

ROBIN DES BOIS

ON_{the} TRAIL

Information and analysis bulletin on animal poaching and smuggling

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

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Rhinoceroses

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

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

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

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

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

"On the Trail" n°19

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

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



EASTERN AFRICA

MALAWI

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 23, 2017

Zomba, Southern Region, Malawi

Esau Billy, his father Aaron Billy Masaka, and a cousin, Lloyd Shaibu, were sentenced to 18 years, 10 years and 8 years in prison, respectively, for having killed a well-known rhinoceros, named Jabesi, in the Liwonde national park (see "On the Trail" n°18, p.66). The horns were found in a family freezer, and are now part of the government stock of trophies. The freezer, in compliance with the Zomba court ruling, was given to the Liwonde park. The ruling, that everyone agrees is dissuasive, is the harshest ever imposed in the country for poaching an endangered species and attempting to sell its parts.¹



TANZANIA

Mid October 2017

Mkomazi National Park, Kilimanjaro and Tanga Regions, Tanzania. Border with Kenya.

A female black rhinoceros, raised at the Dvur Kralove Zoo in the Czech Republic and transported by plane from Leipzig, Germany in June 2016, died of injuries after a confrontation with another rhinoceros. The victim, born in 2012 and known as Eliska, was with three other black rhinoceroses born in zoos in the European Union and transplanted to Tanzania to consolidate the black rhinoceros populations that have suffered from poaching. The Mkomazi national park extends over more than 3200 km².²

ZAMBIA

GANG

December 22, 2017

Chadiza, Eastern Province, Zambia

The two Chinese citizens and the three Zambian citizens were caught in the act of transporting 32.5 kg of horn. They pleaded the court for clemency. "Our families will have big problems if we are sent to prison." They were sentenced to five years of prison without remission, starting from the date of their arrest in July 2017. Cf. "On the Trail" n° 18, p. 69.³



ZIMBABWE

October 30, 2017

Zimbabwe

The Harare courts, in Zimbabwe, agreed to the Interpol request. The Botswana police spokesperson confirmed, "We're just waiting for the stamp from Harare officials to validate the extradition."

In Botswana, they have been waiting for Dumisani Moyo since 2012, when he disappeared after being released on bail until his trial for illegal possession of a rhino horn. Moyo was on the run until he was caught in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe, at the beginning of August (see "On the Trail" n° 18 p. 69). Moyo, 52 years old, has a bad reputation that stretches throughout all southern African countries. He begged the court not to transfer him to Botswana, where he claims he will be mistreated. He pleaded his own defense, which enabled him to obtain extra time in order to find a lawyer and to complete his file, before undoubtedly appealing. To be continued.⁴

November 2, 2017

Harare, Province of Harare, Zimbabwe

Edson Chidziva, former director of ZimParks, is trying to get away with a rather twisted legal argument. His defense invokes the fact that Chidziva was already charged, in 2015, with negligence in a case of a horn that disappeared from a safe that he was guarding, and in the end, he was acquitted. The defense has pointed out that two years later he is now being charged with the same thing. The procedure is supposedly unconstitutional, even though it is not the disappearance of one horn that is being held against Chidziva, but the disappearance of at least fifty horns (see "On the Trail" n° 18 p. 69).⁵

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

October 2017

South Africa

Tortuous story of a horn cutter who did not want to be called a poacher

Jacques Els was in possession of at least 30 horns. An illegal war treasure that he hoped sell one day, some day when all the rhinos have disappeared and their horns are at peak value and can be sold legally. In March 2012, the Louis Trichardt Regional Court, in the province of Limpopo, sentenced him to eight years in prison, plus a four-year suspended sentence and a fine of 1 million rand (\$73,000 US) to be paid to the Green Scorpions, for possession and illegal trade of rhinoceros trophies. He had acquired the horns from a certain Tom Fourie, who committed suicide seven years ago. According to the investigation, the rhinos were anesthetized and their horns were cut off the live animals. Els only did five months in prison, at first. He was released on bail for 4 million rand (\$292,000 US) until the appeals court announced its ruling. His lawyers appealed immediately after the initial sentence was made.

The court, stating that Els was not involved in a case of poaching and that the only crime he committed was the amputation of a rhinoceros, and not a case of mortal poaching, the judge reduced his sentence from 8 to 4 years, which means that Els is theoretically going to have to go back to prison for three years and seven months. In the end, all of the horns were "stolen" from his farm in Thabazimbi in September 2010.⁶

October 12, 2017

Kempton Park, Province of Gauteng, South Africa

Shuangshuang Xue, 24 years old, was sentenced to four years in prison for having attempted to illegally export horns from the Johannesburg International Airport to Hong Kong. She was coming from Lusaka, Zambia, with a stop-over in South Africa (see "On the Trail" n° 18 p. 72). Genetic analysis showed that the 14 horns and sections of horns were from five males and one female, all white rhinoceroses. None of the exhibits could be linked to a known poaching episode or to any State trophy collection.⁷



Mid October 2017

Near Hoedspruit, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

- Death of a poacher.
- Serious injury for another poacher.
- A third is on the run, but being tracked by the dog unit.

Following an incident on the hunting reserve, several weapons and ammunition were seized.⁸



© SAPS

October 19, 2017

Entabeni Safari Conservancy, Province of Limpopo, South Africa

It is a sad first for the reserve, founded 23 years ago. The adult female was poached and its two horns stolen. Its offspring of 21 months was hit. It is being monitored by veterinarians and could be referred to a specialized orphanage. The reserve, dedicated to photo safaris, extends over 22,000 ha.⁹



October 1 and 22, 2017

Wildschutsberg Game Reserve, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Two attacks in three weeks on this ranch.

– Two 10-year-old males, in plain daylight. It was a Sunday. They had been sighted in prime condition at 11 a.m. At 4 p.m., a helicopter spotted them, dead, 300 m from each other.

– Two females, approximately 8 and 15 years old, and a 4-year old male, on another Sunday, in the middle of the night. Two corpses were found on Monday morning; one of the females was still alive. The two dead animals had been entirely dehorned. The survivor still had her horns. But she died during the operation to remove a bullet from her shoulder. "I don't have any left. They are all dead. They've killed seven in the past three years," sighed Greg Harvey, owner of the reserve.¹⁰



October 22, 2017

Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, South Africa

Serial Murder into Pilanesberg

Two black rhinos were massacred during the night. They were found at dawn. One still had its horns. He had managed to flee the ambush. He died without having lost his horns. The other one, a cow with full-term calf, was found near a track, hit by car and its long horn cut off. The butchers did not have time to saw off the short horn that is partly hacked.

A third carcass was found in an isolated spot. It was already rotting away. A bullet was found in its side.¹¹



October 9, 19, November 2, 2017

Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, South Africa

- Minus two, a male and a female.

- Minus one.

- Minus one gestating female and one young rhinoceros. The horns were in place. The poachers were not able to complete their operation.

The park has lost a total of 13 individuals to poaching since the beginning of 2017.¹²

October 25, 2017

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

Sentencing of Paul Ubisi Julio Nvhimbithi to 20 and 18 years of prison. They took part in an exchange of gunshots with rangers while they were poaching. An accomplice, Nelson Mathebula, was hit by a bullet. The ranger tracked him for 250 m by following the trail of blood. He was rescued by an emergency physician who arrived to the site by helicopter, but he did not survive. Usibi was armed with large caliber 458. His backpack contained an axe. The Advocate General in his indictment said that the two convicts from Mozambique were in some way responsible for the death of their sidekick by having launched offensive shots on the rangers without complying to the summons. The court of Skukuza is specialized in rhinoceros poaching cases (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p. 75).¹³



GANG

November 6, 2017

Grahamstown, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Postponement of the trial of the Ndlovu trio - Jabulani, Forget, and Sikhumbuzo. They were accused of poaching 22 rhinoceroses (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p. 70). The three men remain free on bail, despite the serious risk of evasion that the prosecuting attorney highlighted.

Yet again, poachers have been very clever with the procedures. Jabulani turned down legal aid, choosing a famous legal firm in Port Elisabeth. The new attorneys were not available on the trial day. Jabulani must sell his home to pay them. The trial has been postponed to June 4th.¹⁴

KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

November 13, 2017

The battle has been lost for JP van Zyl-Roux, a member of the Hawks for 10 years and who has now been sidelined for the past two years for unclear reasons. His main mistake may have been contributing to the arrest of Dumisani Gwala, a bigwig in wildlife trafficking and corruption, whose trial is endlessly postponed due to supposed procedural flaws. After multiple appeals and attempts with administrative mediation, JP van Zyl-Roux will be emptying his office mid-November. "The entire business is stupefying, it's a circus of absurdity," lamented his lawyer, Jacques Botha to the newspaper The Witness. The soldier JP van Zyl-Roux has not been saved (see "On the Trail" n°17 p. 78).¹⁵

FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 13, 2017

Mkhuhlu, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Mbuyane father and son seem to be involved in poaching. Two large-caliber weapons were found in their home.¹⁶

November 16, 2017

South Africa

A young female, shot in the back and dehorned, is now in the good care of Saving the Survivors.¹⁷



November 20, 2017

Near Hoedspruit, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Three men suspected of poaching were spotted in a rhinoceros breeding farm. Shots were fired. One suspect is dead. The other two fled. A revolver and a saw were seized.¹⁸



November 26, 2017

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa

Walter Mhangani, Emmanuel Mdhuli and Xongani Mathebula appear before the Skukuza Special Court. They are charged with breaking after having entered Kruger national park without passing through the official entry, unlawful possession of weapons, and poaching in conspiracy of three white rhinoceroses.¹⁹



December 2, 2017

Ngwelezane, Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

K. Shandu, the judge responsible for Dumisani Gwala's case, is deprived. Dumisani Gwala is a boss involved in all kinds of business (cf. "On the Trail" n°12 p 71, n°14 p.63 and 66). Shandu is suspected of accepting money from the defence counsels to indefinitely delay the trial. JP Van Zyl-Roux, (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p 72) is satisfied with this progress. He was hired by the NGO Saving the Wild to manage its investigations department. Gwala was arrested in 2015 by Van Zyl-Roux's team, when the latter was a

member of the Hawks. For the moment, the trial is planned for May 2018. Despite his violence during his arrest, his lavish lifestyle, and the risk of evasion, Gwala is free on bail. If the change in judges is confirmed, the hearing might not be postponed for a 16th time.²⁰

December 2 and 3, 2017

Grahamstown and Ventersburg, Eastern Cape and Free State Provinces, South Africa

Progress on anti-poaching?

In both provinces, poaching is rising, while it is dropping in Kruger park. Cooperation between the police of the two provinces and the Department of Environmental Affairs investigators has led to the arrest of eight suspects in 48 hours. Two were picked up in a bakkie that was being used by three poachers to enter the Great Fish River Nature Reserve, and six others in a convoy of two powerful vehicles containing a .458 rifle, ammunition, axes, knives, night-vision binoculars, cash in rand and in US dollars, and five telephones. All of the equipment was seized.

The .458 rifle is of particular interest. It may be the weapon used to kill five rhinoceroses in the Wildschutsberg Game Reserve in October. According to non-official sources, the preliminary ballistic cross-checking seems to confirm that hypothesis. Most of the suspects are foreigners.²¹

December 8, 2017

South Africa

Saving the Survivors made a vain attempt to rescue a two-year old female shot in her front left paw. She was exhausted after roaming around the whole night.²²



December 25, 2017

Enoch Mgijima, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

She was due to give birth in two or three weeks. She was killed on Christmas night and dehorned 60 m from the southern fence of the Lawrence de Lange hunting reserve (1,200 hectares), near a cemetery. She is the 12th victim of the year in the province.²³



NAMIBIA

October 14, 2017

Etosha National Park, Kunene Region, Namibia

The Namibian reported that the poacher, Luteni Muharukua, who entered the park illegally with the intention and tools necessary for poaching, was charged by a rhinoceros that "appeared from nowhere." His accomplices fled, after having hid him on a neighboring mountain. The suspect was arrested the next day by police. His leg is injured; he is hospitalized and treated, and well-guarded.²⁴

November 2017

Windhoek, Khomas Region, Namibia

Follow-up on the Lu and Chen case, and the five rhinoceros horns. Yanghui Lu escaped to China after he was released on bail. Nan Chen will go to court in February 2018. But the judge is giving him a chance to escape, too, because until then, Chen will also be free on bail (see "On the Trail" n° 16 p.69).²⁵

December 1, 2017

Omungwelume, Ohangwena Region, Namibia. Near the border with Angola.

Three men, aged 20, 21, and 31, were arrested at a roadblock. In the vehicle, police found a backpack containing two fresh horns.²⁶

SWAZILAND

November 20, 2017

Swaziland

Two men from Taiwan were caught in 2016, in the process of exporting 35.14 kg of horns, cut up into 31 fragments estimated at 2.4 millions US\$, that is \$ 68,300 US/kg (see "On the Trail" n°16 p.70). They were each sentenced to two different prison terms of 11 and 9 years for illegal possession of horns, trade in horns and smuggling. The two sentences run concurrently. DNA analyses revealed that the horns were from eight different rhinoceroses. After they were arrested at the King Mswati III Airport in Swaziland, a bag belonging to them was intercepted at the Johannesburg International Airport. Their trick was to put the pieces of horn in 5 L wine boxes. In addition to the prison terms, they are required to pay a fine of \$3000 US to the government of Swaziland and to each of the reserves where the rhinoceroses were poached, the Madikwe Game Reserve in the North-West province, the Balule Game Reserve in Limpopo and the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal.²⁷



AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OPERATION CRASH

November 14, 2017

Miami, State of Florida, United States of America

Michael Hegarty, member of the Rathkeale Rovers gang, was sentenced to 18 months in prison, followed by three years on parole, for criminal trafficking in conspiracy of a libation cup (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 78 and n°13 p.76).²⁸



Mid-November 2017

Haute Vienne Department, France

The Rathkeale Rovers have diverse tricks. In France, they work on behalf of so-called Irish public works companies. With their used trucks and the Eastern European accomplices, they sell adulterated and stolen tar at cheap prices. Their coatings break off with the first bad weather. Around a hundred tarring sites have been identified, 300,000 € of checks have been credited to around twenty bank accounts. At least equivalent sums were probably paid in cash by victims of the scam who did not dare to file complaint. The Rathkeale Rovers are routinely arrested and released under judicial control, from which they make a game out of escaping.²⁹

ASIA

CHINA

October 30, 2017

Hong Kong International Airport, China

Seizure of 1.4 kg of presumed horn cut into pieces and hidden in food wrappings, for a total value of \$280,000 HK, or \$36,000 US (\$25,700 US/kg). The passenger, aged 31, was coming from Maputo, Mozambique, via Doha, Qatar.³⁰



November 12, 2017

Hong Kong International Airport, China

A fruitful day for the Hong Kong customs officers.

– Seizure of 1.8 kg of presumed rhinoceros horn in the backpack of a passenger coming from Beira, Mozambique, via Johannesburg, South Africa.

– Seizure in the jacket and socks of a passenger from Xiamen, in the province of Fujian, of 800 g of presumed rhinoceros horn.

The customs department estimates the value at \$520,000 HK total for the 2.6 kg of horn, i.e. \$66,600 US, or \$25,600 US/kg.³¹

INDIA

October 23, 2017

Bongalmora, Lakhimpur District, State of Assam, India

A horn was confiscated, and the four people who were trying to sell it were arrested.³²

October 19, Thursday November 2, Saturday November 4, November 9 and 10, 2017

Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India

- Hangal and Pegu had been haunting in the park for a few days. Hangal is a sharpshooter who was hired by local poachers. He is from Manipur. He did not have time to use his AK 56 or his A .303. He and his partner were circled and disarmed by the police and forest rangers before they could act. There were 2000 rhinoceroses in the park, and there still are. An expert in criminology explained that the .303 is the ideal weapon for killing rhinos, and that the new trend in automatic weapons, such as the AK 58, is meant to protect poachers from rangers, in case of confrontation.



Calibre .303



AK56

- Thursday, November 2. Three poachers equipped with AK-47, escaped through the night after having shot a male rhino and stolen his horn. "We believe that they arrived from the north, crossing the Brahmapoutre, and waited for the right moment, hiding on a sandbank," said a ranger, without giving his identity.

- Saturday, November 4.

The job was wrapped up quickly, in a matter of minutes, around midnight. Shots rang out in several parts of the park. The rangers did not know which way to go. The gang brought down two rhinos, a mother and her calf, and sawed off their horns. The two bodies were found lying one against the other. Specialists say that the raid's military-like organization suggests that the members of the gang are militants from an autonomous, Communist group from Karbi Anglong. The mother was officially known as the "pride of Assam."

- November 11. The All Assam Students Union (AASU) organized a major pro-rhino demonstration in the district of Golaghat and demand that the Assam Forestry Minister, Pramila Rani Brahma, resign.³³



November 1, 2017

**Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India
Poaching lull in the largest and most famous park in the country**

Only two cases of poaching since the beginning of the year. That report is comparable to 2001. Rangers are now equipped with night-vision goggles and semi-automatic weapons to dissuade poachers. Cameras have been installed on top of 30-m watch towers and transfer live footage to a control room. Homemade firearms have been confiscated in the villages around park, and 38 local micro-development projects are promoting weaving and other hand made craft. These efforts seem to have paid off. There is better coordination between the forest rangers and the State police, which facilitates reactivity and makes interventions and anti-poaching investigations more efficient. The park administration is not resting on its provisional laurels. They are expecting the poaching organizations to develop new strategies. For the moment, poachers have turned to other parks and sanctuaries in Assam that are less well-equipped, such as Pobitora and Orang.³⁴

November 11, 2017

State of West Bengal, India

The SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal) 17th battalion arrested Giranb Das, residing in the Alipurduar district, and seized a horn, weighing 750 g and measuring 18 cm long, that Das was trying to smuggle across the border from Bhutan. The tax value of the horn is set at 35,100,000 rupees (\$540,000 US).³⁵

December 3, 2017

Bokakhat, Golaghat District, State of Assam, India

Seizure of a horn weighing over one kg and arrest of the seller, Bipin Borah.³⁶

December 2017

Alluvial floodplains of the Dooars, State of West Bengal, India

While preparing for their crime, or after, the poachers are accustomed to staying in hotels or other resorts on the fringes of the Gorumara national park. "We want managers and employees to provide us with information immediately if they have suspicious customers." An information campaign was launched and negligent hotel-keepers could be accused of complicity.³⁷



LAOS

October 23, 2017

Wattay International Airport, , Laos

The airline Silk Air transported two Chinese citizens, whose luggage was searched on arrival, on a flight from Singapore to Vientiane. Their baggage contained 11.1 kg of horns. The two traffickers had planned to take a domestic flight to the Luang Prabang province in the north to get closer to the Chinese border.³⁸



THAILAND

October 10, 2017

Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

Seizure of Chinese travelers' baggage coming from Lusaka, Zambia, and destined for Cambodia, via Addis-Ababa and Bangkok. The bags contained 6.2 kg of horns, estimated locally at approximately \$300,000 US, i.e. \$48,400 US/kg.³⁹



December 2017

Thailand

Wongchan Nikon works in quarantining at the airport. He is in prison now. He acknowledged that several times, upon the request of a man named Sen—a Chinese citizen—he took luggage from the carousel, and left with his security badge without any problem. He then gave the suitcases to an anonymous correspondent. Rhinoceros horns were in the suitcases. The last suitcase, one too many, had 14 horns with an estimated worth of 50 million baht, or approximately \$ 1,530,000 US.

