

# ON the TRAIL

The defaunation bulletin  
Quarterly information and analysis report on animal poaching and smuggling

## Covid-19 Special Edition

Pangolin trafficking ante Covid-19 from the 1<sup>st</sup> October to the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019  
and post Covid-19 from the 1<sup>st</sup> January to the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2020  
Published on April 30, 2020

Original version in French





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

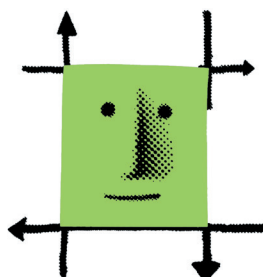
"On the Trail" highlights the new weapons of plunderers, the new modus operandi of smugglers, rumours intended to attract humans consumers of animals and their by-products. "On the Trail" gathers and disseminates feedback from institutions, individuals and NGOs that fight against poaching and smuggling.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

**Previous issues in English**

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

**Previous issues in French**

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**Translation English edition "On the Trail ":** Emilie Courtin with Robin des Bois

# Preliminary report on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on terrestrial and marine wildlife

The direct and indirect effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on wildlife behaviour, poaching and trafficking are numerous. This special issue of "On the Trail" is a first sketch. The coming months will allow us to refine it, confirm or refute the trends and analyse new ones. The integrated poaching and smuggling network, which is as sharp as ever, is spreading rumours about Covid-19 and the curative virtues of its miracle drugs. It's too early to prove that this marketing based on the exploitation of endangered animals, cruelty and gullibility is successful.

Moreover, noting that the pangolins are blamed by a hasty study by Chinese scientists, it seemed essential to establish a continuum between the pre-Covid-19 (October, November, December 2019) and post-Covid-19 (January, February, March 2020) seizures with the light of maps. Here again, it is too early to draw definitive conclusions on the slowing down or acceleration of the trafficking of live, frozen pangolins or their scales. It is notable, however, that there has been no collapse in the trafficking of pangolins despite their suspected involvement in the spread of Covid-19. Until the end of March, despite the slowing down and then paralysis of global maritime and air logistics, pangolin trafficking persisted and prices could be on the rise.

Fortunately, the pangolin is not a gregarious animal. It is a solitary one and unlike bats, he has escaped mass killing. He sometimes even benefits from increased protection. On 31 March 2020, Gabon issued an order prohibiting the hunting, capture, possession and marketing of pangolins and bats.

## CHINA

- **February 24, 2020**, the National People's Congress recalled that hunting, trade, transport and eating of protected wildlife species are prohibited. "What is prohibited must be strictly prohibited". The ban is extended to the consumption of all terrestrial wildlife as food. The safeguarding of human health, the strengthening of harmony between humankind and nature and the implementation of "eco-civilization", inter alia, are justifying the decision. At the same time, traditional medicine, scientific research, the pet and zoo market are not bound by this reminder to the law and their needs can continue to be ensured subject to quarantine and completion of all regulatory formalities.

Only terrestrial wildlife is concerned and no mention is made of marine wildlife. The highest Chinese authorities want to "eliminate the bad habit of overeating wild meat" but are careful not to include marine food resources in their instruction. By the way, in early April 2020, the order for a factory trawler specialized in catching krill in Antarctic waters was confirmed. It will be deliverable in 2023 and with its 145 m long, it will be the largest industrial predator of these planktonic crustaceans, which are the favourite, not to say unique prey of whales. The Finnish group Wärtislä, which already has a strong presence in China in the container shipping industry, designed it. The European Union is thus participating in the gigantism of the Chinese fishing fleet.



- **On March 4, 2020**, the National Health Commission published on its official website a list of remedies recommended by some wise men of traditional Chinese medicine and likely to cure Covid-19-induced pneumonia. A decoction of carefully dosed herbs and buffalo horn is recommended for heavy and critical cases, as well as an intravenous injection of Tan Re Qing (TRQ). TRQ has long been prescribed to treat bronchitis and other respiratory tract infections. It is composed of Baikal skullcap roots, also known as Chinese skullcap, Japanese honeysuckle, forsythia extracts, goat horn and bear bile. There's the rub. Traditional Chinese medicine is considered by President Xi Jinping to be "a treasure of Chinese civilization", which cannot be objectively disputed. But its recipes need to be updated and its effectiveness verified. In a way, the drug marketing approvals for traditional Chinese pharmacopoeia most often date back several thousand years and do not benefit from clinical and statistical re-examination and intercomparisons with modern treatments. TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) terminology should also be recast. Curiously, in a scientific Chinese article published in 2019 on controlling the production of TRQ, bear bile is described as "herb". Saiga antelopes, rhinos, tigers, pangolins, bears and sea cucumbers continue to be exploited by the TCM even though all these species are threatened with extinction. Their bones, biles, scales, horns and their organs must be effectively handled and processed into medicines by approved laboratories and administered in specialised hospitals. But the smuggling networks take advantage of this guarantee to sell the poaching products on the black market. There are clearly contradictions and clashes on this subject within the scientific and political communities in China. In this respect, the turnaround concerning Ejiao, the gelatine produced from boiled donkey skins, says a lot about the tensions (see next page).





**February 2018.** The message posted on Weibo came from the Ministry of Health and the Family planning commission. It said that ejiao was nothing more than boiled donkey skin and that the collagen protein coming out of the boiling was not a useful source of protein. The China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (CATCM) condemns what they call a “fake” without the least scientific basis misleading the public and consumers. The CATCM call on everyone to show reason and consider its own information instead of blindly following advice from other sources. On 26 January after having been read and shared by millions of people, the message was taken off the China’s National Health and Family Planning Commission hotline. The official organism apologized and claims to have been victim of a hoax. From “On the Trail” n°20, p.131.

The “Silk Roads”, better known worldwide as BRI (China’s Belt and Road Initiative) have among their objectives the promotion of TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine). The strategy is paying off. Between 2016 and 2017, official export sales of TCM products increased by 54% and reached a turnover of 300 million US\$, not counting smuggling revenues. Recently, 17 TCM centres have been opened worldwide in countries as diverse as Kazakhstan, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Spain and Hungary. At the same time, in 2019, WHO has included TCM in its ICD (International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems). This document is a kind of universal bible on diseases, diagnoses and therapeutic responses. It can be consulted in more than 100 countries. The eleventh edition of this document will increase the influence of TCM and its related revenues.



- **Early April.** The skinning and sale of snakes are in theory suspended on domestic markets and restaurants and at the same time - China is virtuoso in the concept of “at the same time” - the export tax on live snakes and other animals for food and possibly decorative use is lowered, as with steel. It is indeed necessary to save the soldier Zisiqiao in Zhejiang and his many brothers in arms in Guangxi, Fujian, and the Hubei always well placed in the exchequer. Zisiqiao was the first village to start breeding, marketing and producing snakes, vipers, cobras, pythons, *Deinagkistrodon acutus* forty years ago. The pioneer was a trapper of wild snakes who could no longer find anything to poach because he and others had raked in too many. Since then, he has been imitated by more than a hundred locals and Zisiqiao has become the Snake Village with the snake soup and fried snake drives, snake wine pubs, snake gall bladder tea rooms reputed to protect the liver before getting drunk on vodka, whisky or cognac. Everything is good in snake, python skin for Vuitton, viper powder for the immune system, cobra pill for libido, venoms against cancer, not all but some. Around the snake farms an industry has curled up which is supported by the principles of traditional Chinese medicine and the rumours attached to it. 10,000 tons of farmed snakes, not counting the smuggled snakes brought in massive quantities from Viet Nam and Southeast Asian countries, are marketed, eaten, tortured [venom extraction is no small matter], reduced to powder and food supplements.



- **On April 9, 2020,** China clarified that reindeer, sika deer, alpacas, ostriches, emus and all species of wild guinea fowl are inter alia allowed to be bred for food purposes and that silver foxes, polar foxes, and raccoon dogs are allowed to be bred for their furs.

- **April 20, 2020.** Wet markets differ from dry markets by the sale of fresh meat, whole or skinned dead animals, domestic and wild, sold and, if necessary, slaughtered on the spot without respecting the cold chain and the basic rules of sanitary hygiene. Animal welfare is the last concern of sellers and consumers. After the warning shots in February, wet markets have taken over far from the political and commercial capitals of Beijing and Shanghai. In Guilin, 5 million inhabitants, Guangxi Autonomous Region, and Dongguan, 7.4 million inhabitants, Guangdong Province, cats and dogs are not waiting for a kind soul to adopt them, they fear a buyer and immediate death on a concrete square dripping with blood. The dead bats, dried lizards and snakes are back. How could anyone hope that this meat flow that comes down the countryside could suddenly stop thanks to political posturing? “What is forbidden must be strictly forbidden”, the political and judicial powers said in February. Today, what is strictly forbidden and fought against by sellers and buyers is taking pictures. The same goes for the wet market in Tomohon, Indonesia (North Sulawesi).

## Macaques

Laboratories around the world doing in vivo experimentation are complaining about a shortage of monkeys. China could use the embargo on the export of farmed monkeys to slow the frenzied race for a vaccine for the mysterious new coronavirus and prevent a Western laboratory from registering the first patent that would generate profits and considerable fame. Today, it is more important from a geopolitical point of view to be the first to discover and manufacture the vaccine than to send a man to Mars.



