

ROBIN DES BOIS

ON_{the} TRAIL

The defaunation bulletin
n°41. Events from the 1st June to the 31th August, 2023



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

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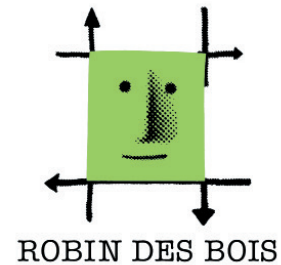
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NOTE AND ADVICE TO READERS

"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 / felines / rhinos / calaos
- Elephants + hippos / walrus / felines
- 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.

• 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.

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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RHINOCEROSES



Eastern black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis* ssp. *michaeli*). Photo Chris Fisher

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°41

Black market horn quotation from media or official sources

The values were estimated at the time of the seizures

1kg of raw horn

Continent	Pays	US\$	Ref. (year)
Africa	South Africa	6,000	15 (2023)
	Kenya	20,820	3 (2015)

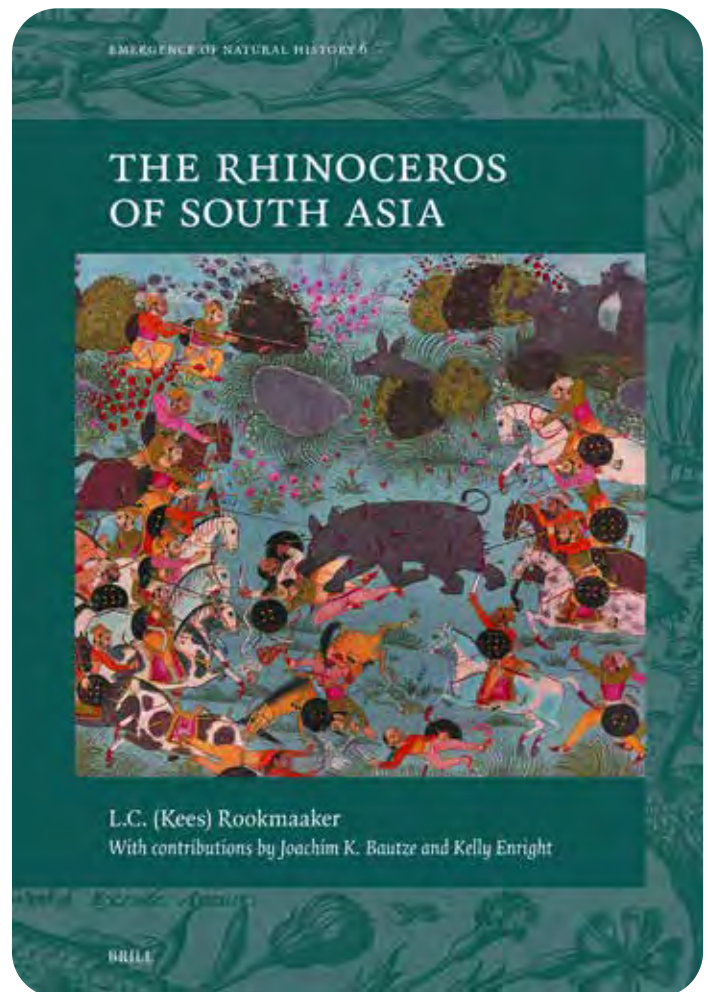
“THE RHINOCEROS OF SOUTH ASIA” BY KEES ROOKMAAKER

Three species of rhinoceros once inhabited South Asia, two of which disappeared over a century ago. This survey aims to reconstruct the historical distribution of these large mammals resulting in new maps showing the extent of their occurrences. Thousands of sources varied in time and nature are used to study the interactions between man and rhinoceros. The text is supported by over 700 illustrations and 38 maps showing the importance of the rhinoceros in the scientific and cultural fabric of Asia and beyond.

This book can be viewed and downloaded free of charge online (pdf 889 pages, 143.8 MB): <https://brill.com/display/title/64767>

Rookmaaker, Kees. 2024. *The Rhinoceros of South Asia*. Leiden, Boston: Brill (Emergence of Natural History, vol. 6), pp. i-liv, 1-835 (4to). With contributions by Joachim K. Bautze and Kelly Enright.

