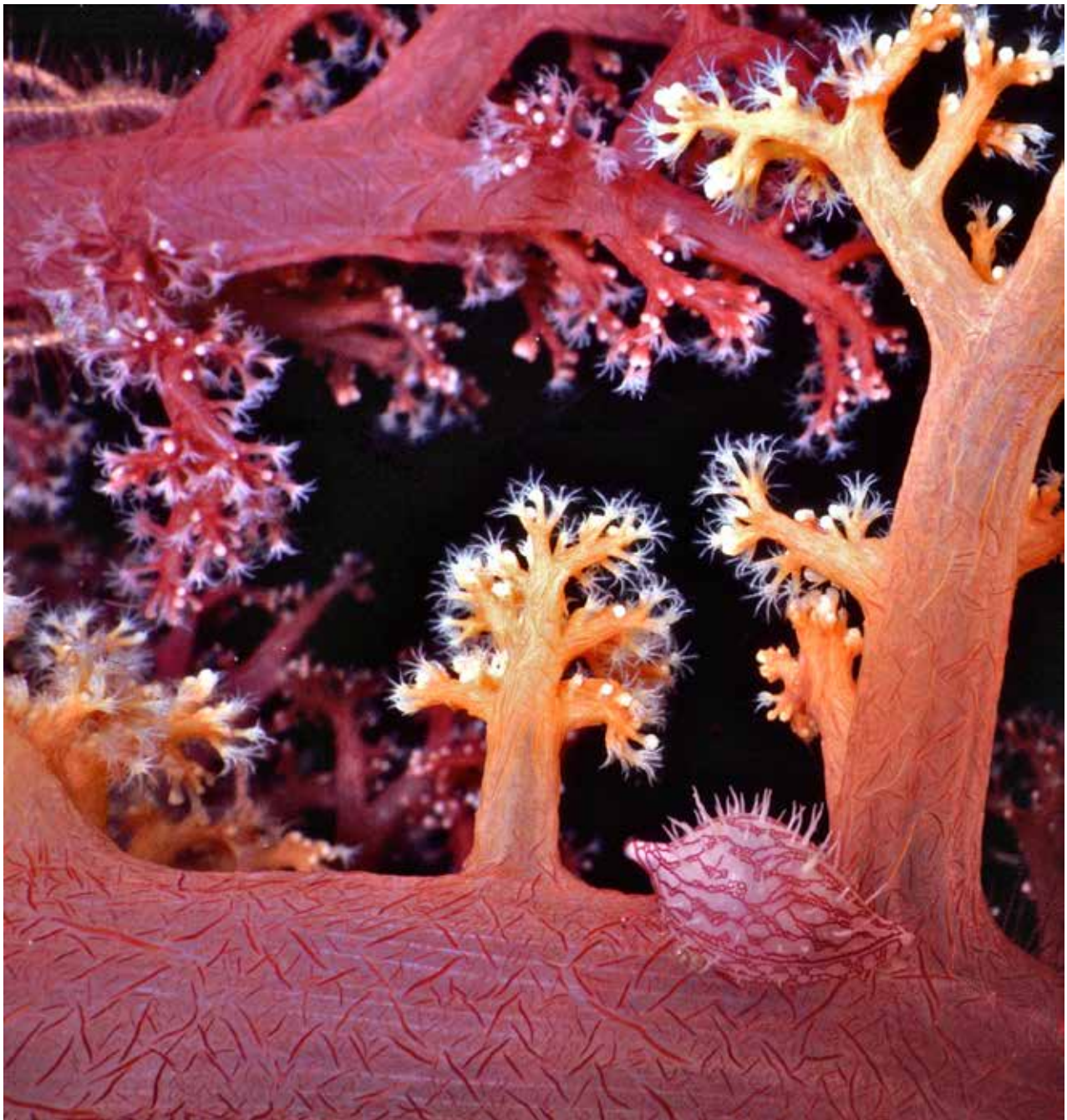


ROBIN DES BOIS

# ON<sub>the</sub> TRAIL

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

Original version in French





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

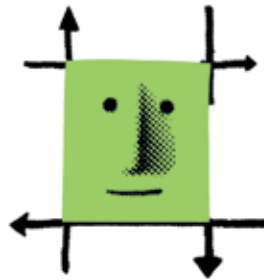
“On the Trail” highlights the new weapons of plunderers, the new modus operandi of smugglers, rumours intended to attract humans consumers of animals and their by-products. “On the Trail” gathers and disseminates feedback from institutions, individuals and NGOs that fight against poaching and smuggling.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

**Previous issues in English**

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

**Previous issues in French**

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



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The English translation of this n°20 of “A la Trace”/ “On the Trail” was realized with the support of of the Séché Environnement group.