Nikon admits to performing this service several times for 3,000 baht (\$ 92 US) per kg—"just to get the suitcase out of the airport". He stopped the game because he feared that he would be caught in the act. But the network came back with an irresistible offer: 9,000 baht (\$ 276 US) per kg. Nikon was back.

A Vietnamese man was arrested at the same time as him. He came to look for the smuggled goods, to take them to Viet Nam. The ghost-like Sen paid him 170,000 baht (\$ 5,211 US) for each mission. The horns came from South Africa via Dubai. The network had contacted 42-year-old Nikon on the Line application.⁴⁰

GANG

December 12, 2017

Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

Seizure of 16 horns for a total weight of 12.5 kg. Arrest of a Chinese citizen and a Thai citizen who disembarked on a flight coming from South Africa. The police, after having received information from the NGO EAL, subsequently arrested M. Bach Van Hoa, one of the two brothers of the Bach family, who is said to have headed the network and imported 56.5 kg of horns into Thailand in the last four months.⁴¹

EUROPE

NETHERLANDS

December 19, 2017

Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, Province of North Holland, The Netherlands

Seizure of five horns and four items presumably made of horn from the baggage of a Chinese passenger coming from South Africa and on the way to Shanghai. He is in custody for at least 15 days. The customs officers estimate the seizure to be worth 500,000 € or \$590,000 US.⁴²



Rhinos and Elephants

AFRICA

NAMIBIA

October 2017

Namibia

According to news from Mr. Shifeta, elephant and rhino poaching is down in the country (20 in 2017, vs. 101 in 2016, and 27 in 2017 vs. 60 in 2016, respectively).

75 traffickers have been arrested since the beginning of the year, most of them linked to Asian networks. 30 horns, 103 tusks and 69 pieces of tusks have been confiscated by the police and the army.¹

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 24, 2017

Boston, State of Massachusetts, United States of America

Guan Zong Chen, alias Graham Chen, a professional antique dealer and Australian national, has a long history of trafficking in rhinoceros horn, ivory and coral. He was just tried for an overall trade estimated at \$700,000 US. In 1989, he was arrested in Chengdu, in the Chinese province of Sichuan, for illegal importation of carved ivory coming from the United States. He was placed under house arrest for several years, but continued trafficking with assistance from a Chinese national, Jin Jie Yang, and the owner of a courier service in Concorde, New Hampshire. The two of them were intermediaries, enabling him to fraudulently import ivory and horns to China.

Once he had served his sentence, he went back to the United States and continued using the Concord courier platform to ship ivory and horns, and among other things, a libation cup hidden in a porcelain vase and some raw horns purchased at an auction in Beverly Hills, California. He was wanted by the US justice, and was picked up in July in Australia, and extradited to the United States. He pleaded guilty partially and faces up to 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 US (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 81).²

ASIA

CHINA

October 17-18, 2017

Hong Kong International Airport, China

Three passengers, aged 20 to 34, coming from Harare, Zimbabwe, via Dubai, were arrested. Two of the women were transporting 43 kg of semi-raw ivory in their cabin bags, and the third had 2 kg of rhinoceros horn, cut into three pieces, tied to her chest and thighs.



It is interesting to note that given the proliferation of imitation and counterfeited articles, the Hong Kong customs systematically talk about "presumed" rhinoceros horns and ivory in their press releases. The three female smugglers were sentenced to two months jail.³

EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

November 9, 2017

London, United Kingdom

Abbas Allawi has been sentenced to 14 months in prison (see "On the Trail" n°17, p.87). On October 19, 2016, a search warrant and the sniffer dogs of the Metropolitan Police's Wildlife Crime Unit brought in the trophies. The sentence was as follows:

- 14 months for possession and trade of three rhinoceros horns.

- 7 months for 40 kg of raw elephant ivory.

- 3 months for 4 hippopotamus teeth.

The sentences run concurrently.⁴

Elephants

If we have to talk about imminent extinction, Asian elephants are much more threatened than African elephants. By the end of 2017, Sri Lanka's and Indian's super-tuskers and Indonesia's pygmy elephants are disappearing at top speed. The official and global value of an Asian elephant in China is just over \$300,000 US compared to just over \$150,000 US for an African elephant. Asiatic ivory is more appreciated in Asia than African ivory.

Ivory is not the only material sought in the elephant. In 10 years, 70,000 elephants from Africa would have legally fed tanners and world fashion.

The African elephant, *Loxodonta africana*, is listed in CITES Appendix I, except populations from South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe which are in Appendix II. The Asian elephant, *Elephas maximus*, is listed in Appendix I.

"On the Trail" n°19 Black market raw ivory quotation from media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref.
Africa	Kenya	967	4
		770	11
		1,925	12
		1,603	13
	Uganda	108	31
	Zimbabwe	250	46
		2,500	50
	Gabon	120	74
Asia	China (Hong Kong)	2,570	89
	India (Kerala)	1,156	115
	India (Arunachal Pradesh)	4,243	41*
	Viet Nam	1,300-2,200	6**

* Chapter Multi-species

** Chapter Pangolins and Elephants

EASTERN AFRICA

BURUNDI

November 27, 2017

Bigina, Kayogoro, Makamba Province, Burundi

Seizure of a Kalachnikov, 2,250 cartridges, a detonator, and 18 elephant tusks.²

KENYA

Mid October 2017

Masai Mara Reserve, Narok County, Kenya

Elephant Voices, Save the Elephants, Mara Elephant Project and Elephant Aware are once again calling public attention to the invasion of elephant travel routes by the anarchic appropriation of wilderness areas to be converted into agricultural land surrounded by fences and protected from incursion by wild animals.

The call from these NGOs, whose skill and desire for mediation are well recognized in Kenya, in Africa and in the international community, was triggered by the weakening and slow death of Nalakite, the matriarch of the Masai Mara who was watched over for many long hours by her three orphans. Nalakite was the victim of a spear attack a few months ago, and died of her infected wound. She is another victim of the conflicts between men and elephants.

For nearly 2 years, a report written by the NGOs in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service, has proven that encroachment by human activities of the main migration corridor in the Masai Mara reserve has been confronting elephants with inextricable difficulties. However, the county and government authorities remain passive, letting the men and the elephants sort out their vital problems among themselves.³



November 28, 2017

Chogoria, Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya

Seizure of several tusks, including some that were fresh, for a total weight of 58 kg estimated by local authorities to be worth \$56,000 US, or a little less than \$1000 US/kilo (\$967 US/kilo). The three traffickers arrived at a hotel on a scooter with the ivory in a bag, to bargain with rangers dressed as civilians and pretending to be clients.⁴



End of November 2017

Olarro Conservancy, Narok County, Rift Valley Province, Kenya

Assassinated by two spears in the bush. The tusks were cut off and weighed according to protocol, before going into the State trophy collection.⁵



December 1, 2017

Kyuso, Kitui County, Eastern Province, Kenya

117 kg of raw ivory. Life sentence or a fine of 20 million shillings (\$192,000 US) for each of the two people. Cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p.88.⁶



Beginning of December 2017

Kenya. Near the border with Tanzania

Silence and camouflage.

Hit by a spear in a vital organ, the elephant was able to walk 100 m before it collapsed. Its tusks were then amputated and it was covered with branches. A patrol found it a few days afterwards.⁷

December 4, 2017

Eastleigh, Nairobi, Nairobi County, Kenya

Two arrests. Two tusks cut into four pieces. 5 kg of ivory. The swindlers were coming from Maai Mahiu, 65 km from Nairobi.⁸

December 6, 2017

Olarro Conservancy, Narok County, Kenya

The veterinarian Limo and assistants from DSWT (David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust) put a male wounded by a spear to sleep in the middle of a large family of adult and young elephants.⁹

Mid December 2017

Near the Nairobi National Park, Nairobi County, Kenya

A dead elephant was found. Chris Leadismo, a ranger and member of Save the Elephants, paid tribute to this victim.¹⁰

December 15, 2017

Mtsangatu and Tiribe, Kwale County, Kenya

Arrest of two civil servants practicing ivory trafficking. Said Kuzidi, school teacher at the Mwamasa primary school, held in Mtsangatu a pair of tusks weighing 34 kg. Hamisi Makoti, a county enforcement officer, had hidden in Tiribe another pair weighing 16 kg. Value of the lots is estimated at 4 million shillings (\$38,480 US, that is \$770 US/kg) by the Kenya wildlife service (KWS). The ivory is not fresh. The suspects were still searching for a buyer. Held in custody at the Kwale police station, they were to be indicted.¹¹



FAMILY AFFAIRS

December 16, 2017

Kisima, Samburu County, Kenya

The father and son were trying to sell 15 tusks weighing 27 kg in all. There are estimated to be worth 5.4 billion shillings, the equivalent of \$52,000 US and \$1,925 US/kg. The tusks were from elephant calves. It seems that the poaching has been happening for several years now.¹²

December 22, 2017

Rumuruti, Laikipia County, Kenya

Seizure of 30 kg of raw ivory estimated to be worth \$48,100 US, or \$1,603 US/kg. 2 arrests.¹³

MALAWI

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 4, 2017

North of Malawi

Two-staged arrest of two brothers, Chancy and Patrick Kaunda, suspected of being behind the attempted smuggling between Tanzania and Malawi of 781 tusks or pieces of tusk hidden in a truck under bags of cement (see "On the Trail" n°1 p. 33).¹⁴

GANG / REPEATED OFFENSE

October 11, 2017

Lilongwe, Malawi

Winston Humba (38 years old) was at the head of a prosperous ivory workshop in the capital, the product of which was shipped to Thailand and Malaysia. Using heavy machines, they cut the tusks into pieces that were adapted to smuggling. He was arrested by the police on 26 December 2016. In his workshop, investigators found 126 kg of ivory scraps lying on the floor, left over from a 475-kg batch sent to Zambia. The court sentenced him to seven years in prison. Winston Humba already had a police record for cases involving trafficking wild animals. Four of his accomplices had been sentenced previously: in March, Godfrey Kaludzi was sentenced to four years in prison with hard labor for possession of 126 kg of ivory, and in September, Golden Bakili, Mussa Malopa and Samuel Chiweta, received the same sentence for illegal sale of ivory. The new National Parks and Wildlife Act which came into force in February 2017 in Malawi calls for sentences of up to 30 years in prison.¹⁵



November 4, 2017

Nkhotakota District, Central Region, Malawi

Two men, aged 45 and 56, were sentenced to 13 years in prison for having poached elephants that had just been transferred to the reserve from the national park of Liwonde. Faliki Simeon and Thomson Zindo pleaded guilty and asked for clemency from the court, pointing out that they were the only breadwinners for their families. The prosecutor requested a harsh sentence. "This malpractice of killing wild species is pulling down the development of the country," he said, before adding, "Elephants generate foreign currency by encouraging tourist visitation."¹⁶



November 7, 2017

Ntchisi, Ntchisi District, Central Region, Malawi

Two men originally from the Ntchisi district were sentenced to five years in prison with hard labour. They were taken by surprise on September 6 in the process of selling 4 kg of raw ivory.¹⁷



MOZAMBIQUE

End of December 2017

Niassa National Reserve, Niassa Province, Mozambique. Border with Tanzania

26 poached elephants. At least two of them were gestating females. It appears that the pillagers are from Burundi and Tanzania, and received help from the villagers of Mbamba. 30 tusks, three mobile phones, one solar panel, rags, provisions, 138 AK47 bullets, four claws, and the head of a lion were found in the bivouac of the poachers.

At least 356 elephants were poached in the country in 2017. Illegal ivory is branching out in Asia, to Cambodia and Viet Nam in particular, via the ports of Pemba and Nacala.¹⁸

Cf. "On the Trail" n°3 p.65, n°6 p.84 and 87, n°7 p.77, n°10 p.55, n°11 p.51 and 70, n°15 p.89, n°16 p.77, and n°18 p.84.



UGANDA

October 13, 2017

Northern Region, Uganda

One arrest. 84 kg of raw ivory. A super tusker has disappeared.¹⁹



Mid October 2017

Uganda

47 kg of ivory in a bag. Arrest of three Kenyans. New proof of cross-border traffic between Kenya and Uganda.²⁰



© Eagle

October 27, 2017

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

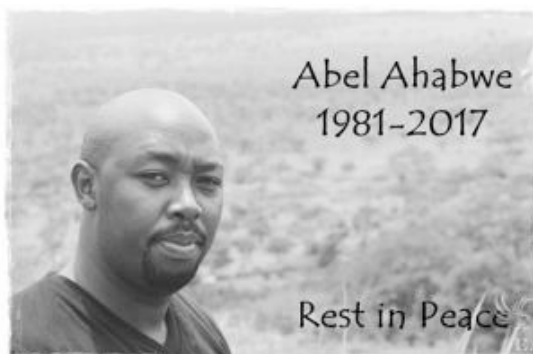
Two arrests, a woman and a man, from whom 47 kg of ivory was confiscated.²¹



October 2017

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

The police seized 20 kg of raw ivory from the trafficker. They were working with the NRCN team (Natural Resource Conservation Network). This operation is following the accidental death of Abel Ahabwe in Kampala. After 15 years with the Uganda Army Forces, Abel was headed up the investigation and intervention team of Eagle Uganda.²²



Beginning of November 2017

Uganda. Border with Democratic Republic of the Congo.

50 kg of ivory in the hands of three Congolese individuals, one woman and two men.²³



Beginning of November 2017

Uganda

120 kg seized, four large tusks.²⁴

November 2, 2017

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

Uganda continues to be a place where lawfulness and lawlessness work together.

Arrest of two civil servants and two traffickers, and seizure of four tusks.²⁵

November 5, 2017

Entebbe International Airport, Kampala District, Center region, Uganda

After reading the article in the *Sunday Monitor Kampala*, it's easier to understand why the president recently charged the dog unit with the ability to intercede night and day in all parts of the Entebbe Airport, including auxiliary services and locked buildings (cf. "On the Trail" #18, p.68). In Entebbe, cocaine, precious stones, rhinoceros horns or ivory are not only found in passenger luggage. The facts are known, however the interview with Richard Okullu illumines them in a raw and bizarre way.

No one knows how five tons of ivory made their way onto airport premises and were stored at the fire station, loaded into the firemen trucks and quietly dropped off in the Asian section of the new freight terminal. Corporal Okullu discovered this deceptive manoeuver and immediately informed his superiors, thus the Commander Caleb Mwesiyege. This measure was useless, since at the highest level, the police forces of Entebbe Airport were already informed of this traffic, in full knowledge of the Pakistani owner of the cargo, and had even conspired with the clearing agents. (.../...)

After three hours of palaver, Okullu was offered cash to turn a blind eye to the immediate shipping of the merchandise. Okullu refused and, following a moment of hesitation, the man who was in charge of loading the cargo in the freight plane escaped in his handling trolley. The five tons remained on the tarmac until the police came to inspect the left out packages and verify that indeed this was raw ivory. The "merchandise" was then stored for several months in a space close to the canine brigade's kennels, before being brought to the vaults of the Uganda Wildlife Authority, from which they may have disappeared. (cf. "On the Trail" #17, p.43). These facts took place between 2012-2014.²⁶



Richard Okullu

REPEATED OFFENSE

November 15, 2017

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda



The man on the right had already been caught red-handed in possession of raw ivory, in September, and was quickly released after having paid a small fine. Two months later, it was the backsliding.²⁷

Mid November 2017

Arua and Simbili, Northern Region, Uganda. Border with Democratic Republic of the Congo.

- Arrest of Ewai Abel, 52 years old, boda-boda driver; 67 kg of raw ivory seized.
- Arrest of Ndaaba Icaku, Congolese, and Okuni James, Ugandan; 33 kg of raw ivory seized. They hid their stash in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and had brought it into Uganda after being baited by undercover policemen.²⁸

November 20, 2017

Maracha District, Central Region, Uganda

Josephine Angucia, spokesperson for the police confirmed to Xinhua, the Chinese press agency, that two men from the Democratic Republic of the Congo were about to sell 43 kg of raw ivory. Uganda is a land of transit for fauna stuff that can be moved easily across the porous borders of the Great Lakes region. Chaku Ndabah and James Aniku risk five years in prison.²⁹

November 22, 2017

Uganda

Eight tusks in the car of a man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.³⁰



FAMILY AFFAIRS

End of November 2017

Pakwach District, Northern Region, Uganda

The large tusks of super tuskers are coming out of the closet in Uganda. Opunya Edwin, 26 years old, is a veterinary assistant. He says that his job opened his eye to the good deals to be made with ivory. He has been in the business for a year. The 150 kg of ivory are estimated at \$16,150 US, or \$108 US/kg. He stored the tusks on the farm of his uncle, General Otema Awany. His uncle was apparently not aware of the trafficking.³¹



TANZANIA

October 24, 2017

Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam Region, Tanzania

Miscellaneous news item for the Court in session today.

–Jennifer, a civil servant with the tax authorities, is suspected of having a lifestyle well above her legal revenue. She owns 19 cars worth a total of \$220,000 US.

- Four citizens of Zanzibar appear in court for transportation and illegal possession of four tusks worth a total of \$15,000 US.³²

October 30, 2017

Dodoma Region, Tanzania

A tough legal blow to Alfred Nyagawa and Jumanne Mlaga, arrested in possession of a rifle and two tusk tips. Twenty years in prison for each. The district court, presided by Judge James Karayemaha, decided to make an example of them. Six witnesses were called and 9 exhibits were brought to court, during the hearing for “economic sabotage.” The State attorney, Slimu Msemo, rubbed it in by denouncing the two defendants for appropriation of national wealth for personal profit. Their advocate, Magiri Mbasha, pleaded in vain for lighter sentences that could “open the door to rehabilitation or reconversion.”³³



November 17, 2017

Kigoma, Kigoma Region, Tanzania. Border with Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Maneno Tanu is accused of having killed two elephants, three weeks ago. The police raided his house at about 5:00 a.m. Two fire arms, including a submachinegun, and ammunitions were seized. Several points of information received by the police, the Friedkin Conservation Anti-Poaching unit and the rangers in Kifura corroborate the suspect's guilt, but nothing is certain for the moment.³⁴

November 23, 2017

Manyoni, Manyoni District, Tanzania

PAMS has announced that five poachers have been sentenced to 20 years, 14 years and 6 years in prison. “Hongera sana!” (Congratulations !) says PAMS speaking to magistrates.³⁵



December 8, 9, 10 and 11, 2017

Ruvuma Region, Tanzania. Border with Mozambique and Malawi

Three arrests and seizure of munitions and 10 firearms, thanks to the collaboration of the police, PAMS, KDU (the Wildlife Division's anti-poaching unit), and local whistleblowers.³⁶

December 11, 2017

Ilala, Dar es Salaam region, Tanzania

Dominic Kombe and Helbert Machaka are sentenced to 20 years in prison for trafficking 24 sections of raw tusks. Their car was permanently seized for the benefit of the State.³⁷



December 18, 2017

Ruaha National Park, Iringa region, Tanzania

According to a London-based ITV News documentary, drawing upon a report by Colin Beale, researcher at York University, UK, a team of guards financed by the UK's Department for International Development, the United States' governmental organization Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Programme, actually turned against elephants and approached poachers by supplying them with ammunitions, strategic information on the elephant's movements and on patrol routes. Numerous elephant carcasses were discovered in close proximity to at least two ranger bases. This collusion, if proven true, would once again attest to the double-dealing of certain wildlife guards in Tanzania, just as in other countries. This particular case would help to explain the brutal decline of elephants in and around Ruaha national park.