Anyway, industrial macaque breeders and brokers of “non-human primates” are worryguts. “Our business has come to a standstill,” the managing director of Beijing-Sun Rising Technology is complaining in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper. Even the domestic market is frozen. China seems to be stockpiling its monkeys on shelves as it did for several months with the masks. China is the world’s largest manufacturer of monkeys for animal testing, 70,000/year. The term manufacturer is used deliberately, since monkeys and other laboratory animals are referred to as commodities by statistics and logistics. When Air France transports monkeys, it carries kilos as it does when it transports masks...

The Chinese shortage inspires the Philippines. Long-tailed macaques are wandering through banana plantations and cassava fields in search of morsels that they used to beg or ransom from tourists who are now far away. A spokesman for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) talks about the possibility of catching them. Their offspring would allow the 7 monkey farms, which have not prospered in recent years due to competition and whose operating licence are still valid, to be put back into active service.

## Bats

It’s panic among the 1,400 species of bats. *Rhinolophus* are suspected of having carried the new coronavirus, but bats of all species are struck by lookism.

In Shanghai and Beijing, the police are called in to chase bats hibernating under gutters or in the hollows of trees.

In Peru, a few villagers of Culen (200 inhabitants) have burned down a cave that was used by the bats as a den. 300 died. Agents of the Serfor (Servicio Nacional Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre) saved 200 of them.



In Bangalore, India, 8.5 million inhabitants, people are by-passing trees or abandoned houses where bats gathered. In the silence of the confined city, the cries of bats at night sound the death knell and insomniacs call the emergency services to eradicate them by fogging aerosols. Others are calling for bat trees to be felled.

All wise scientists and naturalists in the United Kingdom, a country that is a great protector of the pipistrelle, Peru and India, fear carnage and call for calm, stressing the major role of bats in pollination, seed dispersal and natural control of the proliferation of mosquitoes, which are themselves vectors of transmissible and deadly diseases such as dengue and chikungunya. In Wuhan itself, the presumed epicentre of the pandemic, Huabin Zhao, a university researcher in ecology, is concerned about the exaggeration of the negative profile of bats and the underestimation of their positive profile, which could ultimately lead to their unnecessary and intentional elimination.

## Tigers

The Covid-19 confinement in India began on March 24 and since then the behaviour of human and animal populations in rural areas has been under scrutiny.

There is no evidence of increased poaching, but it is feared. Forest rangers, who are normally understaffed, devote part of their time to informing rural populations about the need for confinement and its modalities. Some of them go to the most isolated villages to buy cashew crops from small producers, which they can no longer sell because of the suspension of local public transport. These tasks are useful but divert the anti-poaching services from their priority mission.



In Madhya Pradesh, the time of confinement coincides with the time of collecting the flowers of *Mahua longifolia* (butter tree in French and honey tree in English), a pivot tree for tribal populations. These dried flowers have medicinal and alimentary virtues. They are collected in groups. In order to circumvent the confinement instructions, the families leave to collect them at dusk. A tiger in the Pench reserve mortally attacked three little girls kneeling under Mahua. Anonymously, a forest officer explains that the tiger confused them with a small mammal and specifies that “the autopsy of the 3 bodies confirms that they were not eaten by the feline”. Calls are increasing for the gathering of Mahua flowers to be avoided after sunset. (Continued on next page).

A tiger coughs in the Bronx Zoo in New York and in echo the sneezes of tigers in Asia are being watched out. The suspicious death near a water hole in the Pench reserve in India of a male of about 10 years old was hastily attributed to Covid-19. Pesticide poisoning of feline drinking troughs is unfortunately a common practice of poachers in India and other continents.



"This coronavirus can be very dangerous, so we are waiting and taking every precaution," says an official of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. The NTCA and India's Minister of Environment and Forests are reminding all their officials that during the time of confinement, human incursions into reserves must be avoided to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19 to wildlife. Discordant comments criticize the over-mediatization of the new risk. The director of the Center of Wildlife Studies, Ullas Karanth, believes that in times of financial and food shortages aggravated by confinement, the major threat for tigers is to be poached for meat and hide. According to several other experts, the ban on villagers entering the reserves and collecting firewood and food resources is counterproductive. The general feeling of local NGOs is that there are other long-standing and far more devastating threats to tigers than Covid-19, foremost among them poaching, deforestation and destruction of habitats.

## Elephants

**In Botswana,** in February, the government held an auction to award 60 elephant hunting licenses to safari operators. They sold for an average of 40,000 US\$. The government collected more than 2 million US\$ in 3 hours. 60 elephants had already lost their heads on paper. It was expected that they would lose it quickly on the ground thanks to the arrival in Botswana, often by private jet, of American, European or Russian hunters. The safari operators had already pre-sold the 60 elephants for 80,000 to 85,000 US\$, including accommodation in lodges and escort by hunting guides. The truce of the confinement came to upset the business plan. Botswana has suspended the immigration, even temporarily, of nationals of countries at risk, including the United States of America. The Botswana Wildlife Producers Association immediately called for an extension of the hunting season. Nothing is yet definitively settled. 60 tuskers are living on borrowed time.



**In the United States of America,** on 9 April 2020, the federal court in Washington rejected the request of the Safari Club and two hunters in their personal names for the US Fish and Wildlife Service to expedite the procedures for authorizing the import of elephant trophies from southern Africa. The Safari Club believes that American hunters are legitimately concerned about the uncertainty about their ability to import tusks and other trophies into the United States. The hunters are reportedly suffering an unbearable burden of anxiety. They would also have to bear the financial costs of storage in the countries of origin. Trophies would also be exposed to the risk of theft of the ivory tusks, which they say belong to them. The Court rejected all these arguments. It held that it would be imprudent and contrary to the public interest to access during the Covid-19 pandemic at the request of the plaintiffs, and that such a decision would be unreasonable.

**In India,** in Kerala, an elephant offered himself more than 100,000 views on social networks. Walking slowly on an empty road, he inspected all the shops with closed shutters one by one as if he were being appointed by the government to check the application of lockdown.

Forest officers on anti-poaching patrols use the 16 domesticated elephants in Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand as mounts. In order to avoid possible contamination by Covid-19, they will not be feeding on sugar cane purchased in markets for a while. They will eat leaves, bark and bamboo stems collected in the jungle. The 4 members of the canine brigade in charge of tracing back poachers' tracks will also benefit from a secure food supply. No meat bought in markets or on the roadside. Precautions are not superfluous. Jim Corbett is home to over 150 tigers.

**In Sri Lanka,** elephants in Yala and Udawalawe National Parks normally wait near electric fences for tourists from their cars to throw fruit or something else that has nothing to do with their usual diet. Despite the instructions, visitors are responsible for the opportunistic behaviour of the elephants.

For two months now, there have been no more tourists. The truce will not be enough for the elephants to get rid of this partial food dependency even though since the roads and tracks inside the parks are no longer congested with traffic jams, they can come and go and graze here and there the 100 kg of plant material they need every day. Poaching, or at least attempted poaching, is reportedly on the rise. "Even though visitation has its problems in national parks, the movement of people in protected area in itself is a deterrent to poachers," says Sumith Pilatitiya, former director of the national parks. Poachers like to work away from eyes and denunciations. There is no data yet on the frequency of human/elephant conflict during the confinement. Specialists expect a slight decrease due to reduced night drives and lower alcohol consumption.

**In Thailand,** there is misery in Mae Rim in the north of the country, as in all the domestic elephant camps that live here from the curiosity of international tourists and their willingness to ride elephants. Two mahouts stayed in the camp. They could not return home before the confinement order. Their only resource during this period is to collect precious elephant dung, make compost from it and sell this fertilizer that is much appreciated by plant lovers. There are 3000 to 4000 domesticated elephants in Thailand. The greatest concerns about what will happen to them after the crisis and the inevitable bankruptcies are shared by NGOs and public opinion.

# Pangolins

The four African pangolin species (*Manis gigantea*, *M. temminckii*, *M. tetradactyla*, *M. tricuspis*) and the four Asian species (*Manis crassicaudata*, *M. culionensis*, *M. javanica* and *M. pentadactyla*) are listed under CITES Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. International trade is therefore prohibited.

