo between SAPS and the abalone golden boys. A Porsche Cayenne and a Toyota Camry altogether carried 9,398 abalones (19 US\$/abalone). The chase lasted over an hour until police created a roadblock at the Graff-Reinet entrance, forcing the Camry to swerve to the side of the road and then the Cayenne's passengers to flee into the bushes. Only the 2 drivers were arrested.

SAPS, May 3, 2023; Community Against Abalone Poaching (CAAP), May 4, 2023.¹⁰

May 3, 2023

Between Hartenbos and Klein Brakrivier, Western Cape Province, South Africa

SAPS seized 407 shucked abalones (9 US\$ each) as well as diving and fishing equipment belonging to the 4 suspects, ages 18 to 25. SAPS, May 4, 2023.¹¹

May 10, 2023

Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Attempted escape and arrest of a driver and passenger, and 936 abalones (11 US\$/each) in garbage bags. SAPS, May 12, 2023.¹²

May 11, 2023

Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Thanks to cooperation among the Border Security Crime Intelligence, K9 Unit, Anti-Gang Unit, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Affairs and the metropolitan police, an abalone cooking workshop was raided and shut down. Officials recovered 26,169 abalones, valued at 42 US\$ per specimen, as well as bags of salt, racks, gas bottles, burners, fans, pots, chemicals and a generator. "All the arrested suspects will be appearing in their respective magistrate courts soon."

SAPS, May 12, 2023.¹³

May 11, 2023

Kariega, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa



After local residents complained of an odour, police interrupted 2 men and a woman, between 30- and 50-years-old, while cooking abalone and seized 4,274 specimens.

SAPS, May 12, 2023.¹⁴

FAMILY AFFAIRS

May 11, 2023

Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

The DPCI (Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation) and Public Order Policing Unit raided a house on Whiteleaf Avenue and seized 1,674 abalones, worth 17 US\$ each. Jaydon Barnard, 18, Duncan Brown, 23, Brendon Barnard, 24, Jason Nason, 27, Dean Bower, 31, Zelko Barnard, 33, Nasseem Matthews, 39, Zulin Chen, 42, Louis Barnard, 43, and Johan Abraham Barnard, 67, were all remanded in custody.

SAPS, May 12 and 13, 2023; The Herald (South Africa), May 16, 2023.¹⁵

May 18, 2023

Bloemfontein, Free State Province, South Africa

Acting on a tip, a mobile intervention unit and the police raided an apartment and discovered 782 drying abalones in one room, and a 51-year-old man - whose nationality was not disclosed in the police statement - hiding under a bed in another. Bloemfontein, 420 km from the sea, confirms its role as an inland staging post for national and international abalone trafficking.

SAPS, May 19, 2023.¹⁶

May 29, 2023

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Police recovered 2,055 dried abalones from Jian Liang Wu's Mercedes and an additional 464 kg inside his sheds, bearing an estimated value of 2.8 million rand or 153,470 US\$ and 330 US\$/kg. Wu was released on bail of 20,000 rand or 1,000 US\$! His trial is to follow, if he doesn't vanish into thin air. Independent Online, May 30, 2023; News24, June 7, 2023.¹⁷

End of May 2023

Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa



Ping Wei received a 4-year suspended prison sentence and was fined 100,000 rand (5,480 US\$) for illegally operating a seafood processing and marketing workshop, and for possessing large quantities of abalone. The case dates back to July 28, 2021 (see "On the Trail" n°33 p.253, ref.20).

Independent Online, June 1, 2023.¹⁸



End of May-early June 2023

Hermanus, Western Cape Province, South Africa

The Overstrand dog squad makes life difficult for traffickers. A suspect was caught in possession of 2.7 kg of compressed cannabis, as well as 4,108 abalones in a car. Total value: 2 million rand, or over 100,000 US\$, and 24 US\$ per abalone. Politicsweb, June 7, 2023.¹⁹

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

April 2023

Los Angeles, State of California, United States of America

Young Jun Kim, manager of the Korean district boutique Galleria Market, was, alongside his financial partners, fined 174,242 US\$ for importing at least 797 undeclared disk abalones (*Haliotis discus*) from South Korea via Los Angeles International Airport between April 2018 and August 2019. They also must pay the CDFW (California Department of Fish and Wildlife) 4,757 US\$ to reimburse investigation costs and donate 20,000 US\$ to the CalTIP (Californians Turn in Poachers and Polluters) program.

The importation of any non-native abalone species into California is banned so as to avoid introducing exotic and invasive species into marine environments, as well as any exotic parasites or diseases. California's Asian communities still show strong demand for abalone, but 8 endemic abalone species have declined due to excessive recreational and professional fishing, poaching, and the disappearance of seaweed, which is vital to their habitats. The white abalone (*Haliotis sorenseni*) and the black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*) are federally listed endangered species. The disk abalones illegally imported by Galleria Market don't exactly have a better fate. On the islands of Jeju in South Korea, Hokkaido in Japan and Sakhalin in Russia, they are subject to intense predation, despite being farmed in their natural ranges and in Chile where they were imported.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife, April 12, 2023; The Korea Daily (US), April 18, 2023.²⁰



ASIA

CHINA

March 2, 2023

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Border Post, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Hong Kong and Macau.

Twenty kilos of abalone seized from a vehicle. Chinese Customs, March 7, 2023.²¹

TAIWAN

November 2022 to January 2023, April 18, 2023 Matsu Islands, Lienchiang County, Taiwan

The Democratic Progressive Party revealed that 11 tonnes of abalone (110,000 specimens based on a weight of 100 grams) were imported from the Matsu Islands, a Taiwanese outpost 30 km from mainland China. The Matsu Islands, with a population of 10,000, lack any industrial activity pertaining to capturing or breeding abalones. The PDP concluded after an investigation that the abalones were of Chinese origin, and that they had simply been "Taiwanized" by traveling to Matsu. This little bombshell is alarming given that the government is imposing an embargo on abalone importation to help protect Taiwan's abalone industry. Just a few years ago, consuming a cheap bundle of abalone from China was dangerous because of its excessive content of nitrofurans, an antibiotic that is reputed to be carcinogenic.

Liberty Times Net, April 19, 2023; Timenews, April 19, 2023.²²

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

Mid-March 2023

Brighton, State of Victoria, Australia

Green Point, the hot spot for abalone poaching. After the arrest on New Year's Eve 2023 of 4 men who had just caught more than 300 abalones (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.227, ref.24), it was an individual's turn to be caught. He was returning from the foreshore with 469 abalones in his underwater scavenger's bag, 420 of which were under the minimum authorized size of 10 cm, in one night, whereas the regulatory catch in 24 hours for one recreational fisher is 5 abalones.

Victorian Fisheries Authority, March 19 and 20, 2023.²³

NEW ZEALAND

Mid-April 2023

Port MacDonnell, State of South Australia, Australia



A recreational diver was fined 1,000 \$ (670 US\$) and ordered to pay 2,708 \$ (1,810 US\$) in legal and other costs for holding 4 blacklip abalones (*Haliotis rubra*) at the top of the beach, 3 of which were smaller than the legal size (13 cm), for not having a ruler to measure his catch, and for refusing to state his identity and address. The SE Voice, April 18, 2023.²⁴

Week of May 1, 2023

Geelong, State of Victoria, Australia



The couple whose exploits were recounted in "On the Trail" n°38 p.227 (ref.23) have suffered the wrath of the law. All their abalone-catching equipment, including the 6-metre-long boat, was confiscated for the benefit of the State. The total value is 55,000 dollars (36,425 US\$). The man was fined 2,000 dollars (1,325 US\$), while the woman had to make a donation of 1,000 dollars (660 US\$) to the court fund.

Victorian Fisheries Authority, May 10, 2023.²⁵

Mid-May 2023

Batemans Bay, State of New South Wales, Australia



Charles Nye is sentenced to 2 years' community corrections order, 250 hours' community service and a fine of 3,000 dollars (1,985 US\$) for illegally harvesting 200 abalones. Claiming his Aboriginal status, Charles Nye said he had wanted to organise a party and banquet to celebrate his daughter's 30th birthday. "I thought it was a beautiful idea because it brings all my family and the community together, to have a good laugh and a drink." The court ruled that this party could not be considered as an aboriginal ritual and cultural practice and pointed out that 157 of the 200 contentious abalones were below the legal size. In court, Mr Nye swept aside this alleged departure from the norm. "I measure the size of the abalone with my hand in accordance, which is a traditional practice. In fact, you take what you think will provide for your family and friends and elders." At the time of his arrest, Nye had threatened one of the officers. "Stop being such a joker, or I'll punch you in the fucking head."

ABC News, May 16, 2023.²⁶

March 15, 2023

Blenheim, Marlborough Region, New Zealand



A clandestine collector of pāua (the vernacular name for abalone) was sentenced to 7 months' imprisonment for collecting 249 in a few hours, whereas the daily limit for a non-professional fisherman is 5. Nearly half his catch was below the legal size. At wholesale, Robert Jason Guild could have made around 2,000 dollars (1,360 US\$) and at retail around 8,300 dollars (5,650 US\$). To escape arrest in flagrante delicto in the early hours of December 11, 2021, near the Cape Campbell lighthouse, the poacher pulled out all the stops, without success, as Howard Reid, Fisheries New Zealand regional manager, recounts: "He went to the trouble of leaving the pāua in the water, packed in suitcases and using binoculars to check whether he was under surveillance, before returning to collect it. He also removed the licence plates from his vehicle to evade possible identification. Clearly, he knew what he was doing was illegal.

Mr. Guild was seen reversing his vehicle into the water to retrieve the suitcases, before driving towards Marfells Beach and a fisheries checkpoint. When he realized it was a checkpoint, he quickly turned around, driving quickly back to the sea, entering the water in his clothes, and attempting to empty the suitcases of pāua into the chest-deep water.

Despite being directed to stop what he was doing by fishery officers, he ignored them and continued to dump the pāua. He then fled the scene but with the assistance of the police, we caught up with him along the beach.

Two recreational fishers assisted fishery officers by recovering the cases from the water. One case was zipped and full of pāua with the rest recovered from the sandy bottom."

Ministry for Primary Industries, March 15, 2023.²⁷

REPEATED OFFENCE

May 16, 2023

Porirua, Wellington Region, New Zealand



Sentencing of 64-year-old Teotulo Tuala to 10 months' house arrest for storing 302 pāua, the vernacular name for abalone, in a freezer and burying thousands of abalone shells in his yard. Mr Tuala was banned from all fishing activities from December 2018 to December 2021 due to several previous convictions for breaching fisheries regulations. In June 2021, he was arrested once again by fisheries officers. He was carrying 95 abalones that he had just harvested in Camp Bay. His diving equipment and Nissan vehicle were confiscated for the benefit of the State.

Ministry for Primary Industries, May 17, 2023.²⁸

SEA CUCUMBERS AND SEA URCHINS



White spot cucumber (*Holothuria poli*). Photo Frédéric André

Sea cucumbers: *Holothuria fuscogilva*, *Holothuria nobilis* and *Holothuria whitmaei* (teatfish): Appendix II. *Isostichopus fuscus*: Appendix III in Ecuador.

AFRICA

SENEGAL

March 5, 2023

Blaise Diagne International Airport, Thiès Region, Senegal

Seizure of 23 kg of dried sea cucumbers from the luggage of a Senegalese passenger traveling from Morocco. The consignee was summoned to the scene and, after an undisclosed transaction, was released at the same time as the consignor.

EAGLE Senegal, March 2023.¹

March 30, 2023

Blaise-Diagne International Airport, Thiès Region, Senegal

Two Senegalese nationals attempted to export 50 kg of sea cucumbers belonging to species listed in CITES Appendix II and were seized by customs with expert support from Eagle Senegal. The estimated value is 82,000 US\$ (1,640 US\$/kg).

EAGLE Senegal, March 2023.²

SEYCHELLES

April 16 and 26, 2023

Republic of Seychelles

The Seychelles archipelago covers an Exclusive Economic Zone of 1.4 million km² in the Indian Ocean, with islands spanning over 1,000 km apart from north to south. Boarding and securing foreign crews, escorting suspicious fishing vessels to safe havens, and seizing and destroying seafood caught in the ever-increasing IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing operations pose a major challenge for the efficient yet undersized navy. An increasing number of old wooden fishing vessels from Madagascar and the Comoros, 1,000 and 1,500 km from the main island of Mahé, with large crews on board and abundant stolen sea cucumbers are being spotted. These vessels are fragile, and one of them from the Madagascar archipelago sank while being towed a long-distance to Mahé. The crew had previously been repatriated to Madagascar.

In early May, the 56 Malagasy sailors caught illegally fishing in Seychelles waters in April were repatriated to Madagascar. For the time being, diplomatic channels are working smoothly and effectively.

Seychelles News Agency, April 21 and 27, 2023; 2424.mg, May 9, 2023; Réunion la 1ère, May 11, 2023.³

AMERICA

MEXICO

May 12, 2023

Los Petenes Biosphere Reserve, State of Campeche, Mexico

Dismantling of a clandestine sea cucumber cooking workshop on the upper beach. Seizure of 9,648 specimens, 6 gas bottles, cooking pots, stoves, fuel cans and a boat.

EstamosAqui.mx, May 13, 2023; Profepa, June 2, 2023.⁴

VENEZUELA

April 2, 2023

Taguantar, Nueva Esparta State, Venezuela

On a beach near the fishing village, 34 kg of sea cucumbers were seized. Six suspects attempted to flee before being caught and brought before the courts, who ordered their provisional detention at the National Guard in Juan Griego, based on the evidence and the arrest report.

Public Ministry of Venezuela, May 19, 2023.⁵

ASIA

CHINA

April 4, 2023

Off Fan Lau, Lantau Island, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China

The customs coastguard boarded a vessel and escorted it to the Tuen Mun River Trade Terminal. There they found 9 sailors on board with 49 containers, 2 of which were declared to contain red wine and sports shoes. Upon opening the containers, customs and tax officials discovered 5.5 tonnes of pig offal, 2.5 tonnes of beef, 2.5 tonnes of dried sea cucumbers and an assortment of electronic equipment with a total estimated value of 11 million Hong Kong dollars (1.4 million US\$). The local customs and tax services commander says that the smugglers chose the Hong Kong/Macao/China mainland sea route (80 km) to evade the frequent checks between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, mainland China (30 km). At the end of March, customs officers on Lantau Island seized 28 packages of lobster meat worth 560,000 Hong Kong dollars (71,640 US\$), but were unable to immediately arrest the 7 suspects.

Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, April 8, 2023; South China Morning Post, April 8, 2023.⁶

INDIA

March 7, 2023

Thoothukudi, Thoothukudi District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

A man on a scooter was carrying 2 bags with a total of 25 kg of sea cucumbers when he was stopped in the early hours of the morning by 2 forest officials on a surveillance mission.

The Times of India, March 7, 2023.⁷

March 25, 2023

Akkaraipettai, Nagapattinam District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Seizure of 600 kg of cooked sea cucumbers in a shed in the fishing village (10,000 inhabitants).

The Hindu, March 25, 2023.⁸

March 31, 2023

Vedalai, Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India



The districts of Mandapam and Ramanathapuram are at the heart of trafficking. Seizure of 250 kg of cooked sea cucumbers in a South Street hideout. They were destined to be smuggled by sea to Sri Lanka.

Asian News International, March 31, 2023.⁹

April 5, 2023

Near Velankanni, Nagapattinam District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

T. Kesavan, 20, and T. Singaravel, 27, were arrested in possession of 400 kg of cooked sea cucumbers inside their van, worth an estimated 3 million rupees or 36,548 US\$ and 91 US\$/kg. The sea cucumbers were at the bottom of 30 polystyrene boxes filled with fish.

The Times of India, April 7, 2023.¹⁰

April 15, 2023

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

An operation carried out by the Coast Guard revealed 105 kg of sea cucumbers, worth 4,725,000 rupees or 57,562 US\$ or 548 US\$/kg.

