

ROBIN DES BOIS

ON_{the} TRAIL

The defaunation bulletin
Quarterly information and analysis report on animal poaching and smuggling
n°28. Events from the 1st January to the 31th March, 2020
Published on October 6, 2020

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.

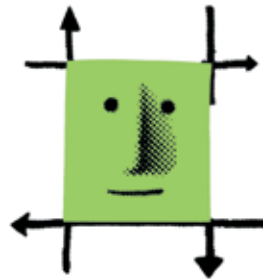
“On the Trail” highlights the new weapons of plunderers, the new modus operandi of smugglers, rumours intended to attract humans consumers of animals and their by-products. “On the Trail” gathers and disseminates feedback from institutions, individuals and NGOs that fight against poaching and smuggling. 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/>



ROBIN DES BOIS

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Judgment and sanction
Condemnation, acquittal, fine...



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



Poisoning
By chemicals, pesticides and medicines: cyanide, Carbofuran, Diclofenac, M99 ...



Trapping
Poaching by jaw trap, snare ...



Full moon
Moonlight poaching

CITES Appendices

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. **182 Member States.**

Appendix I : species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances and under import and export permits.

Appendix II : export permit required in order to avoid utilization incompatible with the species survival. Import permit if required by national law.

Appendix III : species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade. In the case of trade from a State that included the species in Appendix III, an export permit of that State is required.

Hippopotamuses

See also pages 37, 102, 107, 115 and 125.

AFRICA

KENYA

January 11, 2020

Matayos, Busia County, Kenya

The hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) was lynched with stones, axes and machetes and then butchered and distributed to the villagers. As he fled, he smashed down fences, latrines and a moped. "We called the police but saw nothing coming, so we took things into our own hands. "It was a venerable inhabitant of the village who, when she woke up in the morning, she says, found the hippopotamus on her doorstep and alerted the neighbourhood with her cries. "We killed it to teach the Kenya Wildlife Service a lesson so that they answer our distress calls promptly next time", says one resident, while another expresses himself in a more outrageous manner: " We thank God for this January gift. We pray that another one will emerge soon". "The fate of the victim's ivory teeth is not known. ¹

SENEGAL

March 8, 2020

Saré Balla, Tambacounda Region, Senegal. Border with Gambia.

Arrest of 3 individuals long wanted for criminal conspiracy, drug trafficking, possession and marketing of endangered species. In their homes were seized 98 teeth and tooth fragments, 4 hippopotamus skulls and ammunition.²



Rhinoceroses

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

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

EASTERN AFRICA

ZAMBIA

February 25, 2020

Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, Southern Province, Zambia. Border with Zimbabwe.

Appearance of Ashes Gumbo, lorry driver. In his mad rush through the national park and despite sound and light warnings from oncoming vehicles, he fatally hit 2 white rhinos crossing the road with his truck. Speeding or road poaching? ¹

ZIMBABWE

January 23, 2020

Bubye Valley Conservancy, Matabeleland South Province, Zimbabwe

Arrest of Nhlanhla Nkomo, police inspector in Bulawayo and 2 accomplices, Stanley Katandika, a Zambian national, and Owen Nyoni, a former ZimParks ranger. They were heavily armed and were about to poach rhinos. ²

February 9, 2020

Bubye Valley Conservancy, Southern Matabeleland Province, Zimbabwe

Thinkmore Midzi, Nqobizitha Dube and Wenzile Midzi remain in pre-trial detention. Through their lawyer, Primrose Ncube, they were seeking release on bail of 30 US\$ each. On 8 February, they had entered the reserve by climbing the fence in the evening, and the next morning, guards in charge of watching and maintaining it spotted footprints and alerted the game scouts who, reinforced by ZimParks rangers, followed the tracks, arrived at the heart of the reserve and surrounded the 3 intruders. In their bundles were a machete, an axe, knives and pesticide, and a little further on in an open field, 2 cabbages and 6 cobs of green mealie impregnated with pure pesticide and obviously intended for rhino baiting. Initially, the 3 suspects pleaded guilty before retracting. ³



SOUTH AFRICA

January 2, 7 and 9, 2020
Skukuza, Stolznekspuitdam
and Tshokwane Sections, Kruger
National Park, Mpumalanga
Province, South Africa



Successive arrests with the support of the canine brigades and the reinforcement of aerial means of 7 suspects heavily armed and equipped with the kits for poaching and dehorning rhinos. All the suspects live in villages in the vicinity of the park. Fundisile Mketeni, the director of SANParks, calls on the local population. "We urge our neighbours to help us save jobs and create opportunities through tourism because people come to the park to see these magnificent animals and if we lose them through the actions of these selfish individuals, we won't be an attraction anymore."⁴

January 14, 2020
Boitekong, North West Province, South Africa

Attempt to arrest 4 men. They are suspected by the SAPS of preparing an imminent poaching in a private reserve near Rustenburg. Three of them manage to escape at the last moment, taking advantage of the night and the dense vegetation cover. The fourth, Amukelani Nkuna, was apprehended. He is a police officer. The four men are also suspected of being involved in the poaching series in Pilanesberg Park (see "On the Trail" n°7 p.65, n°9 p.59, n°10 p.45, n°12 p.69 and 70, n°14 p.63 and 64, n°15 p.77, 78 and 81, n°16 p.68, n°18 p.70, 73 and 74, n°19 p.85, n°20 p.82, n°21 p.77, n°22 p.78 and 79, n°23 p.106, n°26 p.76 and n°27 p.87). The local press reminds us that poaching and traffic are fuelled by the myth that crushed horns can cure anything from a cold to cancer and by a snobbish desire to own the horn as a status symbol, the famous "Ferrari factor" as the unfortunate managers of Pilanesberg Park call it.⁵

January 18, 2020
Lephalale, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Discovery of 2 dehorned carcasses in the process of advanced decomposition. The investigation starts late. A call for witnesses is launched on the Crime Stop alert number 0860 010 111.⁶

February 1st, 2020
Near Khula, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

Arrest of 4 men aged 22 and 24 suspected of preparing to poach rhinos in conspiracy. A firearm with silencer, an axe, binoculars, ammunition and mobile phones were seized from their vehicle.⁷

February 7, 2020
20 km from the Vioolsdrif port of entry,
Northern Cape Province, South Africa. Border
with Namibia.

Tomas Chester Francisco, Mateus Betuel Novela and David Betuel Novela are arrested 20 km from Namibia. The search of their vehicle leads to the discovery and seizure of 2 rhino horns worth an estimated 640,000 rand (44,000 US\$). Are they in charge of evacuating rhino horns poached in Namibia via South Africa or on the contrary to exfiltrate in Namibia rhino horns poached in the Northern Cape Province? Stay tuned! Operation coordinated by the Hawks and the border police of Vioolsdrif.⁸

February 13, 2020
Bloemfontein, Free State
Province, South Africa



Jimmy Mashopane is sentenced to 24 years in prison. Nine corpses of dehorned rhinos were discovered by rangers between 29 July and 15 December 2018 in the Sandveld Reserve. The patrols, after the series of disasters, had been multiplied. On 22 January 2019, Mashopane was caught in the reserve. An accomplice managed to escape. Mashopane had a gun. The decryption of his phone shows that he was near the reserve when the nine crimes were committed. The Sandveld reserve covers 37,000 hectares.⁹

End of February 2020
Gauteng Province, South Africa

Yansen Feng, who was caught red-handed holding horns, had tried to obtain his release by promising 10,000 rand (6,800 US\$) to a police officer. A search was authorised and a sum well in excess of 6,800 US\$ was found at his home. At this time Feng and 3 accomplices remain in pre-trial detention.¹⁰

End of February 2020
Mankweng, Limpopo Province,
South Africa



Sentencing of Andries Mathebula, aged 49, to 15 years in prison for poaching, 15 years in prison for plucking and holding horns and 5 years for illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition. The first two sentences are combined. Sentencing of Shadrack Zitha, 52, to 12 years in prison for poaching, 12 years for plucking and holding horns and 5 years for illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition. The first two sentences are running concurrently.