The government has stated that the ITV allegations are worth looking into. “The presence of an unusually high number of carcasses around these posts is an issue for further investigation. This should not be taken as an institutionalized system that operated with the tacit knowledge of the authorities.”³⁸

December 20, 2017

Mpanda, Katavi Region, Tanzania

Sentencing of a 52-year old man to 30 years in prison and a fine equal to \$45,000 US Dollars. In the early evening of October 25th, he was stopped on his motorcycle and found with four entire tusks and four tusk sections weighing a total of 27 kg.

Jackison Ejule is a resident of the Katumba refugee camp. Originally from Burundi, he had just acquired Tanzanian citizenship.³⁹



ZAMBIA

November 26, 2017

Livingstone, Province Méridionale region, Zambia. Zimbabwean border.

Park agents killed an elephant after it charged or threatened a worker who was installing an electric fence around a lodge.

The villagers rushed to the site to skin the victim without impunity. The final butchering was not caught on camera.⁴⁰



December 27, 2017

Kitwe, Copperbelt Province, Zambia. Close to the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sentencing of a 42-year old man to five years in prison following his arrest in the Moba Kitwe Hotel, while negotiating a trade for an elephant tusk. News sources said that the trial was expeditious.⁴¹



ZIMBABWE

October 5-12, November 7 and 17, 2017

Victoria Falls National Park, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Cyanide has struck again. Thirteen elephants are dead. Four tusks weighing 75.7 kg were recovered in the bush near the place where the elephants fell. Two suspects from the villages of Jambezi and Jabula were arrested by the police. Their council claims they were ill-treated to extort confession. They were released for lack of proof.⁴²



October 19, 2017

Victoria Falls National Park, Matabeleland Septentrional Province, Zimbabwe.

Freeing of a young male elephant who had been caught in two leghold traps, one on his front left foot and the other on his back right foot.⁴³



Beginning of November 2017

Zimbabwe

ZimParks Progress Report

Since the beginning of the year, 51 elephants have been poached by firearms or cyanide and other poisons. 429 poachers have been taken in for questioning, most of them involved in ivory trafficking. 62 small boats or other floating devices have been seized in the upper valley of the Zambezi. Poachers from Zambia use speed boats, night-vision goggles, firearms with silencers. Others use cyanide and are guided to water holes by local informers. Since the beginning of the year, ZimParks has seen 10 cases of gunfire exchange between rangers and intruders. The latest arrest occurred last week. A Zambian citizen was chasing an elephant. His accomplice died on site in the skirmish near Chirundu. In early November, another man died of bullet wounds from the rangers near Changadzi; he was a local.⁴⁴



November 2, 2017

Chitungwisa, Harare, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

Arrest of Collen Dick, Alwisi Paundi, and Christopher Chapata. They were trying to sell six tusks weighing a total of 34.2 kg.⁴⁵

November 14, 2017

Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Two men from the village of Kamativi received the standard 9-year prison sentence regularly reserved for traders of ivory or pangolins. When they were arrested, they were transporting a tusk weighing nearly 4 kg, and were trying to sell it for \$1000 US.⁴⁶



November 17, 2017

Kennedy siding, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

At 4:00 a.m., the railway brigade, acting on information they had received, arrested a passenger on the Bulawayo Express. He was in possession of four elephant tusks from a cyanide poisoning in the Hwange park. He was sentenced in flagrante delicto to nine years in prison. An accomplice has been identified and is on the run.⁴⁷



November 17, 2017

Victoria Falls National Park, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

A new serial poisoning by fruit full of cyanide near Victoria Falls and the landing strip of Kazun Gula. 14 elephants are dead. The authorities recovered only five tusks.⁴⁸



December 7, 2017

Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Christopher Mupindi left the hospital after six months of treatment. He was immediately tried. He was imprisoned awaiting trial. With two accomplices, he had poached two elephants in Hwange park and had seized its four tusks weighing 74.3 kg. One of the accomplices died in a shoot-out with rangers at the end of June 2017. Cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p.94.⁴⁹



December 11, 2017

Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

Seizure of 200 kg of ivory. The smuggled goods were heading off to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. They were estimated to be worth \$ 500,000 US, or \$ 2,500 US/kg. The shipper was not clearly specified. It is rumoured that Grace Mugabe, the wife of the former president, owned the ivory. The same day as the seizure, it appears that the couple took off for Malaysia, where their daughter Bona lives.⁵⁰

End of December 2017

Kariba, Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe

The request to release Gumi was refused. He is suspected of poaching an elephant in the beginning of 2017, and of attempting to murder the three rangers who ordered him to surrender.⁵²



Who wants elephant skin ?

December 20, 2017

In 1997, with the support of Botswana and Namibia, Zimbabwe moved elephants from Appendix I to Appendix II in CITES. This reduced protection for African and Asian elephants has resulted in an upsurge of the international trade in skins.

Between 2007, and 2016, Zimbabwe, the top exporting country, and South Africa legally exported nearly 4,000 full skins, 56,577 m² of pieces of skin, and nine tons of fashion accessories containing skin. In 10 years, 70,000 elephants have given their skin to fulfill the needs of tanners and fashion. ZimParks auctions off elephant skins that it "had to kill". Skins of those "infamous problem elephants" accused of causing conflict with farmers and inhabitants. More and more Chinese purchasers go to auctions and compete with American purchasers. Until now, the United States has been the main importer. The skins are turned into boots, bags, briefcases, car and motorcycle seats, and gun holsters.

The Chinese purchasers say that they had something else in mind: adding small bits of untanned leather to "tone up" the soups. In Myanmar, the retail price of one m² of elephant skin is \$ 5,660 US. This is 2 to 3 times more expensive than the current price per kg of ivory on the black market.⁵¹

ZIMBABWE - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

November 14, 2017

Zimbabwe-United States of America

At the occasion of a forum in Tanzania - organized by the International Safari Club, based in Tucson, Arizona, USA - a representative of the US Fish & Wildlife Service made the official announcement that the ban on importing ivory trophies from legally hunted elephants from Zimbabwe into the United States had been lifted. The ban dated from May 2014, during the Obama administration. This announcement by the Safari Club was made the same day Robert Mugabe was put under house arrest with his wife and close guard in the presidential palace of Harare, at the moment of being removed by parliament vote after a 30-year reign characterized by corruption, the misery of his people and the inequitable redistribution of agricultural land.

November 15

A spokesperson for the US Fish and Wildlife Service specifies that an official announcement will be published on Friday, November 17 in the Federal Register, the American equivalent of the *Journal Officiel* in France.

November 17

The Federal Register justifies lifting the embargo on the import of trophies from elephants of Zimbabwean origin, by adopting in this country a new Elephant Management Plan between 2015-2020, supposed to reinforce the anti-poaching workforce and the ability to trace revenue (.../...)

SOUTH AFRICA

October 10, 2017**Satara, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**

Bad trip for the tourists. A carcass whose genital organs had been amputated was lying in the middle of the road, 1 km from Satara. In response to the hypothesis on Muti, suggested by witnesses, the park police responded by suggesting a possible attack by predators, possibly lions. The tusks had not been cut. The postmortem investigation will tell us more.⁵⁶

October 17, 2017**Olifantshoek, Northern Cape Province, South Africa**

11 :30 p.m. on the N 14 road. Eight tusks seized. Four arrests, two people from South Africa, two from Botswana. The car was also seized.⁵⁷

November 14, 2017**Komatipoort, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Border with Mozambique.**

It was a bad idea for the panic-stricken elephants, after having been attacked by poachers in Mozambique, to come take refuge with the rest of the family in South Africa. They were greeted with rifle shots under instructions from the Mpumalanga Tourism & Park Agency (MTPA). Quickly defined as DCA (Damage Causing Animal), the two elephant calves who had gotten lost in a banana plantation, in a sugarcane field and in a tomato orchard were killed in cold blood, although they had returned to their savanna. According to the two farmers whose fields had briefly been disturbed by the two elephant calves, the damage in question was insignificant. "There was nothing to complain about," they said. This brutal operation is in stark contrast with the delicate transfer of three male elephants that wandered off the reserve at the edge of Kruger park and became interested, with much hoof-stomping and eagerness, in some mango plantations (see "On the Trail" n°18, p.87).⁵⁸

December 11, 2017**Kuruman, Northern Cape Province, South Africa**

Court appearance of Riaan Malgas, Mothusi Joel Tshibithi and Albert Mosimanyane. The three were apprehended Friday December 8 at the local airport. They had in their possession two tusks. Malgas and Tshibithi were set free with a penalty equal to \$365 US. The case of Mosimanyane was disjointed. He is a repeat offender. He had already been released on bail for another ivory case. He had been arrested with three other fellows, two of them citizens of Botswana, on the National Route 14 near Olifantshoek, also in Northern Cape Province.⁵⁹

generated from hunting permits issued to foreign hunters, notably Americans. The decision is partly based on a study financed by the European Union at the tune of 12 million € (\$14, 192,400 US), whose preliminary results are "encouraging," according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

ZimParks and other administrations strengthen their collaboration with hunting safari organizers, certain NGOs like the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and with CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources). Definitive conclusions are expected for early 2018. This astounding advocacy attests to collusion between the United States, the European Union, the former leaders of Zimbabwe and the WWF.

November 18

In his unique personal style, Donald Trump freezes his administration's decision by sending this tweet: "Put big game trophy decision on hold until such time as I review all conservation facts..."⁵³

December 12, 2017**Cecil Kop Natural Reserve, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe**

The director of the Cecil Kop Natural Reserve spills the story. It's been easier since Robert Mugabe and his wife left the government. According to a report brought to the police, Mandi Chimene, the former Minister of the province, had claimed for free an entire meat delivery after two adult elephants had been killed in particularly tragic circumstances on July 18, 2017. In a clash with poachers, a law enforcement authority was also killed.

On August 14, Zimbabwe's celebration day for the glory of heros, Mandi Chimene had given a speech within the Reserve, to the youth of the ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) majority party, putting wildlife at risk by calling for the occupation and appropriation of "wasted lands" of the Reserve covering 1,500 hectares.

Mandi Chimene, who went into exile in Mozambique or Burundi after the fall of the Mugabe government, was president of the Zimbabwe-China Friendship Association.⁵⁴

ZIMBABWE - CHINA

November 15 and December 29, 2017**Zimbabwe China**

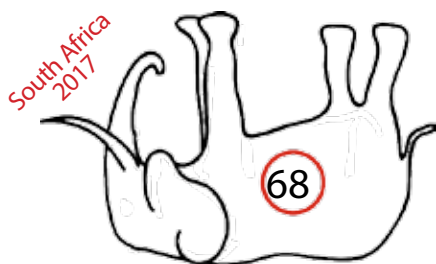
Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, Minister of the Environment, claims he has no need to justify the international trade of live elephants. "Our elephants and our people live with a huge population. We will sell them more without hesitation."

The very same day that China (except Hong Kong) confirmed the prohibition of the sale of ivory on its soil, they imported 30 young elephants between the ages of 2 to 6 years old, captured in the Hwange park in Zimbabwe in August 2017. The elephants were conveyed via Ethiopian Airlines (cf. "On the Trail" #18, p.90).⁵⁵

December 21, 2017

Malvern, Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa

The man from Zimbabwe was carrying chopsticks in illegal ivory. Other ivory items were found in his home. The estimated value of the seizure is \$ 36,500 US.⁶⁰



BOTSWANA

October 31, 2017

Near Maun, Northwest District, Botswana

Taolo Santudu and Gaone Sentle are arrested. They were in possession of 12 tusks. They put the whole case on the back of a certain Murang, who escaped at the moment of police intervention. The request for release on bail is refused for both suspects.⁶¹

NAMIBIA

October 24, 2017

Mariental, Khomas Region, Namibia

The elephants destined for Dubai were in a very difficult situation. Three of them were shut within shipping containers. They were between four and six years old. Two cowboys of sorts captured them in the Eden Game Farm private reserve near Etosha national park. They were specialized in trapping wild animals for the Golden Game brand. The situation is confusing. A trial is underway. The two companies are claiming that they own the elephants.

It's not easy to trade in elephants. In May 2017, the Environment ministry said that all the verifications and formalities between Dubai and Namibia were completed. Negotiations have been ongoing since 2015. According to the minister himself, the exporter had all the skills required, and the Dubai Zoo was to take in the elephants with a scientific and pedagogical program, as required by CITES. The deal is at a standstill now, especially for the three prisoners torn away from their families, who are melting under the sun, between the four containers. Cf. "On the Trail" n°17 p.97.⁶²



WESTERN AFRICA

BENIN

GANG

October 3, 2017

Kandi, Benin

20.9 kg of ivory = five years of prison without remission for the head of the set and a fine equal to \$1440 US. Suspended sentence for his three accomplices. Cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p.94.⁶³



October 30 and November 27, 2017

Cotonou, Littoral Department, Benin

Two ivory tips seized in a hotel in the Agontikon neighborhood. The two suspected traffickers had planned to finalize their sale there. The judicial police and forest administration have received support from program known as Aalf-Benin (Appui à l'application des lois sur la faune et la flore au Bénin) funded by the EAGLE network. The twosome are sentenced to 18 months suspended jail, a fine equal to \$177 US and damages equal to \$1770 US.⁶⁴



November 30, 2017

Djougou, Donga Department, Benin



A pair of handcuffs and a pair of tiny tusks. Will the full force of the law punish the two individuals for killing an elephant calf? They are punishable by six months to five years in prison.⁶⁵

Beginning of December 2017

Ouidah, Atlantique Department, Benin

Six suspects in possession of two tusks were arrested by the police, with the support of AALF-Benin (Project for the Application of Law for Fauna).⁶⁶



COTE D'IVOIRE

GANG

October 31, 2017

Abidjan, Autonomous District of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Dismantling of a network connected to international trafficking. The seizure is nauseating: 53 African elephant tails and over 52 kg of ivory, including two tusks 1.6 m long and approximately 100 objects made out of ivory, as well as others made out of warthog tusks (*Phacochoerus* genus). The elephant tails are used to make bracelets that are sold for up to €2000 apiece (\$2300 US). The gang was made up of two Ivoirians, including a customs sergeant working at the international airport in Abidjan, and to Guineans. After one week in custody, they appeared in court on November 2. The investigation is also looking into money transfers in West Africa. The networks shipment was destined for the Asian market. We do not know whether the 53 elephants that were killed were all poached in Côte d'Ivoire. There are barely 500 wild individuals left in the country, where the elephant is a national symbol. According to Adama Kamagate of the EAGLE network that assisted the Unit for the Fight Against Organized Transnational Crime (UCT) with this investigation, some ivory traffickers are redirecting their networks through West African countries.⁶⁷



NIGERIA

October 31, 2017

Nigeria, Border Area with Cameroon

It was bad luck for Zakari Yau. A Cameroonian citizen, he was caught in possession of two tusks during aggressive patrols being carried out in national parks by Nigerian rangers, with the help of the army and various agencies. Alhaji Ibrahim Goni, Conservator General for the Nigerian National Parks Service (NPS), used his arrest as an opportunity to give an interview to the official press agency and give a review of operations. There were 325 wildlife offenders at seven national parks across the country in the first half of the year. The Conservator General gave very few details on the sanctions. When taken to court, some of them were fined, while compensations were paid to the NPS. Nigeria is trying to improve its national parks management. The NPS is working on operational management plans for each park, as well as a national plan. It is being assisted by nearly 2000 students who were on attachment. For Ibrahim Goni, "The national parks are not only for



revenue generation, but they are also for research and training." He thanked the federal ministry of Environment, the media, military and paramilitary agencies for their support.⁶⁸

November 20, 2017

Yola, Adamawa Province, Nigeria. Border with Cameroon

Seizure of 55 large tusks.⁶⁹

TOGO

October 2, 2017

Lomé, Maritime Region, Togo

Gumedzoe Koffi Mawuli, former member of the Navy, would have been better off not getting into ivory trafficking. He was not up to it. When agents from the Central Office for the Repression of Illicit Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering (*Office Central de Répression du Trafic illicite de Drogue et du Blanchiment* or OCTRIDB) and from the ministry of the Environment and forest resources caught him, he declared, "I am your man." He was in a taxi that was inspected at the GTA intersection and contained 4 tips, 3 raw and 1 sculpted.⁷⁰

CENTRAL AFRICA

CAMEROON

October 9, 2017

Yaoundé, Centre Region, Cameroon

Trafficking continues at the Bastos intersection (see "On the Trail" n°17, p.98). A man in a bar and his accomplice, waiting in a taxi, were caught with their hands in the bag: a plastic bag containing two tusks. The operation was smoothly carried out by agents from Forests and Fauna, with help from the NGO LAGA.⁷¹

December 11, 2017

Djoum, South Region, Cameroon

Seizure of 217 tusks and 81 tails in the car of the colonel of the gendarmerie. A carbon copy of 2014, when a military vehicle was intercepted with nearly 200 tusks on board.

The driver and passenger tried to flee in vain. They had a hearing with the Djoum gendarmerie brigade. According to local sources which must be consolidated, the senior official from the gendarmerie was managing a poaching business and selling the ivory on the black market. The identity of the three suspects has not been disclosed.

600 tusks and tusk sections were seized in Cameroon in 2017. Most of the ivory was taken from poached elephants in the national parks in southeastern Cameroon, and from Gabon and Congo as well.⁷²

GABON

October 14 – 18, 2017

Makokou and Messene, Ogooué-Ivindo Province, Gabon

- Arrest of five traffickers including a teacher, a Cameroonian citizen and another Malian, seizure of about 30 kg of ivory. Teacher Jessy Andry is said to have shot the elephant two weeks earlier.
- Seizure in a hotel of 11 tusks, some whole and some cut up. Dieudonné and Arnaud Boris were arrested 10 km from Makokou.⁷³

November 22, 2017

Ndendé, Dola Department, Ngounié Province, Gabon

The Counter Intelligence and Military Security Services, known as B2, have struck once again. The three traffickers attempted violent reactions before being arrested. The 27.10 kg of ivory, spread out on the floor, were to be sold for \$3245 US. B2 has been on the watch for several months. In the area, several elephants have been killed and their tusks vanished.⁷⁴

November 23, 2017

Fougamou, Tsamba Magotsi Department, Ngounié Province, Gabon

Two traffickers arrested. They were carrying 35.67 kg of ivory. The police had been following them for several months, and they fell into the trap. Their clients were supposed to be one of them. Instead, they were police officers and legal experts from the NGO Conservation Justice.⁷⁵



December 10, 2017

Mékambo, Ogooué-Ivindo Province, Gabon

- Arrest of three nationals. Nolo and Akono had four tusks cut into eight sections in their hands. They were going to sell them to someone named Mouamouélé Landry, known as Socrate. They supposedly "picked up" the tusks by Matsiedie River.



December 18

Ovan

- Arrest of Lucien Kangala, a Gabonese man, and of Mahamat Sale, a Chadian man. They were transporting 26,5 kg of tusks cut into 10 pieces. The former poached the two elephants, and the latter was the "salesman". Officials from the Makokou water and forest department and the NGO Conservation Justice successfully completed the intervention.⁷⁶

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

November 17, 2017

Manovo-Gounda St. Floris National Park, Bamingui-Bangoran, Central African Republic. Border with Chad.

A caravan of poachers on horseback, with pack camels, were on the last leg of the trip toward the park, coming from Sudan, apparently. The expedition would be organized to pillage fauna by-products and ivory from the last remaining elephants in the cross-border region covering Chad and the Central African Republic. The few guards who were there were helpless faced with the determined men armed with AK 47s. A request for help was made to the water and forest Minister in office in Bangui. He responded that in the current state of affairs, no efforts would be made for this. The minister justified his refusal to intervene by the fact that the region was supposedly controlled by rebels. The alarming information was provided by Francis Mollet, the founder of the Elephant Anti-Poaching Patrol.