In the picture on the cover, full of flowers, colors and water, 13 archers and horsemen armed with shields assault a male rhinoceros with spears, arrows and braided manes from the front and back, with his left flank alone covered with some 15 wounds. The muskets aiming at a teen rhino hidden in the groves may soon turn on him, blocking his only remaining escape route. This anonymous painting, dating from 1690-1695, is the last surviving evidence of the presence of rhinos in the princely State of Raghogarh, now absorbed into the State of Madhya Pradesh.¹



RHINOCEROS RED CROSS SOUTH AFRICA

Rhino poaching is declining in Kruger Park, now Bunker Park, and spreading to other provinces, notably KwaZulu-Natal. But poaching is not the only pressure. The National Biodiversity Economy Strategy (NBES) project aims to “optimise biodiversity-based business potentials across the terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine, marine and coastal systems, and to contribute to economic growth with local beneficiation, job creation, poverty alleviation, and food security.” In the words of President Ramaphosa, biodiversity for local communities is currently as useful as “Rembrandts lying in the attic”. The NBES’s “extractivist” approach sees biodiversity as a mine and wants by year 2036 to multiply plant trade and bioprospecting, which involves the use of plants for pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, as well as to double and triple the consumption of antelope, zebra and crocodile meat. NBES also aims to increase financial resources from sport hunting and trophy exports. In 2022, the 6,000 hunters from the USA, Europe and other continents killed 36,500 wild animals, according to figures from the South African Guides and Hunters Union. To meet the financial targets for trophy hunting set by the NBES, 16,500 international hunters would be required by 2036, and thousands of elephants, lions, buffalo and white rhino legally killed. The economics of vision tourism are completely ignored.

On the subject of rhinos, NBES opens up a new avenue. The idea is to open the floodgates to “medical” tourism and encourage the world’s upper classes to come to South Africa for cures based on ground horn powder. This innovative approach, based on ancient prescriptions now disproved by traditional Chinese and conventional medicine, would make it possible to avoid listing rhinos in the CITES Appendices. Since horns are not legally exportable, the idea would be to bring to South Africa customers obsessed by the supposed preventive and curative virtues of horns, and keen to rejuvenate and boost their sexual activity.

NBES seeking to rally the voices of some rural communities and the rhino horn trade lobby, together with the voices of hunters and hunting guides, undoubtedly helped President Ramaphosa’s African National Congress party secure a relative majority in the May 29, 2024 general election.²

EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA

June 23, 2023

Mombasa, Mombasa County, Kenya

Mr. Hajji and Mr. Mwinyi were sentenced to 4 years in prison for holding a rhinoceros horn (1.406 kg) worth 20,820 US\$/kg at the time of the incident (December 27, 2015), and 15,530 US\$/kg on the day of the trial (June 23, 2023). Hajji and Mwinyi, construction workers, said in their defence that they “found” the horn while working at a building site the day after Christmas and wanted to “give it” to a sorcerer (see “On the Trail” n°11 p.56, ref.3).³



July 28, 2023

Marsabit, Marsabit County, Kenya

The court authorizes the 48-hour extension of police custody for Abudho Ali Katello, Diya Sosa, and Abdullahi Mohamed. On the night of July 28, their truck was searched at the Karantina checkpoint on the Isiolo-Moyale expressway, and 2 trophies suspected to be rhinoceros horns were seized. The KWS needs more time to find out whether the horns are genuine or counterfeit.⁴

August 9, 2023

Meru National Park, Meru County, Kenya

The rangers spot a white rhino in trouble, limping. The KWS and SWT veterinary teams intervene. It's a female. She was anaesthetised from a Lewa Wildlife Conservancy helicopter with 5 mg etorphine and 80 mg azaperone. Her breathing during the operation is supported by an injection of butorphanol and doxapram. The steel cable of the trap surrounds the right front and hind legs and causes superficial lacerations. It is sheared off with wire cutters. The wounds are sprayed with an antibiotic. The wake-up antidote was quickly injected. She woke up after 3 minutes, got up and walked off into the savannah unhindered and limp-free.⁵



ZIMBABWE

July-August 2023

Imire Reserve, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe

Following the poaching of 4 white rhinos in a private reserve, the owners decided to relocate the last 4 rhinos who survived the slaughter. They were transported to the Imire Private Reserve. Major logistical resources were deployed, including helicopters, cranes and transport by truck with police escorts. The 4 rhinos are aged between 2 and 13. At first, they will be kept in a boma (enclosure) to help them adapt and to monitor their health and psychological state. Just before she was transferred, the vets discovered a bullet in the shoulder of the little 2-year-old rhino. The operation was supported by the Aspinall Foundation, WeWild Africa and ZimParks.⁶