Indian Coast Guard, April 15, 2023; The Hindu, April 17, 2023.¹¹

SRI LANKA

April 19, 2023

Rameswaram, Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Impunity is over for Villayutham and his clan. His assets have been seized under the Money Laundering Act: homes, agricultural plots, and a hotel valued at almost 57 million rupees (nearly 700,000 US\$). From 2008 to the end of 2021, he made his fortune in the sea cucumber trade, successively operating VVN Sea Foods, VV Agency, VV Sea Shell Mart, and VVI Dry Fish Process as a front. He was arrested and taken into custody on March 13. See "On the Trail" n°32 p.271 (ref.10). The Print, March 17, 2023; Daijiworld, April 20, 2023.¹²

April 20, 2023

Mandapam, Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India



During the Coast Guard's hovercraft surveillance patrol, a suspicious group was spotted on a beach. Some of the men fled. On land, the coastguards came across a cooking and drying workshop and 115 kg of sea cucumbers in plastic drums and baskets, which were about to be smuggled into Sri Lanka by sea. Value: 5,211,000 rupees (63,483 US\$ or 552 US\$/kg). Indian Coast Guard, April 20, 2023; The Times of India, April 20, 2023.¹³

May 10, 11, 20 and 30, 2023

Edaiyarvalasai, between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi, and Serankottai, Ramanathapuram District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

- Seizure by a patrol of 260 kg of sea cucumbers in 11 bags hidden in shallow water. Estimated value: 12 million rupees or 146,707 US\$ and 564 US\$/kg.
- Night seizure of 200 kg of sea cucumbers not far from the highway.
- Seizure of 550 kg of cooked sea cucumbers at the home of S. Lingam, who had fled, pending smuggling by sea to Sri Lanka.
- Seizure of 250 kg of sea cucumbers being cooked. Four arrests.

Press Information Bureau – Government of India, May 11, 2023; The Hindu, May 11, 2023; The Times of India, May 20 and 31, 2023.¹⁴

March 3, 2023

Mohoththuwarem, North Western Province, Sri Lanka

On the beach, police seized 15 kg of dried sea cucumbers, 1 kg of cardamom, 14 kg of cashew nuts, 10 kg of rice, 248 kg of sugar, 100 kg of wheat flour, 3 kg of dried fish, 270 tins of coffee, 680 assorted cosmetics and 2,930 soaps – ordinary contraband aboard 2 dinghies from India's Tamil Nadu. Sri Lanka Navy, March 4, 2023.¹⁵

March 13, 2023

Off Silawathurai Beach, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Officials arrested 3 men for poaching at night and seized a dinghy, diving equipment and 580 sea cucumbers. Sri Lanka Navy, March 14, 2023.¹⁶

March 13, 2023

Off Vankalai, Northern Province, Sri Lanka



Authorities arrested 5 men during the night who held 234 freshly caught sea cucumbers in their dinghy. Sri Lanka Navy, March 14, 2023.¹⁷

March 22, 2023

Kalmunai, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka



Two poachers were arrested at the top of the beach after returning from a fishing trip with 37 sea cucumbers (*Stichopus ocellatus*) and 6 lobsters. The Sunday Times, March 23, 2023.¹⁸

March 27, 2023

Off Mannar, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

A 52-year-old man was arrested and 230 kg of dried sea cucumbers, diving equipment and a dinghy seized.

Sri Lanka Navy, March 28, 2023.¹⁹

March 30, 2023

Mannar, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

12,700 sea cucumbers seized from a fishing boat.

Sri Lanka Navy, March 31, 2023.²⁰

April 3, 2023

Off Nagar Kovil and Jaffna beach, Northern Province, Sri Lanka



- 1,305 sea cucumbers, 4 boats and diving equipment seized.

- 1,700 sea cucumbers and 2 boats seized.

In the 2 operations, 17 people between the ages of 20 and 50 were apprehended.

Sri Lanka Navy, April 4, 2023.²¹

April 26, 2023

Off Kudirippu, Veththalakerni and Nagar Kovil, Northern Province, Sri Lanka



Officials seized 1,040 sea cucumbers, 5 boats and diving equipment, and arrested 10 men between the ages of 22 and 46.

Sri Lanka Navy, April 27, 2023.²²

May 18, 2023

Off Sinna Arichchalai Island, North Western Province, Sri Lanka

Seizure of 193 kg of dried sea cucumbers, 33,000 bottles of shampoo, 198 balm vials, a battery and other accessories for electrofishing from a boat approaching the coast. Two arrests.

Sri Lanka Navy, May 19, 2023.²³



May 19, 2023

Roddapadu, North Western Province, Sri Lanka

Seizure from a house by the sea of 603 kg of sea cucumbers and 11,520 bottles of shampoo smuggled from the Indian State of Tamil Nadu. Two arrests.

Sri Lanka Navy, May 20, 2023.²⁴

May 30, 2023

Off Nagar Kovil, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Seizure of 110 sea cucumbers from a dinghy and arrest of 3 crewmembers.

Sri Lanka Navy, May 30, 2023.²⁵

EUROPE

SPAIN

May 31, 2023

Cádiz, Province of Cádiz, Autonomous Community of Andalusia, Spain

Authorities confiscated and released roughly 80 kg of sea cucumbers caught by 2 men aboard a recreational fishing boat. Asian restaurant owners support the poaching of sea cucumbers off the Cadiz coast so that they can serve them to customers, extolling their curative and aphrodisiac virtues.

Diario de Cádiz, June 6, 2023.²⁶

ITALY

March 28, 2023

Metropolitan City of Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy

Five fishermen-poachers who specialise in trafficking purple sea urchins (*Paracentrotus lividus*) and white spot cucumbers (*Holothuria poli*) were placed under house arrest. Police seized 58,000 € (over 61,000 US\$) and 5,000 € (5,280 US\$) worth of "work" tools (jet skis, diving suits). The Palermo port authority and tax authorities estimate the gang caught 140,000 sea urchins in 2 years to sell to restaurants in the city and western Sicily, and 137 kg of sea cucumbers, which may have been sold to Chinese communities or sold alongside sea urchins to Sicily's finest restaurants. The gang's income is said to have exceeded 100,000 € (105,540 US\$) a year.

EnnaPress, March 31, 2023; La Repubblica, March 31, 2023; Coast Guard, April 2, 2023.²⁷

Italy

Poaching and seizures of purple sea urchins (24,410) between March 1 and May 31, 2023

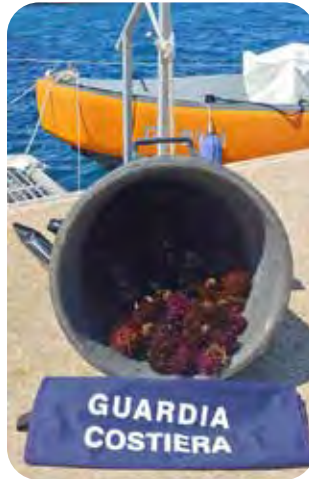


Purple sea urchin (*Paracentrotus lividus*).
Sources, see page 257.



© Alghero Live

March 30, 2023
Protected Marine Area of Capo Caccia - Isola
Piana and Alghero, Province of Sassari,
Autonomous Region of Sardinia



April 11, 2023
Gallipoli, Province of
Lecce, Region of Apulia



April 13, 2023
Sant'Isidoro, Province of Lecce, Region
of Apulia



© Sylvain Le Bris

Purple sea urchin (*Paracentrotus lividus*)



© Guardia Costiera

April 11, 2023
Gallipoli, Province of Lecce, Region of Apulia



© Guardia Costiera

April 19, 2023
Parabita, Province of Lecce, Region of Apulia

Mid-May 2023
Martina Franca, Province of Taranto, Region of Apulia, Italy



1,300 kg of sea cucumbers caught in the Gulf of Taranto were seized in a clandestine workshop run by a Chinese citizen. They were being dried and packaged for smuggling to China. The value of the seizure by the province's financial police is estimated at one million euros (1.1 million US\$ i.e. 846 US\$/kg). What remains to be uncovered is the complicity within the fishing and diving sectors from which benefited the Chinese kingpin. On the basis of 30 grams per dried specimen, the stock represents 43,300 specimens and comes from a considerable network of collectors that undoubtedly extends beyond the Gulf of Taranto. There are around ten species of sea cucumber in the territorial waters of southern Italy and Sicily. Puglia Reporter, May 17, 2023.²⁸

RUSSIA

March 15, 2023
Nakhodka, Primorsky Krai, Russia

2 men are charged with poaching 179 Japanese sea cucumbers (*Apostichopus japonicus*) and 248 scallops (family Pectinidae) in Razboynik Bay with diving equipment in June 2020. A third male accomplice to the offence is not being prosecuted. He partially compensated the environmental damage and paid a fine. Nakhodka Urban District Administration, March 15, 2023.²⁹



May 4, 2023
Slavyanka, Primorsky Krai, Russia

Final and immediate sentencing to one year and 10 months' deprivation of liberty in a general regime corrective colony for 3 "foreigners" who had entered Russian territory illegally with the intention and means, including diving equipment, of catching sea cucumbers and smuggling them. Vostok Media, May 4, 2023.³⁰



REPEATED OFFENCE

May 4, 2023
Artyom, Primorsky Krai, Russia

Indictment of a Vladivostok fishmonger who attempted in July 2021 to export around 170 kg of Japanese sea cucumbers (*Apostichopus japonicus*). The shipment, valued at 7.8 million rubles or 107,240 US\$ and 630 US\$/kg, was seized during a check on a van heading for China. Far East Transport Prosecutor's Office, May 4, 2023; Fishnews, May 4, 2023.³¹

May 16, 2023
Yuzhno-Kurilsk, Kunashir Island, Sakhalin Oblast, Russia



A fisheries inspector has been sentenced to a simple fine of 40,000 rubles (490 US\$) for having, on November 9, 2022, entered into a financial arrangement with the crew of a fishing boat that had exceeded the quota allocated for catching Japanese sea cucumbers (*Apostichopus japonicus*) by 76 kg. On the contrary, in carrying out his duties, the official had to require the release into the sea of the 76 kg of over-quota sea cucumbers. The ecological value was estimated by the fisheries administration at 303,000 rubles (4,935 US\$). The prosecutor and the defendant's lawyer agreed to halt the criminal proceedings, stressing together that his professional experience to date had been commendable, that his confession had facilitated the investigation, that his criminal record was clean, that he was not addicted to narcotics, that he had voluntarily paid for the ecological damage and that he fully acknowledged his guilt. Yuzhno-Kurilsky District Court in Sakhalin Oblast, May 16, 2023.³²

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

May 19, 2023
State of Western Australia, Australia

Boarding of 4 foreign fishing boats in separate operations. The 19 fishermen were looking for sea cucumbers and were able to sail away once their loot was seized. Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), June 7, 2023.³³

SEAHORSES AND PIPEFISHES

ASIA

CHINA

March 9, 2023

Gongbei Border Post, Zhuhai Prefecture, Guangdong Province, China. Border with Macau.

Customs seized 600 dried seahorses weighing 1.3 kg in total that 4 travellers attempted to smuggle into China.

Chinese Customs, March 16, 2023.¹

March 2023

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China



Customs intercepted 3,880 dried seahorses (9.8 kg) in a parcel from abroad.

Chinese Customs, March 18, 2023.²

March 2023

Beijing-Daxing International Airport, Beijing Autonomous Municipality, China

Seizure of 906 dried seahorses weighing a total of 545 grams in the luggage of an overseas passenger.

Chinese Customs, March 25, 2023.³

April 2023

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

Customs seized 877 seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp., Appendix II) in a package from abroad, weighing 3.6 kg.

Chinese Customs, May 8, 2023.⁴

PHILIPPINES

May 2, 2023

Zamboanga International Airport, Province of Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines



Seizure of 45 kg of dried seahorses from a parcel said to contain “second-hand goods”. In the Philippines, seahorses are at the centre of many beliefs. A mixture of herbs and seahorses is said to cure skin and joint diseases. Fishermen on the island of Bohol eat juvenile seahorses before going out to sea. People in Palawan hang them at the entrance to their homes to drive away evil spirits. Seahorses would be a kind of natural Viagra and are sold by the thousands in souvenir shops. On the beaches, children sell them to tourists. The NGO Project Seahorse fills in the picture, confirming that the islanders of Mindanao and Central Visayas use seahorses to treat stomach pains, asthma and hyperactivity.

Philippine News Agency, May 3, 2023; The Manila Times, May 4, 2023.⁵

MARINE OR FRESHWATER FISH



American glass eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) 55 to 65 mm long. Photo Hunterefs

WESTERN AFRICA

SENEGAL

March 29, 2023
Blaise Diagne International Airport, Thiès Region, Senegal



Seizure in the cargo area of 11 packages of dried ray fins from species listed in Appendix II of CITES bound for China. The value of the seizure is estimated by sources to be worth between 307,300 US\$ (558 US\$/kg) and 319,150 US\$ (580 US\$/kg). Souleymane Mbengue, director of the shipping fishing company, is calling for a counter-expertise on which species they are.

The ray species listed in Appendix II of CITES present in Senegal are the giant devil ray (*Mobula mobular*), giant Manta ray (*Mobula birostris*), smoothtail mobula (*Mobula thurstoni*), sicklefin devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*), Atlantic devil ray (*Mobula hypostoma*), African wedgfish (*Rhynchobatus luebberti*), whitespotted guitarfish (*Rhinobatos*

albomaculatus), spineback guitarfish (*Rhinobatos irvinei*), common guitarfish (*Rhinobatos rhinobatos*), and blackchin guitarfish (*Glaucostegus cemiculus*). EAGLE Senegal (March 2023); Senegalese Customs, April 2, 2023.¹

OPERATION BOUCLAGE (OPERATION SHUTDOWN)

April 19 and 21, 2023

Between Dakar and Saint Louis, Louga Region, and Saint Louis, Saint Louis Region, Senegal. Border with Mauritania.

- On the Saint-Louis/Dakar main road, customs officers intercepted a vehicle carrying 1,600 kg of shark fins with an estimated value of 418 million CFA francs (693,700 US\$ or 430 US\$/kg).

- The Saint-Louis river brigade seized 320 kg of shark fins, worth the equivalent of 138,600 US\$ or 430 US\$/kg.

Operation Bouclage had already resulted in Kébémér customs confiscating large quantities of red coral (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.157, ref.1). Besides shark fins and red coral, batches of cannabis unloaded on beaches and taken to secret locations have also been seized as part of Operation Bouclage.

There are 11 shark species in Senegalese waters, all listed in Appendix II, including hammerheads (*Sphyrna* spp.), thresher sharks (*Alopias* spp.), basking sharks (*Cetorhinus maximus*) and whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*).

Senegalese customs, April 23 and May 7, 2023; Le Quotidien (Senegal), April 24, 2023.²

NORTHERN AMERICA

CANADA

April 5 and 15, 2023

Halifax Stanfield International Airport, Province of Nova Scotia, and Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Canada

Seizure of 25 kg of American glass eels (*Anguilla rostrata*) valued at 82,715 US\$ (3,300 US\$/kg). They were bound for Asia. Those that survived the capture and voyage were fattened in Japan or China and killed as adults for the food industry and for eel sushi, which is sold at a very high price in the US and Canada in particular. Glass eels in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec have to contend with harvesting by licenced fishermen, quotas reserved for Indigenous populations, and the omnipresent poachers who are increasingly rushing into estuaries and rivers to satisfy demand from Asian communities and Chinese breeders. The considerable profits made by the illegal trade mean that a kilo of elvers (around 3,330 specimens) sells for around 3,000 US\$ to breeders and their intermediaries. The seizure at Halifax Airport is just a drop in the ocean (although it contained over 83,300 glass eels).

American eels are threatened with extinction and the elvers are under attack from all sides. With extinction looming, Canada is desperately trying to put the brakes on. Violence, neighbourhood disturbances, the risk of night-time brawls, insufficient human control resources, and the influx of both legitimate and illegitimate candidates for the elver catch have forced Ottawa and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to suspend all elver catching activity for 45 days from April 15. Licence holders such as Wine Harbour Fisheries complied with the Minister's order, but expressed their anger as poachers continued to pour into the rivers, mouths, and even streams with their sieves, buckets, dip nets and cars registered in Quebec, Maine, New Hampshire and other US States. As for the Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous populations, some have persisted in catching elvers, relying on traditional and supposedly inalienable food, cultural, social and ceremonial fishing permits. All violators are taking advantage of the strike by Fisheries and Oceans Canada officials, who have long been calling for additional resources to control illegal activities. On May 30, the federal government had no option but to extend the elver catching ban until July 15, pointing out that despite the ongoing strike, fisheries officers had made 110 arrests since April 15 and seized a large amount of fishing gear and 5 vehicles.