Manovo-Gounda St. Floris Park covers 17,400 km². It is next to Zakouma national park in Chad. It would be preferable for the two spaces to be merged. Red-fronted gazelles, African wild dogs, giraffes, elephants, and hippopotamuses are still there but numbers are unknown.

Three negative factors threaten the beauty and biodiversity of this transitional crossroads, where species from the Sahel, West Africa, East Africa, and Central Africa live together.

- The anti-poaching forces are lacking in resources and are poorly paid.
 - The governance of the park is fragmented and inconsistent.
 - Shepherds in search of pasture and poachers coming from Sudan are out of control.
- The insecurity and widespread impunity prevent the park from having an operational management plan.⁷⁷

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

REPEATED OFFENSE

November 11 and 30, 2017

Makoua, Cuvette Department, Republic of the Congo

"Elephants, symbol of the Republic of the Congo, continue to be taken down by the bullets of human greed," states the website Internet Portal 242. A 35-year-old man was just put behind bars. Two tusks and three firearms were found in his home after a search warrant was issued. He could have gotten five years in prison. He got three years and damages equal to \$531 US.⁷⁸



FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 18 and 30, 2017

Makoua, Cuvette Department, Republic of the Congo

Brel and Fodel Mossa were arrested in possession of two tusks cut in pieces and two elephant tails. Conviction to 3 years and 2 years in prison and \$5,310 US and \$4425 US fines and damages respectively. Ndzoli Venance, an accomplice arrested a few days later, received the same sentences as Brel Mossa.⁷⁹



November 25, 2017

Sibiti, Lékoumou Department, Republic of the Congo

Three arrests. The boss Luc Moussa's thing was hiding raw ivory tusks, cut into pieces, in bags of smoked bush meat. To get the tusks out of the forest and onto the main road, he used cars from the SOCOFOR (*Société Congo Forêt*). 24 kg of ivory were seized and put in a hopefully-safe place.⁸⁰

December 14, 2017

Ouesso, County of Sangha, Republic of Congo

Benjamin Bondo is sentenced to 5 years in prison without bail with a fine equal to \$360 US for the poaching of several elephants. He had been questioned at the end of August 2017 in Ouesso and had acknowledged the facts. The Nouabalé-Ndoki Foundation and the other NGOs in Congo appreciated the severity of the penalty, which they hope will prove to be a deterrent. Bondo is a native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁸¹



GANG

December 18, 2017

Dolisie, Niari Department, Republic of the Congo

Arrest of Georges Siombo and Mesmin Ndinga Bounda, who were carrying two big tusks. They obtained their ivory supplies in the department of Lékoumou, and sold them in Pointe Noire and Brazzaville. These two men are also involved in pangolin scale trafficking toward China.⁸²

FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 30, 2017

Owando, Cuvette Department, Republic of the Congo

The Konga brothers, poachers, and their accomplice carver were sentenced to three years in prison, fines ranging from 500,000 to 1 million CFA francs (\$ 885 to \$ 1,770 US), and 2 million CFA francs in damages (cf. "On the Trail" n°18 p.96).

- Mossa Bref, Mossa Fodel, and Ndzoli Venance received the same sentence.

- Oksikabondzo Antonin as well.

The local press says that the court has just sent a strong message regarding the criminals.⁸³



GANG / FAMILY AFFAIRS

December 10, 2017

Ngombé-Ouesso, Sangha Department, Republic of the Congo

Fearing God but not law.

Yet again, religious officials are involved in ivory trafficking. Assafi Doutoum is a preacher at the mosque of Ouesso. Moumoune and Abdouraman are imams in Ngombe. The trio from Cameroon and two fellows were intercepted on the road, with the two tusks cut into four sections in the trunk of the car. A few months ago in Mossaka in the department of La Cuvette, Bodzenga, a Protestant pastor, committed the ivory sin with his brother as well. Cf. "On the Trail" n°16 p.80.⁸⁴

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October 19, 2017

Manhattan, State of New York, United States of America

Alexander Sakhai has pleaded guilty. In his shop, Alexander's Antiques, the police seized 130 carved objects in ivory, last July. The compromise reached with the New York County District Attorney Cyrus Vance stipulates that \$60,000 US shall be given by Alexander Sakhai to the Wildlife Conservation Society and that the ivory shall be turned over to the State of New York. Someday, the ivory objects will be destroyed, along with others, in public (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.97). As a reminder, in 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo introduced a law banning the sale of ivory, with a few exceptions, such as antiques over 100 years old and containing less than 20% ivory.⁸⁵

December 2016 – December 6, 2017

San Francisco, State of California, United States of America

A raid, dating back to December 2016 in Chinatown with the confiscation at Lovell's Antique Gallery of 32 carved ivory objects. The price and characteristics of the articles on the tags had been written in coded language. The owner, Abraham Magadish, the manager, Yesika Becerra, and the sales person, Vivian Wei Zhao, have now been charged with ivory trafficking.⁸⁶

ASIA



Khao Yai National Park, Thailand

CAMBODIA

December 2017

Sihanoukville, Province of Sihanoukville, Cambodia

The hollow log network is back (see "On the Trail" n°15 p.98). After a year waiting on the docks, the container from Côte d'Ivoire was opened by customs and judicial authorities. Inside they found 1 ton of raw ivory. Most of the tusks were hidden in "logs."⁸⁷

CHINA

October 3, 2017

Zhangjiagang, Province of Jiangsu, China

Carved ivory confiscated from tea boxes and other things belonging to two members of the Chinese crew of a cargo ship flying the flag of Panama and coming from Equatorial Guinea.⁸⁸

November 7 and 10, 2017

Hong Kong international Airport, China

Seizure in a postal package of 14 kg of presumed raw and semi-raw ivory, coming from Portugal. The package had been declared to contain "wooden dolls." A 70-year-old man was arrested. The seizure was estimated at \$280,000 HK, or \$36,000 US, i.e. \$2570 US/kilo.⁸⁹



December 2017

Pingxiang, Jiangxi Province, China

Seizure of 165 sections of small tusks weighing a total of 368.5 kg. They were from African elephants.⁹⁰

Beginning of December 2017

Shenyang Taoxian International Airport, Liaoning Province, China

An ivory sculpture "of very fine workmanship" was seized in a passenger's belongings. The origin of the statue was not specified. It could be Japanese. It weighs 980 g. The Japanese ministry of Environment disclosed that between 2011 and 2016, Chinese customs officials seized more than 100 ivory from Japan. "There is a need to strengthen collaboration between customs authorities."⁹¹

December 12, 2017

Qingdao, Shandong Province, China

A fine for the person who received an ivory carving sent from the United Kingdom.⁹²



The end of December 2017

Gongbei, Guangdong Province, China

A report little known to the public has just been handed to the Prosecutor General of the Province, after a long investigation. Last June, 130 kg of raw ivory was seized by customs as part of the National Sword Operation of 2017.

Seven people are arrested. Three cars and 116,400 yuan (\$17,800 US) of illegal origin are also seized.⁹³



INDIA

Beginning of October 2017

Thane, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, State of Maharashtra, India

Two daily wage laborers from the village of Manchar (Pune district) were stopped by police at the main entrance of the residential neighborhood called Unnathi Greens Society. Nilesh Nanavare and Ajinkya Bagal were transporting two ivory statuettes weighing a total of 2.9 kg. One of the figurines represented an African woman. They allegedly purchased the carved ivories in their village from a stranger for 35,000 rupees (\$535 US), approximately five years ago, and had kept them in their home until one of their neighbors advised them to sell them. They decided to try to find a buyer in Bombay. They were denounced. The two items are estimated to be worth 1 million rupees (\$15,300 US, or \$5300 US/kilo).⁹⁴

October 2017

Chhidakudar, Sundargarh District, State of Odisha, India

A dead elephant was found, covered with bruises and blood on its mouth, ears, and tusks. The animal had been electrocuted. The culprits were not identified. The number of police seizures of electric cable spools in the district is increasing.⁹⁵

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 2017

Betla, Palamu Tiger Reserve, Palamu District, State of Jharkhand, India

The elephant was found dead in waterhole on the reserve, on October 12. According to the conclusions of the autopsy, it was killed by a bullet shot from near range into the right ear and the brain. "We did not find any evidence of any attempt to sever the tusk." The poaching theory appears

groundless. However, another veterinarian, on the condition of anonymity, does not exclude that possibility. "The place where the bullet hit is the temporal bone area... It looks like the job of a professional shooter... Poaching cannot be ruled out, as an elephant can be shot and its carcass hidden for its tusks to be severed later on."

It turns out that the tusker murderers are the Khalkhos, father and son, who farm 15 ha of rice and corn fields on the reserve. They could not stand to see the elephant passing by their fields and supposedly going into the fields, and decided to kill it but did not even think, so they say, to take the single 18 kg tusk. They rented a muzzleloader rifle from an acquaintance for 300 rupees (\$4.70.US), and with another similar rifle as backup, they shot the elephant during the night of October 10-11. The victim died on October 12 at 1:20 p.m. The father and son are in pre-trial custody. Another member of the Khalkho family, the rifle renter, and his brother were brought in for questioning and released on bail. The rifles have been confiscated. The reserve manager went to see the poachers' fields and could find absolutely nothing that resembled damage from an animal intrusion, even from an antelope.

Following these news, the Chief Conservator of Forests launched a restitution campaign, in an attempt to recover all muzzleloader guns held in the 168 villages that are located within the reserve. If necessary, searches will be carried out every six months. Local blacksmiths can make these guns in two or three days, and sell them for 700 to 1000 rupees (\$11 to \$15.50 US), depending on how well finished they are. The purchasers are also being targeted by the authorities. People say they use these guns to scare away hyenas, wild boar and flocks of birds over their fields. The conservator pointed out that the use of firearms within a protected area, a reserve, a park or sanctuary must be authorized ahead of time by local authorities. As of today, 9 rifles have been confiscated.

Nine elephants have been killed since the beginning of the year in the reserve. That is a heavy toll. There were 238 elephants in 2012, but today, the reserve has only 180. Poaching, presumed anthrax, reprisals, collusion and corruption – the reasons for the decline are multiple, and include an elephant that stepped on a mine in September (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.101).^{96 and 97}

October 15, 2017

State of West Bengal, India

One arrest by the 17th battalion of the SSB and seizure of 14.96 kg elephant bones.⁹⁸

October 15, 2017

Tura, South West Garo Hills District, State of Meghalaya, India

Two male elephants were found dead near the border with Bangladesh. The autopsy revealed that they had been electrocuted. All four tusks had been severed. Two of them were found nearby.⁹⁹



October 16, 2017

Phulbadia, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India

She had fallen into a hole and was riddled with arrows. She was about 20 years old. A local pro-elephant activist, Vanoomitra Acharya, supposes that the poachers were looking for tusks of a male, and that a female ended up getting the arrows. The initial statement from the authorities suggested a case of anthrax.¹⁰⁰

October 21, 2017

Dolopa, Dhemaji District, State of Assam, India

Trunk, tail and tusks were severed and large chunks of flesh cut out. The rest of the adult male elephant's carcass had been buried. Once again, the deceitfulness of the rural and neo-rural population is suspected. They point out elephant intrusions to justify poaching, and they give no explanation for the disappearance of tusks and other elephant parts.¹⁰²



October 23, 2017

Devikulam, Idukki District, State of Kerala, India

The pregnant elephant was electrocuted by a fence completely put together by a farm worker on the Kanan Devan Hills Plantations Company. He wanted to protect his food garden. The dead body was discovered Monday morning. Later that night, 14 elephants came to the area and destroyed everything agricultural there. In July, another farm worker distinguished himself for killing an elephant with a bulldozer in a plantation further north (see "On the Trail" n°18, p99).¹⁰³

An elephant's life in Kerala

October 2017

State of Kerala, India

- Of the 228 elephants that officially died in 2016 in Kerala, 86 were electrocuted. The people who come and settle on the elephants' ancestral territory, thanks to the laissez-faire policy, put up electrified fences, which is against federal law. Moreover, of the total of 228 elephants that died, 68 were victims of explosives commonly used to clear forests.

In 2014, the Kerala High Court ordered the government to recover all of the illegally occupied forest areas, but in September 2016, when the deadline expired, the government asked for an extension. And for good reason: it had only managed to recover 2% of the territory that had been stolen, in a way, from wild animals and elephants.

- In religious places, the elephants are mistreated, despite appearances. Government veterinarians carefully examined the health of the elephants that march in the annual Hindu Pooram parade. In their report, they said that forbidden accessories were used on the elephants, that they suffered from painful abscesses, from wounds on their legs due to chains, from eyesight problems, from pulled-out nails and other wounds that are deliberately hidden by black substances. Because they always walk on the tiled or tarred surfaces of temples and roads, the elephants' feet are covered with blisters and cuts.

- The president of the Heritage Animal Task Force (HATF) did not mince her words when speaking about the refuges, which appear to be prisons. "I've been to some of these camps, like the one outside Thiruvananthapuram," Ms Iyer said. "It's only masquerading as a shelter. All these elephants are kept in chains, even the babies."

Another voice can be heard defending elephants of Ketala, that of Chitra Iyer, founder of Society for Elephant Welfare. According to statistics, there are 700 domesticated elephants in the State, but Ms. Chitra believes there are more. "Many elephants are unregistered. We call them "dupes," short for duplicates. If the main temple elephant isn't able to perform in a parade, the dupe stands in and, really, no one knows the difference." Apparently, there is a very active trade in elephant calves captured in the forests and destined for domestication.¹⁰¹

October 24, 2017

Peechi, District of Thrissur, State of Kerala, India

Seizure of 23 ivory sculptures and 7 sculptures made of ivory and wood, in a State-owned residency run by the Department of Irrigation. The residency is about fifty years old, the historical ivories had always been there. The problem is that they were never declared and according to the information that the police received, from time to time some of them disappeared and, one way or another, made their way onto the black market for white gold.¹⁰⁴

October 25, 2017

Periya Thadagam, Coimbatore District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Three young men were fined 5000 rupees (\$76 US). They had taken a family photo with elephants in the background. The troublemakers were freed after receiving a warning. It was not the first time in India that selfies with wild animals, or supposedly wild animals, have triggered procedures and controversies (see "On the Trail" n°13 p.63). Getting too close to elephants contaminates them, in a way, and leads to a form of dependency and curiosity, if repetitive and regular, that can turn into conflicts between people and elephants.

"We will take stringent action against the people who disturb wild animals," said a ranger. The wild animal selfie fad is all the rage with celebrities and young people.¹⁰⁵



October 27, 2017

Wayanad District, State of Kerala, India

The famous and cheerful tusker that had been named Maniyan by the villages neighboring the Wayanad animal sanctuary got caught in a metal trap. He had to be anesthetized to remove the metal wire that had dug deeply into his front left leg. Maniyan is going to be all right. It seems he signed a pact with the farmers: "If you feed me, I won't touch your corn." Maniyan may not have been clearly informed that last year alone (2006), the sanctuary lost 1740 hectares of forest to farming.¹⁰⁶



October 27, 2017

Ramnagar, Nainital District, State of Uttarakhand, India

An early-morning seizure of two large tusks, 1.25 m and 1.15 m long.

Mohammad Qasim is a man of the woods. He lives in the heart of a dense forest. He says that he happened upon a dead elephant, that he buried the carcass and came back later to extract the tusks and burn the bones.

The investigators do not believe his story. Qasim could not have buried the animal by himself; he undoubtedly got help from locals, either friends or members of his family.

It is true that burying a 3-ton elephants whose tusks originally measured 30 cm in circumference at the base would be nearly impossible. The general suspicion is that the Indian super tusker was poached. Many carcasses of elephants have been found in the area without their tusks, and tusks have been rediscovered without carcasses. Qasim will remain in custody for 14 days.¹⁰⁷



October 31, 2017

Patasahi, Sundergarh District, State of Odisha, India

A female, 5 or 6 years old, died from the numerous wounds caused by arrows shots by local villagers. The young pachyderm apparently tried to feed in the crops but was chased until she fell into a hole and was slaughtered. The Banki forest guards are looking for the guilty parties.¹⁰⁸



November 2, 2017

Kokrajhar or Dhubri District, State of Assam, India

A group of five or six elephants left the Kachugaon forest last night. They were looking for food in the paddy crops. They were scared by villagers beating drums and were able to run away, but one of them got bogged down. Some hours later he was found still alive but his body pieced by four gun shots. Despite the efforts of forest guards and vets from the International Fund for Animal Welfare – Wildlife Trust of India (IFAW – WTI) the animal died of his wounds in the early hours of November 3.¹⁰⁹

November 2017

Shivamogga, Shimoga District, State of Karnataka, India

An archived photo from 2007 which was not shared shows that there was a pair of tusks in the office of the police captain. They were towering above his armchair, on the wall. Twenty years ago, the forest department had entrusted the tusks to the police station for decorative and educational purposes – as per a custom that enables authorities, schools, and military institutions to display ivory from seizures or from elephants that have died naturally. These in-kind donations must not ever be sold or embezzled. The disappearance of the tusks from the police station was noted and made official the same day that stone sculptures were delivered to the archeology museum of Kuvempu University. These sculptures were also meant to decorate the police station. This police station has had at least 5 police superintendents since 2007. An investigation is under way.¹¹⁰

November 2017

Mumbai, State of Maharashtra, India

The Sanctuary Asia magazine gave its 2017 “Wildlife” prize to the photo by Biplab Hazra, entitled “Here Is Hell,” taken in Bankura, West Bengal.



This is not a demonstration. It is not a circus. These are not reprisals. It is a game that has become a fad in Western Bengali and other parts of India – chasing peaceful elephants, including this mother and her calf, with balls of flaming tar. A combination of cruelty and pollution.