**“On the Trail” Special Edition  
Value on the black market  
according to media or official sources**

**Value of 1kg of pangolin scales  
October 1, 2019-March 31, 2020**

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref.
Africa	Nigeria	2,980	19
Asia	China (Yunnan)	8,000	38
	Myanmar	80	39
	Indonesia	71	80
	Malaysia	2,900	88
	Viet Nam	86-108	99

**Value of a pangolin  
October 1, 2019-March 31, 2020**

Continent	Country	US\$	Ref.
Africa	Namibia	3,280	11
	Uganda	8,000	20
	Zimbabwe	3,000	25
Asia	India (Odisha)	7,050	58
	India (West Bengal)	8,460	66
	India (Assam)	1,700	70

## AFRICA

### SOUTH AFRICA

**October 25, 2019**

**Musina, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

Interception of a suspicious vehicle on the road between Alldays and Musina. Police were acting on confidential information. Inside, 3 men were arrested and a pangolin released.<sup>1</sup>

**October 29, 2019**

**Mmabatho, North West Province, South Africa**

Zehao Zehong was released on bail of 3000 rand, or 200 US\$, although counterfeit slot machines, pangolin armours and python skins (*Python* spp., Appendix I or II) were found in his home and workshops.<sup>2</sup>

**October 30, 2019**

**Temba, Gauteng Province, South Africa**

Seizure on confidential information of 2 live pangolins, a firearm and 2 vehicles. Five arrests.<sup>3</sup>

**December 12, 2019**

**Capetown, Western Cape Province, South Africa**

Interception of a vehicle by a flying patrol. After being towed to the Bellville police station, the vehicle was searched and scales and other parts of pangolins worth 4,440 US\$ were seized. Four men aged 42, 47 and 57 were arrested.<sup>4</sup>

**February 27, 2020**

**Wrenchville, Northern Cape Province, South Africa**

Thanks to the nose of the K9 canine brigade, arrest of Denzil Feris for holding a live pangolin. Feris was released on bail of 2,000 rand (135 US\$).<sup>5</sup>

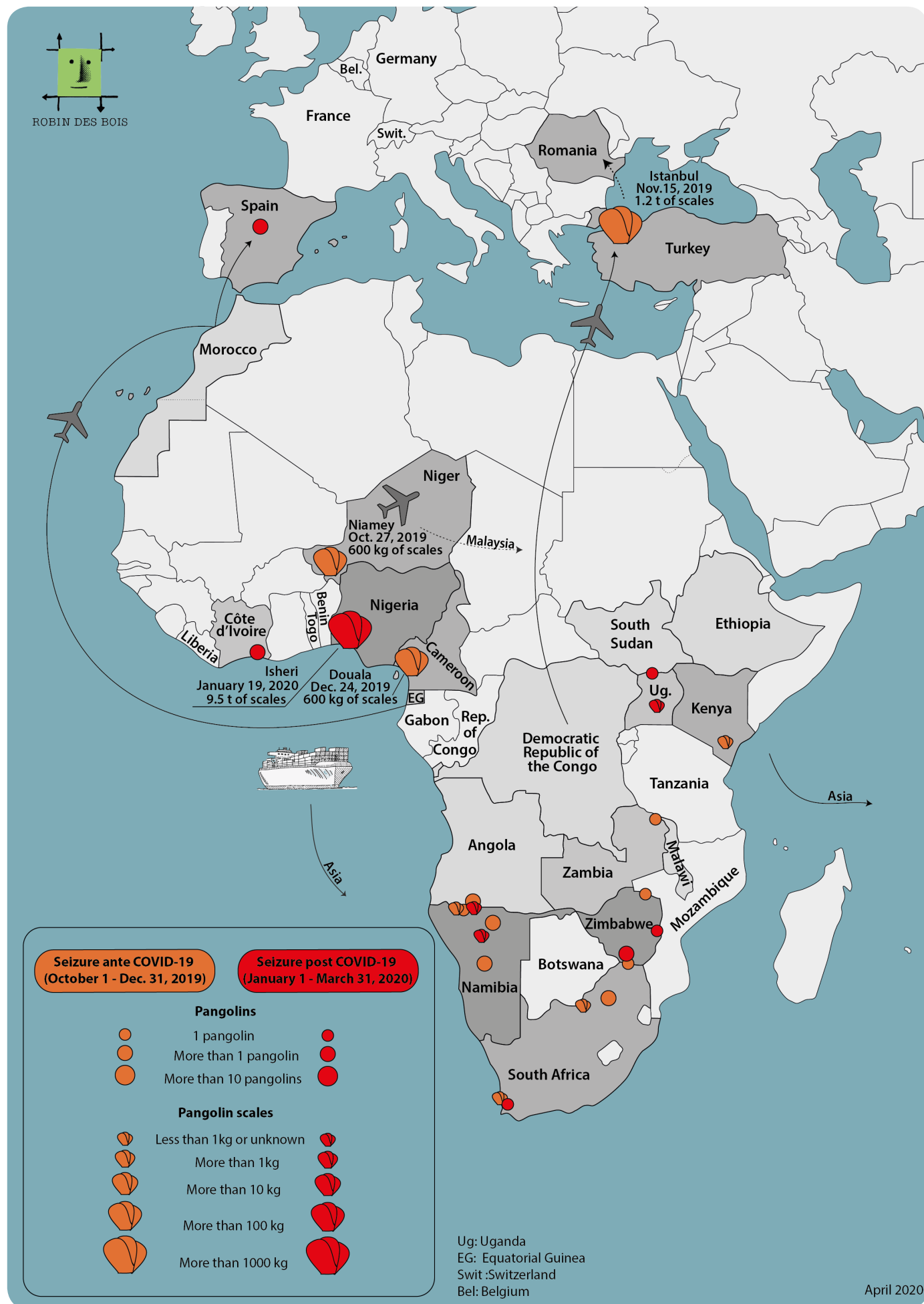
### CAMEROON

**OPERATION HALCOMI (Stop Illegal Trade)**

**On the night of December 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Douala, Littoral Region, Cameroon**

A said to be “record” seizure: 600 kg of pangolin scales, 200 live grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*, Appendix I), 3 elephant tusks, 122 boxes of liquor and 96 boxes of wine and spirits from 2 motorized pirogues that had just run aground in a creek.<sup>6</sup>





## COTE D'IVOIRE

**February 20, 2020**

### **Azaguie, Lagunes District, Côte d'Ivoire**

Seizure on the Adzopé-Abidjan corridor of a vehicle transporting 9 pangolins, 57 agoutis, 28 antelopes, one warthog, a total of 206 carcasses and guts of wild animals caught in traps or killed with rifles. The bushmeat intended to supply Abidjan's markets was buried in a pit.<sup>7</sup>

**March 3, 2020**

### **Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**

Open-air burning and irretrievable destruction under the control of Alain-Richard Donwahi, Ivorian Minister of Water and Forests, of 3 tons of pangolin scales from seizures made in the country in 2017 and 2018 by the UCT (Unité de lutte contre la Criminalité Transnationale) and intended for fraudulent shipments to Asia. The Ambassador of the United States of America and the British Ambassador congratulated the Government of Côte d'Ivoire on this initiative.<sup>8</sup>



## KENYA

**December 24, 2019**

### **Amboseli, Kajiado County, Kenya**

Seizure of 200 pangolin scales. Four arrests.<sup>9</sup>

## MALAWI

**20 January 2020**

### **Lilongwe, Central Region, Malawi**

Jiang Cheng sentenced to 24 months in prison for holding 403 pangolin scales in his home. The prosecutor had called for a deterrent prison sentence rather than a fine that the accused could easily have paid. The judge found indeed that a simple fine would not be sufficient to deter the accused and other traffickers from giving up wildlife trafficking.<sup>10</sup>



## NAMIBIA

**October 4, 2019**

### **Windhoek, Khomas Region, Namibia**

A 37-year-old man is arrested. He was carrying a dead pangolin. Value: 3,280 US\$. In the same week, 5 more pangolins were seized.<sup>11</sup>

**October 24, 2019**

### **Rundu, Kavango-East Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.**

Sentencing of Mukoya Katombera to a fine of 2,660 US\$ or 3 years in prison for the illegal detention of a live pangolin. He had been arrested on 9 September.<sup>12</sup>



**October 29, 2019**

### **Outapi, Omusati Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.**

Arrest of Muhenhe Tchimbanda, an Angolan national, in possession of the full armour of a pangolin.<sup>13</sup>

**November 21, 2019**

### **Oshikango, Ohangwena Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.**

Arrest of a 46-year-old man. The suspect had entrusted 2 bags to a young woman. Many young people make a little money at the border crossing by helping those with cumbersome luggage to cross the border. The man stood at a distance, busy presenting his papers to the police. Realizing that his bags were being searched, he tried to escape and was caught. The carrier was released. She did not know that the 2 bundles contained 2 pangolins.<sup>14</sup>

**November 24, 2019**

### **Outapi, Omusati Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.**

Arrest of 2 Namibian subjects. Festus Katambo and Beteul Katjinda were carrying a live pangolin.<sup>15</sup>

**December 1, 2019**

### **Tsumeb, Oshikoto Region, Namibia**

Raymond Shihepo and Augustinus Sikukutu arrested. They were in possession of 2 live pangolins.<sup>16</sup>

**January 5 and 6, 2020**

### **Ondangwa, Oshana Region and Otjiwarongo, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia**

- Arrest of 2 Namibian citizens in possession of a full armour of pangolin, i.e. the skin with scales of the eviscerated animal.