CBC/Radio-Canada, April 12, 2023; Fisheries and Oceans Canada, April 15, 2023; Radio-Canada, April 15, 18, 25, and 27, 2023; La Presse canadienne, April 18, 25, and May 30, 2023.³

May 5, 2023

Enfield, Province of Nova Scotia, Canada

During the sine die suspension of the fishery for American glass eels (*Anguilla rostrata*), 113 kg of eel fry were seized from the back of a pick-up truck, an inestimable ecological value and an economic value of 500,000 dollars (367,000 US\$ and 3245 US\$/kg). Between April 15 and May 5, the fisheries police seized 28 dip nets, 46 fyke nets, 4 vehicles, 15,000 dollars (11,000 US\$) in cash, a whole range of elver catching gear and storage devices.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada, May 8, 2023.⁴

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

REPEATED OFFENCE

End of March 2023

State of Washington, United States of America

Agent Anderson at US Fish and Wildlife is informed that a sturgeon (*Acipenser* spp., Appendix II) has been poached in the Toutle, a sub-tributary of the Columbia. He notices a cooler in the suspect's truck with a sturgeon tail sticking out of it, the lid rising and falling with the jerk of the still-alive sturgeon. Anderson goes down to the bank, identifies the fisherman using the clothing profile he was given, and asks how the fishing trip is going. He said it didn't go well as he didn't reel in a single sturgeon, inserting that even if he had, he would have released it immediately. Anderson then invited the fisherman and his companion back to their vehicle, where the fisherman was confronted with his lie. He was subpoenaed, and as Anderson delved into the archives, he realized he was dealing with a repeat offender.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Police, March 29, 2023.⁵

April 9, 2023

South Padre Island, State of Texas, United States of America. Border with Mexico.

The Coast Guard recovered 2 sharks (250 kg each) in a Mexican lancha, a type of speed-boat that fishes by day in Mexican waters or poaches in U.S. waters, and sometimes at night engages in drug trafficking between Matamoros, Mexico, and Corpus Christi, U.S.A.

United States Coast Guard Heartland, April 10, 2023; CBS News, April 12, 2023.⁶



LATIN AMERICA

COSTA RICA

May 17, 2023

Cabo Blanco Marine Management Area, Puntarenas Province, Costa Rica

While longline fishing in the AMMCB (Area Marina de Manejo Cabo Blanco), 27 hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrnidae*, Appendix II) were seized aboard a vessel registered in Puntarenas. In February 2023, the President of the Republic and Ministers of the Environment and Agriculture co-signed a degree prohibiting the capture, transshipment, storage and marketing of scalloped hammerheads (*Sphyrna lewini*, Appendix II), smooth hammerheads (*Sphyrna zygaena*, Appendix II) and great hammerheads (*Sphyrna mokarran*, Appendix II). Sinac, May 17, 2023.¹²

THE CARIBBEAN

HAITI

March 9, 2023

Aerogare Guy Malary, Port-au-Prince, Ouest Department, Haiti



Seizure by customs of 29 packages of eels of the species American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) prior to boarding the private plane with registration number HR-AXL, en route from Honduras to Tocumt, Panama. The final destination of the eels was Toronto, Canada. The plane and cargo are believed to belong to a certain Jean Philippe Chatelain, CEO of Chatelain Tours, which is a travel agency.

General Customs Administration, March 10, 2023; Rezo Nòdwès, March 10, 2023; Haiti Channel Network, March 12, 2023.¹³

April 13, 2023

Nogales, State of Arizona, United States of America. Border with Mexico.

Seizure of 110 kg of totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) swim bladders with a total value of 2.7 million US\$, i.e. 24,540 US\$/kg, inside a package said to contain "frozen fish fillets".

US Customs and Border Protection, June 12, 2023.⁷

End of April 2023

Madison County, State of Illinois, United States of America

Indictment of a Michigan fisherman for catching a pregnant female pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*, Appendix II) at a dam on the Mississippi River. It has been released.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, April 30, 2023.⁸

Beginning of May 2023

Bay County, State of Florida, United States of America

The 2 men filmed fishing for spinner sharks (*Carcharhinus brevipinna*, Appendix II) were found. They had caught 6 specimens, 3 of which were undersized, and had amputated their fins. They have been indicted.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, May 15, 2023.⁹

Beginning of May 2023

Port Canaveral, State of Florida, United States of America

Inspection of a boat. The owner declares that he has no fish on board, but fails to notice the traces of blood on the floor from 3 sharks, including a scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*, Appendix II). He receives a summons.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, May 18, 2023.¹⁰

May 2023

Sauvie Island Wildlife Area, State of Oregon, United States of America

Three men busy themselves with a white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*, Appendix II). One pulls it to shore, the second removes the hook, and the third tries to get it into a bag. A wildlife officer interrupts them amid all this commotion and points out that none of them has thought of the most essential thing: putting the sturgeon back in the water. The first and third men are charged with illegal capture.

Oregon State Police, May 2023.¹¹

THE GLASS EELS OF HAITI

“Nan Bouchi”, the mouth of the Grand-Anse in the Caribbean Sea, is at its greatest agitation on the moonless nights from September to March and sometimes beyond. There are bars serving alcohol, sandwich and ginger tea vendors, and beyond the beaches there are flickering lights. It’s the “dekou” season, the glass eel harvest.

Professionals and laymen newly attracted by the the goose that lays the golden eggs comb the sea with their wooden frames nailed with a piece of mosquito net and sift the glass eels. Good night, bad night, the experienced ones rake in between 15 and 250 grams per night, risking their lives because, although the setting is in a way enchanting, it sometimes happens that, in the middle of a cold night, the fishermen lose their footing while they are trying to go further out to find the glass eels where there is no longer any competition. On the beach, touts working for wholesalers and exporters buy a gram for 200 gourdes

(1.3 US\$). One gram contains 3 to 4 glass eels. In 3 nights, the luckiest and the boldest can catch 1,000 grams of glass eels and earn up to 200,000 gourdes (1,300 US\$) or drown: “l’al Chili” (they leave for Chile). The same scenes are repeated along the 1,500 km of Haitian coastline at the mouths of the Bas-Limbé, Novion, Cap-Haïtien, Borgne, Camp Louise, Saint-Marc, Caracol and Petite-Rivière-de-Nippes.

Back in 2018, the CITES Animal Committee expressed doubts about the traceability of American eels (*Anguilla rostrata*) from Haiti: “American eels originating from the Caribbean were imported into Canada and re-exported. They were sometimes marketed as product of Canada, possibly considered to be a more desirable country of origin than others.” “According to the testimony of an eel broker in Canada, all his competitors go to Haiti, Cuba and the Dominican Republic to buy as many as possible.” Cuba and the Dominican Republic are CITES contracting parties, Haiti is not.

In 2021, the Report on conservation and trade of the American eel in Haiti, written by Jean Anderson Bolivar, spokesman for the “Association Nationale de Protection des ressources Aquatiques” (National Association for the Protection of Aquatic Resources), for UNESCO Oceanography Commission, warns of the loss of this economic resource over the next 20 years if the Haitian authorities do not immediately take measures to restrict access to the biological resource. The seizure at Aerogare Guy Malary seems to be in line with the recommendations of Jean Anderson Bolivar and other experts, and despite a torn and degraded social and political context, an affirmation of the will to put an end to the squandering of the country’s natural wealth.

AyiboPost, December 13, 2019; Report on conservation and trade of the American eel *Anguilla rostrata* in Haiti prepared by Jean Anderson, 2021.¹⁴



©Anderson Jean

Night fishing for elvers in Haiti

CENTRAL ASIA

KAZAKHSTAN

March 1, 2023

Shieli District, Kyzylorda Region, Kazakhstan

Arrest at 2.30 p.m. of 2 men aged 32 and 35 for electrofishing on the Syr-Daria river, which flows into the Aral Sea. The river is polluted by uranium mining residues.

Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, March 3, 2023.¹⁵



Saturday, April 4-Monday, April 6, 2023

Balkhash-Alakol Basin, Almaty Region, Kazakhstan



On the Ili River, which flows into Lake Balkhach, fishery and game wardens spotted 3 powerboats with 6 offenders engaged in electrofishing. They fled after directing torrents of water at the officials’ boat, there to inspect and fine them. On April 6, a rebellious grievance was lodged, endangering public officials and illegal fishing.

Lake Balkhach covers an area of 17,000 km². The main fish species caught are European perch (*Perca fluviatilis*) and carp (*Cyprinus carpio*). Ship sturgeon (*Acipenser nudiventris*, Appendix II) also live there. Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, April 6, 2023.¹⁶

UZBEKISTAN

March 1, 2023

Yangiyer, Sirdaryo Region, Uzbekistan

Officials arrested 2 men caught red-handed electrofishing in the middle of the night. They caught 104 fish including 53 crucian carps (*Carassius gibelio*), 28 wels catfish (*Silurus glanis*), 5 carps (*Cyprinus carpio*), 2 northern pikes (*Esox lucius*) and 2 northern snakeheads (*Channa argus*). Their boat, fishing gear and a battery were seized. Ecological damage is estimated at 86.4 million sums or 7,610 US\$.
Gazeta.uz, March 1, 2023.¹⁷



Night of March 30-31, 2023

Sardoba Reservoir, Sirdaryo Region, Uzbekistan

Between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m., 2 poachers were caught electrofishing and arrested. They caught 242 fish in total. Officials estimated damages at 196,380,000 sums or 17,300 US\$ and seized a canoe, a pair of oars, fishing gear and a battery. The Sardoba reservoir, built between 2010 and 2017 to irrigate crops and with a maximum capacity of 920 million m³, has been infamous since its dam was overflowed on May 1, 2020. The flood destroyed numerous buildings, roads, other means of communication, and crops. Six people died, at least 70,000 were evacuated in Uzbekistan and 31,000 more along the Kazakhstan border. 17 civil servants and officials were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 4 to 10 years on May 10, 2021 for negligence, corruption and violating safety regulations.

Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, April 5, 2023.¹⁸



EASTERN ASIA

CHINA

March 9, 2023

Hong Kong International Airport, China



A busy day at the airport. In 2 different consignments from Bangladesh were 270 kg of fish maw and 50 kg of dried shark fins. The total value is estimated at 300,000 Hong Kong dollars (38,230 US\$). Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, March 13, 2023.¹⁹

March 2023

Wuhan, Hubei Province, China

Declared as "jellied drinks for children", 100 medaka (*Oryzias latipes*) fingerlings stuffed into water pouches were discovered by Wuhan customs in an incoming postal package. Medakas are sought-after by aquarists and considered by Chinese authorities to be an invasive and dangerous species for aquatic fauna. They have a reputation for being "killer fish." Medaka, see "On the Trail" n°32 p.284 (ref.38 and 39) and p.285 (ref.41 and 42) and n°36 p.218 (ref.26). Chinese Customs, March 27, 2023.²⁰

March 2023

Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China

Declared as "non-alcoholic lotion", medaka (*Oryzias latipes*) fingerlings and eggs were discovered alongside an aquatic plant inside a parcel mailed from Japan. Customs officials drew their attention to the polystyrene box protecting the water pouch. Xi'an Customs, April 6, 2023.²¹

March 29, 2023
Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Border Post,
Guangdong Province, China. Border with Hong
Kong and Macau.



Dozens of swim bladders weighing 39.28 kg are seized from the luggage of a group returning from an excursion in Macau.
 Chinese Customs, April 10, 2023.²²

April 2023
Futian Port of Entry, Shenzhen Prefecture,
Guangdong Province, China. Border with Hong
Kong.

Seizure of 26 kg of shark fins which, after expert assessment, were found to come undoubtedly from thresher sharks (*Alopias* spp., Appendix II).
 Chinese Customs, May 1, 2023.²³

April 13, 2023
Hong Kong Special Administrative
Region, China

The recipient of a parcel sent from Mexico in March 2022 containing 6 totoaba swim bladders (*Totoaba macdonaldi*, Appendix I) (see "On the Trail" n°35 p.202, ref.18) was sentenced to 6 months in prison.

Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, April 13, 2023; The Standard (Hong Kong), April 13, 2023.²⁴



OPERATION CLEAR SKY
Beginning of May 2023
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region,
China

Seizure of 5 tonnes of dried shark fins from 4 containers. Estimated value: 21 million Hong Kong dollars or 2.7 million US\$ and 540 US\$/kg.

Even if these are not endangered species, the seizure of 31 containers on May 3 and 10 containing copper, aluminium and plastics, electronic waste, used vehicle spare parts and old batteries bound for Klang in Malaysia is worth noting. The total value of this waste traffic is estimated at 178 million Hong Kong dollars (22.7 million US\$).

Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, May 19, 2023.²⁵

May 2023
Dongxing, Fangchenggang Prefecture, Guangxi
Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. Border
with Viet Nam.

Seizure by customs of 69 water bags, each containing a guppy (*Poecilia reticulata*), a 2 to 4-cm long ornamental fish native to South America, from the suitcase of a citizen coming from Viet Nam.

Chinese Customs, May 26, 2023.²⁶

May 2023
Jinan, Shandong Province, China

Seizure in a package declared to contain "food" of 6 live medakas (*Oryzias latipes*) in a bag filled with water.

Chinese Customs, May 23, 2023.²⁷

May 31, 2023
Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport,
Guangdong Province, China



Seizure by customs of 314 aquarium fish of several species, including fighting fish (genus *Betta*) and guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*), from the luggage of 2 passengers, in around sixty bags half-filled with water and sealed with adhesive.

Chinese Customs, June 8, 2023.²⁸

SOUTHEASTERN ASIA

INDONESIA

March 14, 2023

Aceh Singkil Regency, Aceh Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

Baru Rezeki ship boarded in territorial waters. In all, 50 bottles of explosives, 55 detonators and diving equipment were seized. The vessel had undoubtedly been fishing with explosives. The naval air police is questioning the captain and 7 crew members, all of whom come from Sibolga in northern Sumatra, 120 km from Aceh Singkil.

VOI, March 14, 2023; Indonesia Maritime Information Centre, March 2023.²⁹



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VIET NAM

May 22, 2023

Kỳ Xuân, Hà Tĩnh Province, Viet Nam

At 4 a.m., at the Deo Ngang station, explosive sticks carried by a fisherman from Ky Xuan were seized. A further 1.2kg of explosives, 4 detonators and 34 metres of slow-burning fuses were subsequently found at his home. Explosives are increasingly being used as fishing gear in Asia and elsewhere.

Một Thế Giới, May 22, 2023.³⁰



© BDBP Hà Tĩnh

SOUTHERN ASIA

INDIA

Night of March 9 to 10, 2023

Vembar, Thoothukudi District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

After a tip-off, 8 police officers went out at night to stake out Akkarai Beach and spotted a jeep in the dunes. They discovered and seized 10 bags of shark fins on their way out. In addition, there were 10 bags of dried ray gills. According to the driver, Syed Shahul Hameed, the cargo was destined to be smuggled by sea to Sri Lanka, 180 km away.

The Hindu, March 10, 2023; The Times of India, March 11, 2023.³¹

IRAN

March 2023

Bonab, East Azerbaijan Province, Iran

Seizure of 80 kg of shark meat. The town's veterinary services recall that shark meat is toxic and that its consumption is forbidden by the Islamic religion (see "On the Trail" n°34 p.252, ref.31).

Sedaye Bonab, March 31, 2023.³²

Beginning of March 2023

Kish Island, Hormozgan Province, Iran

Officials arrested 8 people and seized a boat plus 100 shark fins and 2.5 tonnes of smuggled fish on this small Red Sea island (91 km², population 40,000).

Andishe Kish, March 2, 2023.³³

SRI LANKA

March 13, 2023

Negombo and Dikovita Fishery Harbors, Western Province, Sri Lanka

Eleven people arrested on boats after docking and 13.8 kg of dried shark fins and 111 kg of dried shark meat confiscated.