November 5, 2017

Panidihing Wildlife Sanctuary, Sivasagar District, State of Assam, India

An adult elephant was shot and killed by a stray bullet when a patrol of rangers tried to move the troop away from the fields of a village near the sanctuary. An autopsy was done and, according to directives, the body was buried in situ.¹¹¹



November 10, 2017

GANG

Nadugani, Nilgiris District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The case had been opened over a year ago when divisional Forest Officers had discovered in the forest reserve the corpse of an elephant whose tusks had been removed. An autopsy had revealed that the animal died of natural causes, but the ivory theft was flagrant. Information received some days ago enabled the arrest of Dharmalingam, Manoj and Mani, three men suspected of having appropriated the tusks they stumbled on while hunting mongooses. During questioning they named three accomplices who were to take care of selling the ivory in Kerala. Two of them are already behind bars in Karnataka for drug dealing.¹¹³

GANG

November 15, 2017

Anayara, Thiruvananthapuram District, State of Kerala, India

A snitch rated on them to the Forest Intelligence Wing and flying squad. Aaron Rajesh (26), R. Chudalamani (24), E. Vigneswaran (24) and Mohammed Ismail (47) were arriving from Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu in a luxury car transporting a pair of tusks for a total weight of 20 kg. Their value is estimated at 75,000 rupees (\$1156 US) per kilo. Investigations are underway to identify the tusks' origin and the links between the four men and the local ivory mafia.¹¹⁵

Anand Bora is co-prizewinner for this photograph of forest rangers and villagers from Nashik in Maharashtra rescuing a leopard that had been struggling at the bottom of a well for 30 hours. A combination of ingenuity and cool headedness.¹¹²



November 15, 2017

Satabari, Goalpara District, State of Assam, India

A procedure has been opened against Sofikur Rahman, suspected of being accountable for the death by electrocution of a 15 year old female in the paddy crop he cultivates near the village. The animal's trunk had also been cut off. By following the electrical wire the forest guards were led to a makeshift hookup at Ashwini Rabha's home, who turned in Rahman. The local population illegally cultivates 50 ha of wetland right across a corridor used by elephants. Gul Bahadur, appointed by police as a local village defense volunteer secretary, is suspected to have a decisive role in local deforestation. He is accused of accused of tree felling and timber smuggling, and to have encouraged or enabled illegal crops. Authorities appear determined to take the situation back in hand.¹¹⁶

November 25, 2017

State of Uttar Pradesh, India

The brave female elephant had been in captivity for 40 years. She was about 44 years old. She suffered from polyrheumatism and wounds on her feet. Her eyesight was dwindling. The forest services had been watching her for nearly a year, in the hopes of accumulating the proof of her illegal exploitation. She was transferred with the help of the Wildlife SOS Elephant Care Conservation Center (ECCC), and taken to a specialized retirement center, where she will receive the care and food she needs for the rest of her life.¹¹⁹

November 19, 2017

Thakur Kuchi, State of Assam, India

'Plan bee' to keep elephants away

After electric fences and pepper bombs, the Indian railroad company has launched its Plan Bee. Electronic "buzzers" installed near the tracks puts out the amplified sound of a beehive when necessary. Bee stings on or inside the trunks are a nightmare for elephants. The first device was installed between the Kamakhya and Azara stations. Results are encouraging, but yet to be confirmed. The two elephants that died on November 19 after a collision with a train near Guwahati are the latest of a long series. Between 2006 and 2016, 225 elephants died on the train tracks in Assam.¹¹⁷

November 24, 2017

Thattekkad, Ernakulam District, State of Kerala, India

Elephant calf rescued after falling in an abandoned well. His family stayed 50 m away, on the other side of the river in a teak forest. A bulldozer was called in to help the elephant calf make its way out. Once it had been freed, the elephant lifted its trunk up three times, as if to thank its rescuers. An expert contradicted that interpretation. According to him that sort of posture can generally be explained by the need to detect odors that could represent a threat.¹¹⁸



November 27, 2017

Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, State of Assam, India

Domesticated elephants and public works engines were used by the police to evacuate a slum. Months before this intervention, the residents were encouraged to move several times, and new locations and housing had been offered. This was refused by most of the squatters who had settled down in Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary (50 km²).¹²⁰



December 2, 2017
Nilgiris District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

He claims that he “retrieved” the tusks from a dead elephant near Gudalur. He had buried them in a farm 80 km from there. The 28-year-old man is in custody.¹²¹



December 2, 2017
Gudalur, Nilgiris District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

A new job: watcher of drifting elephants. 28-year-old Manikandan approached them due to the nauseous odor. He was lucky - it was a three-year-old male who had been carried off by the floods three weeks earlier. He cut his tusks and tried to sell them. Forest officials caught him. - In November, three other people were arrested for using the same method. The local police, the NSD (Naxal Special Division), and the forestry administration say they are ready to work together to identify the elephant bodies as early as possible, regardless of how they died, to cut off the tusks and “destroy them”.¹²²

December 3, 2017
Rani Forest Kamrup Metropolitan District (Guwahati), State of Assam, India

It was a female. She didn't have tusks, but she did have a trunk. She had been sucked down into the Dipor Bil, a former branch of the Brahmaputra River which became a natural lake listed in the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. She managed to get out, but she died shortly after for unknown reasons. The trunk disappeared from its cadaver. A few days before this discovery, villagers had spotted a wandering elephant cub and informed the guards of this. It was probably the victim's calf.¹²³

Mid December 2017
State of Assam, India

In 100 days in Assam, 40 elephants died due to collisions, electrocution, poisoning, and other types of traps.¹²⁴



FAMILY AFFAIRS
GANG
Keonjhar District, State of Odisha, India

The poachers came from Arunachal Pradesh. The poaching of the adult male of 35 to 40 years old carries the signs. The practise is to decapitate the elephants and to uproot the tusks. The poachers in the other States are satisfied with cutting the tusks. The poaching took place about 2-3 weeks prior. The guards had been alerted by the odor. Six arrests, two of which are “professional” poachers from Arunachal Pradesh. Phugoyoha Yobin and Saniya Yoba, together with local fellows, were responsible for the death of 11 elephants in Odisha, West Bengal, in Jharkhand and in Assam. These sharpshooters use poison arrows, launched by handmade guns which are crafted by local black-smiths. At the time of their arrest, they were wearing women's clothing to avoid recognition. According to the head of Forestry, they were preparing to poach two males in the Jangira forest. They had already successfully separated them from a herd of 11 elephants to facilitate their task.¹²⁵



December 19, 2017
Thadagam, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The trunks and palm leaves which are used for the brickyard ovens attract elephants. At least one of the workers pestered an adult female until she was trapped in the storage areas of the factory, making her aggressive and dangerous for herself, and for the process. This behavior is becoming widespread in the entire country. The Coimbatore forest management is organizing a meeting with the brickyard management and staff, to inform them of the legal and physical risks of pestering elephants and other wild animals.¹²⁶

December 2017
State of Kerala, India

Violence and torture are suspected towards Aji Bright, himself suspected of poaching in the forests of Idamalayar. The local prison refused to incarcerate the accused in view of his judicial custody and sent him to the hospital. Several fractured at the ribs and shoulder were discovered, confirming Bright's words that he had been beaten with an iron bar covered with a cloth in order to extort a confession. Three forest agents are being prosecuted for torture.¹²⁷

December 22, 2017
Digi, Ganjam District, State of Odisha, India

A male elephant was electrocuted at will. Three arrests. The outcome of the tusks is not specified.¹²⁸

December 28, 2017

Guwahati, Kamrup Metropolitan District, State of Assam, India

Sentencing of Mahat Chandra Talukdar to five years in prison and to a fine equal to \$70,000 US. In his various homes, the anti-corruption police found 20 million rupees (\$312,000 US), gold jewelry, a tiger skin, a little elephant tusk and investment plans in Nepalese and Bhutanese currencies.

Talukdar was head of the park rangers in the Bargori and Agoratoli districts inside Kaziranga national park. He was caught in the act of passive corruption in his office in July 2016. He claims to be the victim of a plot and plans to appeal for justice at the earliest opportunity. (cf. *On the Trail* #13, p.73).¹²⁹



December 28, 2017

Thrissur, Thrissur District, State of Kerala, India

The three mahouts were not content with driving and maintaining their three domesticated elephants. They also indulged in the sale of ivory, after having carved the tusks. In conformity with the Wildlife Protection Act, the sections of the shortened tusks should have been handed over without delay to the local authorities.¹³⁰

End of the year festivities 2017

Bijnor District, State of Uttar Pradesh, India

Warning in the district forests. During the end of the year festivities and amongst the mists of winter, the poachers double their efforts up. So there will be no end of year holidays for the forest rangers. The district forests are home to elephants, tigers, deer, bears and rare trees, which are also illegally felled.¹³¹

INDONESIA

December 22, 2017

Seuneubok Bayu, Aceh Province, Sumatra, Indonesia

A deliberate poisoning is suspected. The 25 year old elephant was pregnant. Her male fetus of 13 months would never see this low world. His mother died amongst the oil palms. News agency Agence France Presse quotes Sapto Aji Prabowo, the head of forest conservation, as saying, "At least 11 elephants died in the Aceh Province in the year 2017. The majority were poached."¹³²



JAPAN

November 28, 2017

Tokyo Port, Kantō Region, Japan

A Chinese seaman of a container ship crew heading for China has been accused of hiding, in his personal belongings in his cabin, 605 small carved ivory objects weighing a total of 7 kg. Mr. Chen Tian Biao had gone out to do some shopping in the Japanese metropolis. The police nabbed him after he got back. Mr. Chen gave two versions of the story: 1- Someone put those ivory objects in my cabin while I was out, and 2- a friend gave them to me.¹³³

MALAYSIA

November 14, 2017

Merotai-Kalabakan Road, State of Sabah, Malaysia. Border with Indonesia.

The Bornean pygmy elephant (*Elephas maximus borneensis*) was found dead on an oil palm plantation belonging to Sabah Sotfwoods Erhad, a subsidiary of Innoprise Corporation—which became very rich from logging, producing woodchips, palm oil, and biofuels. The oil palms of the company cover over 25,000 hectares in the district of Tanau alone. In August, three other pygmy elephants were found dead on the edge of the plantations. Pygmy elephants are in grave danger. It is said that there are less than 1,500 of them left. They are endangered by logging, massive farming operations, disturbances to their migration paths, and food shortage. Cf. *"On the Trail"* n°6 p.93, n°18 p. 102-104.¹³⁴

November 27, 2017

Ulu Segama Reserve, State of Sabah, Malaysia

One named Liningkung died on November 27, 2017, according to satellite data which his tracking collar transmitted to the director of the Danau Girang Field Center (DGFC). His body was found on December 12 in the Reserve, 5 km from the administrative buildings for the State forests. The tusks were not torn out. The 12-year old elephant must certainly have fled after having been hit by gunfire. The autopsy confirmed the case. A metal detector aided the forensic veterinarians. The remaining carcass only contained bones and skin. Liningkung had been transferred to the Reserve 18 months earlier to spare him conflicts from human activity in the Telupid sector. This marks the third elephant victim in the protected forests of Sabah. Benoit Goossens, the director of DGFC and Datuk Sam Mannan, the head of forest conservation urgently called for armed forces to be put in place day and night. "Or else we will lose all our charismatic species... elephants, bantengs, pangolins, etc."¹³⁵

**Early December 2017
Ladang, Pertama, State of Sabah, Malaysia**

This bullet slug was found lodged in the elephant's front leg, the third pygmy elephant killed in the Sabah within a few weeks. About six years old, wounded also in the tongue by a spray of bullets. It was impossible for him to eat. He had been wandering for several days amongst the oil palm trees rows. Captured by a rescue team, he did not survive after emergency care.¹³⁶



MYANMAR

**October 2017
Taikkyi, Yagon Region, Myanmar**

Seizure of 32 kg of smoked elephant meat. In Myanmar, there is an upsurge in meat, skin, and ivory trafficking. Near the border with Laos and Thailand, elephant soup is a popular dish.¹³⁷

NEPAL

**November 15, 2017
Bardibas, Mahottari District, Nepal**

Arrest of Bisraj Tiwari and Laxmi Koirala at the Sishmahal hotel after they were denounced. They were in possession of 9.4 kg of silver ornaments and thousands of elephant hairs.¹³⁸

SRI LANKA

**October 5, 2017
Gampaha, Western Province, Sri Lanka**

Arrest of two people trying to sell eight elephant pearls. Elephant pearls, or gajamukta, are calcifications that grow at the base of the trunk after a bacterial infection. Gajamuktas supposedly bring good luck and prosperity. The only ones who really get rich are the poachers.¹³⁹



**October 21, 2017
Sri Lanka - Myanmar**

New revelations have been made on the fraudulent and abusive use of domestic elephants, thanks to the national newspaper the Sunday Times, which solicited the Right to Information Act (RTI) to get a copy of an official report that was sent to Parliament at the beginning of this year and kept secret up until now. The report was written starting in 2015, headed by a member of the supreme court of justice, on request from the Minister for Sustainable Development and Wildlife, Gamini Jayawickrema Perera. The main scandal was unexpected.

The Dalada Maligawa, the "Temple of the Tooth," in Kandy imported an elephant from Myanmar ten years ago to the tune of \$1,615,000 US, although the average value of an elephant at that time was \$80,000 US. Thus over \$1.5 million US fraudulently left the country in exchange for a falsified invoice. The report calls for charges to be pressed against everyone who participated in this case of financial and tax evasion.

In addition, the report confirmed that the registry of domestic elephants had been falsified several times between 2011 and 2014, in order to enable well-known businessmen, temples and elite politicians to purchase wild elephant calves. The report listed the names and positions of all of those who contributed to these shady dealings within the ministries. The ever-increasing demand for domesticated elephants for use in polo games, Buddhist celebrations and for the pleasure of tourists has been severely criticized. Cruelty to many elephants that are exploited and their exhaustion have been highlighted by the eminent judge. The general conclusion was that all domestic use of elephants should be monitored, reduced or even eliminated (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.104 and 17 p.103).¹⁴⁰

**November 24 and December 3, 2017
Galgamuwa, North Western Province, Sri Lanka**
What happened to Dala Puttuwa, the super tusker of Sri Lanka?



- He can't go unnoticed, but he hasn't been seen in two months. Each day, worry steps up a notch. Two suspects have just been arrested in possession of a pair of tusks. One of them lives in Herathgama. He is a Grama Niladhari, an administrative agent appointed by the government. It's around this village that the iconic animal was last seen, and the seized tusks have the same curvature as those of Dala Puttuwa.

- He is dead. His corpse was found close to the Pallekale Reserve, in a yam plantation.

- The investigation continues. Five to 10 suspects are in police custody, two of them are Grama Niladhari and one is a Buddhist monk. The gang wanted to sell the pair of tusks for two million rupees, or \$31,200 US.¹⁴¹

November 29 – December 8, 2017

Karuwalagaswewa, North Western Province, Sri Lanka

The corpse of another tusker is found close to the flood waters of a dam. He was killed by gunfire. His tusks are still in him. He must certainly have taken flight after having been chased by the poachers. According to the locals, he was a discrete animal, who rarely ventured out of the forest. It's a dark story. Special protection measures are put in place for Wijayab, another tusker from the Minneriya national park, who is seen rummaging through a communal landfill on a regular basis. He has already been the target of gunfire.

Sri Lanka is home to about 15% of Asian elephants. The population, estimated at 3500, would need two times more preserved area, amounting to 17,500 km². At the current time, the elephants only have access to 8200 km². They are crowded in, and conflicts with humans are part of the culture and history of Sri Lanka. According to official data, between 1991-2010, 2844 elephants were killed by farmers and other shooters. 1138 people were killed by elephants. Between 2004-2007, 3000 cabins or other shelters were destroyed by elephants. A MER – Managed Elephant Reserve – has been projected under the auspices of the former government by local communities, naturalists and the NGO Gaja Mithuro, in the Hambantota region, traversed by 10% of Sri Lankan elephants. Unfortunately, this MER is made of paper and regularly gets eaten away – not to say devoured – by an airport, a large stadium, interminable fields of solar panels and – latest threat to date – a refinery held by Chinese interests. As a result, the deceased MER has become the zone with the highest amount of elephant-human conflicts in Sri Lanka.

Immediately following the series of deaths of the most beautiful ivory tuskers of the country, a forum stated in the Sri Lankan Guardian, that, "Time has come to introduce birth control laws to all Sri Lankans irrespective of race, religion or anything else. Otherwise, within soon future, Sri Lanka will become a land without wildlife or forests."¹⁴²

December 9, 2017

Sellankandal Forest Reserve, Puttalam, Northwest Province, Sri Lanka

It's no longer about the human-elephant conflict. It's sheer human greed. Another ivory bearer, 30 years of age, is found dead at the hands of a peasant who brought his cow to graze in the forest. The body riddled with bullets. The death of Thani Dalaya, as the victim was known, puts pressure on the new Wildlife Minister et his government. In response to this catastrophe, a Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance was issued to allow life imprisonment for those found guilty of killing wild elephants.¹⁴³

December 19, 2017

Peradeniya, Central Province, Sri Lanka

Two arrests. Seven elephant pearls were seized.¹⁴⁴



December 29, 2017

Silavatura, Mannar, Northern Province, Sri Lanka

Three arrests. They were planning to sell two tusks, 1.2 m in length and 35 cm in diameter. The sale was by photograph. The two tusks were found later. They were buried near Thanthirimale.¹⁴⁵

THAILAND

December 13, 2017

In the center of Thailand

After 55 years of chains and other deprivations of freedom, Thong Ma is heading to a comfortable enclosure. During her last job, she would eat bananas held out by tourists, allowing each time for a 20 baht (\$6 US) profit by her mahout.¹⁴⁶



VIET NAM

November 16, 2017

Hanoi, Hoan Kiem District, Viet Nam

Duy Khoa, Ba Chien, Van Chuong, and Van Dung were sentenced to 14, 15, and 20 months in prison for being in possession of, transporting, and the attempted sale of 423 kg of raw ivory of African origin. The judgment recommends that the seized ivory be destroyed.¹⁴⁷



December 31, 2017

Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi, Viet Nam

The last catch of the year. At the end of the evening, customs unearthed raw sliced ivory and four pieces of worked ivory from Africa, in the belongings of a Thai Lion Air passenger, embarking for Bangkok.¹⁴⁸

EUROPE

SPAIN

Octobre 2017

Torre-Pacheco, Communauté autonome de Murcie, SPAIN

Saisie de 37 ivoires travaillés dont des pièces de jeux d'échecs et d'un masque en ébène (*Diospyros* spp., Annexe II à Madagascar). Le vendeur a été incapable de produire le moindre document prouvant l'origine légale, la date et le lieu de fabrication des objets.¹⁴⁹

Other Mammals

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

Beginning of November 2017

Barkly West, Northern Cape Province, South Africa

When they took their dogs to go hunting in the Mattanu Private Game Reserve, the three young men, including a minor, were not aware that they were heading for a hornets' nest. During the night, the dogs chased an "antelope" to exhaustion. The poachers then stoned it to death, butchered it and divided the meat among themselves. It turned out, that the ungulate was the only black gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*) in South Africa, and worth 8 million rand, or \$585,000 US.

Black gemsboks are the product of selective breeding and are not considered to be a species or subspecies in animal classification. The Kriek family apparently "invented" the black gemsbok. Johann Kriek Junior spotted a few coal-black specimens during a wildlife census in the province, caught them and initiated captive breeding.

The gemsbok distribution range is shrinking. It has completely disappeared in Angola. In Botswana, the wild population is reduced to Kalahari. It has adapted to life and now survives in the mountains and arid dunes. But captive populations are growing in Namibia and in South Africa, where their magnificent 1-meter-long horns make them considerably appealing for hunters and trophy-lovers.

The trio left behind the animal's head. They should know their fate at the beginning of 2018. Johann Kriek, the owner of the reserve, has even deplored that the threesome cannot be whipped.¹



Oryx gazella

KENYA

November 10, 2017

Tsavo Conservation Area, Kenya

Two hyraxes (*Dendrohyrax* genus) were seized. Their natural enemy is the eagle. These small primitive herbivorous ungulates are also victims of trapping and of the insatiable search of bush meat. Their upper incisive teeth are shaped like tusks, which makes them related to elephants in the classification of species.²



REPEATED OFFENSE

December 3, 2017

Dhoda, Wajir County, Kenya

The village chief notified the KWS of the giraffe poacher's actions. Yusuf Bulbale Ibrahim had been picked up briefly in 2008 for similar offenses.

Nine years later, he was flushed out of the savannah by a KWS patrol, carrying bones and fragments of skin, a rifle and 14 bullets. The county chief ranger had been tracking him for several months. "This guy is a real danger for wildlife. It only takes him one bullet kill a giraffe," he said. Mr. Kanda wants Parliament to reinforce the protection of giraffes by amending the law and including them in the list of species threatened by extinction.³



December 18, 2017

Tsavo Conservation Area, Kenya

- Seizure of 26 dik-diks (genus *Madoqua*), a dwarf antelope that "dik diks" when it is in danger. These bad luck creatures are very popular at Christmas feasts and parties. Hundreds of them are poached and sold for less than two dollars on the black market. Merry Christmas.⁴

\$2US

MOROCCO

End of December 2017

Inezgane, Inezgane-Aït Melloul Prefecture, Souss-Massa-Draa Region, Morocco

Fine of five million dihrams, or \$5,300 US for two gazelle poachers. The carcass was in the trunk of a car.