- Arrest of Eliaser Sem. He too was carrying the whole skin with scales of an eviscerated pangolin.<sup>17</sup>





December 12, 2019,  
Cape Town, South Africa



Early February 2020  
Chimanimani, Zimbabwe



February 27, 2020, Wrenchville,  
South Africa



December 12, 2019,  
Cape Town, South Africa



January 19, 2020, Isheri,  
Nigeria



Mid February 2020,  
Madrid, Spain



February 20, 2020,  
Azaguié, Côte d'Ivoire



## NIGER

**October 27 and 28, 2019**

**Diori Hamani International Airport and Niamey, Niger**

- Seizure of 600 kg of scales bound for Malaysia.
- Following seizure of 150 kg after the search of a private residence.<sup>18</sup>

## NIGERIA

**January 19, 2020**

**Isheri, Lagos State, Nigeria**

Seizure in a warehouse of 9.504 t of scales distributed in 147 big bags corresponding to approximately 28,500 pangolins (on the basis of 3 pangolins per 1 kilo of scales) inside two 20-foot sea containers. The shipment is estimated at 28.3 million US\$, or 2,980 US\$/kg. The Nigeria/Asia network is well identified (see seizure in Malaysia on 31 March 2020).<sup>19</sup>

## UGANDA

**February 18, 2020**

**Elegu Border Post, Northern Region, Uganda. Border with South Sudan.**

Arrest of John Chol Malou Mayen and Denus Arop Ochan Lotyang, 2 South Sudanese border guards. They were trying to sell a live pangolin to their Ugandan counterparts for just over 8,000 US\$.<sup>20</sup>

**19-20 March 2020**

**Kira, Central Region, Uganda**

Police raid in an illegal workshop. Arrest of 36 Chinese citizens, men and women. They were engaged in dismantling used or stolen mobile phones and computers and trafficking in endangered species in the same premises. Seizure of pangolin scales, 6 live turtles and 223 SIM cards used for fraudulent financial transactions. After deliberation by the court, the 36 suspects were transferred to the new Kitalya prison in West Kampala where barrier gestures to reduce Covid-19 transmission are easier to implement than in other remand facilities. First appearance expected in the coming weeks.<sup>21</sup>

## TANZANIA

**January 10, 2020**

**Tanzania**

Sentencing of Abdallah Bakari Nindi, Paul Mtambuki Mng'aro and Said Ally Mchomvu to 20 years in prison each for possession of pangolin meat and a leopard skin. A first in the country that was appreciated by wildlife NGOs.<sup>22</sup>



## ZAMBIA

**Early February 2020**

**Nakonde, Muchinga Province, Zambia. Border with Tanzania.**

Sentencing of Joseph Simwinda, a farmer, and Innocent Mulwanda, a security guard, to 5 years' imprisonment with hard labour for holding a live pangolin. The offence dates back to December 2019.<sup>23</sup>

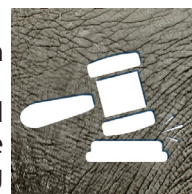


## ZIMBABWE

**October 1, 2019**

**Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe**

Danmore Chinjonjo sentenced to 9 months in prison. He came from Harare and was approaching Hwange Park. In his travel bag, there were 2.5 kg of cyanide and 3 pangolin scales. He wanted, he said, to give the poison and as a bonus the 3 scales to a certain Bheki, unknown to all, in exchange for a few elephant tails. Cyanide is used to kill elephants.<sup>24</sup>



**October 17, 2019**

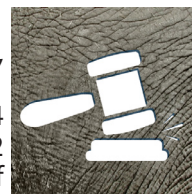
**Mount Darwin, Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe**

Arrest of Mr. Marunga and Mr. Ruwizha who were trying to sell a live pangolin for 3,000 US\$ and had 3 pairs of tusks at home.<sup>25</sup>

**October 22, 2019**

**Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe**

Sentencing of Jerry Mwembe to 4 years' imprisonment for keeping 2 pangolins skinned on the seat of his car and 2 python skins (*Python* spp., Appendix I or II) in his room. The offences date back to 4 April 2019.<sup>26</sup>



**November 12, 2019**

**Guruve, Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe**

Sentencing of Santo Kamu, aged 38, and Lazarus Chihowa, aged 32, to 9 years and 3 years in prison and a fine of 200 US\$ for attempting to sell raw ivory and a live pangolin. On 18 September, they were caught in the act by police officers posing as buyers in the Mushumbi area.<sup>27</sup>



**January 24, 2020**

**Beitbridge, Matabeleland South Province and Bulawayo, Bulawayo Province, Zimbabwe**

Seizures of 8 pangolins. Twelve arrests.<sup>28</sup>

### Early February 2020

#### **Chimanimani District, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe. Border with Mozambique.**

Protocol for the release of an adult male pangolin by the Tikki Hywood Foundation. He was first presented to the Chimanimani District Chief who performed a protection ritual and 2 days later he was released in a secret location.<sup>29</sup>

## EUROPE

### SPAIN

#### Mid February 2020

##### **Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport, Spain**

Seizure of 2 pangolins in a rotten state in the suitcases of a young woman coming from Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, with transit to Casablanca. She resides in Roquetas de Mar, Province of Almería, Autonomous Community of Andalusia, Spain. The Equatorial Guinea/Spain link is becoming clearer (see "On the Trail" n°24 p. 50).<sup>30</sup>

## WESTERN ASIA

### TURKEY

#### November 15, 2019

##### **International Airport of Istanbul, Istanbul Province, Marmara Region, Turkey**

Seizure of 1,200 kg of scales in a container supposed to transport wooden furniture. The shipment originated in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, via Kinshasa. Its destination was the European Union, specifically Romania. The sender was a certain Station Jambo Safari, claiming to be acting on behalf of a Romanian diplomat.<sup>31</sup>

## ASIA

### BANGLADESH

#### January 9, 2020

##### **Bhairab, Kishoreganj District, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh**

Rescue of a pangolin caught in the Lawachhara Forest Reserve and on its way with the poachers to the capital city of Dhaka. The vehicle was intercepted. The local police had received information from civil society. The 2 men, Babla Sarker and Ripon Mia, were sentenced in flagrante delicto to a fine of 20,000 takas each or 235.50 US\$. The average monthly income in Bangladesh is 13,260 takas.<sup>32</sup>

#### March 4, 2020

##### **Moulvibazar, Moulvibazar District, Sylhet Division, Bangladesh**

They were afraid of the stranger. It was the first time they saw a pangolin. They tied him up and almost lynched him. He had ventured to a tea plantation. Alerted by a goodwill villager, the forest officers pulled him off death row at the last minute. After examination, he was released into Satchari National Park.<sup>33</sup>

### CAMBODIA

#### November 22, 2019

##### **Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh Province, Cambodia**

Rescue in a private garden of a female pangolin and her newborn baby escaped from an unknown ordeal. They were taken to the Koh Kong shelter before being set free.<sup>34</sup>

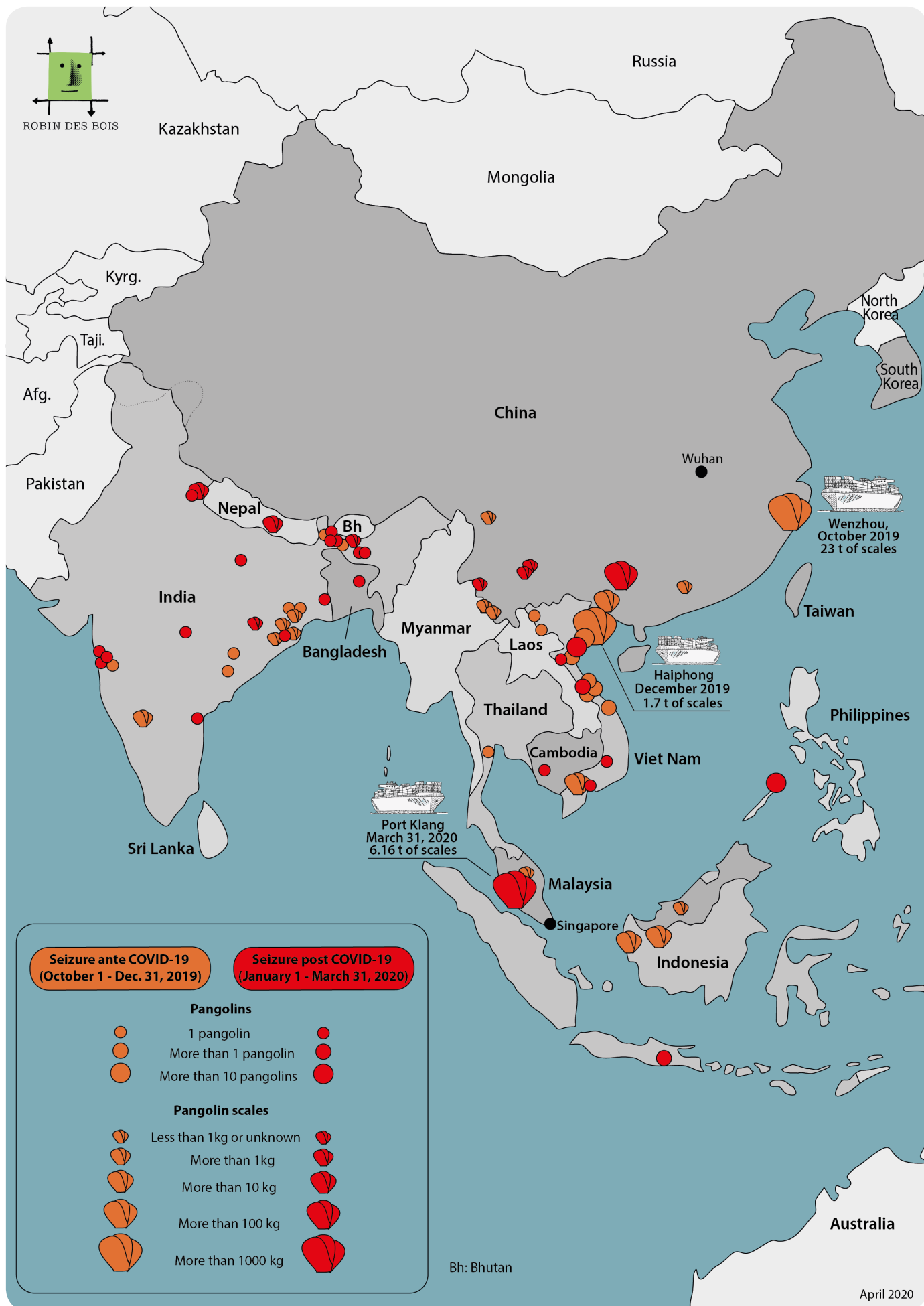
#### February 24, 2020

##### **Cardamom Protected Forest, Cambodia**

Burnt remains of a pangolin caught in a fire near the gold digger's bivouac.<sup>35</sup>