Sri Lanka Coast Guard, March 13, 2023.³⁴

March 17, 2023

Columbuthurai Beach, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Authorities recovered 28 ammonium nitrate-based water gel sticks imported from Tamil Nadu, where they were originally used for mining work. In this case, however, they were bound for use in fishing, which destroys both habitats and fish of all ages.

Sri Lanka Navy, March 18, 2023.³⁵



March 18, 2023
Trincomalee, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka



Officials intercepted 58 ammonium nitrate-based water gel sticks and 100 detonators and arrested 2 men. They were transporting the goods on a three-wheeler.
Sri Lanka Navy, March 19, 2023.³⁶

March 25, 2023
Dikovita Fishery Harbor, Western Province, Sri Lanka

Guards seized 14 kg of dried shark meat and 2.7 kg of fins on the docks and arrested 6 people. As usual, there is no information on the fate of the recovered goods.
Sri Lanka Coast Guard, March 25, 2023.³⁷

March 30, 2023
Beruwala Fishery Harbor, Western Province, Sri Lanka

Guards recovered 591.4 kg of shark meat from the cargo hold of a boat that just returned to shore. Where are the fins?
Sri Lanka Coast Guard, March 30, 2023.³⁸

April 10, 2023
Dikovita Fishery Harbor, Western Province, Sri Lanka



Officials seized 1.7 kg of dried shark fins aboard a fishing boat and arrested 6 sailors.
Sri Lanka Coast Guard, April 10, 2023.³⁹

April 19, 2023
Jaffna, Northern Province, Sri Lanka



At the top of the beach, 25 ammonium nitrate-based water gel sticks, intended for fishing with explosives, were seized.
Sri Lanka Navy, April 20, 2023.⁴⁰



April 30, 2023
Allaipiddy, Northern Province, Sri Lanka



Seizure on the upper beach of 50 ammonium nitrate-based explosive sticks and 50 non-electric detonators intended for fishing.
Sri Lanka Navy, May 1, 2023.⁴¹

May 8, 2023
Off Vankalai, Northern Province, Sri Lanka



Seizure of 10 water gel sticks and 18 detonators, diving equipment and the dinghy. Seven people arrested.
Sri Lanka Navy, May 9, 2023.⁴²



May 22, 2023
Kuchchaveli, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka



Seizure of 54 water gel sticks and 50 detonators intended for fishing. Arrest of the 21-year-old lady in the house.
Sri Lanka Navy, May 22, 2023.⁴³

WESTERN ASIA

AZERBAIJAN

End of April 2023
Şəmkir district, Azerbaijan



Arrest of Vugar Hasanov caught in the act of electric fishing with a home-made battery. Seizure of his equipment, boat, bleak (genus *Alburnus*), carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), and crucian carp (genus *Carassius*).
Report News Agency, April 29, 2023.⁴⁴

GEORGIA

January-March 2023
Regions of Imereti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Inner Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Lower Kartli and Kakheti and City of Tbilisi, Georgia



In the first quarter of the year, environmental authorities recorded 46 illegal fishing incidents. In most cases, the poachers used electric devices or explosives.
Department of Environmental Supervision, April 10, 2023.⁴⁵

April 2023

Regions of Imereti, K'akheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Kvemo Kartli, Guria, Shida Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti, Georgia



Between April 1-30, agents at the Department of Environmental Monitoring detected 61 illegal fishing incidents, 6 of which involved electric fishing.

Department of Environmental Monitoring (Georgia), May 10, 2023.⁴⁶

PALESTINE

March 2023

Gaza Beach, Gaza Strip, Palestine



Miraculous fishing in March and April. Palestinian fishermen caught manta rays (*Mobula* spp., Appendix II) up to 10 kilometers offshore, unless the Israeli blockade further restricts their fishing grounds. They are then spread out on beaches, prepared and sold on markets for around 3 US\$/kg. An adult manta ray weighs between 200 and 300 kg.

The National, March 13, 2023; L'Orient-Le Jour, March 13, 2023; Euronews, March 18, 2023.⁴⁷

NORTHERN EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

March 17, 2023

Lepe, Hampshire County, England, United Kingdom

A smalltooth sand tiger shark (*Odontaspis ferox*) washed up on a beach in the English Channel had been decapitated, its fins and tail amputated by unknown assailants. The remains of the carcass and the skeleton have been temporarily stored at a farm in Exbury until a team from the Zoological Society of London can collect it. "It's an incredibly rare shark and the experts will now want to find why it was swimming in UK waters, how it got here, how long it had been here. This is a once in a lifetime thing for them to be found in the UK," says Dan Snow, who helped with the transport.

The smalltooth sand tiger shark is not ferocious, despite its sharp, protruding teeth. Grey and stocky, it averages 4 meters in length, but can reach up to 5.2 meters in length and weigh 500 kg. It feeds on squid, crustaceans, and small fish. No accidents with humans have ever been recorded, especially as it lives at depths of between 300 and 700 meters. It prefers the warm waters of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans, and even the Mediterranean, and sightings in the French and British Atlantic are extremely rare. It is threatened by trawling in deep sea, although it is not the target species. Hampshire Chronicle, March 20, 2023.⁴⁸

WESTERN EUROPE

FRANCE

REPEATED OFFENCE

March 13, 2023

Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines, Department of Yvelines, France

The team had been followed by investigators for several months. The van was intercepted at the Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines toll booth. It was coming from Vendée, a French department open to the Bay of Biscay, and was heading north towards Paris, 400 km away. 118 kg of European glass eels (*Anguilla anguilla*, Appendix II) were seized in oxygenated tanks used to optimize their chances of survival during transit. Two men were taken into custody and the third is under judicial supervision. Consecutive searches of an apartment in the Vendée and at a traveler's camp led to the seizure of weapons and elver catching equipment.

Elvers in Vendée and Paris, see "On the Trail" n°16 p.10 (ref.23), n°21 p.11 (ref.20) and p.12 (ref.22), n°24 p.15 (ref.17), n°28 p.19 (ref.20), n°32 p.288 (ref.67 and 69), n°35 p.205 (ref.43), n°37 p.218 (ref.60) and n°39 p.177 (ref.29).

France Bleu Loire Océan, March 16, 2023; Ouest-France, March 17, 2023; France 3 Pays de la Loire, March 20, 2023.⁴⁹

FAMILY AFFAIRS

April 4, 2023

Paris, France



The court dismissed appeals for Victor, Eddy and Wesley Bozard, Jessy Bourmaud and Jérôme Thiteca. The Rennes Court of Appeal upheld the convictions imposed by the Nantes Criminal Court for trafficking in European glass eels (*Anguilla anguilla*, Appendix II) in conspiracy. See "On the Trail" n°23 p.16 (ref.33) and n°35 p.206 (ref.46).

Court of Cassation, April 4, 2023; ASPAS, summer 2023.⁵⁰

WESTERN EUROPE, SOUTHERN EUROPE AND EASTERN EUROPE

BELGIUM, FRANCE, SPAIN AND POLAND

May 10, 2023

Province of Pontevedra, Autonomous Community of Galicia, and Oiartzun and Getaria, Province of Gipuzkoa, Autonomous Community of Basque Country, Spain; Paris, La Courneuve, Department of Seine-Saint-Denis and Bidache, Department of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France; Anvers, Province of Anvers, Flemish Region, Belgium



A coalition of poachers, fishermen and fishmongers in the European Union is reaping dizzying financial success from smuggling European glass eels (*Anguilla anguilla*, Appendix II). These small, harmless wild animals – measuring 5-8 cm long, weighing 0.3 grams on average and worth 80 cents in Asia – are called glass eels in the larval stage and eels as adults. Smugglers will sift them from estuaries, canals, rivers and streams and fatten them up for 1-2 years to raise their value. These agri-food prodigies transform into 40 cm-long, 2 kg creatures worth 50 € on world markets. Unless it is discovered or confirmed, which would come as no surprise, that eels are being fattened illegally in ponds or basins hidden away in countries of the European Union or countries that want to join it, the glass eels reaching the French Atlantic and Spanish Atlantic coasts from the Sargasso Sea, however, are force-fed cheap, non-standard pellets and artificial feed mainly in China but also in Japan, where they are imported in water bags weighing several kilos at the same rate cocaine is transported overseas between Guiana and mainland France. Larger consignments can also be sent by airfreight, avoiding commissions due to the carrier costs and various risks involved if caught at the border. European glass eels sometimes get mixed in with eels whose international trade remains authorized for the moment and eventually become sushi meat in the global food chain. There are 20 species of eel across the world's oceans.

The European glass eel, also known as *Anguilla anguilla*, is threatened with extinction due to overfishing and chemical and bacteriological pollutants that accumulate in mud and hinder growth and reproduction. The European Union prohibits exporting the species, listed in Appendix II of CITES since 2009. Intra-European trade is also prohibited, except for restocking operations duly approved by the sending and receiving States. In 2021, France's Biodiversity Office identified breaches in the traceability of glass eels, theoretically originating from quotas reserved for professional fishermen, during checks carried out by a fishmonger in south-west France prior to restocking in Lake Cazaux, in the Gironde department, whose capital is Bordeaux.

Since 2017, there has also been a coalition of law enforcement groups in France, including the OFB, OCLAESP (Office central de lutte contre les atteintes à l'environnement et à la santé publique), SEJF (Service d'enquêtes judiciaires des finances), gendarmes from the research section, the BNEVP (Brigade Nationale des Enquêtes Vétérinaires et Phytosanitaires), and has, over the years, extended to the Spanish Guardia Civil, Europol (European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation), Eurojust (European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation) and EAFO (European Anti-Fraud Office).

The transnational investigation, launched after discovering administrative anomalies in the repopulation of Cazaux, has identified and dissected a network smuggling at least 4 tonnes of glass eels between the European Union and Asia, with profits estimated at 1.2 million € (1.3 million US\$). On Wednesday, May 10, 2023, the joint efforts of 115 investigators led to the arrests of 27 glass eel traffickers in Spain, France, Belgium and Poland, including 4 suppliers, specialists in keeping eels alive in confined environments, recruiters and logisticians responsible for transcontinental smuggling, and so-called restocking experts claiming to be committed to saving the species. The mission is not over: other links are being forged in the European Union and throughout the world to exploit the species to the max. When it's exhausted, it'll be time for the traffickers to move on to another species or commodity.

Noticias de Gipuzkoa, May 10, 2023; Guardia Civil, May 11, 2023; French Customs, May 12, 2023; Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (Belgium), May 12, 2023; France 3 Nouvelle Aquitaine, May 16, 2023; El Diario Montañés, May 23, 2023.⁵¹

SOUTHERN EUROPE

GREECE

April 21, 2023

Ierapetra, Region of Crete, Greece

A bigeyed sixgill shark (*Hexanchus nakamurai*) was captured by an artisanal fishing boat. At 250 kg and 2.5 meters long, it was impossible to reel it in. The 2 fishermen carefully pulled the trawl to the Ierapetra port where, with the help of onlookers and colleagues, the shark was lifted out of the water, taken by truck to a fishmonger, sliced open and sold in restaurants. The 2 fishermen and the skippers are said to be above suspicion. Bigeyed sixgill sharks are not protected by national law, the European Union or international conventions. The financial results of the lucrative operation are not known, nor is the fate of the fins. NeaKriti, April 21, 25 and 26, 2023.⁵²

ITALY

March 10, 2023

Ancona, Province of Ancona, Region of Marche, Italy

The Ancona Coastguard in the Adriatic seized 25 kg of Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) steaks from the cold rooms of a trawler. The skipper was fined 4,000 € (4,220 US\$) and the trawl net, which is prohibited in Italy for tuna fishing, was seized.

AnconaToday, March 10, 2023; CentroPagina, March 10, 2023.⁵³

OPERATION TORPEDO

March 16, 2023

Arquà Polesine, Province of Rovigo, Region of Veneto, Italy

Armed with fish tasers, batteries, and other accessories forbidden in the practice of fishing, the gang of Romanians had killed dozens of carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), wels catfish (*Silurus glanis*), and flathead mullets (*Mugil cephalus*) in one night, intending to sell them on the black market in defiance of basic hygiene rules. They were arrested not far from Tartaro-Canalbianco-Pô du Levant. The poachers were fined 15,000 € (15,830 US\$), although it is not known whether this was paid before they were released. Italy is beginning to be invaded by this new type of looter (see "On the Trail" n°36 p.222, ref.50, n°38 p.241, ref.65 and n°39 p.180, ref.40) and the regional, national, and European authorities don't seem to be aware of the ravages they can inflict on aquatic resources or fish farmers. Police Headquarters of Rovigo, March 17, 2023.⁵⁴



End of March 2023

Golfo Aranci, Province of Sassari, Autonomous Region of Sardinia, Italy

Seizure of a swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) off a fishing boat. It was donated to charity. Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, March 29, 2023.⁵⁵

Night of April 17-18, 2023

Castel San Pietro Terme, Metropolitan City of Bologna, Region of Emilia-Romagna, Italy

The hunt by the coast-guard and Bologna and Modena police forces for a suspicious van, reported as soon as it left the Ravenna port, was both successful and distressing. A rogue trucker was transporting 40 Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) caught in the Adriatic by rogue sailors. The tuna lay on the dirty floor of his trailer and had to be destroyed instead of donated to a charitable organisation. The traffic could have brought in 11,000 US\$ for the gang, but the driver was fined 3,000 US\$.

Coast Guard, April 18, 2023.⁵⁶



Mid-April 2023

Acireale, Metropolitan City of Catania, Region of Sicily, Italy

Officials seized 2 Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) from a fish market and imposed a fine.

Blog Sicilia, April 21, 2023.⁵⁷



REPEATED OFFENCE

April 21, 2023

Codigoro, Province of Ferrara, Region of Emilia-Romagna, Italy

Officials seized 70 electrocuted carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) between life and death, some of which were returned to the water, and arrested 5 Romanian subjects between the ages 20 and 44, 2 of whom were known to the police. A van, 2 homemade electric stunners, 2 dinghies, and waders were also seized.