# Rhinoceroses

EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA



The white rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* and black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* ranging in Africa are listed in Appendix I, except for the white rhinoceros populations of Swaziland and South Africa which are listed in Appendix II for trade of live animals and hunting trophies. The 3 Asian rhinoceros species are in Appendix I: *Rhinoceros unicornis*, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, *Rhinoceros sondaicus*.

**“On the Trail” n°20**  
**The value of horn on the black market, according to media or official sources**

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

**March 19, 2018**

**Oi Pejeta, Laikipia County, Kenya**

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



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

**March 30, 2018**

**Solio Ranch, Nyeri County, Kenya**

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

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



## MOZAMBIQUE

**March 6, 2018**

### **Maputo International Airport, Mozambique**

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

## TANZANIA

**March 2018**

### **Tanga Region, Tanzania**

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

## ZIMBABWE

**Beginning of January 2018**

### **Savé Valley Conservancy, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe**

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



**January 17, 2018**

### **Beitbridge, Matabeleland South Province, Zimbabwe**

Betrayed by his Nokia which he lost in the heat of the moment as he poached two female black rhinoceroses worth \$240,000 US, on Christmas night 2017. At Godknows Mashame's residence, officials discovered three guns, a hunting flashlight, ammunition, explosives and two antelope horns. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison. See "On the Trail" n°15 p. 76.<sup>6</sup>



**February 4, 2018**

### **Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe. Border with Zambia.**

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

**March 5, 2018**

### **Harare, Province of Harare, Zimbabwe**

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



## SOUTHERN AFRICA

### SOUTH AFRICA

**January 10, 2018**

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

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

**January 13 and 15, 2018**

### **Hoedspruit, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

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

**January 23, 2018**

### **Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**

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

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

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

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



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

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



**FAMILY AFFAIRS**

**January 29, 2018  
Pretoria, Gauteng Province, South Africa**

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

**January-February 2018  
Ngwelezane, Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa**

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

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

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



**Beginning of February 2018  
Tonga, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**

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



**February 12, 2018  
Namakgale, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

Four people arrested and two horns seized. Four people freed on bail for 300 rand (\$26 US) nine days later!  
Will Solly Kubayi, Jafta Sekgobela, Andrew Mathebula and Moses Mashito be present at their trial?<sup>18</sup>

**Mid February 2018  
South Africa**

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



**February 16, 2018**

**Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, South Africa**

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

**February 21, 2018**

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

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

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

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

**February 2018**

**Near Cradock, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa**

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

**End of February 2018**

**Hoedspruit, Province of Limpopo, South Africa**

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

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

**March 5, 2018**

**South Africa**

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

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

**March 12, 2018**

**Near Mossel Bay, Western Cape Province, South Africa**

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

**Mid March 2018**

**South Africa**

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



**March 25, 2018**

**Lephalale, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

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



## BOTSWANA

**January 2018**

**Francistown, North-East District, Botswana**

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

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

## NAMIBIA

**January-February 2018**

**Namibia**

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

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

## AMERICA

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**March 6, 2018**

**State of Vermont, United States of America**

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

**March 23, 2018**

**Las Vegas, State of Nevada, United States of America**

Edward N. Levine is sentenced to 27 months in prison followed by 3 years on probation. He was accused of having illegally purchased two horns in California with an accomplice, for having transported them to Nevada and for having attempted to sell them to undercover US Fish and Wildlife buyers. Cf. n°18 p.77.<sup>31</sup>



## ASIA

### CHINA

**TAILOR AND ELECTRIC KETTLE NETWORK**

**January 4, February 10 and 11, 2018**

**Hong Kong International Airport**

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



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



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



### INDIA

**January 6, 2018**

**Manas National Park, State of Assam, India**

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



Heritage site to another, from the Kaziranga Park to the Manas Park. After a 350-km trip in a truck, through cold and fog, they arrived at dawn and were set free in a temporary enclosure. They will get used to the environment of this new site, before the gate opens up to 391 km<sup>2</sup> of forests and marshes that were troubled for twenty years by fighting between the regular army and autonomist groups.

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

**January 14, 2018**

**Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India**

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

2016: 18 lost

2017: 50 lost<sup>34</sup>

**February 5, 2018**

**Jaldapara, Alipurduar District, State of West Bengal, India**

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

**GANG**

**February 11- 17, 2018**

**Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India**

The 2017 respite in Kaziranga is over.