## CHINA

### YUNNAN PROVINCE

**October 19, 2019**

**Menglian County, Yunnan Province, China. Border with Myanmar.**

Seizure of 218.1 g of scales in a plastic bag. Arrest of a Chinese national.<sup>36</sup>

**November 21, 2019**

**Menglian border post, Pu'er, Yunnan Province, China. Border with Myanmar.**

Seizure in the trunk of a rickshaw of 34.9 g of pangolin scales and 100.4 g of elephant skin. Arrest of the Burmese driver.<sup>37</sup>

#### FAMILY AFFAIRS

**Beginning of December 2019**

**Yuanjiang County, Yunnan Province, China**

Sentencing of a man and his wife to 4 years imprisonment and 3 years suspended sentence. They had been caught by the police selling pangolin scales at a food market. They had in their possession 1.905 kg of scales that experts in Yunnan estimated at 106,240 yuan or 15,100 US\$ i.e. 8,000 US\$ per kg. The lot would have been bought 10 times cheaper from a middleman. The 2 individuals had to make a public apology through the official video of the trial and must pay 106,240 yuan (15,100 US\$) for the environmental damages.<sup>38</sup>



**Beginning of December 2019**

**Ninglang County, Yunnan Province, China**

1.000 g of scales in the motorcycle bag. The man had reportedly bought them in Myanmar for 80 US\$ and was about to sell them for 300 US\$ to a friend in need of "medicine".<sup>39</sup>

**February 18, 2020**

**Kunming Changshui International Airport, Yunnan Province, China**

Seizure of 4 pangolin scales (66.3 g) in the handbag of a Chinese passenger disembarking from Vientiane, Laos, on a China Eastern Airlines flight.<sup>40</sup>

**March 4, 2020**

**Mengding, Yunnan Province, China. Border with Myanmar.**

Seizure at the border of 530 g of scales in the toolbox of a motorcycle. The Chinese customs authorities have been tirelessly repeating the slogan "No to the smuggling of these magical animals" after the seizure of endangered animals or their parts.<sup>41</sup>

**Beginning of March 2020**

**Yuxi, Yunnan Province, China**

Seizure of 158 pangolin scales weighing 773 g in an herbalist's shop. Immediate arrest of the trader. The action of the district forest police has a twofold objective: to preserve endangered animals and to prevent the Covid-19 epidemic from possibly spreading through wild animals or their parts. In Yunnan, pangolin scales are mostly smuggled through Myanmar.<sup>42</sup>

### GUANGXI ZHUANG AUTONOMOUS REGION AND ANHUI PROVINCE

**March 9, 2020**

**Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Anhui Province, China**

Seizures of 820 kg of pangolin scales. "This seizure is the latest effort by Chinese customs and police to curb the smuggling of wildlife and wildlife parts, to fully support the fight against the new coronavirus (Covid-19) and to safeguard public health" (Official release). Nine arrests. The main suspect is accused of having organized the fraudulent introduction of the scales from a foreign country [presumably Viet Nam] by taking advantage of waterways or roads with little or no customs control. The scales were then transported by road to the provinces of Anhui (nearly 1,500 km) and Henan and sold to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) laboratories.<sup>43</sup>

### GUANGDONG PROVINCE

**December 5, 2019**

**Guangzhou-Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China**

Seizure of 27.5 g of pangolin scales and 3 worked ivories with a total weight of 99.8 g in the trolley suitcase of a passenger arriving from Addis Ababa.<sup>44</sup>

**March 5, 2020**

**Huadu District, Guangdong Province, China**

Sentenced to 8 years in prison for attempting to market a pangolin.<sup>45</sup>



### JIANGXI PROVINCE

**November 9, 2019**

**Pingxiang Border Post, Jiangxi Province, China. Border with Viet Nam.**

The white Mercedes was driving towards Nanning when at 10.40 pm it was stopped. Faced with the frightened looking of the driver and a rancid smell, the police searched the vehicle thoroughly and found in the back 3 bags of 25 kg containing more than 26,500 scales.<sup>46</sup>

## ZHEJIANG PROVINCE

**End of October 2019**

### **Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, China**

Huge catch. Seizure of 23 t of scales corresponding to at least 50,000 pangolins. Once again, sea containers were used as vectors. Lagos (Nigeria), Busan (South Korea), Shanghai (China), this was the sea route. The containers then were trucked to Wenzhou, about 500 km away. The big-bags of scales were mixed with big-bags of ginger. The investigation had been underway for a year and started off again in September 2019 when scales dealers were caught on the act in Wenzhou. Eighteen arrests.<sup>47</sup>

Pangolin scales in Zhejiang, see "On the Trail" n°4 p. 42, n°15 p. 43, n°16 p. 39, n°20 p. 52.

**February 28, 2020**

### **Pujiang County, Zhejiang Province, China**

Appearance before the People's Court of W1 and W2 for having between July 2017 and June 2019 illegally purchased in Guangdong and Guangxi and smuggled from Viet Nam a total of 23 live pangolins, 8 frozen pangolins, 3.6 kg of pangolin scales, 4 bear paws, 1 frozen owl and for having delivered by various means the specimens or their parts to at least 23 customers who are actively sought. Payments were made via WeChat and Alipay. Proceedings to follow.<sup>48</sup>

## SHANGHAI MUNICIPALITY

**Mid-March 2020**

### **Shanghai Municipality, China**

Sentencing by People's Court No. 3 to 7 years in prison of a female citizen for attempting to introduce in November 2017 and again in May 2018, a total of 110.45 kg of pangolin scales. According to the official Xinhua agency, China has stepped up efforts in cracking down on illegal activities related to wildlife as researchers believe the virus most likely came from wild animals.<sup>49</sup>



## BEIJING MUNICIPALITY

**December 18, 2019**

### **Beijing Municipality, China**

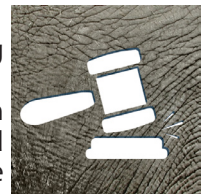
Conviction of an ex-employee of a clinic to 4 years in prison and a fine of 40,000 yuan (5,700 US\$) for attempting to import 26.2 kg of scales in April 2019 from Equatorial Guinea.<sup>50</sup>



**February 28, 2020**

### **Tongzhou District, Beijing Municipality, China**

Sentenced to 8 months in prison for disseminating via WeChat and QQ false information about the transmission of Covid-19.<sup>51</sup>



**March 5, 2020**

### **Beijing Municipality, China**

The Supreme Court notes the intensification of the legal fight against wildlife trafficking. The instructions are clear. It is a matter of securing the health of the population and having a legal framework in the battle against the Covid-19 epidemic. In order to fight effectively, courts across the country have been instructed to deal first and foremost with cases of poaching and trafficking in wildlife that complicate the control of the epidemic and increase the sense of panic among the population.

The courts must deal with the easiest cases established by evidence and indisputable facts by shortening procedures. But if the facts are complex and suspects deny responsibility, courts must follow normal procedures in order to protect the legitimate rights of the population and avoid hasty convictions.<sup>52</sup>

## INDIA

### STATE OF ODISHA

**October 21, 2019**

### **Balichatra and Bundagadi, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India**

Seizure of scales from 3 pangolins. Arrest of 6 persons aged between 20 and 43 identified as Nishikant Jena, Sudama Khandeai, Sukul Tudu and Guru Charan Bindhani, Rabi Patra, and Prasant Kumar Mishra.<sup>53</sup>

**October 28 and 29, 2019**

### **Putana Reserve Forest, Boudh District and Kuliana, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India**

- Seizure of a pangolin (12 kg) in the Putana Forest Reserve. He was in a cage, hidden in the forest waiting to be smuggled to Bangladesh.