The two men were arrested in September 2015 (see "On the Trail" n°10 p.48). According to the investigation file, the traces of blood found on the axe they also had in their possession coincide with that of a rhino shot a few days earlier on a Hoedspruit ranch.¹¹

March 18, 2020

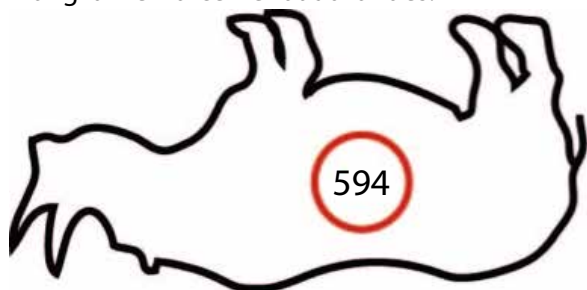
KwaMsane, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa

4:30 a.m. Abandonment of a vehicle as the police came up. All the necessary equipment for poaching and rhino dehorning is discovered inside.¹²

March 18, 2020

Between Pretoriuskop and Skukuza sections, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Arrest of 4 suspects thanks to the coordinated involvement of park rangers, air assets and private reserve guards. Seizure of a firearm, ammunition and dehorning paraphernalia. Since the beginning of the year, 11 suspects have been arrested in the park. In all provinces of South Africa, the official account in 2018 was 769 rhinos poached, and 594 in 2019. The decline could be attributed to a combination of measures, including improved capabilities to react to poaching incidents and improved information collection and sharing among law enforcement authorities.¹³



March 25-26, 2020

South Africa

Under normal circumstances, the wildlife is protected by a few rangers and many visitors whose presence disturbs the poachers. Contemplation tourism and even game hunting are a deterrent. Since the month of March and the Covid-19 storm, the reserves and parks have been empty. At the end of March, some testimonies and provisional assessments already attest to an opportunistic and speculative peak of poaching on sure values such as rhino horn. Rhino 911 reports one poaching per day since the enforcement of the stay at home order (23 March) and at least 9 poaching in the North-West Province alone between 23 March and 7 April.¹⁴

BOTSWANA

January 3, 6, 14, 15 and 16, 2020

Okavango Delta, North West District, Botswana

At the end of December 2019, the official account for poaching since April was 13. But since the beginning of the year 2020 it has been rising sharply.

- Two in the first week of January.
- One white rhino on Tuesday 14th and another on Wednesday 15th.
- Discovery of 2 decomposing carcasses. One black and one white.¹⁵

March 16, 2020

Okavango Delta, North West District, Botswana

New poaching in the delta. This time, it is a black rhino.¹⁶

March 2020

Okavango Delta, North West District, Botswana

"There are several groups of Zambian poachers bivouacking on the Chiefs Islands in the delta. Two rhinos per week are reportedly shot. Most of the horns are evacuated through Zambia. The Botswana Defence Force (BDF) is not equipped to do effective anti-poaching. Intermittent patrols are done by helicopter and the guys below have a good chance to camouflage themselves before being flown over. At the rate things are going, there won't be a rhino in the delta in a few months. With the "bushmen" or trackers of the former safari companies, there is however enough to set up super efficient anti-poaching teams. When the rhinos will be "finished", the mafia will fall back on the elephants. It's a question of opportunity, for the moment the rhino is more profitable." The Bhejane Trust did not beat around the bush to urgently call for a re-shaping of anti-poaching measures in this sensitive area, which is rich in biodiversity, tourists, borders and cross interests.

These remarks are to some extent confirmed by the Deputy Director of the Wildlife Department at the Ministry of Environment Moemi Batshabang : "I can attest that 46 rhinos have been killed by highly organised poachers between April last year to date". In this period of pandemic and economic crisis, the director of Rhino Conservation fears a surge in poaching of antelopes and other animals less sought after than the Big Five. "There's going to be a lot of people out of work and falling back on nature".¹⁷

NAMIBIA

January 8 and 10, 2020

Oshivelo, Oshikoto Region, Namibia

Arrest of Diognes Nambili Shivute, Moses Ekandjo, Heimo Tweuya Namweya and Seboron Shivolo in Etosha National Park.

They were in the process of cutting the 4 horns of 2 rhinos they had just poached. Additional seizure of their vehicle, a firearm and 6 rounds of ammunition. Heimo Tweuya Namweya and Seboron Shivolo are municipal employees of the city of Oshakati. The 4 individuals are already implicated in a break-in at a hunting reserve in Omuthiya and an attempted poaching of rhinos. Two accomplices, Johannes Pinias and Samuel Afunde Matias, were arrested 2 days later.¹⁸





© SAPS

February 1st, 2020, Near Khula, South Africa



© Limpopo Police

End of February 2020, Mankweng, South Africa



© SAPS

March 18, 2020, KwaMsane, South Africa



© The Sentinel

February 4, 2020, Natun Sehjang, India



© Times of India

February 8, 2020, Harmati, India



© Chinese Customs

March 15, 2020, Guangzhou, China



© Chinese Customs



© VietNamNet

March 2, 2020, Can Tho Viet Nam



© VnExpress

March 6, 2020, Tan Son Nhat Viet Nam

January 10, 2020

Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region, Namibia. Border with Zambia.

Arrest of Lubbula Tama Hendricks and Zambwe Matengu in possession of 2 horns.¹⁹



January 10, 2020

Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region, Namibia

Arrest of Makalo Meki, Junior Sililo, Inonox Sibela and Sheka Vitali of Zambian nationality. They were in possession of a large-calibre firearm and 11 bullets. They are suspected of being rhino poachers.²⁰

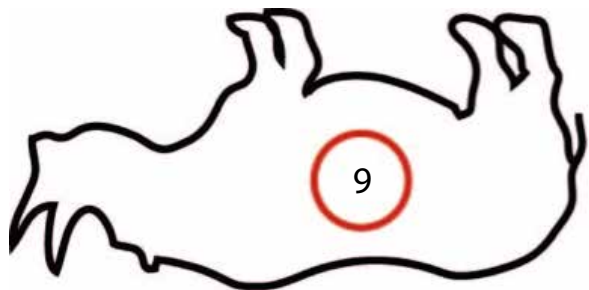


March 23-29, 2020

Oshakati, Oshana Region, Namibia

-The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism claims that the Covid-19 pandemic does not impede the monitoring of poaching. The weekly report produced by the Ministry of the Environment and the police indicates a single event in the week of 23-29 March. It concerns the arrest of 2 nationals carrying an illegal firearm and 43 rounds of ammunition and suspected of poaching rhinos.