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

June 4, 2023

South Africa

Council of Contributors, a rhino protection NGO founded in 2017 that operates in South Africa and Kenya, announced that in the same reserve under a full moon, one rhino was killed, and another was shot in the neck. Fortunately, the latter had the bullet extracted and wound treated. The prognosis is favourable. The press release adds that all rhinos in the (unnamed) reserve have been dehorned to prevent poaching during the next full moon on July 3.⁷



June 20, 2023

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Freedom Ndlovu was sentenced to the following prison terms: 2 years for breaking into and entering the Kruger; 10 years for poaching 3 rhinos; 10 years for the possession of an undeclared weapon; 10 years for the intent to commit a crime with this weapon; 5 years for the possession of undeclared ammunition; 10 years for committing an organised crime, and 2 years for the possession of a dangerous weapon [an axe]. This amounts to 32 years in prison. The SAPS (South African Police Service) press release did not specify whether certain sentences run concurrently. Ndlovu is also banned for life from owning a weapon. Ndlovu was 32 at the time of the verdict. The story dates back to August 2016. His accomplice Alsony Baloyi was sentenced in June 2021 to 23 years in prison (see “On the Trail” n°33 p.65, ref.21). A 3rd man, Fanual Nqobe, is still at large.⁸



**June 26 and 29 and July 5, 14 and 15, 2023
Mahikeng, Rustenburg and Brits, North West
Province, South Africa**

- It was on Sunday April 20, 2014, the new heist of the century (see "On the Trail" n°5 p.71), with the Daily Maverick calling it a military operation. A gang robbed the province's coveted and highly protected Heritage House and made off with 80-90 kg of rhino horns. The hooded men entered the vault containing seized horns, horns broken in rhino fights, horns from preventive dehorning and splinters scattered during chainsaw cutting. According to images, they were moving through the cellars and upstairs as if they were at home and even knew where the security cameras were located. Many questioned where the temple guards were and why it took SAPS almost 10 hours to arrive on scene. Three second-hand suspects were arrested in June 2014.

- Nine years later, the Hawks, the elite police force, are allegedly on the trail of the organisers.

- Overnight on June 29, Elias Manganda, an alleged Malawian national, was arrested in Rustenburg, 200 km from Mahikeng. Officials seized 5 cars - a Range Rover, Land Rover, BMW, Nissan X-Trail and Honda Civic - and reliable sources claimed that some 15 men were involved in the Heritage House robbery.

- On July 5, Lindani Mthombeni was arrested in Brits, 50 km from Rustenburg.

- On Friday, July 14 and Saturday, July 15, Lonjezo Kanjipiti and Lefa Mankgaba, were also arrested in Rustenburg. Authorities still have yet to examine these 4 suspects' bail applications, prove their guilt, track down possible accomplices, and find the horns, which according to the South African press at the time, were worth 15 million US\$, or 187,500 US\$/kg on the Asian retail market.⁹

**July 4, 2023
Skukuza, Kruger National Park,
Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**



Enock Ngobeni, a Mozambique national, entered illegally Kruger Park through the Tshokwane section with an accomplice who fled with the firearm on April 17, 2022. He poached 2 rhinos and cut the 4 horns that were in his pack when he was arrested by rangers alerted by gunshots. He was sentenced by the Skukuza "rhinoceros" court to 28 years in prison:

- 2 years in prison for trespassing in the Kruger National Park.

- 1 year in prison for violation of the immigration act.

- 10 years for killing a protected species (a rhinoceros) without a permit.

- 10 years for killing a protected species (the second rhino) without a permit.

- 4 years for conspiracy to commit an offence.

- 1 year for possession of a dangerous weapon (the axe).