- Seizure of 2 motorcycles and an Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) weighing 18 kg. Probably a pregnant female. Arrest of Pradeep Kumar Mahakur, Sanat Kumar Mohanta, Krushna Chandra Hansda and Premkhel Murmu.<sup>54</sup>





November 22, 2019,  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia



March 4, 2020,  
Moulvibazar, Bangladesh



End of October 2019,  
Wenzhou, China



March 9, 2020,  
Guangxi Zhuang and Anhui Province, China



February 18, 2020,  
Kunming Changshui, China



Beginning of March 2020,  
Yuxi, China



October 19, 2019,  
Menglian, China



Beginning of December 2019,  
Ninglang County, China



March 4, 2020,  
Mengding, China



**November 4, 2019**

**Pithabata, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India**

A female pangolin “escapes” from the forest service pen after her newborn baby dies, possibly the 18 kg specimen seized in the above-mentioned event.<sup>55</sup>

**November 18, 2019**

**Patmud, Malkangiri District, State of Odisha, India**

Seizure in the village of Patmud of a pangolin. About six years old, 10 kg, 105 cm long from snout to tip of tail. Arrest of Santosh Mahakud, Kailsah Naik, Ganath Naik and Ramesh Munda by Pallahara forestry officers. An accomplice escaped.<sup>56</sup>

**November 29, 2019**

**Athgarh Forest, Cuttak District, State of Odisha, India**

Seizure of scales and arrest of Akash Behera, Satia Behera, Raju Dehury and Prasant Sethy. They were prowling around the Sunimuha Forest Reserve. According to their first testimonies, the network to which they claim to belong extends as far as Kolkata. Their mobile phones have been seized and should make it possible to find out more about their stooges.<sup>57</sup>

**November 29, 2019**

**Nabarangpur District, State of Odisha, India**

Seizure of a pangolin. 1.10 m long. 12.6 kg. Arrest of Santiraj Ganda, 42, Babula Pattanaik, 20 and Ashok Majhi, 25. They were about to sell their loot for 500,000 rupees (7050 US\$) to a client in Raipur, West Bengal state. Raipur is about 20 kilometers from Kolkata.<sup>58</sup>

**December 10, 2019**

**Dhenkanal District, State of Odisha, India**

Arrest of Biswajit Samal, Asutosh Sahoo and Ratikant Behera. They were in possession of pangolin scales and a deer antler (*Axis axis*). According to their confessions, all members of the network form a group on WhatsApp and use codes to facilitate transactions and to inform their customers of the weight of the pangolins, the locations and dates of capture. To date, 11 individuals have been heard in court in this sprawling case.<sup>59</sup>

**December 13, 2019**

**Paikasahi, Cuttak District, State of Odisha, India**

Arrest of Subash Nayak and Rajkishore Behera. Seizure of pangolin scales, wild boar teeth and mobile phones.<sup>60</sup>

**December 13, 2019**

**Athgarh, Cuttak District, State of Odisha, India**

The Athgarh court authorizes the interrogation and confrontation of 10 alleged traffickers who are in police custody. Two officers from the WCCB (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau) are coming in as backup. Their mission is to shed light on the possible extension of trafficking in other Indian states and foreign countries. They managed to crack the traffickers' code: to indicate the weight of the pangolins and the date of capture, they used banknotes of different values and the length of the videos loaded on WhatsApp.<sup>61</sup>

**December 15, 2019**

**Cuttak District, State of Odisha, India**

Two more arrests of suspected traffickers. In 15 days, 14 people have been arrested.<sup>62</sup>

**December 16, 2019**

**Athgarh, Cuttak District, State of Odisha, India**

Sasmita Lenka, the head of the forestry division, announced that rewards of 10,000 rupees or 140 US\$ will be given to anyone who provides information about the racketeering and trafficking of pangolins. “The list and profiles of 30 people involved in trafficking inside and outside Odisha state will be sent to all police stations and posted in the public square for easy identification.”<sup>63</sup>

**GANG**

**January 17 and February 4, 2020**

**Naraj, Cuttak District, State of Odisha, India**

Naraj, has it become the new launching pad for pangolin scales in Odisha state and beyond ? The fish market serves as a cover for the sale of the scales. Successive arrests of Santosh Das and Hadibandhu Jena, of Mohammed Ali who was in possession of a dead female (7 kg) stashed in a fish tank, and then of Dilip Nayak and Tirthabasi Majhi. According to the official in charge of the investigation, the Naraj gang specializes in trafficking in scales, the small ones are sold on the local market, the large ones are transported and sold at the best price to wholesalers in Kolkata. The carrier is still wanted.<sup>64</sup>

**March 17, 2020**

**Sambalpur, Sambalpur District, State of Odisha, India**

Arrest of a young man, Faizul Hassan, in possession of large numbers of scales. The police speak of a value of several hundred thousand rupees, in other words thousands of US\$. Dugging the case, investigators discover that Faizul is at the heart of a network that covers several districts of the state, extends to neighbouring Indian states, crosses the border and spills over into Myanmar with China in the offing.<sup>65</sup>

## STATE OF WEST BENGAL

**November 22, 2019**

**Siliguri, Darjeeling District, State of West Bengal, India**

The vehicle was registered in Bhutan and was heading towards Bangladesh. The 5 passengers, all with Bhutanese passports, were taken into custody. They were carrying a pangolin with an estimated economic value of 600,000 rupees (8,460 US\$).<sup>66</sup>

**February 24, 2020**

**Chawkuti, Cooch Behar District, State of West Bengal, India**

Border Security Force (BSF) Jawans and forestry officers arrest Sahinur Alam, Zaheerul Islam, Dilwar Hussain and Abed Ali. They were in possession of a pangolin and about to smuggle him into Bangladesh.<sup>67</sup>

**March 4, 2020**

**Nimti Domohani, Alipurduar District, State of West Bengal, India. Border with Bhutan.**

Anwar Hossain stumbled upon a joint patrol by the Forest Department and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). A live pangolin was seized.<sup>68</sup>

**March 14, 2020**

**Hasimara, Alipurduar District, State of West Bengal, India. Border with Bhutan.**

New seizure by the 53<sup>rd</sup> SSB Battalion. Jayanta Roy and Janak Roy were arrested in the evening at the city gas station. The 2 men were riding on motorcycles with a live pangolin.<sup>69</sup>

## STATE OF ASSAM

**October 12, 2019**

**Golakganj, Dhubri District, State of Assam, India**

Seizure of a pangolin. Police arrest of Jiaul Haque and Moinal Haque. The duo would not be at its first try. They say they bought him for 120,000 rupees (1,700 US\$) in the state of Meghalaya a fortnight ago and intended to resell him in West Bengal. He is injured. During the captivity, he was tied by a rope. He received emergency treatment and will be taken to the Soraikhola rehabilitation centre. Between 2009 and 2017, 6,000 pangolins are believed to have been poached in India.<sup>70</sup>

**January 18, 2020**

**Dudhnoi, Goalpara District, State of Assam, India**

Four arrests Saturday night on a roadside on the border between Meghalaya and Assam. The gang leader, a man named Lengra Garo, fled the scene. "Garo asked me to carry a bag to a dhaba [a roadside café]. I didn't know there was a pangolin inside," said one of the suspects.<sup>71</sup>

**February 18, 2020**

**Sonakhuli, Dhubri District, State of Assam, India**

Arrest of 2 men in possession of 800 g of pangolin scales and 5 tokay geckos (*Gekko gecko*, Appendix II).<sup>72</sup>

## STATE OF UTTAR PRADESH

**March 6, 2020**

**Chitaipur, Varanasi District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India**

Overnight interception of an SUV. The 5 passengers were armed with a pistol and a rifle. Seizure of a pangolin in a canvas bag. The local police had been informed of the imminent passage of the traffickers by the WCCB (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau) in New Delhi.<sup>73</sup>

## STATE OF WEST BENGAL, ASSAM, MAHARASHTRA, UTTARAKHAND AND ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA

**January 21, February 7, 8, 18 and 26 and March 13, 2020**

**State of West Bengal, Assam, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Andhra Pradesh, India**

Tweets from the WCCB always with the motto "Help us save the pangolins". Seizures of 5 live pangolins, 2.9 kg of scales and 10 claws. Fourteen arrests.<sup>74</sup>

## STATE OF MAHARASHTRA

**October 13, 2019**

**Kharadi, Pune District, State of Maharashtra, India**

It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> pangolin case since the beginning of the year around Pune. This one is about 3 years old. He was in the hands of Jitendra Mohite, Yogesh Patil and Kumar Savant. As a reminder, in January 2019, seizure of 4.5 kg of scales at 1,500 US\$/kg.<sup>75</sup>

**January 7, 2020**

**Panvel, Raigad District, State of Maharashtra, India**

Seizure of a 7 kg pangolin in a blue plastic barrel inside a SUV at the Panvel bus station where an appointment had been made between Kalpesh Jadhav the seller and an undercover policeman posing as a buyer. A tip-off was used to set up the trap.<sup>76</sup>

**January 9, 2020**

**Kalamboli, Raigad District, State of Maharashtra, India**

Seizure in an ambulance rushing towards Bombay of a rolled pangolin in a barrel covered with a blanket. Seven arrests. The 2 in the ambulance were the sellers, the 5 in the escort car were the buyers.<sup>77</sup>