- The same ministry announced that since the beginning of the year (January, February, March 2020) 9 rhinos have been poached in private reserves and national parks. The official annual account is yo-yoing and remains constantly high: 95 in 2015, 60 in 2016, 36 in 2017, 72 in 2018.²¹



AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

January 10, 2020

State of Nevada, United States of America

Conviction of Jack Ely Buchanan, a lawyer at the Las Vegas Bar, to 25,000 US\$, 2 years probation and 40 hours of community service for trading a stuffed white rhino between Nevada and Minnesota. The transaction would have been made on the basis of 6,500 US\$, whereas according to the investigation file, the horns of the trophy had a value of 435,000 US\$ at the time of the events.²²



FAMILY AFFAIRS

End of February 2020

Orange County, State of California, United States of America

Sentencing of Ms. Nhu Mai Nguyen to 3 years of probation including one year of house arrest and a fine of 20,000 US\$ for participating in conspiracy for the fraudulent sale of horns in Viet Nam and China in 2011 and 2012. His companion, Mr. Vinh Chuong Kha, also known as Jimmy Kha, has already been sentenced to 42 months in prison and his son, Felix Kha, to 46 months. Ms. Nhu Mai Nguyen was also sentenced to hand over to the Treasury 100 gold bars and 1,000 US\$ in cash that had been seized from a safe deposit box. The horns passed through her nail shop under the name "Joline's Nails" and through her "novelties" shop, which she operated jointly with a certain Win Lee Corp. Read in "On the Trail" n°1 p.23-24: all the springs of this complex ring revealed after months of investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.²³



ASIA

CHINA

February 25, 2020

Panlong District, Yunnan Province, China

Conviction of X to 2 years and 6 months in prison for having fraudulently bought 3 fragments of rhino horns "for therapeutic purposes" in August 2018, according to him. He was also fined 7,200 US\$. He had bought the fragments for the equivalent of 3,000 US\$ via WeChat and their market value is estimated at around 10,000 US\$. Instead of seeking treatment, X is said to have sought to make a big profit.²⁴



March 15, 2020

Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure by flying customs of 16 rhino horns weighing a total of 36.6 kg in the boot of 2 BMW. Four arrests. Initial evidence suggests that the horns originated in Africa and transited through Viet Nam before being smuggled into China on their way to Fujian province.²⁵

INDIA

February 4, 2020

Natun Sehjang, Karbi Anglong District, Assam State, India

Seizure of a rhino's horn, 510 g with a black market value of about 12,000 US\$. Lalkhongmang Kipgen was on a moped.²⁶

February 5, 2020

Kharikatia, Jorhat District, State of Assam, India

Seizure of a 600 g horn. Arrest of Rajesh Karmakar and Rahul Pegu.²⁷

February 8, 2020

Harmati, Nagaon District, State of Assam, India

Arrest of a poacher on the fringes of the park in the Bagori sector. He had rifles and ammunition in his hands and was waiting hidden in the thickets for one or two shooters to arrive.²⁸



February 29, 2020

Kaziranga National Park, Golaghat and Nagaon Districts, State of Assam, India

There is turmoil in and around the park. The warden's wife is accused of having used her influence to organise a photo and video safari of tigers blinded by flashing lights in the heart of the park at night. Other controversial images are circulating on social networks. She poses with a python on her shoulders and in her hands. Local residents are protesting against these liberties as new directives prevent them from harvesting dead wood or other forest products inside the park. NGOs for their part believe that the new administration is moving in the right direction by imposing strict timetables, anti-pollution controls, signposted roads and insurance on the Jeep Safari Association that transports tourists inside the park. The Jeep union is up in arms against the director and is doing everything it can to get him transferred. It is said to be on the verge of obtaining satisfaction. Ranjan Kumar Das is expected to replace him. He's dragging along several pots and pans. He is suspected of having been very tolerant towards Mumtaz Siddique, a domestic elephant trafficker, and of having favoured the export of several elephants from Assam to Gujarat. He was also relieved of his duties for a time when he was in charge of forestry services in Dijoiboi and Sonitpur. He and his younger brother are involved in trafficking river sand and woods. NGOs are alarmed : "If he [Ranjan Kumar Das] is appointed as director of Kaziranga National Park, all conservation projects is going to fail".

In the hills of Karbi Anglong, south of the park, the multiplication of illegal quarries has ended up drying up the Mori Diffalo river, which is essential to the water resources of the park's fauna and flora during the dry season. The search on Friday, February 7, by Assam's anti-corruption brigade at the home of Abhijit Rabha, a senior forest protection official, uncovered a copy of a compromising letter sent to a divisional official, urging him not to deal with the quarries and to concentrate on saving the rhinos. Abhijit Rabha is unable to justify the millions of rupees in his bank accounts. He claims to make a fortune by growing and selling broccoli, but on the farm he rents there has never been a single head of broccoli.²⁹

See also page 119 "Tourists in the park become poachers' customers".

INDONESIA

January 8, 2020

Bandar Lampung City, Lampung Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

Ms. Efendi and Isranto are sentenced to 1 year and 8 months in prison each and fines of 30 and 50 million rupees (2,150 US\$ and 3,600 US\$) with an additional 3 months in prison in case of non-payment. By November 2018 they had detained and tried to sell a 202-gram horn.³⁰



VIET NAM

January 2020

Viet Nam

Sentencing of 3 horn traffickers to China to 7 years jail, 6 years jail and 3 years suspended jail.³¹



March 2, 2020

Can Tho International Airport, Viet Nam

Seizure of 11 rhino horns (28.7 kg) in the suitcase of a Vietnamese passenger, Mr. Do Thanh Son, upon arrival of a flight from South Korea. All flights from Seoul were diverted to Can Tho airport to avoid the overloading of the quarantine imposed by the Covid-19 screening in Ho Chi Minh City.³²

March 6, 2020

Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Arrest of a passenger known as N.A.D. from Doha, Qatar. He was carrying 6.22 kg of African rhino horns and horn sections.³³



Rhinoceroses and Elephants

AFRICA

NAMIBIA

Week of 16 to 22 March 2020

Namibia

Sixteen men suspected of poaching rhinos and elephants arrested.¹

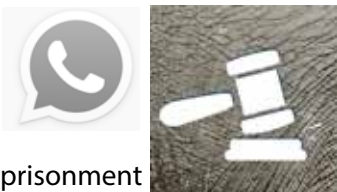
ASIA

CHINA

March 2020

Hainan Province, China

Conviction at first instance of Ms. X to 1 year and 2 months imprisonment and a fine of 4,000 yuan or 570 US\$ for having in 2016 bought via WeChat and offered for sale in her jewellery shop by-products of protected animals in the form of necklaces, bracelets and pendants, including 110 worked ivories, 2 items made of rhino horn and 4 rhinoceros hornbill helmets (*Buceros rhinoceros*, Appendix II) jewels for a total estimated value of 24,916 yuan or 3,550 US\$. The Court of Appeal took into account X's full confession, her repentance and the fact that after 3 years of escaping judicial summons, she presented herself on her own initiative in June 2019 at a police station. The sentences were suspended.²



INDIA

January 17, 2020

Malbazar, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal, India

A big section of raw ivory and a rhino horn were hidden in 2 satchels inside 2 cars that were travelling in a convoy. A third car fled with its traffickers and wildlife war treasure. Three people were arrested including one Bhutanese. The Bhutan/West Bengal traffic is active.³



Elephants

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°28 Black market raw ivory quotation from media or official sources

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref.
Africa	Kenya	60	2
		950	10
	Zimbabwe	232	20
	South Africa	1,800	23
1,700		25	
Asia	India, Odisha	1,270	85

EASTERN AFRICA

ETHIOPIA

Beginning of March 2020

Ethiopia

Seizure of 4 tusks.¹

KENYA

Early January 2020

Kimana, Kajiado County, Kenya

Arrest by Big Life NGO lookouts of 2 men who were trying to sell 20 kg of raw ivory for the equivalent of 1,200 US\$, or 60 US\$/kg, at around 7 a.m.²

January 6, 2020

Masai Mara National Reserve, Narok County, Kenya

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. A man walking home at night would have had a bad encounter with a herd of elephants. He died of it in unknown circumstances. The reprisals fell on Oloropilé, a giant who, all agreed, never hurted a fly. He had been living in harmony with humanity for at least half a century. He had a wonderful nature. "He was often seen grazing with nomadic herds and in the vicinity of people," Elephant Aware's rangers testify.³

January 19, 2020

Kaluku, Tsavo Ecosystem, Kenya

A bull elephant suffered a large infected wound from a throwing weapon. The tusker is back to upright. Joint operation by the SWT (Sheldrick Wildlife Trust) and the KWS (Kenya Wildlife Service). Favourable prognosis.⁴

January 23, 2020

Busia, Busia County, Kenya. Border with Uganda.