Some sentences are combined. Enock Ngobeni, age 31, will spend 22 years in prison.¹⁰

**July 4, 2023
Hoedspruit, Limpopo Province, South
Africa**



Preventive arrest of 5 men about to break into the Kruger National Park. Seizure of a 303-caliber rifle, 10 rounds of 303-caliber ammunition, and an axe.¹¹

**July 7, 2023
Between Makhanda and Fort Beaufort, Eastern
Cape Province, South Africa**

At 6 a.m., police stopped a vehicle between Makhanda and Fort Beaufort. They discovered a rifle, ammunition, and all the essentials for poaching in several hiding places, and arrested 2 men from Gauteng who were charged with preparation of an organised crime and illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition.¹²

**July 15, 2023
Calcutta, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**

A clandestine rifle was seized. It was in the hands of 22-year-old Daniel Makwakwa, who was reportedly going with others to use it in the Kruger. The SAPS statement said that thanks to the cooperation between the public and the police, an attack on wildlife had been prevented. The rifle will be subjected to a ballistics assessment to possibly link it to a wildlife or common law crime. Makwakwa's release on bail will be examined in the coming days.¹³



July 28, 2023

Mtubatuba, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa



The long-awaited trial (it had been postponed 30 times in 9 years) of Dumisani Gwala, presented as a rhinoceros horn mogul, has given birth to a tiny punishment. Gwala received only a 6-month suspended prison sentence and a 20,000 rand (1,070 US\$) fine for rebellion against law enforcement officers. The judge found that the evidence against Gwala was inconsistent and inadmissible, and deplored the fact that the police had not been more “proactive” and “cautious” in gathering evidence. Addressing Gwala and his accomplice Mageba, the judge said he wasn’t sure of their innocence but didn’t have enough evidence to establish their guilt. “If you were indeed involved in what you were accused of, now is your chance to stay away from it.” “You’ve been given a second chance and I suggest you take it.” Is this really the last time “On the Trail” will retrace Gwala’s actions and relationships? see “On the Trail” n°12 p.71 (ref.30), 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), n°32 p.62 (ref.18) and n°40 p.44 (ref.20).¹⁴

Beginning of August 2023

Kempton Park, Gauteng Province, South Africa

A routine patrol believed they spotted suspicious driving maneuvers by a Toyota Etios on Expressway 21. The vehicle was stopped and a suspected rhinoceros horn was discovered under the driver’s seat. Hlulani Baloyi was unable to justify its presence. The horn weighs 1.6 kg and is estimated to be worth 170,000 rand (9,630 US\$ or 6,000 US\$/kg).¹⁵

August 4, and December 6, 2023

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

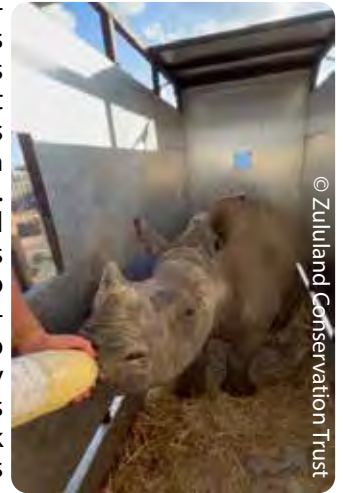


Mogale is sentenced to 6 years’ imprisonment, Ngomane and Nkosana Ndlovu to 8 years’ imprisonment, for premeditating as a conspiracy the poaching of rhinos in the Kruger Park, where they had sneaked in with weapons and all the necessary paraphernalia, without having time to carry out the act thanks to the anticipated action of the rangers.¹⁶

August 2023

KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

Arrival at the orphanage of a rhinoceros aged around 6 months and weighing almost 260 kg. His mother is believed to have been the victim of poaching. He is very agitated and in the early days it was decided, as much to protect him as to protect the care team, to place him in a specially built lodge. He remains nervous and drinks milk greedily. The team is working hard to gradually gain his trust.¹⁷



August 24, 2023

Skukuza, Parc National Kruger, Province du Mpumalanga, Afrique du Sud



Thomas Yingwana, 35, a Mozambican subject, sentenced to 16 years in prison. He had been arrested on November 22 by rangers who had spotted his footprints.

- 2 years for trespassing.
- 1 year for contravention of the Immigration Act of South Africa.
- 6 years for possession of unlicensed firearm.
- 2 years for illegal possession of ammunition.
- 4 years for possession of an unlicensed firearm with an intention to commit crime.
- 1 year for possession of dangerous weapon (an axe).

As some sentences are combined, the effective sentence will be 9 years’ imprisonment.¹⁸

NAMIBIA

June 2023

Outjo District, Kunene Region, Namibia

Discovery of 2 white rhinos poached and stripped of their horns. No suspects have yet been identified. Since the beginning of the year, 23 rhinos have been poached in the country.¹⁹

June 19, 2023

Outapi, Omusati Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.