October 12, 2019, Golakganj, India

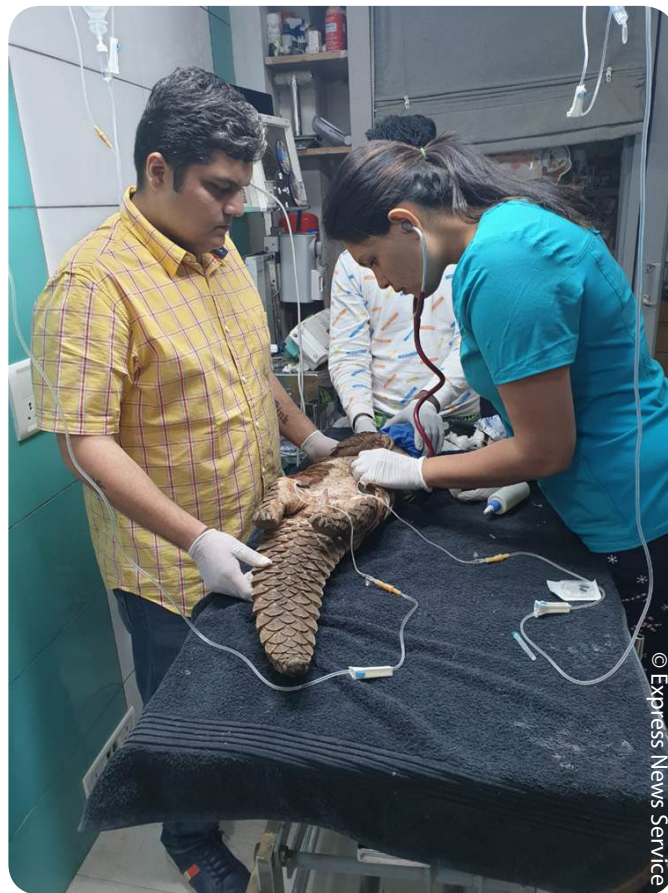


December 4, 2019, Banda Aceh City, Indonesia



December 24, 2019, Sintang, Indonesia

February 7, 2020, Prattapur, India



January 15, 2020, Vashi, India



March 4, 2020, Nimti Domohani, India



March 14, 2020, Hasimara, India



**January 15, 2020**

**Vashi, Thane District, State of Maharashtra, India**

Joint intervention by the police and the NGO Resquink Association for Wildlife Welfare (RAWW). Seizure in a car, around 2.30 am, of a pangolin hidden in a plastic bag. The 3 men, Krishna Padmakumar Chaughule, Nana Lakshman Waghmare and Mangesh Yashwant Waghmare aged 25, 30 and 39, had captured him in the Raigad district 150 km away. They are being held in police custody for up to 14 days. The pangolin suffers from dehydration and minor injuries. He is in the hands of the veterinarians and the RAWW team. It should be possible to release him in the coming days.<sup>78</sup>

**STATE OF KARNATAKA**

**October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019**

**Narasipura, Bangalore Rural District, State of Karnataka, India**

The Forest Department got hold of 1.025 kg of pangolin's scales, 1 kg of Indian softshell turtle (*Nilssonia gangetica*, Appendix I) shells and 7 kg of Indian black turtle (*Melanochelys trijuga*, Appendix II) shells in the bags of 4 farm workers at a bus stop. They were on their way to Bangalore. Talking as they often do, the traffickers recounted that the scales are used to make bulletproof vests and that Ayurvedic pharmacies use the shells to prepare cancer drugs and aphrodisiacs.<sup>79</sup>

**INDONESIA**

**Enf of October 2019**

**Pontianak City, West Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island, Indonesia**

Seizure of 18 kg of scales. Local price: 71 US\$/kg. According to the police, crushed scales are also used in the composition of narcotics. Three arrests.<sup>80</sup>

**December 4, 2019**

**Banda Aceh City, Aceh Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia**

Sentencing of 3 men to 6 and 8 months in prison for transporting and attempting to market 6 kg of pangolin's scales and to a further 1 month in prison in case of failing to pay a fine of 1 million rupees (71 US\$).<sup>81</sup>



**December 24, 2019**

**Sintang, Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan Province, Borneo Island, Indonesia**

52 kg of scales. Four arrests at Popeye Gim cafe. The provincial administration claims to have seized 18 live pangolins, 1840 dead pangolins and nearly 100 kg of scales between early 2015 and late 2019.<sup>82</sup>

**Early February 2020**

**Tulungagung and Trenggalek Regencies, East Java Province, Java Island, Indonesia**

Arrest of Feri Subangi, Ahmad Saifudin, Dadang Andri Krisbiantoro, Sahalal Marzuki and S. I. They were involved in sales and deliveries of several endangered species via the Internet. The profits of the network are estimated at 1.5 million rupees or 110,000 US\$. Seizure of pangolins, slow lorises (*Nycticebus coucang*, Appendix I), Moluccan cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*, Appendix I), rhinoceros hornbills (*Buceros rhinoceros*, Appendix II), oriental-pied hornbills (*Anthracoceros albirostris*, Appendix II), wreathed hornbills (*Rhyticeros undulatus*, Appendix II), changeable hawk-eagles (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*, Appendix II), spotted kestrels (*Falco moluccensis*, Appendix II), ebony leaf monkeys (*Trachypithecus auratus*, Appendix II), cockatoos (Cacatuidae, Appendix I or II) and binturongs (*Arctictis binturong*, Appendix III in India).<sup>83</sup>

**MALAYSIA**

**October 5, 2019**

**Kapit, State of Sarawak, Malaysia**

Seizure of 16 scales of pangolin, 148 casques and 152 feathers from helmeted hornbill (*Rhinoplax vigil*, Appendix I), 183 gall bladders and a bear skull (Ursidae, Appendix I or II), 192 peacock's feathers (Phasianidae family), 96 porcupine quills (Hystricidae family), 9 antlers and skulls of deer (Cervidae family), 35kg of Malayan softshell turtle meat and 1 live turtle (*Dogania subplana*, Appendix II).<sup>84</sup>

**OPERATION BERSEPADU KHAZANAH**

**October 10 to 20, 2019**

**Perumahan Sungai Temau, Kuala Lipis, State of Pahang, Kampung Padang Kunyit, Gerik, State of Perak, Endau-Rompin National Park, State of Johor and Hutan Simpan Tembat, State of Terengganu, Malaysia**

- October 10: Seizure of fragments of tiger skin and pangolin scales. One arrest.
- October 11: Seizure of agarwood (25 kg) and 5 birds. Two arrests.
- October 16: Seizure of 1 kg of agarwood, wild boar meat (*Sus scrofa*), 162 nets, 5 axes, machetes in a camp for poachers and tree cutters in Endau-Rompin National Park. Arrest of a national of Cambodia.
- October 20: Seizure of an elephant trunk, big cat's canines and a turtle shell (order Testudines). Arrest of 6 Cambodian nationals.<sup>85</sup>



**January 13, 2020**

**Bintulu, State of Sarawak, Malaysia**

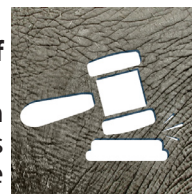
Tan Choon How and Kelvin Por Seong Wooi were sentenced to one year in prison and fined 4 million ringgits (355,500 US\$) for carrying 146 pangolins on their fishing boat (cf. "On the Trail " n°21 p. 47). Most of them were still alive at the time of the boarding. The typical scheme for these shipments is landing directly in Viet Nam or after transshipment at sea, then force-feeding on a farm and finally delivery by road to China via the Guangdong to supply restaurants.<sup>86</sup>



**Mid-March 2020**

**Kuala Terengganu, State of Terengganu, Malaysia**

Conviction of 3 Cambodian traffickers to 12 years and 8 months in prison for having detained inside the Terengganu National Park parts of pangolin, Bornean bearded pigs (*Sus barbatus*), Malaysian civet (*Viverra zibethica*), of Javan chevrotains (*Tragulus javanicus*), Asiatic brush-tailed porcupines (*Atherurus macrourus*), Asian giant tortoises (*Manouria emys*, Appendix II), wild boars (*Sus scrofa*) and for violating national laws for each of these species. The heaviest penalties were imposed for trafficking in pangolin, Malaysian civet, Asian giant tortoise and Bornean bearded pigs. All the sentences run concurrently and the 3 men will spend 2 years in prison.<sup>87</sup>



**31 mars 2020**

**Port Klang, Malaysia**

Seizure on 31 March 2020 of 6.16 tons of pangolin scales with an estimated value of 17.9 million US\$ or 2,900 US\$/kg. The final destination could only be China. Wildlife smuggling always goes to the country with the highest demand and the highest bidder (cf. Robin des Bois' "Atlas of the Business of Endangered Species", published by Arthaud in October 2019, in French only).

This is the largest scale seizure in Malaysia since the beginning of the year. The container was officially transporting cashew nuts. The voyage of a container ship from West Africa, e.g. Nigeria, to Malaysia takes about 2 months. So this cashew nut/pangolin shipment was organized between African traffickers and Chinese dealers in early 2020 after the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic in China and within the emergence of the global pandemic.



This cashew nut nexus had already been identified:

- in May 2019, in Viet Nam, with a seizure of 5.264 tons of scales distributed in 2 20-foot sea containers (151 bags were filled with scales and 63 with cashew nuts. The 2 containers had been shipped from Nigeria;
- in May 2018, in Viet Nam, with a seizure of 87 bags containing 3.3 tons of scales among bags of cashew nuts in transit to Cambodia;
- in September 2014, at Ho Chi Minh City airport in Viet Nam, with a seizure of 40 kg of raw ivory in a cashew nut package;
- in 2012, in Manila, Philippines, with a seizure of 6 rhino horns from a shipping container carrying cashew nuts from Mozambique.<sup>88</sup>



## NEPAL

**January 21, 2020**

### **Hetauda, Makwanpur District, Bagmati Pradesh Province, Nepal**

Seizure of 2.9 kg of scales. Three arrests at the bus station. The scales and other wildlife products seized in Nepal are destined for China via Tibet.<sup>89</sup>

## PHILIPPINES

**January 25 – February 22, 2020**

### **El Nido, Palawan Province, Philippines**

Seizure then release of 20 pangolins into the forests. A 33-year-old man, Wilter Tenorio, held them in wooden cages and force fed them before resale. He had been under surveillance for several days by the CENRO (City Environment & Natural Resources Office).<sup>90</sup>

## THAILAND

**October 5, 2019**

### **Kaeng Krachan National Park, Phetchaburi Province, Thailand**

Rescue thanks to a village chief of a rambling pangolin. Bad condition, covered with ants, lethargic. He appears to have been discarded by a trafficker.<sup>91</sup>