42 kg of raw ivory and 35 kg of wildlife bones were seized from the luggage rack of a boda-boda. The driver, in good faith, believed to be transporting cassavas and was released. The owner of the fake cassavas is a Ugandan school teacher. He was arrested and his bad faith was proven. His "cassavas" came from Marachi, a Ugandan village near the border with Kenya.⁵

January 24, 2020

RKiasa, Tsavo East National Park, Kitui County, Kenya

Post-mortem examination of the carcass reveals that death was caused by a throwing weapon followed by internal bleeding and peritonitis. The search for the arrowhead was unsuccessful. The intestines were already eaten by hyenas.⁶

January 31, 2020

Irima, East Tsova National Park, Kitui County, Kenya

We don't know why, he limped with his front left leg. The little men treated the probable sprain with antibiotics and dexamethasone. On waking up the large grey mass regained its sensation and then slowly moved away without limping.⁷



February 5, 2020

Mount Elgon National Park, Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya

Tangled in her left front leg by a booby-trapped pole, the unlucky female elephant, aged about 14, had been barely moving around in the forest for a fortnight. In order to move in spite of everything, she had found a trick by holding one end of the pole in her trunk. During the anaesthesia, the metal shackle of the trap was cut. The surrounding wound was deep. It was treated with hydrogen peroxide, iodine dye, green clay. Everything is fine when waking up. She got up and walked freely into the forest.⁸



February 5, 2020

Near Kimana, Amboseli National Park, Kajiado County, Kenya



Non-violent death of Tim, a legendary super tusk. Post-mortem examination reveals an intestinal obstruction. The body was transported by truck to the Natural History Museum. Tim is expected to achieve posterity through taxidermy. The autopsy was performed with minimal skin damage. The right tusk weighs 61 kg, the left weighs 73 kg. With Tim's natural death at the foot of Kilimanjaro, one of the last African super tuskers passes to the other side. Their tusks descend to the ground. Favourite targets of ivory traffickers, they are gradually disappearing as the average size of African elephants shrinks. He was "a benevolent, slow-moving preserver of the peace at Amboseli" KWS said. "He was well known and loved throughout Kenya."⁹

March 10, 2020

Narok, Narok County, Kenya

Conviction of Daniel Karanja to a fine of 1 million shillings, 10,000 US\$ or 6 years in prison. Resisting the excuses and lamentations of the accused who, released on bail after the events in 2014 (see "On the Trail" n°6 p.79), has long evaded the summons of justice, the judge, Wilbroda Juma, deplored the irreparable loss of 5 elephants and recalled that to be dissuasive, penalties for wildlife trafficking should be severe. The value of the loot seized from Mr. Karanja's home (84 kg of raw ivory) is estimated at 8 million shillings or 80,000 US\$ and 950 US\$/kg.¹⁰



March 14, 2020

Mara Conservancy, Nakuru County, Kenya

Big problem for a few days old baby elephant lying near a swamp. The umbilical cord is still wet. The nostrils are clogged with soil. He has not been suckled for a long time. On-site injection of dexamethasone and transport by helicopter to the orphanage in Nairobi for care and observation. Prognosis reserved. The fate of the mother is a mystery.¹¹

March 17, 2020

Meru National Park, Meru County, Kenya

Collapsed in the savannah, spotted by helicopter, the elephant was checked by a ground patrol. The diagnosis was bleak. An arrow had made its hole in the right knee and another in the neck. The attack had been going on for several days. The elephant ran away and fell there, to the very end. It was considered to put him upright using ropes and the 4x4 but there was nothing to do except to finish him off and remove the tusks for safety.¹²

MOZAMBIQUE

Early January 2020

Mozambique

To the rescue of a female elephant whose trunk was deeply cut by a leghold trap. The lower part of the trunk was still mobile. Anaesthetised from the DAG (Dyck Advisory Group) helicopter and treated by Doctor Joao of Saving the Survivors, she left well. Uncertain prognosis. She will be followed up regularly in the coming weeks.¹³



January 7, 2020

Mozambique

Emergency landing for Dr. Joao of Saving The Survivors to extract the rusty cable from a trap in the hind leg of a bull elephant calf.¹⁴



January 23, 2020

Maputo, Mozambique

Seizure on Kenneth Kaunda Avenue of 7 kg of raw ivory. "It was a friend who gave it to me," he says. Since the beginning of the year: 31.5 kg of ivory seized.¹⁵

UGANDA

Beginning of March 2020

Kampala, Central Region, Uganda

Kawunde Gyavira is sentenced to 9 years in prison. In December 2019 he was arrested with 61.84 kg of raw ivory. Fellow comrades are on the run.¹⁶



GANG

Mid-March 2020

Kasanda, Mubende and Kiboga Districts, Central Region and Kakumiro, Kibaale, Kikuube, Hoima, Masindi and Kyankwanzi Districts, Western Region, Uganda

A gang of poachers, traffickers in ivory and other wildlife products initially specialising in armed robbery was neutralised in turbulent circumstances by the combined forces of the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and the army. The investigation had been going on for several months. The chief's name is Samuel Kubuka. He had been in contact on several occasions with UWA agents posing as ivory traffickers. One of the people who was informing the police about the poaching had been murdered by the gang and buried in the forest. After the arrest of the 9 suspects and the seizure at their homes of nets, 11 guns and traps and after the first confessions, it was possible to locate the body.¹⁷

TANZANIA

March 4, 2020

Tanzania

Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) is postponing the auction of 29 hunting concessions. Most of them are in the Selous Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Zebras, elephants, rhinoceroses and giraffes are not happy with the Tanzanian government's ambition and its armed wing - TAWA - to collect 3.4 million US\$ in hunting royalties every year.

The good news for elephants and others is that the organizers of hunting safaris don't crowd at the box office. Since June 2019, only 9 out of 50 lots offered for sale have found buyers. TAWA is considering more attractive terms and conditions, including lower auction fees and extending the possession from 10 to 15 years.¹⁸

ZAMBIA

March 6, 2020

Kapiri Mposhi, Central Province, Zambia

Mr. Munkhondya was stopped on the northern highway by national park and wildlife officers. He was riding his bicycle and carrying 18 kg of raw ivory in violation of Section 130 of the national Wildlife Act.¹⁹

ZIMBABWE

January 3 and 24, 2020

Dete and Hwange, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Seizure at the home of Norman Tshuma, aged 29, wanted for thefts in Bulawayo, of 24.6 kg of raw ivory with an estimated value of 5,708 US\$, or 232 US\$/kg on the domestic market. He pleads guilty. Sentenced to 9 years in prison. He has admitted on the stand that he had poached 3 elephants in December 2019. His 19-year-old wife denies responsibility.²⁰



March 16, 2020

On the edge of Hwange National Park, Northern Matabeleland Province, Zimbabwe

On Tuesday, 4 elephants were discovered dead on a salt marsh littered with cyanide granules. Three elephants are already stripped of their tusks. On Thursday, the rangers return to the site to make various observations necessary for the investigation and they discover that the bodies have been partly dismembered. It soon became clear that a local business had set up and that butchers were selling portions of elephant meat. Calls were made by village chiefs, particularly in Kachechete, for people to avoid buying poisoned meat.²¹



March 2020 Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe will not withdraw from CITES. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism confirms this. "If we pull out of CITES we will not be able to trade [fauna] with other countries that are in CITES." Zimbabwe will move closer to other African countries to ensure that the Convention allows for the free trade of hunting trophies, a measure that its proponents say would benefit both the national economy and local communities. The report presented to parliament by the Ministry also stresses the profits from the sale of live elephants. "The resumption of elephant sales will help the Zimbabwe National Parks (ZimParks) with its conservancy goal in key national parks such as the Hwange National Park."