Three species of gazelles listed in CITES are present in Morocco: the cuvier's gazelle (*Gazella cuvieri*, Appendix I), the dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*, Appendix III in Tunisia and in Algeria) and the dama gazelle (*Nanger dama*, Appendix I).⁵



Nanger dama



NAMIBIA

REPEATED OFFENSE

November 12 and 14, 2017

Kalumba, Zambezi Region, Namibia

The Katima Mulilo Hospital ambulance driver is no beginner. For him, it is a means of transportation like any other, and it works well as camouflage. On Sunday, in Kalumba, as he was driving at emergency speed, his ambulance was stopped at a roadblock. In the back of the rescue vehicle, the police found a half-carcass of an impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) and some hunting rifles. In 2015, it was buffalo meat that he was transporting in his ambulance, and just two months ago he was caught again transporting impala meat, but that time in his own personal vehicle. Chris Lizazi, 38 years old, despite the repeat offenses, has been freed on bail for \$5000 Namibian, or \$350 US.⁶



ZAMBIA

October 19, 2017

South Luangwa National Park, eastern Zambia

Back luck one day, good luck another day.

The spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*) dragged itself into the pasture, it was clamped around the neck by a metal collar. It was spotted in the middle of a pasture by officers of the Zambia Carnivore Program then released and treated by veterinarians.⁷



AMERICA

BRAZIL

October 18, 2017

São João do Paraíso, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Five pacas (*Cuniculus paca*, Appendix III in Honduras) and a wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) were prisoners in a house haunted by a revolver, ammunition, traps and other poaching accessories. One arrest.⁸



November 22, 2017

Igarauçu do Tietê, State of São Paulo, Brazil

A senior poacher was reported to the police. In his home, they discovered a veritable arsenal: no less than five rifles, plus two pampas deer's (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*, Appendix I) paws.⁹



CANADA

Mid December 2017

Charlotte County, Province of New Brunswick, Canada

Seizure of 500 kg of deer and elk meat (*Alces alces*), firearms, hunting equipment, narcotics, and a vehicle. Ten arrests.¹⁰

MEXICO

December 26, 2017

Anáhuac, State of Nuevo León, Mexico

One interrogation. He was transporting the body of a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*, *Odocoileus virginianus mayensis*, Appendix III in Guatemala). The deer was poached in a UMA (Unidad de Manejo para la Conservación de la Vida).¹¹

PERU

October 2017

Peru

Poaching is not limited to wild animals. It is also detrimental to wild plants. And in many cases, both at the same time. The story of this brown-throated three-toed sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*), listed in CITES Appendix II, is a symbolic example. It was snuggled at the top of a 30-meter tree that was downed by illegal lumberjacks. The sloth fell with the tree and survived. The tree-cutters put it in a bag and sold it at the Iquitos market, for the equivalent of \$13 US. The NGO World Animal Protection has noted that 80% of the wood exported from Peru comes from illegal forestry exploitation, and that, while they are at it, the lumberjacks also bag tree-dwelling animals and sell them on markets and in pet shops.¹²

ASIA

CHINA

October 15, 2017

Henan Province, China

66 giraffes, 22 males and 44 females (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), all around two years old, arrived from Johannesburg, South Africa. According to the provincial quarantine office, since 2015, nearly 10,000 exotic animals, including giraffes and zebras from South Africa, polar bears from Russia, alpagas from Chile and dolphins from Japan, have been in transit through the Zhengzhou International Airport, before being dispatched to various Chinese zoos.¹³



December 6, 2017

Erenhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. Border with Mongolia.

300 marmot pelts were seized. Two marmot species are listed in CITES:

- Long-tailed marmot (*Marmota caudata*, Appendix III in India)
- Himalayan marmot (*Marmota himalayana*, Appendix III in India)¹⁴



Marmota himalayana

INDIA

October 19, 2017

Anthiyur and Sennampatty Forest, Erode District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

A band of eight poachers was arrested by district forest agents while they were about to go hunting in the forest. They were turned in by a witness. A makeshift rifle was seized, and they each saddled with a 25,000 rupees (\$380 US) fine. In a separate case a resident of the small village Anthiyur was given the same fine for having possession a deer body with the intention of eating it. He claimed to have "found" it in the forest.¹⁵



October 2017

Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer Districts, State of Rajasthan, India. Border with Pakistan.

On paper, the Wildlife Protection Act gives the highest level of protection to Indian gazelles (*Gazella bennettii*, Appendix III in Pakistan). On the field, they are hunted and supply the wild meat market. Most poachers are members of the Bawaria tribe. They do not use of rifles, which would attract the attention of vegetarian villagers in the Bishnoi community. Instead, they play recordings of fawns during the night, deep in the forest. When the adult Indian gazelles arrive, they jump out of their hiding places and blind them with flashlights, catch them and kill them in a just few seconds. They cut off their heads and feet, and then flee with the torsos. The Bishnoi are left to find the gory remains of 5, 10 or even 20 animals.



The Bawarias hunt Indian gazelles on behalf of the Rajputs, the dominant cast in Rajasthan. The Bawarias are paid 500 rupees, or \$8 US for each gazelle. In the winter, tourists are apparently also behind the demand. Gazelle meat is sold in luxury hotels. Complaints are rarely followed through with, and when there is a trial the Bawarias are invariably acquitted. "How else would a man who owns two pairs of clothes get the district's best lawyers to defend him," wonders Mokhram Dharniya, an Indian gazelle defense activist in the Bikaner district.¹⁶

October 26, 2017

Gurgaon District, State of Haryana, India

The head and one foot of a Nilgaut antelope (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) were discovered this morning by a ranger, near a housing complex. The site was soaked with blood, undoubtedly because the animal had been butchered.¹⁷

Beginning of November 2017

Chennai, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The residual forest surrounding the Indian Institute of Technology, used as a campus for students, is covered with trash (see "On the Trail" n°17, p.110). The spotted deer (*Axis axis*), bonnet macaques (*Macaca radiata*, Appendix II) and blackbucks (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Pakistan and Nepal) are attacked by stray dogs, run over during parties and music festivals or intoxicated after eating food packaging. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered the school management to clean up the park within a week, and to reduce the sound volume and usage of plastic dishes during events.¹⁸

November 2017

Keibul Lamjao National Park, State of Manipur, India

Lake Loktak has been in the news lately (see page 42). The "deer who dance" live on its shores. Brow-antlered deer, or sangai (*Rucervus eldii*, Appendix I), were nearly extinct in 1950; there were 14 in 1975, and there are approximately 260 today. The brow-antlered deer have not been spared from poaching. 26 forest rangers watch over them and their antlers, which can span 1m. The Manipur ministry of Forests wants to move part of the population to avoid the eradication of the species due to an epidemic, a forest fire or some other natural disaster, or through poaching. The Pumlun Pat Lake in the Thoubal district matches the species' feeding needs. The brow-antlered deer eat a lot of aquatic plants. Local fishermen are reluctant to support the delocalization project.¹⁹

November 8, 2017

Near Bhitarkanika National Park, Kendrapara District, State of Odisha, India

A poacher was arrested. He caught chitals, or axis deer (*Axis axis*), using nylon nets hung in the forest, despite the 1972 Wildlife Protection Act. Balai Bhakta, 55 years old, sold the meat and skins.²⁰



November 24, 2017

Keibul Lamjao National Park, Bishnupur District, State of Manipur, India

A hog deer from Thailand (*Axis porcinus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) was poached, and one person was arrested.²¹



December 12, 2017

Kishangarh, Ajmer District, State of Rajasthan, India

Right in the middle of the street, they were selling the skin and other parts of an Indian gazelle (*Gazella bennettii*, Appendix III in Pakistan). They two men are 60 and 77 years old.²²

From October to December 2017

Mumbai, State of Maharashtra, India

The star has not yet paid his debt to justice. The Rajasthan public prosecutor has appealed the acquittal of Salman Khan, accused of hunting blackbucks (*Antelope cervicapra*, Appendix III in Nepal and Pakistan) in 1998, on the sidelines of a film shooting (see "On the Trail" n°18 p. 110). The State of Maharashtra has turned to the Supreme Court to appeal the Bombay court's decision to acquit Salman Khan, after an accident in which he ran over five people who were sleeping on the side of the road, and then drove off in his Toyota Land Cruiser. That was in 2002.²³



IRAN

November 12, 2017

Bardsir, Kerman Province, Iran

Environmental forces caught a poacher in the act. He was transporting a dead wild goat (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) and was in possession of illegal weapons. He was sentenced to 7 months in prison for poaching, and a fine of 18 million rials (\$500 US) for carrying firearms. He also must pay for the installation of a fence 1 km long and 2 m high to safeguard the Bidoieh protected area, and supply the forest rangers with 3 t of fodder for the wild animals.²⁴



End of November 2017

Sarigol Protected Area, North Khorasan Province, Iran

Rough interception of a large car. The five hunters managed to get away in the night by spraying tear gas on the police officers. From the car, the police confiscated a hunting arsenal and carving knives, four cell phones, three cameras, quarters of meat and an entire wild goat (*Capra hircus aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) carcass.²⁵

December 2, 2017

Mahdi Shahr, Semnan Province, Iran

Seizure of meat, offal, horns, the carcasses of two mouflons (*Ovis aries*, Appendix II), a weapon, ammunition, carving knives and binoculars. Two arrests. Caught red-handed poaching in the park, the main offender will probably get a fine of 200 million rial (\$780 US) and up to 3 months in prison. His accomplice played a secondary role, carrying the carcasses.²⁶



End of December 2017

Khojir National Park and Firuzkuh, Tehran Province, Iran

- Poaching of one urial (*Ovis aries*, Appendix II) by four men and four firearms. Four arrests.

- Poaching of one urial (*Ovis aries*, Appendix II). The search resulting in the seizure of several flashlights and photos in which the suspect poses with the head of his trophy on his knees. The man was fined 50 million rials, or \$1,387 US and faces three months to three years in prison.²⁷



PAKISTAN

December 29, 2017

Gilgit-Baltistan Territory, Pakistan

Three two-year prison sentences for poaching three markhors (*Capra falconeri*, Appendix I). Apparently each person was sentenced to pay a fine of 13 million rupees. The markhor hunting licenses are sparingly granted to luxury hunters for approximately \$ 68,000 US.²⁸



THAILAND

October 29, 2017

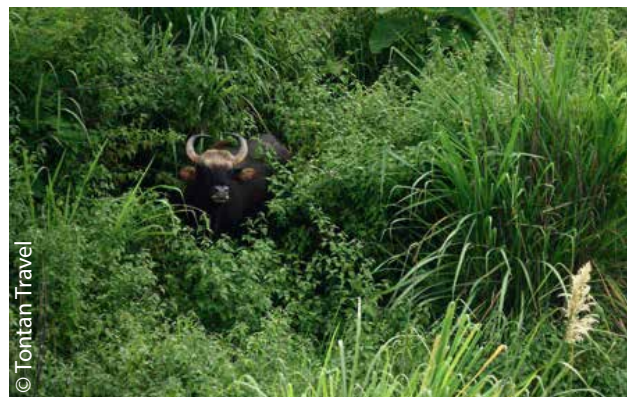
Don Muang International Airport, Bangkok, Thailand

A Japanese student was arrested after attempting to board the AirAsia flight to Narita (Japan) with a suitcase containing 10 otters hidden at the bottom of a basket. Kaede Yamaguchi (22 years old) explained that she found so cute the little animals sold on the Chatuckak market in Bangkok and had bought them for 1000Baht a piece (\$30 US). She intended on raising them herself in Japan. She was charged with unauthorised possession of protected wildlife.²⁹

November 8-11, 2017

Kao Phang Ma, Wang Nam Khiao District, Thailand

Rough time for gaurs (*Bos gaurus*, Appendix I) in the Khao Phang Ma forest area. Within a few days 3 corpses of this rare bovine were discovered, killed by a shot gun. There would be about 300 spread over the 800 ha in the region, the largest population in the country. Poaching is increasing. The horns are sold as trophies for a minimum 30,000 bahts a piece (\$900 US) and the meat used for food. On Wednesday the 8th, a 10-year-old gaur's body weighing 1.2 tons was found in a manioc field near the Wat Pa Wang Sai village. He was shot dead. Having not been de-horned nor his flesh taken suspicion is aimed at the field owner. A tapioca producer, who was arrested. The recent extension of cultivated land around the forest area attracts the gaurs who come feed off the corn and manioc. On Saturday the 11th two new more gaurs killed by gunshot were discovered at the bottom of the Khao Phang Ma mountain. A male of more than one ton who tried to escape after being hit by a bullet in the lungs died without his corpse being found by the poachers. On the other hand a female of 500 kg had been stripped of her flesh and her head and bowels disappeared. Police are looking for a gang of poachers, who do not exclude the possibility that prominent individuals be involved. Pressure on the local gaur population is such that authorities are now mentioning the possibility of relocating the 300 individuals to the Phu Luang forest, 8 km away.³⁰



EUROPE

FRANCE

November 2, 2017

Etrechy, Essonne Department, France

13 European hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) at the bottom of a garbage can on board a vehicle. Their squeals attracted the attention of the gendarmes. Hedgehogs are "niglos" for gypsies, who eat them. They are not concerned about the species becoming extinct, or about their regulatory protection in France and Europe. If nothing stops the hedgehogs from being poached and crushed on the streets, and if the scattered use of pesticides does not end, they will become extinct by 2025. Two interrogations.³¹



FAMILY AFFAIRS

November 28, 2017

Villefranche-sur-Saône, Rhône Department, France

They had two European hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) in the glove compartment of the car. The two young men explained to the court that poaching and eating hedgehogs was a tradition for the travelling community. Hedgehogs are protected by French law, and by laws in the other European Union countries. They did not have time to give the judge the recipe; he gave them a one-month suspended sentence, 105 hours of community work and a fine of 4000€ (\$4730 US) to be paid to the Brigitte Bardot Foundation and to the Hedgehog Sanctuary.³²



ITALY

October 2017

Sesto Fiorentino, Tuscany Region, Italy

Target operation led by the CITES Carabinieri Group in Rome, assisted by the CITES Florence Carabinieri Group against fur trafficking. Alerted by the import of a large quantity of raccoon skins (*Procyon lotor*) of dubious origin, agents raided the buildings of an importer in the industrial zone. They found there 5500 than 5,500 clothing made in fur coming from China including hats, scarves and gloves. There are no raccoon breeding farm registered in China and China is not recognized by the European Union as meeting the regulation CEE N° 3254/91 requiring that fur be exclusively from countries implementing a ban on jaw-traps or conforming to "agreed international rules regarding cruelty free trapping". The fur pieces were seized, and the company owner was sent before Justice.³³



UNITED KINGDOM

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 2017

Portsmouth, Hampshire County, England, United Kingdom

Paul (42 years old) and Ronald (70 years old) Floyd were hit with the full-fledged rigor of British law. They were charged with destroying a breeding site of a wild animal listed as a European protected species. The offense goes back to work that they did on their property between February 9 and 27. The building that was destroyed was the habitat of pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*). Both have since appeared at Portsmouth Magistrates' Court and were each fined £200 (\$270 US) with a £30 (\$40 US) victim surcharge and £85 costs (\$114 US). Bats are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.³⁴



Multi-Species

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

October 2017

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

The NGO Tusk, headed by the Duke of Cambridge, gave its 2017 "Tusk Conservation Award" to Solomon Chidunuka (50 years old) who has been defending wildlife in the national parks of Zambia since 1987. Under his authority, the North Luangwa national park has not lost a single black rhinoceros. The elephants, felines and other animals of the forests and the savannah can be grateful to him for the arrest of 200 poachers.



The other recipient of the annual Tusk award is the South African Sergeant Lucky Ndlovu (55 years old) to whom the rhinoceroses in Kruger's Intensive Protection Zone are indebted for the arrest of 70 poachers. It is true that, like his colleague in Zambia, Lucky does not work alone. He is assisted in particular by a Belgian malinois named Ngwenya and a foxhound named Chico. Their nose provokes terror in poachers. As evidence of his unbending loyalty and his independent spirit, in June 2016, Lucky devised a trap to catch his own boss and one of the park veterinarians in the act of rhinoceros poaching (see "On the Trail" n°14, p.62).¹



October 30, 2017

Johannesburg, Province of Gauteng, South Africa

The man used to advocate for living animals about to be tortured, dismembered, or cut into pieces for use in black magic of medical charlatanism in the Muthi market.

In his final and perilous mission, he rescued two great dukes (genus *Bubo*) and two Home's hinged-backed tortoises (*Kinixys homeana*, Appendix II) before releasing them back into the wild. These tortoises are dependent on the countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea. In South Africa, it is an exotic specimen or a breeding one. This is unlikely as the Home's hinged-backed is restive to terrariums and human manipulation.²



November 22, 2017

**Oliver Reginald Tambo
International Airport,
Johannesburg, Gauteng
Province, South Africa**

51 lion's claws, 19 lion's teeth and one rhinoceros horn were discovered in a package destined for Nigeria.³



CAMEROON

**Douala, Littoral Region,
Cameroon**

The Agence France-Presse reported that a truck full of bags of chili peppers heading to Nigeria was also transporting 160 tusks or pieces of tusks, parrot feathers, 100 parrot heads and 19 bags of pangolin scales.⁴



REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

October 25, 2017

Ouesso, Sangha Department, Republic of the Congo. Border with Cameroon.