Acting on a tip, police arrested 2 Angolan individuals on the Ruacana-Outapi road in possession of an undeclared large-caliber firearm, a machete, a screwdriver, a flashlight and a telescope. They allegedly sought to poach at least one rhinoceros in Otjiwarongo, in the Otjozondjupa region, as part of a conspiracy. They entered Namibia without requesting permission.²⁰

July 13 to 16, 2023

Otjiwarongo, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

The police spokeswoman confirms that after the discovery of suspicious footprints in a private reserve, a special operation was mounted as a matter of urgency. It resulted in the arrest of 2 intruders who were not in possession of weapons. Three others escaped. The rhino being tracked was not injured.²¹

August 18, 2023

Maroelaboom, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

A female black rhino is found dead near a watering hole in Eden Farm, a private reserve. A bullet was located in her stomach using a metal detector. The victim's horns were intact.²²

SOUTHERN ASIA

INDIA

June 27, 2023

Hugaltoli, Morigaon District, State of Assam, India

Arrest of Saharuddin. He is allegedly involved in the poaching of a rhinoceros in March (see "On the Trail" n°40 p.47, ref. 40) and other animals in the Kaziranga and in Laokhowa wildlife sanctuary.²³

June 30, 2023

Manas National Park, Baksa District, State of Assam, India

Discovery of a charred rhinoceros skeleton in the heart of an impenetrable forest area. Among the bones, the horn was nowhere to be found. The poaching is believed to have taken place in May 2023. To burn a rhinoceros corpse, you have to feed the fire for several hours. The fatal fumes and odors did not attract the attention of the guards, much to the astonishment of wildlife conservationists. Coincidence or not, in May, in Rangia (80 km from Manas Park), Zahirul Islam had been arrested during a roadside check. There was a rhinoceros horn in his car.²⁴



NEPAL

June 24, 2023

Manahari, Makwanpur District, Bagmati Province, Nepal

The death occurred several weeks ago. The rhino is believed to have been killed with bladed weapons. The horn is missing. It left Parsa National Park to an unknown destination and unknown hands.²⁵

July 5, 2023

**Ramgram
Nawalparasi
Province, Nepal**

**Municipality-18,
District, Lumbini**



Two rhinos, a mother and her calf, were electrocuted near the Narayani River on January 20 (see "On the Trail" n°39 p.29, ref.16) and the horn of the 14-year-old female had been cut off by poachers.

Today, July 5, 2023, the Chitwan National Park administration revealed that the 3 suspected poachers had been arrested on May 26. One of them, Krishna Bahadur Mahato, admits to the crime and says he was incited to commit it by watching several videos on YouTube and TikTok. While working as a daily agricultural labourer, he spotted a rhino in the vicinity, stole cables from a construction site, and set up an electrical ambush by plugging into the Siddeshwar temple's network. According to statistics, since 2015, 204 rhinos have died in Chitwan (952 km²). Of these, 42 died in rhino fights, 19 by drowning in swamps, 16 after tiger attacks, 10 by electrocution, 10 as a result of disease, 9 by firearms, 5 by poisoning, 3 by falling into pits, and 28 for unknown reasons.²⁶

WESTERN EUROPE

BELGIUM

June 30, 2023

**Namur, Province of Namur, Walloon
Region, Belgium**



Seizure of a horn that the original owner claims to have received in 1959 from a cousin returning from the Belgian Congo. In 2016, he decided to part with it and sold it to 2 cellar and attic emptiers via a written agreement. The 2 purchasers then attempted to declare and validate their acquisition on the CITES Belgium website in the hope of reselling it. Their justification file was refused and the horn seized.²⁷

FRANCE

End of June 2023

Chambéry, Department of Savoie, France

Unease persists at the Natural History Museum. Plant, mineral and animal collections are said to be at the mercy of looting by some members of the staff or their accomplices. There are still a few crumbs of rhinoceros horns in the showcases, but a horn photographed in the 2013 inventory has disappeared. A complaint against a person unknown has been lodged by one of the co-presidents. Other pieces are said to have disappeared from the storerooms. The truth is hard to come by. For several years now, the Natural History Museum of Savoie has been undergoing an interminable crisis of governance, which Chambéry town hall and the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs have allowed to deteriorate.²⁸