FerraraToday, April 21, 2023; Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, April 23, 2023.⁵⁸



Beginning of May 2023

Falcone Borsellino Palermo International Airport, Metropolitan City of Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy

Seizure of a shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*, Appendix II) jaws from the luggage of an Italian national returning from São Vicente, Cape Verde. He was fined 5,000 € (5,520 US\$). Customs and Monopolies Agency, May 2, 2023.⁵⁹



Sunday, May 14, 2023
Mondello, Metropolitan City of Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy



Seizure of a 270-kg Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) from a van during a check. Deemed unfit for consumption, it was destroyed. The driver was fined 2,667 € (3,000 US\$). PalermoToday, May 15, 2023; Sicilianews24.it, May 15, 2023.⁶⁰

May 18, 2023
Termini Imerese, Metropolitan City of Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy



Seizure from a van in the port area of 10 Atlantic bluefin tunas (*Thunnus thynnus*) weighing 150 kg on average and without any document proving their traceability and legality. The driver was fined 2,667 € or 3,000 US\$. After veterinary inspection, the tunas were given to charities. Blog Sicilia, May 19, 2023.⁶¹

May 22, 2023
Palermo, Metropolitan City of Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy



Atlantic bluefin tunas (*Thunnus thynnus*) are coming out of the fridges. There's a demand for them. The 4 weighed 400 kg. The Guardia Costiera is working hard on the docks. Fine equal to 3,000 US\$ for the van driver. Trapani Oggi, May 23, 2023.⁶²

May 22, 2023
Bagheria, Metropolitan City of Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy



Interception of a van and seizure of 4 Atlantic bluefin tunas (*Thunnus thynnus*) weighing 1,400 kg in total, i.e. 350 kg per specimen. Fine equal to 3,000 US\$ for the driver. Trapani Oggi, May 23, 2023.⁶³

May 23 and 24, 2023
Port of Palermo, Metropolitan City of Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy



- Seizure of 7 Atlantic bluefin tunas (*Thunnus thynnus*) weighing a total of 1,100 kg, i.e. 157 kg per specimen, from a cold room.
- Seizure by the coast guards of 2 Atlantic bluefin tunas tied to illegal buoys, weighing a total of 412 kg.
The 9 Atlantic bluefin tunas of reproductive age were deemed edible by the vets and given to charities. LiveSicilia, May 25, 2023.⁶⁴

May 23 and 24, 2023
Bagheria, Metropolitan City of Palermo, Region of Sicily, Italy



Interception of 2 vans with 600 and 850 kg of Atlantic bluefin tunas (*Thunnus thynnus*). Fines equal to 2,945 US\$ for both drivers. The fish were deemed unfit for human consumption. LiveSicilia, May 25, 2023.⁶⁵

May 25, 2023
Trapani, Free Municipal Consortium of Trapani, Region of Sicily, Italy



It's May full swing, the tourists ask for more. Seizure at 4 a.m. of 6 Atlantic bluefin tunas (*Thunnus thynnus*), 700 kg, in a refrigerated van from Porticello, 120 km away. They were to be sold on the Trapani market. Fine equal to 3,000 US\$ for the driver. Blog Sicilia, May 25, 2023.⁶⁶

End of May 2023
Province of Alessandria, Region of Piedmont, Italy



The Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) is sold in slices in fish shops across the province. The fines imposed by fisheries inspectors amount to 9,000 € (9,940 US\$). Telenord, May 31, 2023.⁶⁷

MONTENEGRO

OPERATION STOP KRIVOLOVU (STOP POACHING)



March-May 2023
Lake Skadar National Park, Montenegro

- **March 15, Godinje.** Seizure half an hour after midnight of 50 kg of fish, 3 batteries, electric cables, and a metal boat with outboard motor. One arrest. One man fled up the hill. Lake Skadar is shared between Montenegro and Albania. It extends over 370 to 530 km² depending on the water level.
- **Mid-April, Vranjina.** A boat loaded with electrofishing equipment was discovered in the Lake Skadar National Park. A suspect fled but has been identified.
- **May 4, Lake Skadar.** At around 6 a.m., a poacher was arrested in flagrante delicto and a boat, an outboard motor, electrofishing gear and 150 kg of fish were seized. This is the 5th boat confiscated since March 15, when the fishing ban began. Electrofishing in Lake Skadar, see "On the Trail" n°35 p.207 (ref.53), n°36 p.223 (ref.51 and 52) and n°39 p.180 (ref.41 and 42). National Parks of Montenegro, March 15, April 13 and May 4, 2023; Vijesti, April 30, 2023.⁶⁸

EASTERN EUROPE

BULGARIA

REPEATED OFFENCE

March 2023

Svishtov and Vardim Island, Veliko Tarnovo Province, Belene Island, Pleven Province, Bulgaria. Border with Romania.

During their slow hours, border guards from Ruse, Ruse Province, and a service boat loaded with friends, colleagues and, why not, paying passengers, indulged in fishing for sturgeon (*Acipenseridae*, Appendix I or II) and belugas (*Huso huso*, Appendix II) near the island of Vardim, 70 km from their home port, the island of Belene, and opposite Svishtov on the vast course of the Danube separating Bulgaria and Romania.

Breaking.BG, March 28, 2023.⁶⁹

ROMANIA

March 23, 2023

Mamaia, Constanta County, Romania

Smuggling in the Black Sea. Approximately 100 km opposite the resort of Mamaia, in waters under Romanian jurisdiction, 3 Bulgarian fishing boats were observed, boarded, searched, and escorted to the military port of Constanta by the coast guard vessels *Mai 0201* and *Ştefan cel Mare*.



On board the Bulgarian fishing boats were 600 Black Sea brill (*Scophthalmus maeoticus*) and 60 spiny dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*). Black Sea brill turns fisher's heads. In 2019, the Romanian coast guard attempted to escort a Turkish boat to Constanta, but it failed to respond to the first summons, was then followed by a Romanian naval aircraft and finally it sank while being towed. The Turkish crew had previously been transferred to a Romanian military vessel. A kilo of brill sells for an average of 70 lei (15 US\$) in Romania. Adult spiny dogfish measure around a meter long, and very young ones around 20 cm. They feed on fish and crustaceans. They grow very slowly, just a few centimetres a year. They reach sexual maturity late. They are threatened by overexploitation for their meat (15 to 20 €/kg or 15 to 21 US\$/kg) but also for their oil, which sells for at least 10 times more per kilo, not forgetting that shark products are used in vaccines and that shark skin can be used in leather goods.

Nothing is lost for man in the shark, and that's what makes its undoing.

The incident created a diplomatic row between Bulgaria and Romania. Three days after the boarding, the 10 Bulgarian fishers were released without being charged, but their 3 boats remain docked in the Romanian military port awaiting further investigation. The Bulgarian captains and their wives are crying foul and say they don't understand the Romanian Navy's intervention. "We were in European waters." "Off Bulgaria, we have the right to fish for sharks and we didn't know that off Romania we don't have the right." "When we're off Bulgaria and we catch a shark, we sometimes then go to Romanian waters with sharks caught here." "The fact that there are sharks on board our boats doesn't make us criminals." "The European Union does not ban spiny dogfish shark fishing, only Romania does, and the ban should only apply to Romanian boats."



The director of the Bulgarian Fisheries and Aquaculture Agency is in the hot seat. He is accused of having no understanding of European Union regulations and of calling Bulgarian fishers poachers on the national airwaves. For Emil Milev, president of the Bulgarian fisher's association "Sunrise on the Black Sea," "the big battle is the release of the vessels," and he is counting on his government to intervene as quickly as possible so that the harassment of his colleagues off the Romanian coast ceases as soon as possible, including through the intervention of the European Commission. To be continued.

Observer, March 24, 2023; Romanian Border Police, March 24, 2023; Novinite.bg, March 25, 2023; BNT, March 26, 2023; Plovdiv24.bg, March 26, 2023.⁷⁰

April 3, 2023

Tulcea County, Romania. Border with Moldova.

A live starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*, Appendix II) was recovered from a vehicle's trunk. The driver is Romanian. The sturgeon was released into the Danube basin in the presence of a fisheries guard, border guards and the suspect.

Romanian border police, April 4, 2023.⁷¹

April 6, 2023

Fetești, Ialomița County, Romania

In their car, 3 men carried sturgeon (Acipenseridae, Appendix I or II), common barbel (*Barbus barbus*) and silver carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*) caught in the Borcea, a branch of the Danube where fishing is prohibited. An investigation is underway into the following offences: “possession, transport or sale without legal documents of fish and other forms of aquatic life obtained by fishing and commercial or sport fishing without a fishing licence or permit” and “fishing, possession, transport and sale of sturgeon caught on Romanian territory in natural fish habitats without complying with the legal provisions in force”.

Ialomița County Police Inspectorate, April 7, 2023.⁷²

April 10, 2023

Sulina, Tulcea County, Romania

Withdrawal of 450 meters of sturgeon nets (Acipenseridae, Appendix I or II) in the Black Sea, 2 km from shore.

Constanta ZIUA, May 12, 2023.⁷³

April 12, 2023

Făcăeni, Ialomița County, Romania

Under search warrants, officials seized inside 2 private homes 7 outboard motors, 2 boats, an arsenal of cables and batteries for electrocuting all forms of aquatic life, 3,700 meters of monofilament netting, 2,000 meters of plant fiber netting, around 40 kilos of fish and fish eggs. They arrested 2 men, ages 27 and 52.

Ialomița County Police Inspectorate, April 13, 2023.⁷⁴



April 27, 2023

Islaz, Teleorman County, Romania. Border with Bulgaria.

Electric and explosive fishing on the Olt, nearly 700 km-long, flowing into the Danube. Officials seized 180 kg of fish, a battery, electric cables, explosives, narcotics and firearms. One poacher was arrested, while 2 others fled during the night.

Dolj County Police Inspectorate, April 27, 2023.⁷⁵



May 2, 2023

Sfântu Gheorghe, Tulcea County, Romania

Seizure by the border police and agents of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve of 6 sturgeons (Acipenseridae, Appendix I or II) weighing a total of 25 kg caught in 2 nets belonging to a 22-year-old man. The fish were released in front of the poacher, and the boat and its motor were seized.

ZIUA de Constanta, May 3, 2023.⁷⁶

May 3, 2023

Tulcea County, Romania

Police search of the homes of 2 suspects. Seizure of 30 kg of sturgeon (Acipenseridae, Appendix I or II) and 4.3 kg of black caviar, 50 kg of carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) and 28 kg of carp eggs, 22 kg of sander (*Sander lucioperca*), 6 nets and 4 outboard motors. Tulcea County Police Inspectorate, May 4, 2023.⁷⁷

May 5 and 6, 2023

Between Sulina and Sfântu Gheorghe and Periteașca-Leahova National Reserve, Tulcea County, Romania

- Dismantling of 1,070-metre long nets in the Gulf of Musura and release of 5 starry sturgeons (*Acipenser stellatus*, Appendix II) measuring between 70 and 90 cm in length.

- Spotted by border police, 2 poachers leave their boat and jump into their car with their catch. They are pursued and caught. In the boot of the pick-up were 10 starry sturgeons still entangled in nets, and a little further down the road, 8 other starry sturgeons in bags that had fallen out during the chase. The sturgeons are still alive and released in the water. Seizure of the vehicle, boat and nets.

Romanian Border Police, May 7, 2023.⁷⁸

May 12, 2023

Stelnică, Ialomița County, Romania

Arrest of 4 men aged 24 to 31 on national road 3B. The trunk contained 142 kg of fish. Alongside 112 kg of carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), wels catfish (*Silurus glanis*), silver carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*), and common barbel (*Barbus barbus*), there were 9 sterlet sturgeons (*Acipenser ruthenus*, Appendix II) and starry sturgeons (*Acipenser stellatus*, Appendix II) still alive. The sturgeons were returned to the water.

Ziarul Obiectiv Ialomița, May 15, 2023.⁷⁹



May 24, 2023

Sulina, Tulcea County, Romania

Release of 7 starry sturgeons (*Acipenser stellatus*, Appendix II) caught in 680-meter-long nets 2 km offshore.

Romanian Border Police, May 25, 2023.⁸⁰

Sunday, May 28, 2023

Grindu, Tulcea County, Romania

Seizure by the border police in the boot of a car of 32 kg of sterlet sturgeons (*Acipenser ruthenus*, Appendix II) and 90 metres of nets. Three people were arrested. The sturgeons were immediately released into the Danube basin.

Romanian Border Police, May 29, 2023.⁸¹

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine Seizures of caviar (62 kg). Poaching and seizures of sturgeons (1,229 specimens + 3,458.3 kg of meat) between March 1 and May 31, 2023



Based on a minimum price on the black market of 20,000 roubles/kg (255/kg US\$) of caviar, the minimum value of the caviar seized is 15,810 US\$. Sources: see page 257.

Sturgeon, unidentified species (Acipenseridae, Appendix I or II)
 Beluga (*Huso huso*, Appendix II)
 Amur sturgeon (*Acipenser schrenckii*, Appendix II)
 Starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*, Appendix II)
 Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II)

Russian sturgeon (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II)
 Sterlet sturgeon (*Acipenser ruthenus*, Appendix II)
 Huso sturgeon (*Huso dauricus*, Appendix II)
 The litres of caviar have been converted into kilos on the basis of 1.08 kilos for 1 litre.



April 2, 2023
Fort-Shevchenko, Mangystau Region, Kazakhstan



End of May 2023
Poldnevoe, Astrakhan Oblast, Russia



April 2023
Kamyshevatskaya, Krasnodar Krai, Russia



OPERATION BEKIRE
April 1st-May 31, 2023
Atyrau, Manguistau and West Kazakhstan Regions, Kazakhstan



End of May 2023. Astrakhan Oblast, Russia



End of April 2023
Novosibirsk Oblast, Russia



Beginning of March 2023
Neftchala District, Azerbaijan

RUSSIA

REPEATED OFFENCE

March 2, 2023

Ust-Ishim, Omsk Oblast, Russia

A Zaton village resident was caught poaching in the Irtysh River back in July 2022. He caught 102 sterlet sturgeons (*Acipenser ruthenus*, Appendix II), one Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II), 2 ides (*Leuciscus idus*) and 2 breams (*Abramis brama*). He was handed a suspended prison sentence of 2 years and 1 month, plus 3 years of probation (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.224, map of sturgeon poaching and seizures). Upper Ob Territorial Department of the Federal Agency for Fishery, March 14, 2023.⁸²



Beginning of March 2023

Tobolsk, Tyumen Oblast, Russia

Sentencing of Victor Malyshkin, aged 34, to 300 hours of community service. He has already paid damages of 160,000 rubles (2,120 US\$). He was arrested in June 2022 while carrying 4 Siberian sturgeons (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II), 13 sterlet sturgeons (*Acipenser ruthenus*, Appendix II) and a nelma (*Stenodus nelma*) in his Niva (see "On the Trail" n°36 p.226 and p.229, ref. 79). NG72.RU, March 4, 2023; BezFormata, March 10, 2023.⁸³



March 2, 5 and 24, 2023

Kizilyurtovskiy District, Republic of Dagestan, Russia

- Several people arrested in flagrante delicto for electric fishing. A boat, a battery, current converters and nets seized.
- Several people who had just engaged in electric fishing arrested.
- Several people arrested in flagrante delicto for electric fishing. A boat, a battery, current converters and nets seized.

Dagestan is best known in "On the Trail" for sturgeon poaching and caviar trafficking, but similar to the rest of Southeast Europe, electric fishing is gradually taking hold. The Soulak River is home to carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), common barbel (*Barbus barbus*) and trout (family Salmonidae). Sturgeons (*Acipenseridae*, Appendix I or II) from the Caspian Sea spawn here, and alevins are released to replenish the population.

North Caucasus Territorial Administration of the Federal Agency for Fishery, March 6 and 27, 2023.⁸⁴



March 7, 2023

Astrakhan, Astrakhan Oblast, Russia

A 50-year-old man has been sentenced to two and a half years in a penal colony and fined 300,000 rubles (3,980 US\$). He had been caught at the end of May 2022 attempting to sell a kilo of Amur sturgeon caviar (*Acipenser schrenckii*, Appendix II), 9 Russian sturgeon carcasses (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II) and a beluga carcass (*Huso huso*, Appendix II) weighing a total of 35 kg (see "On the Trail" no. 36 p.226).

The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Astrakhan Oblast, March 7, 2023 ; Punkt-A, March 7, 2023.⁸⁵



March 10, 2023

Zhigansk, Republic of Sakha, Russia

A 57-year-old man from Moscow has been charged with poaching 27 Siberian sturgeons (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II) and extracting 6 kg of caviar in September 2022. Moscow is more than 4,000 km from Zhigansk.

Sakha Republic Prosecutor's Office, March 10, 2023; SakhaLife, March 11, 2023.⁸⁶

Mid-March 2023

Okha, Sakhalin Oblast, Russia

90 kg of Huso sturgeon (*Huso dauricus*, Appendix II) meat had been seized from their home and they had already sold some to their friends and family. The first was sentenced to 320 hours of community service, the second to 240 hours of community service. If it is not poached, an adult Huso sturgeon easily exceeds 500 kg, the known record being more than one tonne for a length of more than 5.5 metres. Sakh.online, March 13, 2023.⁸⁷



Mid-March 2023

Novosibirsk Oblast, Russia

A man sentenced to a year's suspended community service and a fine of 320,000 rubles (4,245 US\$) for being caught in possession of a Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II) had a visit from bailiffs coming to seize his belongings and was fined an additional 24,000 rubles (320 US\$) for delaying payment of his fine. NGS.RU, March 16, 2023.⁸⁸



March 17, 2023

Ikryanoye, Astrakhan Oblast, Russia

"On the Trail" n°37 p.222 (ref.83) recounted the arrest in August 2022 of a poacher who had managed to escape from the FSB in May 2021 while poaching Russian sturgeons (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II) and starry sturgeons (*Acipenser stellatus*, Appendix II) with 2 other people. He is sentenced to 6 years' deprivation of liberty in a general regime corrective colony, a slightly harsher sentence than those handed down to his accomplices in November.

The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Astrakhan Oblast, March 17, 2023.⁸⁹



March 20, 2023

Surgut, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia

A man is charged after catching a Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II) in the Irtysh in December 2022.