## VIET NAM

**October 5, 2019**

### **Sop Cop District, Son La Province, Viet Nam**

Rescue of a pangolin in the baggage compartment of a bus. In the same bag, there was a fox already dead.<sup>92</sup>

**7 octobre 2019**

### **Between Tan Lien and Khe Sanh, Huong Hoa Province, Viet Nam**

Seizure aboard a motorcycle of 5 live pangolins, average weight 6.5 kg. The couriers were reportedly given 5 US\$ to cover the 11 km between the Tan Lien village and the town of The Sanh.<sup>93</sup>

**October 8, 2019**

### **Huong Hoa, Quang Tri Province, Viet Nam**

The 5 living pangolins were cramped in wire baskets. Four are on the way of recovery in the Cuc Phuong refuge. The fifth is dead.<sup>94</sup>

**October 14, 2019**

### **Hung Nguyen District, Nghe An Province, Viet Nam**

Sentencing of 2 men aged 28 and 39 to 5 years and 5 years and 6 months in prison for trafficking in 7 pangolin bodies for catering (cf. "On the Trail" n°25 p.52). Strict application of article 244 of the Penal Code dating from 2015 and amended in 2017.<sup>95</sup>



**October 19, 2019**

### **Dai Loc, Quang Nam Province, Viet Nam**

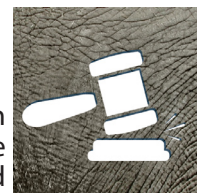
Three pangolins are recovering. During the intervention of the NGO SVW (Save Vietnam's Wildlife) and the police at the trafficker's home, a mother gave birth. Suffering from skin lesions and dehydration, she did not survive and the newborn died too. One arrest.<sup>96</sup>

## GANG

**November 25, 2019**

### **Quang Ninh Province, Viet Nam**

Sentencing to 13 years in prison for the head of a transit spot where 145 poached pangolins destined to restaurants in China were force-fed. Ten accomplices were sentenced to 5 and 8 years in prison.<sup>97</sup>



**December 2, 2019**

### **Hoa Thuan, Long An Province, Viet Nam**

Seizure in a bus between Binh Duong and Thanh Hoa of 20 kg of scales hidden in a polystyrene box. Mr. Ngan Ba Hai, 43, attempted to flee. Caught by the patrol, he claimed to have bought the lot for the equivalent of 1,720 US\$, or 86 US\$/kg in Ben Cat district and to be able to resell them in Cao Bang, about 1290 km away, for 2,160 US\$, or 108 US\$/kg.<sup>98</sup>

**December 4, 2019**

### **Dien Bien Province, Viet Nam**

Seizure of 8 big-headed turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*, Appendix I) and one pangolin, all of them dehydrated.<sup>99</sup>

**December 10, 2019**

### **Hai Phong Port, Viet Nam**

Seizure in 3 containers from Nigeria of 1,700 kg of pangolin scales and 330 kg of raw ivory concealed in logs. The shipper and consignee are identified in the bills of lading as Mercury Resources Ltd and Pama Northern Trading Import Export Company Limited allegedly based in Hanoi.<sup>100</sup>

## GANG

**December 17, 2019**

### **Hanoi, Viet Nam**

Do Huu Hoi on his Honda Dream motorcycle was carrying a bag of pineapples. Under the pineapples, there were 4 live pangolins weighing a total of 19.2 kg or 4.8 kg per individual. They were handed over to the Cuc Phuong refuge.<sup>101</sup>

## GANG

**December 17, 2019**

### **Hanoi, Viet Nam**

Nguyen Van Luu in his minibus carried 4 live pangolins weighing a total of 8.1 kg, or about 2 kg per individual. They were handed over to the Cuc Phuong refuge.<sup>102</sup>

**GANG**  
**December 17, 2019**  
**Hanoi, Viet Nam**

Rescue of 13 pangolins. They were in the hands of a network under surveillance by ENV (Education For Nature - Vietnam) for years.<sup>103</sup>

**December 17 or 18, 2019**  
**Cam Lo, Quang Tri Province, Viet Nam**

Police seized 9 live pangolins packed in bags. After first aid and an 11-hour drive, they were entrusted to the Cuc Phuong shelter by SVW (Save Vietnam's Wildlife) paramedics.<sup>104</sup>

**December 20 or 21, 2019**  
**Dien Hong, Dien Chau District, Nghe An Province, Viet Nam**

Seizure in a car on National Road 1A of 8 live pangolins distributed in 2 cardboard boxes sealed with adhesive tape. Two arrests.<sup>105</sup>

**January 11, 2020**  
**Quang Xuong District, Thanh Hoa Province, Viet Nam**

Seizure of 16 live pangolins from the trunk of a taxi at dawn.<sup>106</sup>

**January 14, 2020**  
**Huong Hoa District, Quang Tri Province, Viet Nam**

Seizure at midnight in a bus connecting Laos and Viet Nam of 5 live pangolins. They were returned to the care of Save Vietnam's Wildlife. One of them died shortly afterwards.<sup>107</sup>

**January 15, 2020**  
**Ha Tinh Province, Viet Nam**

Conviction of 12 members of a pangolin traffickers' gang to 2 to 8 years jail and fines totaling 300 million dongs, or 13,000 US\$. Nguyen Thi Huong had bought 215 pangolins from a trafficker in Laos in January 2019, then recruited 11 couriers to transport them to his home in Ha Tinh province where they were forced and sold by weight to other middlemen. Most of the time, the pangolins are smuggled from Viet Nam to China via the border town of Mong Cai.<sup>108</sup>



**End of January 2020**  
**Pu Mat National Park, Nghe An Province, Viet Nam**

Attempt to intercept a suspicious moped near the Khe Da Mai bridge. The 2 passengers fled into the forest, leaving a live pangolin, 8 kg of wild meat, 3 detonators and a stick of dynamite at the scene.<sup>109</sup>



**Beginning of February 2020**  
**Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam**

Finding at a bus stop of a pangolin in a polystyrene box. Passenger fled as the police patrol approached. One more resident in the Cat Tien National Park shelter.<sup>110</sup>



**February 20, 2020**  
**Dak Mil District, Dak Nong Province, Viet Nam**

Fine equal to 13,600 US\$ for Chu Van Thi. On the way to his coffee plantation, he caught a 4 kg pangolin. He then tried to sell him in town and was caught in the act by the police.<sup>111</sup>







October 5, 2019, Kaeng Krachan, Thailand



January 21, 2020, Hetauda, Nepal



Dec. 20/21, 2019, Dien Hong, Viet Nam



Oct. 14, 2019, Hung Nguyen



Dec. 17/18, 2019, Cam Lo, Viet Nam



October 5, 2019, Sop Cop District, Viet Nam



January 11, 2020, Quang Xuong, Viet Nam



January 11, 2020, Quang Xuong, Viet Nam



January 11, 2020, Quang Xuong, Viet Nam





## MAIN SOURCES

Sources are available on request by email to [contact@robindesbois.org](mailto:contact@robindesbois.org) indicating the “On the Trail - Covid-19 Special Edition” and reference of the event.

### Institutions

Chinese Customs, Chinese State Taxation Administration, Department of National Parks & Wildlife of Zambia, Ministère des eaux, des forêts, de la mer et de l'environnement de la république du Gabon, South African Police Service (SAPS), Supreme People's Court Of The People's Republic Of China (The), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau of India.

### Non Governmental Organizations

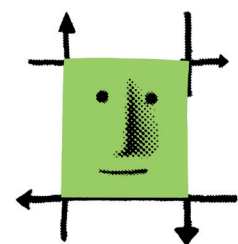
Big Life Foundation, Education For Nature - Vietnam (ENV), Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Humane Society International, PAMS Foundation, Robin des Bois, Save Vietnam's Wildlife, Species Survival Network, Tikki Hywood Foundation, Traffic, Wildlife Alliance, Wildlife Crime Hotline, Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT).

### Medias

7info, Abidjan.net, Aceh Trend, Actu Cameroun, Africa Sustainable Conservation News, B News, Berita Harian, Blaze (The), Bulawayo 24, Cameroon Tribune, China Daily, China News, Chronicle, Daily Star (The), Dantri, East Money, Enviro News, eTurboNews, Global Times, Globle and Mail (The), Guardian Nigeria (The), Himalayan Times (The), Hindu (The), Hindustan Times (The), Independent (The), IDN Times, Indian Express (The), Khoahoc & Doisong, Kumparan, Mer et Marine, Namibian (The), Namibian Sun (The), Nature, New Indian Express (The), New Straits Times (The), New Vision, News Day, Northeast Now, Nyasa Times, Orissa Post, Outlook India, People.cn, Philippine Information Agency, Pioneer (The), Radio France Internationale (RFI), Siliguri Times (The), Sina.com.cn, Star (The), Times of India (The), Tribun Pontianak, Vanguardia (La), Vietnam Net, Vn Express, Voh, VTC News, VTV News, Wall Street Journal (The), Xhby.net, Xinhua.

### Scientific publications

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- Qiao, Li-Man & Lou, Dan & Liu, Hong-Wei & Zhang, You-Ting. Monitoring the ingredient change during the production of Tan Re Qing capsules from *Scutellariae Radix* by HPLC-MS/MS. *Journal of Liquid Chromatography & Related Technologies*. (2019). 41. 1-13. 10.1080/10826076.2019.1565831.



ROBIN DES BOIS