The report is stressing both the damage to the plant biomass caused by elephants in excess and the negative effects of drought on elephants. "In recent years, elephant populations have been depleting due to droughts, while some well-wishers like the Sino Zimbabwe Wildlife Foundation have resorted to supplementary feeding."²²

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

January 27, 2020

Point, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Things went sour for the 2 traffickers when, in the hotel car park, they unpacked their raw ivory (16.88 kg) in front of the alleged buyers who were in fact police officers.²⁴

February 10, 2020

Kempton Park, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Arrest of 2 men in flagrante delicto for selling 5 tusks weighing a total of 45 kg. They are estimated at 1.2 million rand, or more than 80,000 US\$ and 1,800 US\$/kg. The 2 men, aged 42 and 45, were trapped in a car park by fake buyers from the city police and the Hawks.²³

February 12, 2020

Taaibosch, Limpopo Province, South Africa, Border with Botswana and Zimbabwe

Two men from 2 neighbouring countries were trying to sell 2 tusks. They were stopped. Tusks are estimated at 50,000 rand, or 3,400 US\$. Between them, they both weigh less than 2 kg. They come from a baby elephant.²⁵

March 24, 2020

Krugersdorp, Gauteng Province, South Africa

A call to the Crime Stop hotline led police to search the home of a 37-year-old woman and resulted in the seizure of an undisclosed quantity of raw ivory.²⁶

NAMIBIA

January 2, 2020

Rundu, Kavango-East Region, Namibia

Arrest of Kaveto Joseph Mukoya and Ndjamba Joao Kandepwe who were carrying 4 elephant tusks and 2 hippopotamus teeth (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II). The first is a Namibian subject, the second is Angolan.²⁸

February 23, 2020

Windhoek, Khomas Region, Namibia

Arrest of Uaripi Sakaria in possession of 4 tusks or sections of tusks.²⁹

Week of 16 to 22 March 2020

Namibia

Seizure of 4 tusks or sections of tusks.³⁰

March 27, 2020

Namibia

Poaching of an elephant. Arrest of 2 suspects.³¹

The revenge of the older males



Elephants form a perfect society and it is unfortunate that due to an incompatibility of language they cannot express themselves as scholars and observers in the intermediate and plenary sessions of international conventions and in Councils of Ministers of the European Union.

Academics from Exeter, UK, in cooperation with Elephants for Africa, Botswana, have discovered a new gem in the conviviality of savannah elephants and their ability to transmit knowledge. Until then, the learning of the younger generation was considered to be essentially matriarchal. It is now proving to be equally patriarchal.

Older female elephants are the most effective and consistent in teaching calves and sub-adults the skills of living together and the reflex behaviour to repel natural predators. After instructing the herds on which direction to take in the day or night, they usually retreat to the back position of groups. In this position of enhanced surveillance, thanks to their chemical, seismic and acoustic sensors and simultaneous interpretation of the words and postures of all the members, they can make decisions and give the orders they deem necessary while looking behind and to the sides to ensure that lions or other natural predators of elephant calves are not on the lookout.

Between 10 and 20 years of age, sub-adult males leave the cocoon and the family nucleus. They disperse and venture out on their own on new routes. They no longer benefit from the collective protection of matriarchal herds. In the region studied by the experts, the average lifespan of elephants is currently estimated at 41 years for females and 24 years for males. This major difference can be explained in particular by the vulnerability of sub-adult males in situations of acute conflict with local human populations and by the new difficulties to which they are exposed in their search for food. It is therefore in the interest of males of different ages to assemble in opportunistic groups that they can leave or join without reprimand.

After having been mothered for one or two decades, they are then sired and the distribution of the herd changes completely. The older ones are usually at the front rank of the processions and the sub-adults in their contact enrich their abilities to navigate in unknown territories and to search patiently in all seasons for water points and fodder. They walk in single file sometimes possibly separated from each other by a hundred meters maximum in the sparsely vegetated acacias savannah habitat allowing them to have a good visual range. The paths opened in the savannah confirm that elephants are both an umbrella and a pillar species since porcupines, other herbivores and even bats subsequently frequent them.

For the young bulls, their elders are a mine of ecological information, underline the authors of this new research, who at the time of finalizing their work were overtaken by the announcement by the government of Botswana that several hundred elephants were once again going to be the target of ivory and trophy hunters. According to the authorities, only older bull elephants, considered redundant and useless for the future of the species, will be in the hunters' sights. "We argue that such selective hunting would not be sustainable, and removal of older mature bulls from the population could disrupt the wider bull society and the inter-generational flow of information concerning decades of accumulated ecological knowledge, such as effective navigation and location of critical resources." "We argue mature bulls occupy a similar role in male elephant society as old female matriarchs in breeding herds and require equal protection."²⁷

They want to turn the Okavango delta into the Texas of Southern Africa

ReconAfrica (Reconnaissance Energy Africa Ltd.) is a Canadian company based in Vancouver. It specialises in the hydraulic fracking of potential fossil resource deposits and the exploitation of shale gas. Its managers have alarming CVs. They have held key positions with oil majors. They boast the highest achievements such as having increased the production of the multinational Halliburton from 20,000 barrels per day to 100,000 in a few years or having exploited the oil field off the coast of Libya within BP. Nick Steinsberger is a pioneer in hydraulic fracking. He has been involved in the opening of over 700 shale gas drilling and commercial wells in the US and Canada.

In the strictest confidence, ReconAfrica has been granted permission to drill 25,000 km² in Namibia and 10,000 km² in Botswana and a 25-year production licence over any commercial discovery.

ReconAfrican believes, based on preliminary data it has been collecting on the ground for more than two years, that the area is promising. It compares it's potential to that of the Eagle Ford Basin in Texas, which the US Energy Agency says is one of the world's largest onshore oil and gas deposits.

A drilling platform is being revamped in Houston, Texas, and would be transported to Namibia in October if the international travel restrictions are left. It is expected to start drilling, injecting toxic fluids and fracturing the subsoil by the end of the year.

This is disastrous news, perhaps the worst in the year 2020 which is not stingy with it. The Okavango delta and adjacent savannahs provide a cross-border migration corridor for elephants from Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia and a home range for antelopes, painted wolves, rhinos, lions and zebras. Under normal, non-pandemic conditions, the region attracts tourists from all over the world and brings Botswana and Namibia 500 million US\$ a year. Local and international NGOs are caught off guard. Alliance Frack Free South Africa and Alliance Earth, academics, protected area managers are protesting against the lack of information and environmental assessment.

Already disrupted by international poaching, the reopening of legal elephant hunting, cyanobacteria and conflicts between wildlife and human activities, the Okavango delta is now threatened by the stranglehold of the North American extractive industry, water pollution and earthquakes resulting from the forced fracking up to several kilometres deep.

Behind the shale gas, industrial gold and diamond exploration is also outlining. For the past year, ReconAfrica has recruited to its board of directors Ms. Anna Tudela, former director of the Canadian company Goldcorp Inc. and Diamond Fields Resources Inc. In 2019, she was honoured with the Women in mining Aurora award. No chance that this woman of influence pleads the cause of the Ju/'hoansi, a people native to southern Africa who refuse to pile up consumers' goods, with a nomadic tradition and today confined to the north of the Kalahari Desert in the area claimed by ReconAfrica.

Ju/'hoansi, see "On the Trail" n°27 p.97.



WESTERN AFRICA

BENIN

February 2020

Alibori Department, Benin

Conviction of 2 traffickers in raw ivory to 6 months and one year in prison (see "On the Trail" n°26 p.85).³²



March 17, 2020

Parakou, Department of Borgou, Benin

- August 2017 : in the first instance, 4 years in prison, 2 of which are suspended and 3 years in prison for 14 ivory tips (24 kg).