Ural Transport Prosecutor's Office, March 20, 2023.⁹⁰

March 28, 2023

Kamyzyak, Astrakhan Oblast, Russia

Three men were arrested with 2 Russian sturgeons (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II) in November 2022 (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.245, ref.79). They intended to sell them. The main defendant has just been sentenced to 2 and a half years' imprisonment in a general regime corrective colony and a fine of 500,000 rubles (6,630 US\$), the second to 2 and a half years' imprisonment and a fine of 400,000 rubles (5,300 US\$), and the last to one and a half years' imprisonment and a fine of 300,000 rubles (3,980 US\$). They have already jointly paid 276,000 rubles (3,660 US\$) in ecological damages.

The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Astrakhan Oblast, March 28, 2023; Russian.City, March 29, 2023.⁹¹

April 1, 2023

Syzran, Samara Oblast, Russia

A man was caught with 3 Russian sturgeons (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II), 27 perch (genus *Perca*), 24 white breams (*Blicca bjoerkna*), 13 roaches (genus *Rutilus*), 4 breams (*Abramis brama*), 3 crucian carps (genus *Carassius*), one northern pike (*Esox lucius*), one pikeperch (genus *Sander*) and a dozen crayfish in a tributary of the Volga. He was just given a 2-year suspended prison sentence and ordered to pay 888,000 rubles (11,580 US\$) in damages. KTV-LUCH, April 1, 2023.⁹²

Beginning of April 2023

Kizlyar, Republic of Dagestan, Russia

In November 2022, FSB agents seized 33 kg of sturgeon (*Acipenseridae*, Appendix I or II) from a private home in Kollektivizator. The homeowner admitted that he had bought them, but not poached them. Still, he was just sentenced to 100 hours of community service for illegal fishing and trafficking of sturgeon, a sentence lightened by his partial confession. RIA Dagestan, April 13, 2023.⁹³

Beginning of April 2023

Nizhnevartovsk, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia

A man who bought 2 Siberian sturgeons (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II) for 3,000 rubles (40 US\$) from a poacher on the banks of the Ob and was arrested on the road was just sentenced to 250 hours of community service.

Watch out Yugra, April 4, 2023.⁹⁴

April 3, 2023

Saratov, Saratov Oblast, Russia

A 50-year-old shopkeeper who sold Russian sturgeon caviar (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II) in her store from September to December 2021 and her 39-year-old male supplier (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.222, ref.82) were sentenced to 1 year of community service.

The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Saratov Oblast, April 3, 2023.⁹⁵

April 4, 2023

Tobolsk, Tyumen Oblast, Russia

Farhad Damirov was indicted for the illegal acquisition and possession of 2 Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II) carcasses and 18.5 kg of black caviar. He was already known to law enforcement for fraud and for manufacturing and selling counterfeit excise stamps.

Unified press service of the Tyumen Oblast judicial system, April 4, 2023.⁹⁶

April 4, 2023

Surgut, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia

Three Languepas and Kogalym residents have been indicted. In July 2022, they were caught poaching 32 sterlet sturgeon (*Acipenser ruthenus*, Appendix II) and 2 Siberian sturgeons (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II) in the Ob River. Their boat and vehicles were seized on the spot. Ecological damage is estimated at 150,000 rubles (1,960 US\$). Ural Transport Prosecutor's Office, April 4, 2023.⁹⁷

April 11, 2023

Tomsk, Tomsk Oblast, Russia

The 2 individuals who bought 190 kg of Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II) in the Kargasoksky district in May-June 2022 have been indicted. They transported "the goods" to Tomsk for subsequent resale.

Tomsk Oblast Prosecutor's Office, April 11, 2023.⁹⁸



April 11, 2023

Komsomolsky District, Khabarovsk Krai, Russia

The Ministry of the Interior announced that proceedings are underway against 2 men, ages 31 and 50, who were arrested in September 2022 and January 2023 for transporting Amur sturgeon (*Acipenser schrenckii*, Appendix II) in their cars. The first, a Nanaysky district resident, was driving a foreign-registered car with 4 sturgeon fillets. The second was intercepted on the Nikolayevsk-on-Amur highway with 2 carcasses and 8 sturgeon fillets. Both professed that the fish were meant for personal consumption.

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Khabarovsk Krai, April 11, 2023.⁹⁹

April 11, 2023

Ryabchovka, Bryansk Oblast, Russia

Officials recovered 22 northern pikes (*Esox lucius*), 61 roaches (genus *Rutilus*), 10 crucian carps (genus *Carassius*) and 2 perch (genus *Perca*) that 2 poachers fished from the Krestovka River using nets connected to batteries, in violation of the fishing ban during spawning season. Ecological damage is estimated at 77,200 rubles (1,000 US\$).

Moscow-Oka Territorial Administration of the Federal Agency for Fishery, April 13, 2023.¹⁰⁰



Mid-April 2023

Derbent, Republic of Dagestan, Russia

On June 24, 2022, a man was caught catching 7 sturgeons (Acipenseridae, Appendix I or II) in the Caspian Sea. He received a one-and-a-half-year suspended prison sentence, one year of probation, and must pay damages totalling 970,953 rubles (12,660 US\$). North Caucasus Territorial Administration of the Federal Agency for Fishery, April 15, 2023.¹⁰¹



April 20, 2023

Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia

Electrofishing on the Pregolya at 3.30 a.m. Citizen L's boat, 6 breams (*Abramis brama*), 2 northern pikes (*Esox lucius*), 3 tenches (*Tinca tinca*), 2 roaches (genus *Rutilus*) and a crucian carp (genus *Carassius*) were seized.

West-Baltic Territorial Administration of the Federal Agency for Fishery, April 20, 2023.¹⁰²



April 27, 2023

Belogorsk, Amur Oblast, Russia

Indictment of a 40-year-old man from Blagoveshchensk. He had been arrested on December 7, 2022 while transporting to Belogorsk 5.5 kg of Huso sturgeon caviar (*Huso dauricus*, Appendix II), which he had purchased a few days earlier in Khabarovsk Krai (about 700 km from his home).

Amur Oblast Prosecutor's Office, April 27, 2023.¹⁰³

April 2023

Republic of Dagestan, Russia

- Electrofishing on the Sulak river. A poacher was caught red-handed despite his unsuccessful attempt to make his equipment disappear into the water. Seizure of a boat, a pump, a battery, a net and a current converter.

- Electrofishing on the Sulak. Seizure of a boat, a pump, a net, a battery, a current converter and 6 Caspian white fish (*Rutilus kutum*) and Caspian shemayas (*Alburnus chalcoides*). One arrest.

- Electrofishing on the Sulak. The 2 poachers also tried to escape by throwing their equipment into the water, but the battery, pump, net and power converter were recovered. The fish and boat were also seized.

- Hectic arrest of a man caught in the act of electrofishing on the Sulak. He resisted the police by threatening them with a knife. Seizure of his equipment and fish.

North Caucasus Territorial Administration of the Federal Agency for Fishery, April 6, 13, 24 and 28, 2023.¹⁰⁴



© Sobolev Alexander

End of April 2023

Rogozhkino, Rostov Oblast, Russia

Electrical looting on the Don. Batteries, 2 boats, hundreds of so-iuy mullets (*Planiliza haematocheila*), breams and crucian carps were seized.

The Russian Academy of Sciences has denounced the devastating effects on invertebrates, zooplankton and benthic populations of the electrical discharges fatal to fish. "Eggs are destroyed, fry suffer from skeletal deformation, and surviving fish will have after-effects on their reproductive cycle."

BezFormata, April 27, 2023.¹⁰⁵



May 2, 2023

Shelkovskaya, Chechen Republic, Russia

A Russian sturgeon (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II) trafficker was sentenced to 6 months in prison and 6 months' probation. He had been arrested during a traffic stop.

Terskaya Nov, May 2, 2023.¹⁰⁶



May 17, 2023

Moscow Federal City, Russia

Anna Shevkhuzheva, age 40, is sentenced to 4 months of community service with a monthly deduction of 10% of her salary for the benefit of the State. She was arrested in May 2022 for buying and storing sturgeon caviar (*Acipenseridae*, Appendix I or II) in December 2021 and April 2022.

Brateyevo Municipal District, May 17, 2023.¹⁰⁷



May 19, 2023

Ikryanoye, Astrakhan Oblast, Russia

A poacher of Russian sturgeon (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II), starry sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*, Appendix II), and carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) who evaded arrest in May 2021 by driving his car into an FSB agent was sentenced to 6 years in prison in a strict regime penal colony. He and his 2 accomplices, convicted in November 2022, also had to pay damages of one million rubles (12,250 US\$). See "On the Trail" n°37 p.222 (ref.83).

Astrakhan Oblast Prosecutor's Office, May 19, 2023.¹⁰⁸



May 24, 2023

Khabarovsk, Khabarovsk Krai, Russia

A 51-year-old man was sentenced to a one-and-a-half-year suspended prison sentence, with one-and-a-half years' probation, and a fine of 30,000 rubles (365 US\$). He had been caught in May 2022 with 411 kg of Amur sturgeon (*Acipenser schrenckii*, Appendix II) and Huso sturgeon (*Huso dauricus*, Appendix II) caviar in 890 jars in his truck. He brought them to Khabarovsk for a fee, at the request of a "stranger." There was also a bag with a kg of Amur sturgeon flesh (a bribe in kind?).

The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Khabarovsk Krai and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, April 4, 2023; Khabarovsk Krai Prosecutor's Office, May 24, 2023.¹⁰⁹



May 26, 2023

Nadym, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District, Russia

Sentence of 2 men to 5 years in prison which is to be suspended during a 3-year probation period and a fine of 200,000 rubles (2,450 US\$). They were arrested in February 2021 for possessing 2 Siberian sturgeon carcasses (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II). See "On the Trail" n°35 p.208 (ref.64).

Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District, May 26, 2023.¹¹⁰



May 29, 2023

Astrakhan, Astrakhan Oblast, Russia

In autumn 2021 and spring 2022, an Astrakhan resident purchased 30 kg of Russian sturgeon caviar (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, Appendix II), 5 kg of beluga caviar (*Huso huso*, Appendix II), 5 kg of starry sturgeon caviar (*Acipenser stellatus*, Appendix II), and 1 kg of unidentified sturgeon caviar (*Acipenseridae*, Appendix I or II). He was sentenced to 2.5 years in a penal colony and was fined 300,000 rubles (3,675 US\$).

Astrakhan Oblast Prosecutor's Office, May 29, 2023.¹¹¹



May 30, 2023

Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Khabarovsk Krai, Russia

Four people had been arrested in October 2021 in the Nikolayevsky District in possession of 73 filets of Huso sturgeon (*Huso dauricus*, Appendix II). The main defendant was sentenced to 2 years and 6 months in prison in a strict regime penal colony, and his 3 accomplices were sentenced to 3 years of probation and a suspended sentence of 5 years and 3 years of probation.

Khabarovsk Krai Prosecutor's Office, May 30, 2023.¹¹²



May 2023

Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Khabarovsk Krai, Russia

The investigation by the fish and terrestrial wildlife conservation administration raised suspicions about a company registered with the tax authorities as specialising in retail and catering. In August 2022, it had purchased 150 juvenile Siberian sturgeons (*Acipenser baerii*, Appendix II) and 50 sterlet sturgeons (*Acipenser ruthenus*, Appendix II) from approved farms, claiming to have a breeding permit. At the supposed site of the farm, the Amur Federal Agency for Fisheries and the Krai veterinary services found only an ordinary residential building. The 150 juveniles disappeared in the flood of illegal and lucrative trafficking.

Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance, May 18, 2023; Khabarovsk Territory Today, May 19, 2023.¹¹³

UKRAINE

April 25, 2023

Novosilske, Odesa Oblast, Ukraine

Two men arrested for electrofishing in flagrante in Lake Kugurlui. They were in possession of 14 carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), 40 kg, and 4 crucian carp (*Carassius carassius*), 4 kg. Lake Kugurlui, a Ramsar site, is located in the lower Danube basin and covers an area of 80 km².

Odesa Fish Protection Patrol, April 25, 2023.¹¹⁴



OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

April 11, 2023

State of Western Australia, Australia

- Arrest of 6 "foreign" fishermen in coastal waters with an unspecified quantity of sea cucumbers and fish on board.

- Arrest of 5 "foreign" fishermen with an unspecified quantity of sea cucumbers and fish on board.

The 2 boats and fishing gear were seized and destroyed. The 11 fishermen were released.

Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), April 12, 2023; Australian Border Force, April 13, 2023.¹¹⁵



© Australian Border Force

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*), leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and flatback turtles (*Natator depressus*).

AFRICA

COMOROS

March 3, 2023

Kave-Hoani, Moheli Island, Union of the Comoros

During a land patrol, soldiers from the Comorian coastguard naval base intercepted a shipment of sea turtle meat and a motorcyclist. Three suspects in the convoy fled the scene.

Sea turtles in the Comoros, see "On the Trail" n°17 p.16 (ref.1) and n°39 p.184 (ref.1).

Comorian Coast Guard, March 3, 2023; Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), March 2023.¹



© Les espèces Comoriennes

May 15, 2023

Anjouan Island, Union of the Comoros

The Comorian coastguard recovered 12 sea turtles on a motorboat. The turtles were reportedly captured on the island of Moheli and later released off the port of Ahmed Abdallah Abdereman. The gendarmerie questioned the crew, which will be prosecuted.

Comores-Infos, May 16, 2023.²

FRANCE (MAYOTTE)

March 2, 2023

Chirongui, Department of Mayotte, France

Arrest of 3 people in the middle of a meal. They were eating turtle meat.

There are 5 species of marine turtle in Mayotte's waters: the green turtle, the hawksbill turtle, the loggerhead turtle, the leatherback turtle and Ridley's sea turtle.

Mayotte la 1^{ère}, March 2, 2023.³

AMERICA

SURINAME

Night of March 15 to March 16, 2023 Between Albina, Marowijne District, and Commewijne District, Suriname

Arrest at 3.30 a.m. of Iwan J., aged 54, and Wilco A., aged 34. They were transporting 11,500 green turtle eggs on the East-West Link. The eggs were reportedly collected on a beach at Galibi, in the Marowijne district. The police operation was triggered by confidential information. Waterkant, March 16, 2023.⁴

Beginning of May 2023 Burnside, Coronie District, Suriname

Seizure of 2,014 green turtle eggs in 8 bags from a car. The driver was remanded in custody for 30 days. The eggs of "krapé", the vernacular name for green turtles, were destroyed by the game wardens. Waterkant, May 12, 2023.⁵

THE CARIBBEAN

UNITED KINGDOM (CAYMAN ISLANDS)

Sunday, April 2, 2023 Cayman Islands British Overseas Territory, United Kingdom

Last-minute rescue of a hawksbill turtle tied up on the beach, ready to be slaughtered by poachers. The turtle was returned to the sea after a brief check-up.

Cayman Islands Department of Environment, April 4, 2023.⁶



EASTERN ASIA

CHINA

**March 16, 2023
Nanjing Lukou
International Airport,
Jiangsu Province, China**
Customs seized 3 decorative paintings in a hawksbill turtle shell. Chinese Customs, March 24, 2023.⁷



SOUTHEASTERN ASIA

INDONESIA

April 20, 2023 Benoa, Badung Regency, Bali Province, Lesser Sunda Islands, Indonesia

Dismantling of a green turtle slaughterhouse aimed at satisfying the demand for 2 culinary specialities, lawar and serapah. The 21 turtles still alive were tied with raffia through a hole in their flippers. They were aged between 10 and 50 years and weighed between 50 and 70 kg. They were stored in a pond behind the house of a certain Made Japa.

Lawar is a dish of turtle meat cooked in spices and coconut milk or blood. Since 1999, when the sale of sea turtle meat was banned, it has generally been prepared with freshwater turtles.

Serapah is a preparation made from turtle organs cooked and grilled with spices. Garda Animalia, May 2, 2023.⁸

May 15, 2023 Pendem, Jembrana Regency, Bali Province, Lesser Sunda Islands, Indonesia

Seizure of 18 green turtles from a pick-up truck travelling from Banyuwangi, East Java province, to Denpasar, accompanied by a Fortuner car. The 2 drivers were arrested.