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

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

**GANG**

**February 19, 2018**

**Cachar District, State of Assam, India**

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



**February 24, 2018**  
**Biswanath District, State of Assam, India**

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

**GANG**

**February 26, 2018**

**Sivasagar District, State of Assam, India**

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

**March 4, 2018**

**Kaziranga National Park, State of Assam, India**

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



**GANG**

**March 9, 2018**

**Nalbari, Nalbari District, State of Assam, India**

A good catch for the Dalgaon police and forest services: a team of poachers about to enter the Orang National Park to hunt rhinoceros. Three of them were arrested, while the others managed to get away. A manhunt was launched to find them, as well as their rifles and ammunition. Two of the suspects that were arrested were identified as Fazar Ali and Asmat Ali. The Orang National Park covers a surface area of 78.81 km<sup>2</sup>, and is home to populations of Indian one-horned rhinoceros, tigers, elephants, wild buffalo and pygmy hogs. Poaching is a chronic problem.<sup>41</sup>

**INDONESIA**

**January 8, 2018**

**Medan, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia**

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



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## NEPAL

**February 10, 2018**

**Kathmandu, Central Development Region, Nepal**

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

**February 27-28, 2018**

**Lalitpur (Patan), Central Development Region, Nepal**

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



## SINGAPORE

**February 26, 2018**

**Singapore**

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



## VIET NAM

**January 5, 2018**

**Hong Mai District, Hanoi, Viet Nam**

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



## EUROPE

### UNITED KINGDOM

**February 2018**

**Warnham, West Sussex County, England, United Kingdom**

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

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

## Rhinos and elephants

### AFRICA

#### SOUTH AFRICA

**FAMILY AFFAIRS / GANG**

**January 4 - 15 and 26, 2018**

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



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

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

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

- Albertus du Plessis, 71 years old, and his wife Johanna, 55 years old, Free State residents, were fined 20,000 rand (\$1800 US) each or two months in prison if the fines are not paid.

- Deon Cornelius' trial, the fifth suspect, has been disassociated from the others. .../...



A Hawks patrol surprised the two Chinese traffickers coming out of Cornelius' ranch in a Toyota Lexus. A white rhinoceros horn was detected by the Middleburg canine brigade, who were called in for support. The horn was attached to the car chassis with metal cables. A batch of methamphetamines and 24,000 rand (\$1950 US) in cash were also seized from the car. The criminal trafficking organization included a rhinoceros breeder, Cornelius, with a license to stock horns, a couple who claimed to have an authorization to sell them and two Chinese smugglers with ways of illegally exporting the horns. The operation demonstrates the complexity and the loopholes of the South African control system. On January 3, the five accomplices had already finalized the sale of five horns for a total of 500,000 rand (\$43,000 US). The horns have not been found. Cash totaling 675,000 rand (\$57,680 US) was also seized from Cornelius' home.<sup>1</sup>

## ZIMBABWE

### January-February-March 2018

#### Zimbabwe

#### Light and shade in Zimbabwe

Elephant and rhinoceros poaching is officially on the decline.

January and February 2017: 12 elephants, five black rhinoceroses, two white rhinoceroses.

January to March 2018: one elephant and four black rhinoceroses. That's not counting the cyanide poisonings.

The spokesman for Zimparks attributes this official record to the decisions and positions of the new president and his government. M. Farawo, spokesman of Zimparks, says that in 2017, 640 people were arrested for poaching, of whom 590 were nationals and 50 were foreigners, and that more than half of the poachers were sentenced to firm and mandatory sentences. He also says that last year, ten poachers were killed in exchange of fire with rangers, including seven nationals and three foreigners.

### The ex-first lady in white ivory

Mrs. Mugabe led a luxurious lifestyle and has accumulated property assets of 10 million pounds (12.3 millions US\$), without having any official income. She is now suspected of having taken advantage of her influence and diplomatic immunity to export, with or without her husband's complicity, large quantities of raw ivory diverted from government stocks, as well as worked ivory. One of the smuggling tactics was to qualify the exported ivory as gifts for the heads of State on official visits. Diplomacy of worked ivory was also reportedly employed during the visits of distinguished guests, thanks to CITES certificates extorted overnight from the director of Zimparks. The carved ivories were bought from Fariken Madzinga, a craftsman now implicated in an aborted attempt of selling six tusks on February 15, 2018.<sup>2</sup>

## ASIA

### CHINA

#### January 11, 2018

#### Shanghai Pudong International Airport, China

Seizure by customs officers of 46 pieces of ivory, weighing a total of 2.57 kg, plus one rhino horn weighing 4.29 kg. The suspect, nicknamed Feng, was taken into custody. Since January 2017, Shanghai customs has confiscated 370 ivory items, 3 complete tusks and 38 wildlife products, including rhinoceros horns.<sup>3</sup>