- February 2018 : the sentence is reduced to 6 months on appeal.

- November 2019 : the Supreme Court overturned the judgment of the Court of Appeal.

- March 2020 : the Court of Appeal sets the sentence at 12 months imprisonment.

(See "On the Trail" n°16 p.80, n°17 p.97 and n°20 p.95).³³



LIBERIA

March 1, 2020

Gbarpolu County, Liberia. Border with Sierra Leone.

Morris Sokpo alias "County" had become the kingpin of the county. He had authority over a network of poachers and diamond prospectors operating in the Gola Forest National Park. Elephant tusks and a large calibre gun were seized from his home. He was handed over to the police by Jeremiah Gontee, an ex-hunter converted into an eco-guard. With 4 colleagues, it took him only 15 days to immobilise "County" when, according to him, the regular forces of Liberia had been chasing him for years. "The government owes us 1,000 US\$" he recalls.³⁴

CENTRAL AFRICA

GABON

January 3, 2020

Oyem, Woleu-Ntem Province, Gabon

Sentencing of Roddy W. A, Christian Mbongo, Arsène Nguialebe and Joël Michel Djetola to 5 years in prison, to pay a fine of 54,500 US\$ jointly and severally and to pay the equivalent of 8,500 US\$ in damages to the Water and Forests Administration for having transported and attempted to sell more than 120 kg of ivory in November 2019 in an organised gang (see "On the Trail" n°27 p.100).³⁵



January 8, 2020

Koulamoutou and Lastoursville, Ogooué-Lolo Province, Gabon

Seizure of 60 kg of ivory, a firearm, 458 calibre ammunition. Four elephants died as a result. The mastermind of the gang, Edouard Mambenda, was a teacher. His accomplices, Constantin Miyona and Jean Blaise Makita, were arrested in flagrante delicto for transporting seven tusks sliced into rice bags. Edouard was arrested shortly afterwards.³⁶

**January 14 and February 7, 2020
Makokou, Ogooué-Ivindo
Province, Gabon**

Arrest of Boris Nzingo Satoka alias Boston, Jean Valentin Mbondazokou and Régis Betsakame by agents of the judicial police and the Water and Forestry Department, supported by lawyers from the NGO Conservation Justice.

"At around 9 a.m., information about an ivory transaction in the town of Makokou (Ogooué-Ivindo province) was given by an anonymous source. Upon arrival at the indicated location, the team deployed by first securing the perimeter. During 4 hours of observation, the agents noticed several rounds of a Toyota vehicle in the colours of the city's taxis. At 3.30 p.m., this same taxi is going to reappear and enter the courtyard of a motel. Three individuals on board got out of it with a bag of rice whose content seemed doubtful. Without delay, the officers launched the assault. They immobilized the three suspects with their luggage. Their bag contained two tips of ivory." An anonymous source told the story to a journalist from the Gabonese Press Agency. The three men are in custody in the premises of the judicial police.

"Boston" had already been arrested with the support of Conservation Justice for trafficking in raw ivory in August 2013.

On February 7, they were sentenced to 2 years in prison, one of which was suspended, a fine of 3 million CFA francs (5,044 US\$) and the same amount in damages.³⁷



February 7, 2020

Koulamoutou and Lastoursville, Ogooué-Lolo province, Gabon

Sentencing of Makita Jean Blaise, Mambenda Edouard and Miyoma Jean Constantin to 3 years imprisonment, one of which is suspended, a fine of 14 million CFA francs or 23,539 US\$, of which 12 million francs are suspended and 5 million francs or 8,407 US\$ in damages for having transported to Koula-Moutou 7 ivory tusks cut into pieces weighing 56.7 kg in total. Their arrest had been strengthened by the NGO Conservation Justice.³⁸





January 6, 2020, Masai Mara, Kenya

© Elephant Aware Masai Mara



March 14, 2020, Mara Conservancy, Kenya

© DSM-T



Early January 2020, Mozambique

© Saving The Survivors



March 17, 2020, Moanda, Gabon

© App



February 10, 2020, Kempton Park, South Africa

© SAPS



February 14 and 15, 2020, Franceville, Gabon

© Conservation Justice



March 1, 2020, Gbarpolu County, Liberia

© Liberian Observer

February 14 and 15, 2020

Franceville, Province of Haut-Ogooué, Gabon

Gregoire Mapila, a retired teacher and now an ambulance driver, carried in his backpack and in a paint pot 2 tusks cut into 10 pieces (25.643 kg). He was about to haggle over them in a restaurant. The Pan-African news agency says the transaction was broken up by the police, the NGO Conservation Justice and Water and Forests agents. An accomplice, Frédéric Mazou was arrested the next day in the province. Mapila has already “worked” with Alassane Sawadogo, a trafficker already convicted in Libreville and in detention since October 2019.³⁹

February 18, 2020

Makokou, Ogooué-Ivindo Province, Gabon

An old hand in trafficking was caught in the act. In a black bag he was carrying 2 tusks cut in 4 (5.6 kg). Mohamed Sany had been tracked for 5 years and had always managed to sneak in. His arrest was carried out by the DGR (Direction Générale des Recherches) and Waters and Forests. The NGO Conservation Justice provided support.⁴⁰

February 2020

Libreville, Estuary Province, Gabon

Sentencing of Yeno Matamba Dan and Mougala Cédric, who was a soldier, to 3 years in prison, one of which is suspended, and to pay jointly and severally 2 million CFA francs or 3,360 US\$ in damages. They had been arrested on January 17, in flagrante delicto for transporting 2 tusks.⁴¹



February 2020

Libreville, Estuary Province, Gabon

Sentencing of Innocent Djidjou of Cameroonian nationality to 5 years in prison, 2 of which were suspended and 3 million CFA francs (5,000 US\$) in damages. He was arrested on October 2, 2019 with 6 tusks (see “On the Trail” n°27 p.100).⁴²



March 17, 2020

Moanda, Haut-Ogooué Province, Gabon

Joseph Kah Puh was carrying an oddly shaped bag of rice. And with good reason, there were 6 ivory tips inside. A joint operation by the police of Franceville and Waters and Forests agents, with the support of Conservation Justice.⁴³

March 2020

Gabon

Two tusks in the hands of 3 men who are in the net of justice thanks to the gendarmerie with the reinforcement of AALF (Appui à l'Application des Lois sur la Faune et la Flore).⁴⁴

ASIA

CHINA

CHONGQING MUNICIPALITY

January 17, 2020

Chongqing International Airport, Chongqing Municipality, China

And a necklace (24 g) in the belongings of a Chinese tourist from Thailand.⁴⁵

January 26 and 30, 2020

Chongqing Municipality, China

- Seizure of one worked ivory (26 g) in a postal parcel from the United States of America.
- Seizure of 2 hippopotamus tusks (teeth) in a parcel from France (1398.3 g).⁴⁶

SHANGHAI MUNICIPALITY

January 5, 2020

Shanghai Pudong International Airport, Pudong District, Autonomous Municipality Shanghai, China

Seizure of 11 bracelets in the luggage of 2 Chinese passengers coming from Africa. “We wanted to give gifts to the family for the spring festival.” 440 g.⁴⁷

FUJIAN PROVINCE

Early January 2020

Xiamen, Fujian Province, China

Seizure of a carved effigy from a raw tusk. 670 g. The parcel came from Italy.⁴⁸



GANSU PROVINCE

Early January 2020

Lanzhou Zhongchuan International Airport, Gansu Province, China

Seizure of 21 worked ivories. 775.61 g.⁴⁹

Early January 2020

Lanzhou Zhongchuan International Airport, Gansu Province, China

Seizure from a passenger coming from Bangkok of 5 ivory bracelets weighing a total of 215.5g.⁵⁰