It was tempting. A run-down prison wall separated Césaire Mikazoe, Jean Zidou, Jean Bassia, Eric Mbemba and Gildas Bendi from their freedom. They were serving sentences ranging from 3 to 5 years, coupled with heavy fines for poaching. Along with nine other prisoners, they dug through the wall and escaped around 1 a.m. They may have headed for neighboring Cameroon, about 10 km away.⁵

TANZANIA

November 12, 2017

Loliondo Game Reserve, Ngorongoro, Arusha Province, Tanzania

The affair had been brewing for several years already. The new minister of natural resources, Mamisi Kigwangalla, sorted out the problems. The concession will not be renewed. He is accusing Isaac Mollel of corruption. Isaac Mollel is the executive director of Ortelio Business Corporation (OBC), a safari hunting company operated by a member of the royal family of the United Arab Emirates. The majority party Chama cha Mapinduzi and the Natural resources ministry received several millions of dollars of donations from OBC. This generosity may have resulted in the authorities turning a blind eye to the uncontrolled hunting of baboons, buffaloes, hyenas, lions and leopards, without even talking to members of the Massai tribe or sharing profits with them. Apparently, the main clients of the hunting reserve are from the United States. They pay between \$ 14,000 to \$ 20,000 US for safaris lasting 10 to 21 days. The concession has been granted to Emirati interests since 1992. The domestic herds that were authorized to graze in the reserve had to clear off when members of the Emirates royal family were on a hunt—at least that's what the elders in the surrounding villages say. Associations of hunters and professional guides are staunchly opposed to the ministerial decision. They consider that the parliament should validate the revocation or suspension of the hunting concessions. They recall that 90% of the revenue of the Tanzania Wildlife Authority comes from a levy on profits from legal hunting.⁶

AMERICA

ARGENTINA

November 8, 2017

Villa Cañas, General López Department, Santa Fe Province, Argentina

Impressive seizure in the home of an underground taxidermist: heads and skins of deer, brockets (genus *Mazama*), peccaries (family *Tayassuidae*), pumas (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II), oncillas (*Leopardus tigrinus*, Appendix I), rheas (*Rhea* spp., Appendix I or II), capybaras (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), otters, Argentine boa constrictors (*Boa constrictor occidentalis*, Appendix I), anteaters, antelopes, lions (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), zebras, and porcupines. The initial estimated worth of all of this is 3 million pesos (\$ 163,600 US). Part of the loot was in the freezers, awaiting processing.⁷

BRAZIL

October 9, 2017

Santarém, State of Pará, Brazil

Seized by the federal police in a truck intercepted on route 163: ammunitions, rifle powder, a red brocket (*Mazama americana*), two armadillos (*Dasypodidae*), an agouti (*Dasyprocta* genus), four dead birds wrapped up inside Styrofoam boxes and a live tortoise (*Chelonoidis* spp., Appendix I or II). Four people were arrested.⁸



October 11, 2017

Araguatins, State of Tocantins, Brazil

A trafficker was caught red-handed on a night bus, transporting two armadillos (*Dasypodidae* family) and approximately 1 kg of deer meat. The Environmental Battalion of the Military Police (BPMA) confiscated the meat and the animals. The man was fined 1500 reais (\$470 US).⁹



October 25, 2017

Pederneiras, State of São Paulo, Brazil

A 25-year-old delinquent was taken into custody after police raided his home and seized several firearms, dozens of rounds of munitions, eight caged wild birds and a frozen, gutted armadillo (*Dasypodidae* family). The value of the animals was estimated at nearly \$2000 US.¹⁰



OPERATION MALACAFITA

November 16, 2017

Fortaleza, State of Ceará, Brazil

Two search warrants in the Aldeota and Papicu neighborhoods led to the discovery of seven representatives of a snake family that is unknown in Brazil and on the South American continent. A blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*, Appendix II) was also seized.¹¹

November 21, 2017

Sete Lagoas, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Seizure of six toco toucan chicks (*Ramphastos toco*, Annex II) in a bucket, a curl-crested jay (*Cyanocorax cristatellus*) and a sagui monkey (*Callithrix* genus, Appendix I or II) in a cage. The bucket and the cage were in the trunk of a car that was stopped by the federal police. The driver and passenger were charged with environmental crime, illegal trade and mistreatment of wild animals. The little toucans were allegedly purchased from a chick collector for 1.4 million reais, or \$430 US. They were going to be sold in Caratinga for 500 reais, or \$153 US, each.¹²

November 21, 2017

Itatira, State of Ceará, Brazil

Seizure of three caimans (*Caiman* spp., Appendix I or II) from a water tank and two collared peccaries (*Pecari tajacu*, Appendix II) from a cement confine in the Fazenda do Alemão.

In their natural state, caimans live in backwaters of rivers or in waters with slow currents. In their natural state, collared peccaries are prey for pumas and jaguars. But the predators that led them to be listed in CITES Appendix II are humans. According to Bernhard Grzimek, the Iquitos harbour in Peru exported 129,000 collared peccary skins in the year of 1925 alone.¹³

November 22, 2017

Londrina, State of Paraná, Brazil

The police intervened for a suspected case of drug trafficking. They happened on a true wildlife traffic. They seized six tufted capuchins (*Cebus apella*, Appendix II), including one adult and five babies, two marmosets (*Callithrix* genus, Appendix I or II), a parrot (*Psittacidae*, Appendix I or II), a toucan (*Ramphastidae* family) and a ferret, worth a total of \$6145 US. A woman was brought in for questioning, and her statement recorded. The animals are being kept temporarily at the municipal botanical garden.¹⁴

December 7, 2017

Capitão de Campos, State of Piauí, Brazil

It had been going on for a long time. The neighbors knew that, but the police found out about it quite late. Red-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonarius*, Appendix II), yellow-footed tortoises (*Chelonoidis denticulatus*, Appendix II), a margay (*Leopardus wiedii*, Appendix I), birds, and foxes were released from two hovels. One of them was truly a garbage dump for live animals. The owner



of the premises, a former police officer, had torn out the fangs of a puma (*Puma concolor*, Appendix II). He and an helper are accused of illegally capturing wild animals and aggravated abuse of protected species.¹⁵

COLOMBIA

October 13, 2017

Buga, Valle del Cauca Department, Colombia

Employees at a courier service discovered a young boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II) in a registered package coming from Piedecuesta (in the department of Santander). It had been declared as an "object of value". It was handed over to the local bureau of the Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca (CVC). The snake appears to be in good condition and was transferred to a CVC center in Palmira, where it is under observation to ascertain whether it can be released into the wild. Then, a person came to the Buga CVC with a yellow-headed caracas (*Milvago chimachima*, Appendix II) that had been sedated. The small raptor had scars at the end of its wings, indicating that they had been cut to keep it from flying away. And finally, a person carrying a blue-headed parrot (*Pionus menstruus*, Appendix II) was spotted by a municipal police officer. The bird was turned over to the CDC, where the veterinary team noted that it, too, had had its wings cut.¹⁶

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

2017

Los Angeles, State of California, United States of America

Jungle Book closed on 16 international traffickers in abused exotic wild animals, most of which died in smuggling scenarios that were sometimes inventive, and always traumatic. Operation Jungle Book is a USFWS initiative, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Custom Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. A few survivors of the trade are now housed in zoos in San Diego, Los Angeles and at the Turtle Conservancy.

- Nicholas Bishop, known as "Nick the Wrangler," was tangled up in some nasty business involving a tiger (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I) illegally taken from Indiana to California that he claimed he had bought from the rapper Tyga (see "On the Trail" n°5, p.59-60). Bishop first appeared in court on October 20. He is facing five years in prison.

- Gayle Simpson pleaded guilty on September 27 to smuggling varans (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), that had been captured in the Philippines and arrived in the US, either dead or injured, and labeled "audio speakers."

- Bryan Cho from Long Beach was in the habit of getting varans shipped to him from the Philippines labeled as "toys."



- Kevin Duc Vu received compromising packages from his wife containing Asian arowanas (*Scleropages formosus* and *Scleropages inscriptus*, Appendix I), four-eyed turtles (*Sacalia quadriocellata*, Appendix II), Asian box turtles (*Cuora* spp., Appendix II) black-breasted leaf turtles (*Geoemyda spengleri*, Appendix II), half of which were dead. The ruling is scheduled for February 2018.

- Shawn Naolu Lee ordered lucky-charm Asian arowanas from Mickey Tanadi, in Indonesia. They arrived by mail in porcelain herbal pots filled with water. A customs officer noticed a leak. The eight lucky-charm fish were all dead. Lee and Tanadi face 30 years in prison. They are being charged with smuggling in conspiracy, importing a protected species and forging import declarations.

- Asian arowanas are fad in the United States. Cory Pham imported five, hidden in black bags inside a plastic box. He was nabbed at the Los Angeles airport, coming from Viet Nam, on October 5. He faces one year in prison.

- Kurtis Law was just sentenced to one year in prison and six months under house arrest for having attempted to import 93 birds from Viet Nam. The birds were found at the Los Angeles airport, but were nearly all dead (see page 39 and "On the Trail" n°17, p.32).

- In a similar case, Sonny Dong admitted to having hired a carrier to bring songbirds into the United States, hidden under clothes or in accompanied baggage. Dong is facing five years in prison.

- Tyler Rene Vela is charged with trafficking feathers from bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Appendix II), red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II) and turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*). He may get up to 18 months in prison.

- A hearing is scheduled in November for traffickers and importers of live corals coming from Puerto Rico (see "On the Trail" n°18 pp. 4-5).

- Luis Eudoro Valencia, 18 years old, tried to export an undocumented tiger across the California-Mexico border. He was part of the Jungle Book roundup (see "On the Trail" n°18 p.53).

All of these cases are being handled by five prosecutors who are specialized in environmental crimes.¹⁷

GUATEMALA

Beginning of December, 2017

Santa Rosa de Lima, Department of Santa Rosa, Guatemala

Three caimans (*Crocodylia* spp., Appendix I or II), a mud turtle of the genus *Kinosternon*, two raccoons (genus *Procyon*), 24 armadillo shells (family *Dasypodidae*), two raccoon skins (genus *Procyon*), and a coati skin (genus *Nasua*) were seized from the residence of a 76-year-old man. He is in the hands of justice.¹⁸

HONDURAS

OPERATION FIRE STORM X

Beginning of November 2017

Siguatepeque, Comayagua Department, Honduras

Ten white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), a white-faced capuchin (*Cebus capucinus*, Appendix II), 12 scarlet ibises (*Eudocimus ruber*, Appendix II), five parrots (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II), three toucans (Ramphastidae), five dwarf armadillos (*Zaedyus pichiy*), 38 turtles, a black spiny-tailed iguana (*Ctenosaura similis*) and an iguana (*Iguana* spp., Appendix II) were taken in alive, thanks to Operation



Tormenta de Fuego X (Tempest of Fire X). Most of the animals were held and exhibited at a restaurant called "Granja D'Elia". The white-tailed deer has been the national emblem of Honduras since 1933. The species is endangered in the wild in Honduras. Until a better solution is found, the animals are being kept in two zoological gardens in Copán and in Santa Cruz de Yojoa.¹⁹

MEXICO

October 1, 2017

Tlajomulco, State of Jalisco, Mexico



The Unidad de Rescate de Fauna Silvestre de Tlajomulco released an entire menagerie in a place called El Pocito de Agua, in the protected natural zone of Cerro Viejo. The 31 feathered, scaled and furry creatures included a great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*, Appendix II), 10 turtles (Kinosternon genus), four marsupials (Didelphimorphia order), a skunk (Mephitidae family), five garter snakes (*Coluber flagellum*), three milk snakes (*Lampropeltis triangulum*), five snakes of the *Pituophis* genus, a rattlesnake (*Crotalus* genus) and a tarantula.²⁰

October 3, 2017

Insurgente Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla National Park, State of Mexico, Mexico

The national park is riddled with illegal forest exploitations and undeclared activities. In an attempt to curb the damages, the PROFEPA launched a general inspection of the 1750-ha protected zone and its buffer zone. 53 site visits and surveillance patrols led to the closing of 16 installations and worksites, 9 of which were closed for violation of an environmental site and 7 for unauthorized activity in a forest zone. During the operations, PROFEPA agents also seized five

ostriches (*Struthio camelus*), two lionesses (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), 10 taxidermy items, a fallow deer (*Dama dama*), two collared peccaries (*Pecari tajacu*, Appendix II), five white-nosed coatis (*Nasua narica*, Appendix III in Honduras), two common raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), an American jackal (*Canis latrans*), a red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*, Appendix II), a great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*, Appendix II), a common caracara (*Caracara plancus*, Appendix II), a monkey parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*, Appendix II) and two gray foxes (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*).²¹

October 11, 2017

Acapulco de Juárez, State of Guerrero, Mexico



24 armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), a skunk (*Mephitis macroura*), four common raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), a stuffed opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*), a Mexican spiny-tailed iguana skin (*Ctenosaura pectinata*), a jaguar skin (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I), a jaguarundi skin (*Puma yagouaroundi*, Appendix I), two ostrich skins (*Struthio camelus*, Appendix I), an American crocodile skin (*Crocodylus acutus*, Appendix I), a boa constrictor skin (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II), 233 Pacific Ridley turtle eggs (*Lepidochelys olivacea*, Appendix I), a bag containing a crocodile head, a bear paw with resin claws (Ursidae, Appendix I or II), eight boa-skin wallets, a crocodile skin bag, bracelets made of feline skin, crocodile skin and boa skin – all where irremediably destroyed in the industrial furnace at the airport. All of these hides and objects had been seized or confiscated through search warrants related to criminal cases.²²

October 12, 2017

State of Campeche, Mexico

Three animals seized by the PROFEPA, three destinies rerouted.

A young Morelet's crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*, Appendix II) gallivanting around among the frightened swimmers at the Ejido Paraiso beach, in the town of Champoton. When the crocodile was arrested, he was suffering from an eye infection. He was taken to the Las Potrancas farm where veterinarians are caring for him.

The common iguana (*Iguana iguana*, Appendix II) liked to stroll around the property of a private home. The owner captured it and handed it over to the PROFEPA. The saurian was in good health and was quickly freed near Hampolo, close to the Petenes - Ría Celestún Natural Park..../...

The third case is more problematic. An adult male peacock (*Pavo cristatus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) was found wandering through the streets of Campeche. Because the species is originally from Asia, it is considered an exotic animal and will have to live the rest of its life in detention.²³



October 2017
Guadalupe and Sabinas Hidalgo, State of Nuevo Leon, Mexico

- Seizure of a female tiger cub (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), approximately 5 months old and confined in a back courtyard. She was transferred to the La Pastora park. She had been treated disgracefully, with no respect for animal well-being.



- Seizure from a ranch of a female black bear (*Ursus americanus eremicus*, Appendix II) approximately 2 years old. She had apparently been "collected" by her master when she was just a cub. She was cramped in a wire cage. She had been treated disgracefully, with no respect for animal well-being. She was transferred to the La Pastora park.²⁴

October 20, 2017
Tepic, State of Nayarit, Mexico

A boa (*Boidae spp.*, Appendix II) infiltrated the Ojo de Agua neighborhood. Social networks announced that it was near Copal and López Mateos Streets. The reptile was captured by the Civil Defense services and handed over to the PROFEPA. It was released in the forest near the city of Compostela. As for the puma (*Puma concolor*, Appendix I) captured a few days ago, wandering through the Colonia Moctezuma housing development, the PROFEPA assessed that its behavior indicated strong human influence. Although it was in good health and had all of its claws and teeth, the animal was considered inapt for release in the wild. It will live out the rest of its life at the El Tigre UMA.²⁵

October 24, 2017
Acapulco, State of Guerrero, Mexico

Three wild animals on vacation in Acapulco deemed undesirable for tourists and residents, and promptly removed by the PROFEPA. The first was a male green iguana (*Iguana Iguana*, Appendix II), about 1.2 m long and very interested in events at the Convention Center. He was picked up by the tourism police and released in the Tres Palos lagoon. Then a brown pelican (*Pelecanus Occidentalis*) was captured on the touristic beach at Pichilingue, visibly disoriented by the mood. When released in the Boca Chica lagoon, he came back to his senses quickly and started looking for food.

Lastly, a male boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*, Appendix II), about 1.2 m long, was identified by residents in the Las Playas neighborhood of Cerro de los Cañones. Action was taken to remove it, and then immediately release it.²⁶

November 19, 2017
tláhuac, Ciudad of Mexico, Mexico

The deer educational park (Venadario de las niñas y los niños) is home to 47 wild animals of suspicious origin: white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), ostriches (*Struthio camelus*), a red-lore Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II), and a white-tailed hawk (*Buteo albicaudatus*, Appendix II). They were all put under sequestration, under the park's responsibility, awaiting the provision of compliant documents.²⁷

November 23, 2017
Apatzingán, State of Michoacán, Mexico

Three Harris' hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*, Appendix II), three southern caracaras (*Caracara plancus*, Appendix II), two orange-fronted conures (*Aratinga canicularis*, Appendix II), three lions (*Panthera leo*, Appendix II), seven northern coatis (*Nasua narica*, Appendix III in Honduras), a patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*, Appendix II), three gray foxes (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), four common raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), two fallow deer (*Dama dama*), 17 collared peccaries (*Pecari tajacu*) and four west Mexican chachalacas (*Ortalis poliocephala*) were the object of emergency seizure by the PROFEPA. The children's park in Nuevo Amanecer was evacuated on court order. The animals of unknown origin were being kept in disgraceful conditions, in violation of the law on wildlife. Penned up in dirty cages, malnourished and without veterinary care, the menagerie was temporarily transferred to a zoo and to a more hospitable accredited shelter.²⁸



December 6, 2017
Tonalá, State of Jalisco, Mexico

A tiger (*Panthera tigris*, Appendix I), three military macaws (*Ara militaris*, Appendix I), a keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*, Appendix II), a Harris's hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*, Appendix II), and two northern crested caracaras (*Caracara cheriway*, Appendix II) were seized on "La Esperanza" ranch.²⁹



December 12, 2017

Charco Cercado, Guadalcázar Municipality, State of San Luis Potosí, Mexico

PROFEPA seized 42 rattlesnakes (genus *Crotalus*), two snakes of the *Pituophis deppei* species, one American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*, Appendix II), and one coyote (*Canis latrans*). Plants were also seized: nine peyotes (*Lophophora williamsi*, Appendix II), a cactus of the species *Mammilloidya candida* (Appendix II), and 24 bishop's cap cactuses (*Astrophytum myriostigma*, Appendix II).³⁰

December 23, 2017

Valle de Chalco, State of Mexico, Mexico

Seizure of a Geoffroy's spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*, Appendix II) and a red-lore amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*, Appendix II).³¹

PANAMA

October 12, 2017

Los Santos, Los Santos Province, Panama

Four poachers of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and pacas (*Cuniculus paca*, Appendix III in Honduras) caught red-handed and sentenced to 48 months in prison commutable to a fine.³²



PERU

October 17, 2017

Iquitos and Punchana Urban Districts, Maynas Province, Loreto Region, Peru

In the restaurants for tourists Don Andres and El Mijano: seizure of several jaguar skins (*Panthera onca*, Appendix I) and other felines, preserved insects, saurians, and 11 live yellow-headed sidenecks (*Podocnemis unifilis*, Appendix II).³³

ASIA

CAMBODIA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 20, 2017

Kampong Trabaek District, Prey Veng Province, Cambodia

The truck on its way to Viet Nam did not get very far. It left the border province of Prey Veng, but was stopped by military police, tipped off by the NGO Wildlife Alliance, before it got out of the country. On board were Chea Phoeng and Nguyen Thigim, a Vietnamese couple living in Cambodia, as well as a Mandarin duck (*Aix galericulata*), three wild ducks, 60 doves and 221 kg of snakes. The couple's trip ended with a fine. According to a member of the NGO, the animals will be taken to the Tamao zoo in the province of Takeo, or released in the forest or in Tonle Sap Lake, depending on their condition and species.³⁴



October 23, 2017

Angkor Borei, Takeo Province, Cambodia

The livestock truck was transporting no less than 1 ton of live wild animals, snakes that included Indochinese spitting cobras (*Naja siamensis*, Appendix II) and checkered keel back reticulated pythons (*Xenochrophis piscator*, Appendix III in India), turtles and a few birds. It was on its way to Viet Nam. The poisonous snakes were taken to the zoo in Phnom Tamao. Most of the other animals were freed near a lake. The driver and passenger of the truck were taken in by the military police and are in custody.³⁵

December 18 and 19, 2017

Province of Stoeng Treng and Phnom Srouch District, Province of Kampong Speu, Cambodia

- Seizure from market butchers stalls of three turtles, five lorises (*Nycticebus* spp., Appendix I), and three varans (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II) all still alive, and of three dried porcupine stomachs.

- Seizure of eight turtles, including four softshell turtles (family Trionychidae), five pangolins dead and alive, and of 100 kg of green-necked peafowl adornments (*Pavo muticus*, Annexe II) from two individuals.³⁶



CHINA

November 1, 2017

China

How much are they worth?

It turns out that according to a new document issued by the State Forestry Administration—which has been applied since the 15 December—a seized Asian elephant, or all of its parts, is worth 2,000,000 yuan, or \$ 302,844 US, an African elephant half as much. Asian rhinoceroses are worth as much as Asian elephants. White rhinoceroses are worth as much as African elephants.

According to this same scale, a pangolin is worth \$ 6,056 US, a wild tiger is worth \$ 151,422 US, a bred tiger is worth half as much, a leopard is worth \$ 75,711 US, a snow leopard is worth \$ 75,711 US, and a clouded leopard is worth 45,426 US.