### INDIA

#### February 2018

#### State of West Bengal, India

#### Cyanide and Gucci

Homemade syringe guns locally called "Gucci" administer cyanide in the flesh of rhinoceroses or elephants. The Guccis are made by gunsmiths and used by poachers in Arunachal Pradesh. This modus operandi was brought to the police's knowledge after the arrest in a bus of a certain Marato Riba, known in the north of India for his skills as a pachyderm beheader. Riba's testimony led to the arrest of two accomplices, Gandhe Singh and Raja Pao, a schoolteacher. The cyanide experiment is being carried out in Jadalpara National Park.<sup>4</sup>



## LAOS

### GANG

January 30, 2018

#### Laos

Esmond Martin's final survey looked at the marketing of ivory in Laos, 236,000 km<sup>2</sup> of deforested mountains, savannas and industrial plantations, 7 million inhabitants and 400 wild elephants. Laos is landlocked in five wildlife consuming and trafficking countries, China, Viet Nam, Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia. Five countries federated or separated by the Mekong, 4180 km long.

The Mekong is also a royal route for smuggling. The report by Esmond Martin and Lucy Vigne is a royal way to learn about the ivory trade and more generally the elephant trade in the country.

Overviews :

- The value of a domestic elephant is about \$50,000 US. A domestic elephant excursion is charged to tourists \$19 US per half hour.

- A dead elephant can be bought by a Chinese knacker for around \$ 2800 US depending on the quality of the tail, skin, trunk, ears and feet. Tusks are the subject of a separate contract.

- A few craftsmen persist in carving domestic elephant ivory with hand tools and producing miniatures of Nam Kwak, goddess of rice, bearer of good fortune and especially of money.

- Luang Prabang, 400 km north of Vientiane, with 75,000 inhabitants, has at least 21 retail ivory outlets with 5,000 items for sale in display cases and 80% on shelves made with recent ivory. Fifteen shops are run by Chinese. For 3 years, Chinese tourists have been flocking. An antiquarian expert in the Laotian inheritance deplores the growing influence of China which is denaturing the city listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

- In 2007, Hong Kong-based Kings Romans Casino signed a 99-year lease agreement with the government for 100 square kilometers in Bokeo province, about 100 kilometers northwest of China. A Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone (GT SEZ) already covers 30 km<sup>2</sup>, a free zone dedicated among other playful, futile and lucrative activities to gambling and the sale of ivory and attracting female and male "nouveau riche" Chinese tourists.

- At the end of January, the United States declares financial war on Zhao Wei and his wife Quiqin Su. The couple run the Kings Romans. The Treasury Department freezes their assets in the United States and prohibits U.S. citizens and companies from cooperating with the couple and two partners or with companies they manage.

Kings Romans Casino is accused of being a transnational criminal organization involved in drug and wildlife trafficking -including ivory and rhino horn-, corruption, money laundering and human trafficking in Thailand, Myanmar and Laos.<sup>5</sup>

" The Ivory Trade in Laos : Now the Fastest Growing in the World ". Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin. Save the Elephants. September 2017.

Hard blow. Esmond Bradley Martin, 76, died in his Nairobi home on Sunday, 4 February 2018, stabbed by unknown persons. He was a super-tusker, carrying an elephant's memory on raw and worked ivories. From Senegal in 1999 to Laos in 2018, he delivered extraordinarily detailed reports on ivory markets with a certain tenderness for authentic ivory artists and a plain speaking on traffickers, industrial processors and white gold magnates.



## THAILAND

### GANG / FAMILY AFFAIRS

January 18, 2018

**Nakhon Phanom Province, Thailand. Border with Laos.**

It is difficult to figure out the Bach family. This time, it is Boonchai Bach's turn to be arrested. He appears to be involved in an attempt to smuggle 14 to 15 rhinoceros horns (see "On the Trail" n°19 p.89). The Bach clan is allegedly one of the suppliers for Vixay Keosavang, wanted all the way to the United States for trafficking live and dead CITES-protected animals. The man lives in Laos and runs Xaysavang Trading. He is considered untouchable and untakable.



The Bach clan also appears to be in contact with Chumlong Lemthongtai, who is serving a prison sentence in South Africa. He had recruited Asian prostitutes who pretended to be rhinoceros hunters in order to facilitate horn exports. See "On the Trail" n°2 p. 47.<sup>6</sup>

## OCEANIA

### AUSTRALIA

March 3, 2018

**Melbourne, State of Victoria, Australia**

First great crush in Australia.

Cutlery, grandmothers' jewelry, ivory napkin holders, raw ivory, and cuts of horn are crushed in the concrete crusher. <sup>7</sup> Cf. "On the Trail" n°9 p. 89.