GUANGDONG PROVINCE

January 6, 2020

Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

10 worked ivories on 10 passengers disembarking from Cambodia. Total weight: 338 g.⁵¹

February 8, 2020

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Guangdong Province, China

Seizure from Addis Ababa of 17 worked ivories. 482,5 g.⁵²

7 kg of bracelets, necklaces, statuettes, other worked ivories seized in China between January 1 and March 31, 2020



**February 2020
Guangzhou-Baiyun International Airport,
Guangdong Province, China**

Seizure in a passenger's luggage of a dozen worked ivories weighing a total of 235 g.⁵³

GUANGXI AUTONOMOUS REGION

**January 7, 2020
Dongxing Port, Guangxi Autonomous Region,
China. Border with Viet Nam.**

The first of the year! Seizure of 70 worked ivories crammed in plastic bags and stuck on the elephant man. His silhouette and ample coat intrigued the customs officers.⁵⁴

GUIZHOU PROVINCE

**March 19, 2020
Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China**

Seizure of 13 worked ivories. 490 g.⁵⁵

HEBEI PROVINCE

**Early January 2020
Tianjin, Hebei Province, China**

New seizure by postal customs of painting scrolls with ivory tips from Japan. 532 g. Tianjin customs seized 40 kg in 2019.⁵⁶



**Early January 2020
Tianjin Binhai International Airport, Hebei
Province, China**

Seizure in a parcel declared as containing fish oil and coming from the United States of 2 pairs of earrings and an ivory bracelet.⁵⁷

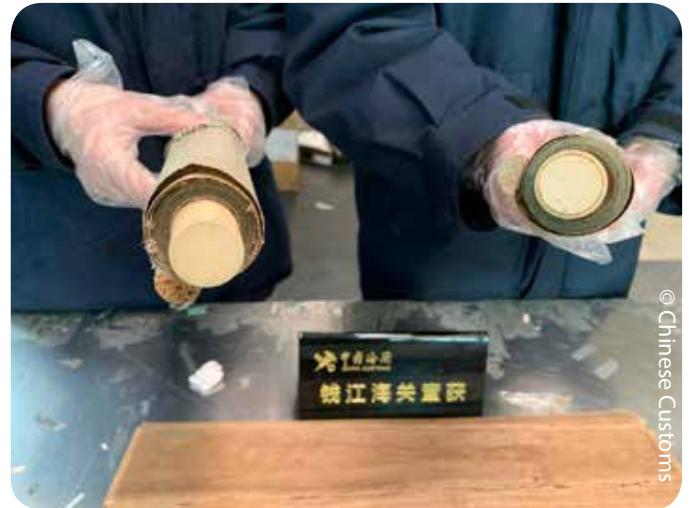
**Beginning of March 2020
Tianjin, Hebei Province, China**

Seizure in a package from the UK of 2 worked ivories declared as collectible pewter spoons.⁵⁹





Early January 2020, Tianjin, China



March 26, 2020, Hangzhou, China



January 5, 2020, Shanghai Pudong, China



February 18, 2020, Suzhou, China



March 18, 2020, Suzhou, China



January 7, 2020, Dongxing Port, China



JIANGSU PROVINCE

January 12, 2020

Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, China

Seizure of several worked ivories.⁶⁰

February 18, 2020

Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China

A fan: 115 g.⁶¹

March 18, 2020

Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China

A first! Seizure of 2 corkscrews with ivory handle decorated and engraved in a package from the United Kingdom.⁶²

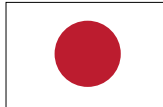


LIAONING PROVINCE

January 19, 2020

Dandong, Liaoning Province, China. Border with North Korea.

Seizure of an ivory pearl necklace from Japan. 15 g.⁶³



SHANDONG PROVINCE

January 2, 2020

Jinan Yaoqiang International Airport, Shandong Province, China

Seizure of a 57-g worked ivory item in the possession of a passenger coming from Seoul.⁶⁴

January 15, 2020

Qingdao Liuting International Airport, Shandong Province, China

Seizure of 2 painting scrolls with ivory tips at the arrival of a flight from Tokyo. 158 g.⁶⁵



January 20, 2020

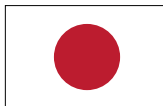
Qingdao Liuting International Airport, Shandong Province, China

Seizure from a passenger disembarking from Hong Kong of 11 worked ivories hidden in coffee cans and weighing a total of 347g.⁶⁶

January 20, 2020

Jinan Yaoqiang International Airport, Shandong Province, China

Seizures of 2 worked ivories from Thailand and Japan (19 and 18 g) and one elephant leather goods (196 g).⁶⁷



SICHUAN PROVINCE

January 3, 2020

Chengdu-Shuangliu International Airport, Sichuan Province, China

17 worked ivories in the luggage of a Chinese citizen from Ethiopia. 469 g.⁶⁸

March 23, 2020

Chengdu-Shuangliu International Airport, Sichuan Province, China

The X-rays had however clearly identified 2 round things presumed to be ivory bracelets in the suitcase of the passenger disembarking from the Ethiopian Airlines flight from Addis Ababa. When the man was asked to open it, the things were gone. At the insistence of customs officials, he admitted that he had removed them from his suitcase and carried them with him.⁶⁹

ZHEJIANG PROVINCE

January 7, 2020

Yangshan Port, Zhejiang Province, China



Seizure by the seconded Shanghai customs of 26 piano keys and worked ivories attached to 8 keys. The keys were "made of wood" according to the accompanying document. At the end of December, the same customs authorities had seized 4 worked ivories with a total weight of 3.9 kg in 4 parcels from Japan.⁷⁰

January 20, 2020

Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, China

Seizure of a painting scroll with ivory tips. Probably coming from Japan.⁷¹

February 28, 2020

Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, China



Yes ma'am, yes sir, these are still Japanese made painting scrolls that you have seized from a parcel post. Weight of the 8 ivory tips: 171.23 g.⁷²



February 28, 2020

Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, China



Are the recipients print lovers or ivory hungry? Another painting scroll seized in a postal parcel from Japan. 39 g.⁷³

March 26, 2020

Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China

Seizure of 3 painting scrolls with ivory tips.⁷⁴

INDIA

January 6, 2020 Neriyamangalam, Ernakulam District, State of Kerala, India

The male had been electrocuted and Santhosh had sawed off his tusks. The forest officers found the booty at his home. Arrest and seizure.⁷⁵



January 10, 2020 Sakleshpur, Hassan District, State of Karnataka, India

Arrest of Gangaprasad, Unil Gaur, Silass Barl, Birkumar, Babulal Singh and Sancharornng aged between 19 and 45, all farm workers. They were trying to sell the 2 tusks of an elephant killed in a tea plantation.⁷⁶

January 10, 2020 Bangalore, Urban Bangalore District, State of Karnataka, India

Seizure in a van in the middle of the afternoon of a tiger canine and 6 kg of raw ivory. Arrest of Syed Siraj, Mujbeer Rehman, Gabriel Benedict and Santosh K.M.⁷⁷



January 14, 2020 Thrippunithura, Ernakulam District, State of Kerala, India

Seizure of 2 tusks, 1,046 g and 1,226 g, in the hands of Roshan Ram Kumar, Shebin Sasi, Midhun T. M., Sanoj T. A. and Shemeer K. R. aged between 26 and 36, knives and a banknote counting machine. One of the tusks was half-worked. Roshan says he inherited it from his father. The police doubt it.⁷⁸

January 16, 2020 Thalavadi, Erode District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

The elephant was electrocuted. On Friday night she wanted to approach a field of coconut trees, or it was by chance that she passed by a field of coconut trees. 50 villages are adjacent to the forest and defend themselves from wildlife intrusion with electricity.⁷⁹