We would like to thank EIA for sending us the translation of this document which "On the Trail" will mention again.³⁷

INDIA

Beginning of October 2017

Biwanath Chariali, State of Assam, India

Jahir Ali and Nader Ali are notorious and multitargets poachers. The Chatia and Gingiya police caught them with their rudimentary rifle and five bullets. They have been placed in detention for interrogation.³⁸

October 14, 2017

Kumbla, Kasaragod District, State of Kerala, India

Seizure by 11 forest rangers of 11 turtles and 3 Sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*) antlers from a convoy of two vehicles that were difficult to stop on the road from Mogral to Peral. Four arrests.³⁹

REPEATED OFFENSE / GANG

October 16, 2017

State of Madhya Pradesh, India

Four years in prison and a fine of 10,000 rupees (\$150 US) – that was the penalty given to Shamim, Badrilal Sapera, Mansingh, Prahlad and Raghuvir, a particularly efficient gang of multi-species poachers that was dismantled last February (see “On the trail” n°16 p.103). If they do not pay their fines, an additional 10 months in prison will be added. They were caught, this time, with pangolin scales and a spotted sand boa. Their track record is much longer: Shamim has been arrested at least twice in the past and admitted to being involved in trafficking 120 tiger hides and 1200 leopard hides. Raghuvir, alias Kalicharan, managed to escape in 1988 after having been arrested in possession of 129 animals hides. The five men also poached cobras, hyenas, jackals... The gang was dealing in Madhya Pradesh in the Narsinghgarh, Sehore and Guna districts, extending its activities as far as the State of Rajasthan and around Delhi, and was linked to international trafficking through Nepal and Tibet.⁴⁰



October 18, 2017

Pasighat, East Siang District, State of Arunachal Pradesh, India

A WASE team (Women Against Social Evils) and the police seized two elephant tusks weighing 720 g, worth an estimated 200,000 rupees, or \$ 3,055 US (\$ 4,243 US/kg); four live tokay geckos (*Gekko gecko*); and 235 bottles “of odd spirits made in India”. One arrest.⁴¹



October 22, 2017

Harmoti, on the borderline of the Assam and the Arunachal Pradesh States, India

Major seizure of 45 bear gallbladders, five leopard claws and three tiger bones by the Assam Forest Department, assisted by the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department. The two poachers were trying to cross the border between the two States. Authorities estimate that the items are worth 2 million rupees (\$305,500 US) on the international market.⁴²



October 25, 2017

Tiliki, State of Odisha, India

Rangers in the forest arrested two men suspected of poaching, after they were denounced. A homemade rifle, a motorcycle and a cell phone were confiscated. Silama Siba and Pitabash Naik allegedly admitted to hunting in the forest. Wildlife in the region is more and more threatened. A joint patrol program was kicked off mid-October by the forest personnel and engineers of Southco, a power distribution company, in view of the increasing number of cases of poaching with live wires. Two poachers were arrested on October 22 after having electrocuted a boar.⁴³

November 3, 2017

Chilika Lake and its area, State of Odisha, India

During the month of Kartika, most Hindus follow a vegetarian diet, and eat meat only after Purnima, the full moon on November 3.

At that time, the demand for wild meat becomes very high in the neighboring cities of Balugaon, Berhampur, Khurda and Bhubaneswar.

As a precaution, all wildlife protection personnel reinforce surveillance around Lake Chilika in order to prevent poaching.

Lake Chilika, with a surface area of approximately 1000 km², is part of the RAMSAR network. It is an essential wetland for migratory birds coming from Iran, Central Asia and Siberia. From white-bellied eagles (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*, Appendix II) to flamingos, 160 species are concentrated around the lake and breed there between November and February.⁴⁴



Limosa limosa

November 10, 2017

Simlabari, State of West Bengal, India

The 53th battalion seized a gecko, four deer antlers and a Maruti vehicle. One arrest. The trafficker is from Bhutan.⁴⁵

**Beginning of December 2017
Kabirdham District, State of Chhattisgarh, India**

The canine unit was on the scene to investigate the poaching of an Indian bison (*Bos gaurus*, Appendix I). The dogs extricated pangolin bones, monkey skulls, tiger skins, and a sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*, Appendix I) from a hut in the village. Next door, people were cooking sambar deer meat (*Rusa unicolor*). It is in this same area that hundreds of dead and cut up monkeys were found (cf. "On the Trail" n°5 p.54).

Prabhat Mishra, the forest division manager, says that people eat the wild meat and keep the remains for black magic.⁴⁶



IRAN

**October 14, 2017
Saqqez County, Kurdistan Province, Iran**

Two teams of poachers were arrested by gamekeepers.

First, two men tried to escape by motorcycle when they saw the gatekeepers. During the chase, they dumped a blue bag containing an eagle. They were caught.

Next, three unarmed men with greyhounds were caught in an ambush. They were carrying wild goat (*Capra aegagrus*, Appendix III in Pakistan) carcasses. The carcasses, the vehicles, the dogs and the men were turned over to officials in charge of the environment.⁴⁷

**October, November 2017
Protected area of the Alborz mountain range, Iran**

Tumult at the peaks

The protected zone extends from the hills on the shores of the Caspian Sea to the hills of Tehran, 4540 m above the sea. Up there, the snow is everlasting. The "poaching" of cypress and juniper is aggravated by illegal hunting and collisions with wolves, with *Ursus arctos*, with *Panthera pardus* and with wild goats (see "On the Trail" n°7, p.53 and n°14 p.56). After hunting the "predators" day and night, the environmental police of Chaloos and the mountain rangers were able to capture five armed poachers who were hiding several unidentified animal carcasses in their bivouac. In any case, they cannot be domestic animals at this altitude. In accordance with the new criminal code, each of the "predators" faces three years in prison.⁴⁸

**November 29, 2017
Khojir National Park, Tehran Province, Iran**

The two poachers abandoned their rifle and ammunition, and fled. The Khojir national park is home to wolves, leopards and eagles.⁴⁹

**December 1, 2017
Qom, Qom Province, Iran**

Seizure in a ready-to-wear shop of several hats made of lynx (*Lynx lynx*, Appendix II), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, Appendix II) and wolf (*Canis lupus*, Appendix II) fur.⁵⁰

**December 1, 2017
Golestan Province, Tehran, Tehran Province, Iran**

Coordinated seizure in two rural houses of two red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and five pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*), and in a house in the capital city of a red deer skull, antlers and 20 kg of meat. The three hunters should get a fine totaling 702 million rials (\$20,000 US) and face between three months and three years in prison for poaching, and three to six months for possession of illegal weapons.⁵¹

MALAYSIA

**November 13, 2017
State of Sabah, Malaysia. Border with Indonesia.**

In a freezer, seizure of Bornean bearded pig (*Sus barbatus*) meat, civet, pangolin (*Manis* spp., Appendix I), fruit bat (*Pteropus* spp.), two monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), and seizure of two reticulated pythons (*Python reticulatus*, Appendix II) that were still alive. The restaurant owner is being grilled.⁵²



NEPAL

**REPEATED OFFENSE
October 18 and 25, 2017
Central Development Region, Nepal
Stupor in Kathmandu.**

Seizure of two chimpanzees (*Pan* spp., Appendix I) and seven monkeys (Primates spp., Appendix I or II) of an unidentified species.

Acting on a tip, the CIB (Central Investigation Bureau) raided a house and found the caged monkeys. According to the preliminary investigation, they came from Nigeria by plane and were destined for India, transiting through Nepal. Seven golden pheasants (*Chrysolophus pictus*), two ringneck pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) and 65 parakeets (Psittacidae, Appendix I or II) were making this improbable voyage with the monkeys. But in the world of wildlife smuggling, anything can happen..../...

Six people were arrested. Among them, Mohammad Usman, an Indian citizen, contraband manager. It is the fourth time that he has been caught red-handed in the capital of Nepal (see "On the Trail" n°6 p.114 and n°13 p.111).

A few days later, three customs agents at the Tribhuvan international airport were suspended. Fifteen years ago, four gorillas coming from Nigeria and destined for Malaysia transited through Nepal.⁵³

THAILAND

October 5, 2017

Aranyaprathet District, Province of Sa Kaeo, Thailand. Border with Cambodia.

The pick-up truck loaded with 52 bags of "fertilizer" was stopped at a roadside checkpoint. Inside the bags, there were 369 animals, 45 varans (*Varanus* spp., Appendix I or II), 105 turtles, 9 soft shell-turtles (family Trionychidae), 180 wild ducks, and 30 cobras still living for the most part. The driver said to have been paid 4,000 bath, or \$120 US, by a certain Cambodian named "Jim" who supplied restaurants in his country. It was the second time that Mr. Anuwat worked for "Jim."⁵⁴

VIET NAM

FAMILY AFFAIRS

October 26, 2017

Loc Dien, Binh Phước Province, Viet Nam

The registered breeding farm for snakes, turtles, varans, minks and porcupines had gotten off track.

An environmental police raid led to the discovery of 27 king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*, Appendix II), 23 pangolins (*Manis* spp., Appendix I), over 100 long-tailed monkeys (*Macaca fascicularis*, Appendix II), civets (Viverridae family) and a dozen water monitors (*Varanus salvator*, Appendix II). They were apparently being stored for an up-coming delivery. A man called Hanh, owner of the breeding farm in the south of the country, says that he gets his supplies from a variety of sources in the north of Viet Nam. His son, however, stated that the pangolins and cobras had been purchased a few days earlier from a city resident who had just moved.⁵⁵



December 18, 2017

Go Vap Urban District, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

12 macaques (*Macaca* spp., Appendix I or II) and 7 otters crammed into a balcony on the 2nd floor. Freed.⁵⁶



EUROPE

GERMANY

October 15, 2017

Amberg, Bavaria State, Germany

7000 in the little truck with license plates from the Czech Republic. Rats, mice, rabbits, guinea pigs, chameleons (*Chamaeleonidae* family, Appendix I or II) and axolotls (*Ambystoma mexicanum*, Appendix II). The driver, who was on his way to Belgium, was taken in by the police for questioning and released on bail for €500 (\$590 US). He continued on his way. The German police is very discreet about the matter, and in the eyes of the German judicial system, the lives of each of the animals seized are worth no more than 10 euro cents.

Several dozen or hundreds of animals had already died of suffocation and cold when the van was inspected on a highway parking lot. The survivors were taken for the time being to animal shelters in Bavaria, Hesse and Bade-Wurtemberg. It's probable that the shipment was destined to feed snakes breeding.⁵⁷

December 6, 2017

Hannover-Langenhagen international airport, Lower Saxony State, Germany

Seizure in the baggage of a Congolese traveler coming from Kinshasa, with transit through Paris, of 5.4 kg of unfrozen porcupine and addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*, Appendix I) meat. He claimed to be carrying "vegetables", brought back as souvenirs.⁵⁸

ITALY

October 24, 2017

Province of Brescia, Region of Lombardy, Italy

The tattoo shop was decorated with a monkey skull and an owl, a little crocodile, and several dozens of other animals and stuffed animal parts of unknown origin. In less than a year in the province, anti-smuggling services have seized 500 live and preserved animals of protected species. Most of them were turtles.⁵⁹



NETHERLANDS

September 1-November 5, 2017
Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, Province of North Holland, port of Rotterdam, Province of South Holland, Zwolle, Province of Overijssel and Netherlands Antilles, Netherlands

Customs and other services were kept busy between September and November. They pulled a lot of items off the black market: 14,000 dried seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp., Appendix II), three elephant legs, a polar bear skin (*Ursus maritimus*, Appendix II), 77 kg of pangolin scales (*Manis* spp. Appendix I), seven wild animal pelts, some monkey skulls (*Primates* spp., Appendix I or II) and crocodile skulls (*Crocodylia* spp., Appendix I or II), a green turtle shell (*Chelonia mydas*, Appendix I), six butterflies, 10 shipments of live coral and 120 arapaimas (*Arapaima gigas*, Appendix II) whose 110 were already dead.



Reports were drawn up on several smugglers, and several have already been sentenced. The seahorse transporter got six months in prison, including a three-month suspension.



At the bird market in Zwolle, several merchants were sentenced to fines of 5000 € (\$5900 US). Their birds had forged bands or certificates.⁶⁰

CZECH REPUBLIC

Mi-october 2017
Prague-Václav-Havel International Airport, Province of Bohemia, Czech Republic

Full count of the summer's seizures was made by Sarka Miskovska, spokesperson for the airport customs service: from Mai to September 35 cases of illegal import of "souvenirs" and protected animal by-products were detected. 273 coral fragments were seized, as well as 384 mixtures for "traditional Chinese medicine" containing Siberian musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*, Appendix II), python fat, turtle shells and Saiga antelope's horns (*Saiga tatarica*, Appendix II).⁶¹



RUSSIA

December 6, 2017
Primorsky Kari, Far Eastern Federal District, Russia

A 31-year-old Chinese man held 133 Amur tiger bones (*Panthera tigris altaica*, Appendix I) preserved in alcohol, 20 bear paws, and dried sea cucumbers at his home. He was sentenced to three years and eight months in prison.⁶²



Donkeys

Pressure's getting worse. Australia enters into conversations with China to export thousands of donkeys once again wild. In China, since 1 January 2018, the import tax on donkey skins has been reduced from 5% to 2%.



The African wild ass *Equus africanus* is listed under CITES Appendix I. The domesticated form *Equus asinus* is excluded from this listing. The Indian wild ass *Equus hemionus khur* and the Mongolian wild ass *Equus hemionus hemionus* are listed under CITES Appendix I. The kiang *Equus kiang* and the Asian wild ass *Equus hemionus* are listed under CITES Appendix II.

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

December 10, 2017

Ga-Rankuwa, Gauteng Province, South Africa

The three men were arrested after a road inspection they tried to avoid. In a car, they were transporting garbage bags and buckets full of donkeys meat that had been cut up in illegal slaughterhouses. The men were released on bail amounting to \$ 36.5 and \$ 73 US. The head inspector Mishack Matlou is also considering prosecuting Dube, Sepeng, and Molapo for animal cruelty as well. The donkeys are often killed with pangas [machetes]. Street vendors sell donkey meat as "bush meat". Since 2015, over 300 donkeys have been stolen and slaughtered in the province. The heads, paws, and skins of about thirty donkeys were



found in the bush recently. Six of these donkeys belong to a small local transporter. The pack donkeys were transporting water and firewood. He has three donkeys left, which he protects 24 hours a day, especially in the nighttime.¹

KENYA

October 12, 2017

Kenya

The government has put a freeze on permits for new donkey abattoirs (see "On the Trail" n°13 p.97, n°16 p.111, n°17 p.125 and n°18 p.121). Petitions demanding that slaughterhouses be closed are flooding authorities' desks, and complaints of stolen donkeys are inundating police stations. Neighboring Tanzania would have already suspended operations in donkey abattoirs.²

ZIMBABWE

October 2017

Zimbabwe

Tension is mounting regarding the Bulawayo "model" abattoir that Battlefront Investments is about to open. The veterinary doctor Keith Dutlow, manager of the NGO Aware Trust, devoted to promoting animal well-being, is multiplying his calls for reason: "The small population of donkeys that Zimbabwe has cannot sustain the removal of 2,000 donkeys a month from the national herd... The proposed opening of a donkey abattoir in Bulawayo will lead to the extinction of donkeys in Zimbabwe, within five to ten years."

On the contrary, Gwanda Rural District Council is overjoyed. Some Chinese are very interested in the next donkey auction.

A high-level official from the health and veterinary services says that he cannot forbid the abattoir from functioning, as long as it complies with general regulations on the protection of public health.

The ministry of Agriculture, mechanization and irrigation has turned its attention to the subject. "Donkey are a major source of draught power in the agriculture sector and decapitating them will be a major blow for the smallholder farmer and agriculture sector... The Government will not stand by and allow that to happen, as donkeys' economic, social and political importance far outweigh the interest of meat and skins." Minister Joseph Made also stresses the capital role that donkeys play in the local transportation sector.

Battlefront Investments, which already runs a cattle abattoir and two butcher shops in Bulawayo and in Victoria Falls, plans to open its new establishment before the end of the year.³

CHINA

December 31, 2017

China

After the confirmed closure of the domestic ivory market and the simultaneous import of about 30 elephants from Zimbabwe, China is giving the whole world a new proof of its ambiguity and its cruelty toward wild and domestic animals: a new boost is given to the unbelievable ejiao industry. The import tax on donkey skins passed from 5 to 2%.⁴

IRAN

October 6 2017

Semnan Province, Iran

Donkeys at the threat of bikers

A gang of poachers on dirt bikes runs onagers (*Equus hemionus onager*, Appendix II), a subspecies of Asian wild ass, to exhaustion. The motorcycles are fast. The onagers are, too, but after a few hours they collapse.

Gestation lasts one year before the foal is born. The young foal remains dependent on its mother for two years. Onagers are crepuscular and eat desert plants when temperatures are not too hot, at dusk and dawn. Like all Asian wild asses, they are endangered. Hunters use motorized vehicles as weapons to hunt them for their meat. (Chasing wild donkeys by car in Tibet, see "On the Trail" n°6, p.99.) Three poachers on motorcycles, including one soldier, were arrested by the police after a difficult investigation which led to an onager carcass that had not yet been butchered. They face a fine of 100 to 500 million rials, or \$2900 to \$14,500 US, which is very little if you take into consideration both the cruelty involved and the loss for biodiversity. There are only 100 to 300 onagers left in Asia. The poachers could also get three months to one year in prison.

Soon, if rangers and the Iranian authorities do not change the course of events, we will have to say that the Khar Turan park, a UNESCO biosphere reserve, was one of the last places on Earth where you could see or hope to see wild donkeys.⁵

AUSTRALIA

October 2017

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, State of South Australia, Australia

Tex McGrath saw a good deal. Chinese demand to make ejiao never ceases to rise and feral donkeys are estimated by the ministry of the Environment to be at least 5 million individuals, with strong proportions of the population being in the arid central regions of the country. McGrath claims to have passed an agreement with Donald Fraser from the Anangu tribe, famous militant for aboriginal rights to the land. He buys donkeys captured by the aboriginals in the APY territories and fences them in, in waiting to receive authorizations to export the males to Asia, in Singapore he says. The females would be kept in Australia for reproduction. But this is no simple business. McGrath count a multitude of problems caused by the fierce nature of the animals. They would be difficult to gather, manipulate, sort, and reticent to climb into the trucks.

At present, 200 donkeys are prisoners. They are for the moment stuck in a pen rendered inaccessible to the trucks because of heavy rain.

A second contract covers 1200 more animals but McGrath hopes to acquire thousands more.

Donkeys- and horses- were imported by the settlers during the XIXth century as draft and pack animals. Those that escaped reproduced in absence of any predators and populations grew all along the XXth century, limited only by drought and bush fires. Deemed an invasive species donkeys and horses are regularly slaughtered in groups by exterminators using motorcycles and helicopters. The country's law does not yet allow export of live equines, but the perspective of the Chinese market changes things. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources declared that an agreement had already been signed on 24 March 2017 between the two governments, which "opens the door for Australia to start the process to trade edible donkey meat and skins". Greed is tickled. Northern Territory Minister for Primary Industries and Resources, Ken Vowles, neighbor State of the APY territories, was in China in 2017 where he met with the most important donkey breeder in the country. According to him, over thirty Chinese businessmen visited the Northern Territory over the last year and a half to evaluate business opportunities regarding donkeys.⁶



Main Sources

Sources are available on request by email to contact@robindesbois.org indicating the "On the Trail" issue number, section and reference of the event.

For instance, for the last event of "On the Trail" n°19 : chapter Donkeys, Australia, reference 6.

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