Bali Tribune, May 17, 2023.⁹

SOUTHERN ASIA

INDIA

April 24, 2023 Collinpur, South Andaman District, Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

Seizure of 10 kg of sea turtle meat from a man's bag. He was trying to sell them on the public road. He lives in Ferrargunj by the sea but will reside in custody for a while. There are 4 species of sea turtles in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands: leatherback turtles, hawksbill turtles, green turtles and Ridley sea turtles.

Andaman Sheekha, April 25, 2023.¹⁰

SRI LANKA

May 22, 2023 Arippu, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Seizure of 206 kg of sea turtle meat and 2 live turtles. The species found off the coast of Sri Lanka are loggerhead, leatherback, hawksbill, green and Ridley sea turtles. The 2 men arrested are 26 and 37 years old.

Sri Lanka Navy, May 22, 2023.¹¹

SOUTHERN EUROPE

GREECE

End of April 2023

Charachia, Region of Peloponnese, Greece

Welcome in Greece. A loggerhead sea turtle had its throat slit on the beach.

Toulipa Goulimy, April 23, 2023; Zoosos.gr, April 23, 2023.¹²

May 2, 2023

Naxos, Naxos Island, Region of South Aegean, Greece

Another loggerhead turtle has been found with its throat cut, this time on the seabed, at the foot of the lighthouse. It was reported by a group of divers.

Naxos island wildlife protection, May 3, 2023.¹³

OCEANIA

FRANCE (NEW CALEDONIA)

REPEATED OFFENCE

April 24, 2023

Nouméa, South Province, Overseas Collectivity of New Caledonia, France



Four months' imprisonment (to be served on the outside under an electronic bracelet), fine of 40,000 francs (365 US\$) and 240,000 francs (2,190 US\$) to the South Province for environmental damages, for poaching a green turtle on August 11, 2022, and for catching undersized mangrove tree crabs (*Aratus pisonii*). He is a repeat offender. In October 2022, a green turtle shell was also seized from his home (see "On the Trail" n°37 p.228, ref.21). Nouvelle-Calédonie la 1ère, April 24, 2023.¹⁴

MARINE MAMMALS

AFRICA

SEYCHELLES

March 20 and May 6, 2023

Off Denis Island, The Seychelles



© Louis Toussaint

The Exclusive Economic Zone of the Seychelles Islands is a vast 1.4 million km². In a joint exercise by the Seychelles Coast Guard and a US Coast Guard vessel, the fishing vessel *Fishfinder* was approached, boarded, and searched 35 nautical miles off Denis Island. The crew of 6 Sri Lankans were concealing salted dolphin meat (Delphinidae, Appendix I or II) in around 20 bags. The boat was escorted to Port Victoria. The meat was unloaded and weighed (472.45 kg), then burned in the hospital incinerator on May 6.

Sea turtle meat burnt in the hospital incinerator in Mahé (Seychelles), see "On the Trail" n°38 p.248 (ref.3).

Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), March 30 to April 5, 2023; Seychelles News Agency, March 31, 2023; Seychelles Nation, May 8, 2023.¹

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 12, 2023

Ohikilolo Beach, State of Hawaii, United States of America

The NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) is promising a 5,000-US\$ reward to anyone who can identify the person or persons responsible for the violent death of a Hawaiian monk seal (*Monachus schauinslandi*, Appendix I) on a beach in the archipelago.

Hawaii News Now, June 7, 2023.²

ASIA

THAILAND

April 23, 2023

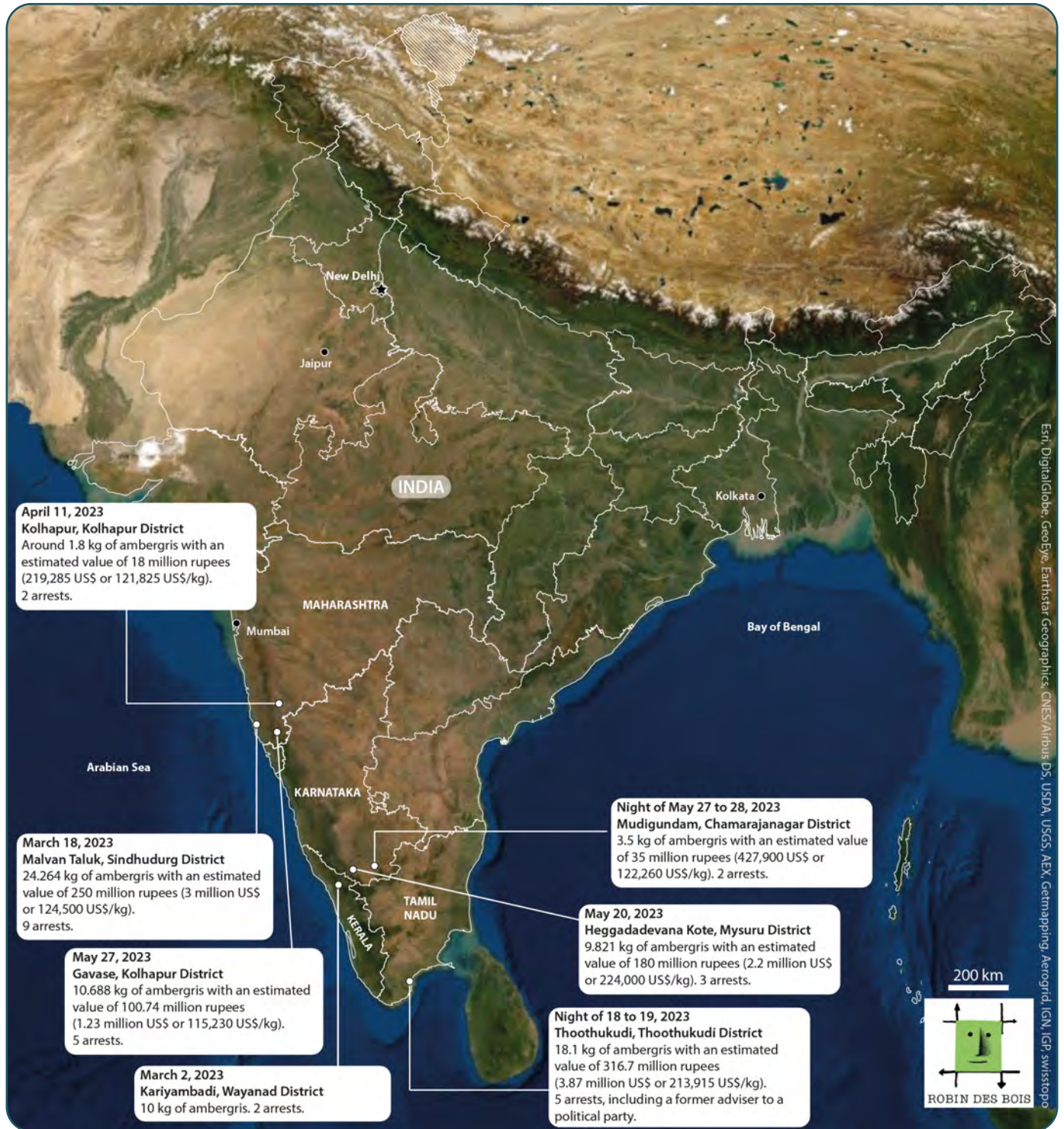
Pak Nam Krasae, Rayong Province, Thailand

While searching for crabs and shellfish on the beach, Chuwit Senanoi picked up 3 kg of a clear floating material that, he is convinced, based on information seen on TV, is ambergris released by a sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*, Appendix I). Expert assessment will tell whether the treasure is estimated to be worth nearly 3 million baht (30,000 US\$/kg) or whether it is just an illusion. In Thailand, more and more people are walking the beaches with dogs that are able to detect the scent of ambergris, like the dogs that specialise in locating the truffles in France and Italy.

The Thaiger, April 27, 2023.³

India

Seizures of alleged ambergris (78.173 kg) between March 1 and May 31, 2023



Sources, see page 257.

EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIA

May 26, 2023

Sevastopol, Republic of Crimea

Meanwhile, in Crimea, there is a big mess around captive dolphins.

The Sevastopol dolphinarium, whose management on the verge of bankruptcy is suspected of having surreptitiously returned 4 Black Sea bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus ponticus*, Appendix II) to the sea (see "On the Trail" n°38 p.254, ref. 16), has allegedly also sold a 5th dolphin to a Sochi dolphinarium without seeking the agreement of Rosprirodnadzor. The Sevastopol prosecutor initiates an investigation.

RIA Novosti Crimea, May 26, 2023.⁴

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

March 27 and August 23, 2023

Eden, State of New South Wales, Australia



- Theft from outside the Eden Killer Whale Museum of the skull of a sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*, Appendix I) 4 meters long, 2 meters wide, and weighing one tonne. The vestige was suspended from the skull to the jaws to allow the oil to drain and be collected. It was stored in a shed during renovation work at the museum. The thieves used a crane and a flatbed truck to break into the premises. They face a fine of 80,000 Australian dollars (53,645 US\$).

- Return of the sperm whale skull near the museum. The vestige is vandalized, cracked, and dislocated into 3 parts.

ABC News, March 27, 2023; 9News, March 29 and August 23, 2023; Daily Mail, March 29, 2023; About Regional, August 28, 2023.⁵

See also the chapter Various marine species.

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Kazakhstan. Seizures of horns (6,365), carcasses (6) and skins (3) between March 1 and May 31, 2023 (page 81).

Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, March 1, 7, 9, 10 and 18 and April 4, 2023; Khabar 24, March 2, 2023; Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, March 7, 2023; Atyrau Region Police Department, March 9, 2023; Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, March 20, 2023; National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, April 3, 2023; Okhotzooptom, March 20, 2023; Total.kz, May 31, 2023.

Democratic Republic of the Congo. Seizures, handing over and rescues of primates between March 1 and May 31, 2023 (page 99).

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Indonesia. Orangutans March 1 - May 31, 2023 (pages 108-109).

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Brazil. Seizure of 3,099 birds between March 1 and May 30, 2023 (page 132).

Amazonas : Amazonas Institute for Environmental Protection, April 27, 2023.

Bahía : Vitoria da Conquista City Hall, March 30, 2023.

Ceará : G1 CE, March 2 and April 21, 2023; Military Police of Ceará, March 7, 24 and 28, April 30 and May 22, 2023; Federal Highway Police, March 14, 2023; Secretariat of Public Safety and Social Defense of Ceara, April 11, 2023; Olhar Animal, May 5, 2023; Ceará State Government, May 12 and 18, 2023.

District Fédéral : Military Police of the Federal District, March 1 and 8, April 2, 14 and 28, May 8 and 29, 2023; G1 DF, April 15, 2023; G1, April 18, 2023.

Espírito Santo : Environmental Military Police - Espirito Santo Force, March 24 and May 8, 2023; Environmental Military Police Battalion, March 31, 2023; Military Police of Espírito Santo, April 12, 22 and 26, 2023; Environmental Military Police, April 19, 2023.

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Minas Gerais : G1 Minas, March 14, 2023; State Secretary for the Environment and Sustainable Development, March 31, 2023; G1, April 27, 2023; Government of the State of Minas Gerais, May 29, 2023.

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Pernambuco : G1 Caruaru, March 9 and 31, 2023.

Piauí : G1 PI, April 4, 2023; Lupa 1, April 13, 2023.

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São Paulo : G1 Santos, March 3, 2023; G1 Presidente Prudente, March 14 and April 13, 2023; G1 Piracicaba e Região, April 22, 2023; G1 Campinas e Região, May 3, 2023; G1 Mogi das Cruzes e Suzano, May 9, 2023.

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Indonesia. Seizure of 2,894 birds between March 1 and May 30, 2023 (pages 140-141).

FLIGHT – Protecting Indonesia's Birds, March 5, 11 and 22, April 4 and 6 avril, May 23, 2023; BKSDA Maluku, March 15, April 2, 3, 8, 25 and 29, May 10 and 29, 2023; Indonesia Maritime Information Centre, March and May 2023; Liputan6.com, April 4, 2023; West Papua Natural Resources Conservation Center (BBKSDA Papua Barat), April 5 and 27, 2023; Directorate General of Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation, April 6 and May 23, 2023; Korpolarud News, April 9, 2023; Garda Animalia, April 18, May 11 and 30 and June 2, 2023; Bandar Lampung Class I Agricultural Quarantine Center, May 5 and 20, 2023; Barantin Kini, May 6 and 24, 2023; VOI, May 31, 2023.

United Kingdom. Poaching of raptors (14) between March 1 and May 31, 2023 (page 149).

Raptor Persecution UK, March 28 and 30, May 5, June 6 and 9, September 19, November 23, 2023 and January 31, 2024; Durham Constabulary, March 31, 2023; Police Scotland, March 31, 2023; ITV, April 13, 2023; Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group, May 15, 2023; Lancashire Rural Police, May 17, 2023; Police Service of Northern Ireland, May 17 and July 7, 2023.

Italy. Poaching and seizures of birds (182) between March 1 and May 31, 2023 (page 157).

- Abruzzo: Rewilding Apennines, May 8 and 17 and June 27, 2023; Il Messaggero, May 18, 2023; Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, June 15, 2023.

- Campania: Il Mattino, March 4, 2023; SalernoToday, March 5, 2023; NapoliToday, March 18, 2023; MARIGLIANO.net, April 17, 2023; Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli - Napoli, April 29, 2023; Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, May 8, 2023; Committee Against Bird Slaughter, May 8, 2023; Police Headquarters of Naples, May 8, 2023; Teleischia, May 10, 2023; Scisciano Notizie, May 22, 2023.

- Emilia-Romagna: Province of Modena, March 17, 2023.

- Friuli-Venezia Giulia: Friuli Oggi, May 3, 2023.
- Lazio: Committee Against Bird Slaughter, April 29, 2023; Rewilding Apennines, June 4, 2023.
- Liguria: Savonanews.it, May 6, 2023.
- Lombardy: Il Giorno, March 12, 2023; Committee Against Bird Slaughter, March 21, 2023.
- Piedmont: Quotidiano Piemontese, May 31, 2023.
- Sicily: AgrigentoNotizie, May 7, 2023.
- Veneto: Province of Vicenza, March 13, 2023; Rovigo in Diretta, April 3, 2023; Il Gazzettino, April 17 and 19, 2023.

Italy. Poaching and seizures of purple sea urchins (24,410) between March 1 and May 31, 2023 (page 228).

- Lazio: Baraondanews.it, March 3, 2023.
- Marche: AnconaToday, May 20, 2023.
- Apulia: Puglian, March 10, 2023; Puglia Reporter, March 24, 2023; LeccePrima, April 6 and 11, 2023; Antenna Sud, April 11, 2023; Coast Guard, April 14, 2023; Rai News 24, April 19, 2023; Manfredonia Coast Guard, April 26, 2023; FoggiaToday, April 27, 2023.
- Sardinia: Sardegna Live, March 8, 2023; L'Unione Sarda, March 17, 2023; Alghero Live, March 23 and 31, 2023; Coast Guard, 23 mars 2023; Sardegna Ieri-Oggi-Domani, March 31, 2023.
- Sicily: Libertà Sicilia, March 11, 2023.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine. Seizures of caviar (62 kg, minimal value 21,675 US\$). Poaching and seizures of sturgeons (1,229 specimens + 3,458.3 kg of meat) between March 1 and May 31, 2023 (page 246).

Azerbaijan

Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, March 6, 2023.

Kazakhstan

Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, March 2, 12 and 29, April 5, 17 and 21, May 20 and June 5, 2023; Fisheries Committee of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, March 3 and May 19 and 22, 2023; Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, March 31, 2023; CaspianLife, April 14 and May 19, 2023; Tumba.kz, April 17, 2023; Atyrau Region Police Department, May 5, 2023; Border Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, May 6 and June 2, 2023.

Russia

- Astrakhan Oblast: Volga-Caspian Management Unit of the Federal Agency for Fishery, March 22, April 27, May 16 and 23, 2023; Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Astrakhan Oblast, April 11 and May 15 and 22, 2023; V1.ru, April 20, 2023; The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Astrakhan Oblast, April 24 and May 29, 2023; Argoumenty i Fakty (AIF), May 3, 2023; Gazeta VOLGA, May 12, 2023; Astrakhan.Ru, May 24, 2023; Bloknot Astrakhan, May 24 and 31 and July 5, 2023; A24, June 1, 2023; Punkt-A, June 1, 2023; BezFormata, June 7, 2023.
- Republic of Dagestan: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Republic of Dagestan, March 23, 2023.
- Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District: Moskovski Komsomolets Yamalia, March 28, 2023; Vesti Yamal, April 1, 2023.
- Republic of Kalmykia: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Republic of Kalmykia, March 29, 2023; Republic of Kalmykia Prosecutor's Office, May 19, 2023.
- Kaluga Oblast: Moscow-Oka Territorial Administration of the Federal Agency for Fishery, June 9, 2023.
- Khabarovsk Krai: AmurMedia, March 27, May 19 and 25, 2023; Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Khabarovsk Krai, May 11, 19 and 25, 2023; DV Novosti, May 22, 2023; The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Khabarovsk Krai and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, June 20, 2023.
- Krasnodar Krai: Argoumenty i Fakty (AIF), March 15, 2023; Yugopolis, May 5 and 24, 2023; Kuban Today, May 12, 2023; Novorossiysk News - Our Newspaper, May 17, 2023; Kommersant, May 23, 2023; The investigative committee of the Russian Federation in the Krasnodar Krai, June 7 and 19, 2023.
- Krasnoyarsk Krai: Taimyr Telegraph, April 2, 2023; NGS24, April 3, 2023; Baikal24, May 31, 2023; Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Krasnoyarsk Krai, May 31, 2023.
- Omsk Oblast: Upper Ob Territorial Department of the Federal Agency for Fishery, May 11 and 25, 2023; Argoumenty i Fakty (AIF), May 17, 2023; Federal Service of the National Guard Troops of the Russian Federation in Omsk Oblast, May 24, 2023.
- Republic of Udmurtia: Federal Agency for Fishery, March 29, 2023.
- Rostov Oblast: Komsomolskaia Pravda Rostov, April 9, 2023; Panorama, May 10, 2023; TASS Russian News Agency, May 10, 2023.
- Samara Oblast : Samara Independent Information Agency, March 21, 2023; Volga News, March 21, 2023.
- Tomsk Oblast : Argoumenty i Fakty (AIF), April 8, 2023.
- Voronezh Oblast: Azov-Black Sea Territorial Administration of the Federal Agency for Fishery, May 17, 2023.

Ukraine

Odessa Fish Protection Patrol, March 27 and May 12, 2023.

India. Seizures of alleged ambergris (78.173 kg) between March 1 and May 31, 2023 (page 255).

- Karnataka: Star of Mysore, May 23, 2023; The Hindu, May 23, 2023; Asianet News, May 28, 2023; Deccan Herald, May 29, 2023.
- Kerala: Mathrubhumi, March 3, 2023.
- Maharashtra: Saam TV, March 18, 2023; United News of India, March 18 and May 27, 2023; Lokmat Times, April 11, 2023; The Times of India, April 12, 2023; ABP Majha, May 27, 2023.
- Tamil Nadu: The Times of India, May 19, 2023; India Today, May 20, 2023.

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Musical instruments with ivory parts (pianos, violins, cellos, etc.)

N°5 p.95. **N°22** p.102 (Nouvelle-Zélande). **N°28** p.110 (ref.70). **N°29** p.31 (ref.63). **N°32** p.36 (ref.117), p.37 (ref.122) and p.42 (ref.176). **N°33** p.38, p.39 (ref.109) and p.44 (ref.161). **N°34** p.37 (ref.125). **N°35** p.27 (ref.85). **N°37** p.27 (ref.61) and p.37 (ref.127). **N°38** p.27 (ref.74) and p.36 (ref.131). **N°39** p.17 (ref.39) and p.18 (ref.46). **N°40** p.28 (ref.67).

Poisoning by agricultural toxins (pesticides, insecticides, rodenticides, such as: aldicarb, bendiocarb, brodifacoum, bromadiolone, carbofuran, chlorpyrifos, Curater, endosulfan, fenthion, Furadan, metaldehyde, monocrotophos, parathion, sulfotep, Temik, Thimet, ...)

N°2 p.37. **N°4** p.30, p.54 and p.83. **N°7** p.20 (ref.1) and p.27 (ref.39). **N°8** p.20 (ref.2), p.26 (ref.32) and p.75 (ref.30). **N°10** p.69 (ref.15). **N°11** p.51 (ref.44), p.74 (ref.46) and p.84 (ref.83). **N°12** p.27 (ref.3), p.57 (ref.25) and p.102 (ref.2). **N°13** p.59 (ref.37), p.61 (ref.52), p.102 (ref.10) and p.103 (ref.14). **N°14** p.27 (ref.1). **N°15** p.36 (ref.59), p.64 (ref.50), p.65 (ref.52) and p.101 (ref.94). **N°16** p.75 (ref.10). **N°17** p.38 (ref.69) and p.55 (ref.5). **N°18** p.32 (ref.32), p.34 (ref.49), p.54-55 (ref.26), p.58 (ref.59) and p.85 (ref.20). **N°19** p.33 (ref.2) and p.71 (p.50). **N°20** p.34 (ref.4), p.46 (ref.109), p.48 (ref.121), p.69 (ref.55) and p.106 (ref.118). **N°21** p.37 (ref.72 and 75), p.52 (ref.19), p.69 (ref.86) and p.98 (ref.113). **N°22** p.44 (27 juillet 2018) and p.56 (12 août 2018). **N°23** p.46 (ref.36), p.50 (ref.59), p.55 (ref.84, 85, 88 and 89), p.89 (ref.67), p.94 (ref.92), p.114 (ref.10) and p.118 (ref.36). **N°24** p.43 (ref.65). **N°25** p.42 (ref.16), p.44 (ref.35) and p.116 (ref.98). **N°26** p.36 (ref.1), p.47 (ref.55), p.61 (ref.3), p.62 (ref.8 and 10), p.64 (ref.22) and p.66 (ref.39). **N°27** p.41 (ref.2), p.42 (ref.5), p.48 (ref.33) and p.49 (ref.40). **N°28** p.47 (ref.39 and 41), p.80 (ref.39), p.93 (ref.3) and p.135 (ref.78). **N°29** p.54 (ref.7), p.55 (ref.12), p.56 (ref.15), p.68 (ref.82), p.118 (ref.44), p.126 (ref.102), p.128, p.129 (ref.110) and p.131 (ref.129). **N°30** p.119 (map). **N°31** p.68 (ref.103), p.72 (ref.9), p.110 (ref.8), p.114 (ref.9), p.116 (ref.19), p.133 (ref.110) and p.181 (ref.66). **N°32** p.70 (ref.6), p.73 (ref.23), p.78 (ref.51), p.100 (ref.34), p.145 (ref.6), p.156 (ref.39), p.172 (ref.108), p.173, p.180 (ref.156 and 157), p.181 (ref.163), p.182 (ref.170 and 171), p.183 (ref.175 and 176), p.194 (ref.243) and p.195 (ref.244 and 246). **N°33** p.46 (ref.172), p.87 (ref.60), p.115 (ref.25), p.169 (map), p.172 (ref.102), p.173 (map), p.179 (ref.132), p.182 (ref.140) and p.239 (ref.122). **N°34** p.41 (ref.148), p.156 (map), p.161 (map), p.162 (ref.109) and p.179 (ref.217). **N°35** p.52 (ref.54), p.67 (ref.18), p.128 (map), p.133 (ref.80), p.134 (ref.91), p.135 (ref.99), p.136 (ref.106 and 109), p.143 (ref.147), p.145 (ref.163), p.146 (ref.167) and p.185 (ref.71). **N°36** p.59 (ref.23), p.71 (ref.2), p.138 (ref.62), p.144 (ref.92), p.145 (ref.97 and 98), p.146 (ref.101), p.147 (ref.110), p.155 (ref.135), p.159 (ref.162) and p.191 (ref.34). **N°37** p.133 (map), p.137 (ref.86 and 90), p.138 (ref.94), p.140 (ref.110), p.147 (ref.144 and 146) and p.176 (ref.1). **N°38** p.50 (ref.8), p.68 (ref.1), p.70 (ref.12), p.71 (ref.14), p.73 (ref.26), p.148 (map), p.154 (ref.127), p.155 (map), p.156 (ref.133), p.159 (ref.157), p.161 (ref.173), p.164 (ref.185) and p.169 (ref.209). **N°39** p.34 (ref.14), p.109 (ref.85), p.111 (ref.97 and 99), p.112 (ref.102), p.119 (ref.129 and 131) and p.122 (ref.146). **N°40** p. 21 (ref. 22), p. 50 (ref.12), p. 51 (ref.20), p. 52 (ref.25), p.53 (ref.36), p.56 (ref. 52 and 57), p.67 (ref.16 and 17), p.69 (ref.27), p.89 (ref.1), p.113 (ref.78), p.124 (ref.5), p.131 (ref. 44), p.144 (ref. 90), p.145 (ref.94, 95 and 96), p.147 (ref.104 and 108), p.148 (ref.111), p.149 (map), p.150 (ref.116, 117 and 118), p.151 (ref.123, 124 and 125), p.153 (ref.135), p.155 (ref.145), p.158 (ref.154 and 155), p.159 (ref.157, 158 and 159), p.160 (ref.163), p.161 (ref.168), p.163 (ref.180 and 183), p.204 (ref. 73), p.209 (ref. 95).

Rathkeale Rovers

N°1 p.22. **N°2** p. 48, 49, 50, 52 and 53. **N°4** p.67 and p.69-70. **N°5** p.76. **N°7** p.75 (ref.78). **N°8** p.66 (ref.55 and encadré). **N°9** p.69. **N°10** p.49 (ref.49bis). **N°12** p.72 (ref.48/49). **N°13** p.76 (ref.61). **N°14** p.97 (ref.129). **N°15** p.86 (ref.75). **N°16** p.70 (ref.37). **N°18** p.78 (ref.70). **N°19** p.87 (ref.28 and 29). **N°27** p.88 (ref.23). **N°30** p.49 (ref.37bis). **N°32** p.55-58. **N°34** p.60 (ref.62). **N°40** p.39 (ref.9).

Servals alive in Europe and Northern America

N°11 p.52 (ref.51). **N°26** p.68 (ref.52). **N°27** p.79 (ref.57). **N°28** p.86 (ref.69 and 70). **N°31** p.66 (ref.92). **N°32** p.88 (ref.117, 118 and 119) and p.251 (ref.119). **N°33** p.91 (ref.87 and 88) and p.96 (ref.114). **N°34** p.78 (ref.106, 107 and 108), p.82 (ref.131), p.83-84 (ref.135) and p.227 (ref.98). **N°35** p.58 (ref.94), p.62 (ref.123) and p.187 (ref.84). **N°36** p.66 (ref.69 and 70) and p.67 (ref.71). **N°37** p.55 (ref.60). **N°38** p.62 (ref.76), p.66 (ref.94), p.67 (ref.95) and p.214 (ref.81). **N°39** p.41 (ref.51, 52 and 54). **N°40** p.59 (ref.77 and 78), p.60 (ref.79).

Shahtoosh (stoles made from the wool of the Tibetan antelope *Pantholops hodgsonii*)

N°3 p.76. **N°5** p.109. **N°6** p.100 (ref.10). **N°8** p.93 (ref.12). **N°9** p.91 (ref.13). **N°11** p.49 (ref.30). **N°16** p.103 (ref.61). **N°20** p.114 (ref.24). **N°23** p.140 (ref.26) and p.142 (ref.45). **N°28** p.119 (ref.23). **N°32** p.109 (ref.6). **N°33** p.113 (ref.13). **N°34** p.101 (ref.15). **N°35** p.75 (ref.7) and p.76 (ref.11). **N°40** p.79 (ref.10), p. 80 (ref.11).

Sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*, Appendix I) (teeth thefts, seizures and convictions)

N°2 p.5, p.70 and p.77. **N°3** p.76. **N°4** p.13. **N°7** p.116 (ref.69). **N°9** p.88-89 (ref.95). **N°10** p.9 (ref.3). **N°11** p.12 (Multi-espèces marines), p.97 (ref.49) and 98 (ref.55). **N°12** p.12 (ref.6). **N°13** p.114 (ref.74 and 75). **N°15** p.11 (ref.6) and p.87 (ref.1). **N°16** p.12 (ref.1). **N°17** p.16 (ref.10), p.99 (ref.74) and p.117 (ref.33). **N°18** p.13 (ref.2). **N°20** p.128 (ref.78). **N°21** p.14 (ref.1). **N°22** p.124 (août 2018). **N°24** p.17 (ref.5 and 8). **N°25** p.19 (ref.4), p.20 (ref.10) and p.111 (ref.69). **N°26** p.18 (ref.7). **N°27** p.23 (ref.1) and p.127 (ref.74). **N°29** p.41 (ref.124 and 126) and p.180 (ref.6 and 7). **N°30** p.174 (ref.95), p.179 (ref.8), p.197 (ref.6) and p.200 (ref.17). **N°31** p.41 (ref.2 and 4) and p.188 (ref.103 and ref.2). **N°32** p.241 (ref.61) and p.305 (ref.22). **N°33** p.59 (ref.4, 5 and 6) and p.282 (ref.8). **N°34** p.49 (ref.1 and 6) and p.227 (ref.97). **N°35** p.35 (ref.5), p.215 (ref.2) and p.217 (ref.9 and 10). **N°36** p.43 (ref.2). **N°37** p.197 (ref.4), p.232 (ref.12) and p.233 (ref.13). **N°38** p.213 (ref.77) and p.252 (ref.4). **N°40** p.38 (ref.6).

Spiders in and from Poland

N°25 p.37 (ref.4). **N°31** p.166 (ref.10). **N°33** p.217 (ref.30). **N°34** p.208 (ref.10 and 12) and p.209 (ref.13). **N°37** p.178 (ref 9 and 10). **N°40** p.190 (ref. 19).

Totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*) (Contraband of swim bladders)

N°1 p.3. **N°4** p.6. **N°5** p.13. **N°6** p.6 (ref.1, 2 and 4). **N°7** p.5 (ref.5). **N°8** p.5 (ref.4 and 5) and p.8 (ref.1). **N°10** p.7 (ref.2 and 3) and p.8 (ref.12). **N°11** p.6 (ref.2) and p.7 (ref.7). **N°15** p.8 (ref.11). **N°16** p.8 (ref.12, 13 and 14). **N°17** p.4 (ref.1) and p.11 (ref.19). **N°18** p.10 (ref.5). **N°19** p.13 (ref.20). **N°20** p.15 (ref.11), p.16 (ref.13, 14 and 15) and p.22 (ref.3). **N°21** p.10 (ref.10, 11, 12 and 13) and p.18 (ref.1). **N°22** p.11 and p.12. **N°23** p.13 (ref.15, 16 and 17) and p.14 (ref.20). **N°24** p.14 (ref.8). **N°25** p.15 (ref.16, 18, 19 and 20) and 16 (ref.22, 24 and 25). **N°26** p.15 (ref.10). **N°27** p.20 (ref.28). **N°29** p.172 (ref.18) and p.173 (ref.23). **N°30** p.178 (ref.5), p.188 (ref.7), p.189 (ref.14) and p.191 (ref.21). **N°31** p.208 (ref.21 and 22) and p.210 (ref.34). **N°32** p.301 (ref.7). **N°33** p.259 (ref.2), p.263 (ref.16), p.265 (ref.26) and p.282 (ref.7). **N°34** p.38 (ref.128), p.232 (ref.2 and 3), p.249 (ref.14), p.250 (ref.17) and p.252 (ref.30). **N°35** p.200 (ref.5), p.202 (ref.17 and 18) and p.203 (ref.24). **N°40** p.210 (ref. 2), p.211 (ref.3), p.234 (ref.7), p.237 (ref.24).

Vaquitas (*Phocoena sinus*)

N°16 p.16 (ref.2). **N°17** p.10 (ref.15) and p.11 (ref.14). **N°19** p.15 (ref.1). **N°22** p.19. **N°27** p.20 (ref.27). **N°32** p.301 (ref.7). **N°33** p.282 (ref.7). **N°40** p.211 (ref.3).

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