January 27, 2020
Meppadi, Wayanad District, Kerala State, India
Seizure of 2 elephant tusks (7.85 kg) from a former president of the Bisonvalley Panchayat (community council). The raw ivory is believed to come from the carcass of a 30-year-old elephant that was killed 3-4 days ago in an inter-species fight. Peer Muhammed Basha with the help of 3 accomplices had appropriated the tusks in the hope of trading them. Meanwhile, he had buried them under a tree.⁸¹

REPEATED OFFENSE / GANG February 9, 2020 Durgaprasad, Cuttack District, State of Odisha, India

Babuli Mahalik is for a while under lock and key. His lawyers had so far managed to get this famous poacher released on bail. He takes credit for the death of about 20 elephants. He is 45 years old. His speciality is shooting. He is a purist. Automatic weapons are not his thing. He uses handmade rifles. He was betrayed by anonymous information and taken prisoner on Saturday night in his home village after a difficult shadowing. The cops were forced to disguise themselves as beggars or street vendors and are now questioning him about the beheading of 2 bull elephants in a forest near Athagarh.⁸²

February 11, 2020 Yeshwanthpur, Bangalore District, State of Karnataka, India

Sounder Pandiyan alias Selva Shivaji and his sidekick Kundan were trying to find a buyer around 8:30 this morning near the Ullas theatre. The police stopped them and found "elephant tusks" in their bag, without further details.⁸³

February 12, 2020 Jalpaiguri, Jalpaiguri District, State of West Bengal State, India

Seven pieces of ivory with a total weight of 13 kg, overestimated by customs at Rs.12,900,000 (180,068 US\$) or 13,000 US\$/kg.⁸⁴

February 13, 2020 Titia Chhak, Mayurbhanj District, State of Odisha, India

A tusk weighs 700 g and is 45 cm long. The other tusk weighs 600 g and is 38 cm long. They are respectively estimated at between 50,000 and 70,000 rupees or between 690 and 960 US\$ (1,270/kg US\$). The victim was a male aged between 8 and 9 years. Five arrests.⁸⁵

February 23, 2020
Sikar, Sikar District, State of Rajasthan, India
Arrest of 4 men aged between 30 and 50 years old. They were in possession of 2 tusks, 3.5 kg in total, and an elephant's jaw.⁸⁶

February 26, 2020

Vadodara, Vadodara District, State of Gujarat, India

Arrest of Vinayak Purohit. He was caught in the act of selling 2 tusks (2,5 kg each and 1 m long). Purohit, a truck driver by profession, claims to have inherited them from a grandfather coming back from Africa in 1964. The WCCB's sleuths and forestry officers find this hard to believe. Genetic analysis is underway.⁸⁷

February 28, 2020

Talavadi, Chamarajanagar District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Two males in their twenties fell dead against the illegal electric fence surrounding the M. Palanisamy's field. He is now on the run.⁸⁸



February 28, 2020

Karalavadi, Erode District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

Two elephants are fatally electrocuted by a fence surrounding a field of sugar cane covering an area of one hectare or so, in the immediate vicinity of the tiger reserve. The 2 elephants were a 6-year-old male and a 5-year-old female. They were transported inside the reserve with the help of a building site machinery and buried. The farmer ran away. The fence was clandestine and connected to the public network. The next day, the local forestry services officer was relieved of his duties for not having organised patrols and taken sufficient measures in this sector known for conflicts between wildlife and agriculture.⁸⁹



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February 29, 2020

Gudiyattam, Vellore District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

S. Pichtandi had illegally installed an electric fence around his rice field to protect it from wild boars. But today it was a 25-year-old tusker who was struck. The peasant first covered the corpse with branches and dismantled the fence, then the next day mobilized Ashok Kumar, a local entrepreneur who owns a bulldozer, and a worker, Selvaraj Arjun, who came to dig a pit in the early morning and bury the pachyderm. How can anyone think to be discreet when burying an elephant with a bulldozer near a village? The threesome was given away. Dogs were sniffing for days above the grave. Agents from the Forestry Department and the Revenue Department turned up and got hold of Selvaraj Arjun, who told the whole story. His two confederates had vanished into thin air. The pit was reopened and the elephant autopsied. S. Pichtandi surrendered on 3 March. Ashok Kumar had been arrested in the meantime. They were charged with several offences under the Wildlife Protection Act and placed in custody. It cannot be ruled out that the gravediggers may have planned to recover the elephant's rotproof tusks at some point after an indefinite period.⁹⁰



March 3, 2020

Halli, Chamarajanagar District, State of Karnataka, India

A bull elephant, about 25 years old, died from electrocution in a maize field. He had ears of corn in his mouth that he had just picked. The field is 1 km from the forest. The steel wire tightened a few centimetres from the ground was directly connected to a public high-voltage line. It was a mortal danger for the fauna and for human beings.⁹¹



GANG

March 9, 2020

Sarjapur, Bangalore-Urban District, State of Karnataka, India

Another raw ivory transaction that fails near a bus stop thanks to a patrol intervening on intuition or information. Seizure of 2 tusks. Arrest of Nagaraj V. from Tamil Nadu. His accomplice, a certain Sinnaraju, is wanted.⁹²

March 18, 2020

Tangi Forest, Odisha State, India

Alerted by locals, the forestry agents rushed into the forest and could only witness the noisy agony of an elephant lying on the ground with a flabbergasted partner at his bedside. The victim is said to have eaten a poison. In the same place 3 months ago, an elephant had died for reasons that have not been officially elucidated.⁹³



INDONESIA

January 15, 2020

Aceh Jaya Regency, Aceh Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

The police investigation after the discovery of 5 elephant skeletons in an oil palm plantation revealed the presence of a fence tapped to the grid and designed to electrocute elephants considered as pests. "Several people will be prosecuted" according to Bima Nugraha Putra, the local police chief.⁹⁴



January 26, 2020

Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

Rescue of a bull elephant, about 5 years old, entangled in a trap around a forest concession of the company PT Arara Abadi, a forestry subsidiary of Asia Pulp & Paper. He had managed to escape but was dragging a skein of nylon threads with him. His fore-right leg was deeply cut. Anaesthetised at 5.45 p.m., he was released, treated and put back on his feet 3 hours later. His herd was waiting for him nearby. Joint operation by the BKSDA and specialists from the Tesso Nilo and Leuser parks.⁹⁵



February 10, 2020

Koto Pait Beringin, Bengkalis Regency, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

Discovery after a tip-off of a 40-year-old elephant inside a forest concession of the Chinese conglomerate Asia Pulp & Paper. Death occurred a few days ago. It is attributed to gastroenteritis or a chronic digestive disease. The hypothesis of poisoning is not discussed. The corpse had been in secret buried on the spot with the means of PT Arara Abadi, a subsidiary of Asia Pulp & Paper (see event of January 26, 2020). The company's Arara Abadi plantations and concessions are close to Sakai, an indigenous tribe who, according to the timber and paper magnates, "live in remote areas, far from technology, modernisation and access to education". "We hope to improve their standard of living by offering them work."⁹⁶

February 14, 2020

Minas Elephant Care Centre, Siak Regency, Riau Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

It was death after 2 months of treatment for a 3 year old calf elephant that was deeply wounded in the legs after being captured by a trap in the forest in Tesso Nilo Park. He had aggravated his wounds and suffering by trying to free himself. He was disincarcerated several days later by rangers and vets. He refused to drink milk. He was being fed intravenously and with vitamins. On arrival in Minas, he weighed about 100 kg.⁹⁷



End of February 2020

Bireuen Regency, Aceh Province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia

An *elephas maximus sumatranus* whose front left foot was caught in a trap was disincarcerated and urgently transferred to the Saree Elephant Training Centre. His recovery is not assured. He is badly injured. He would have remained at least 15 days captive in the metal trap set by poachers.⁹⁸



MALAYSIA

FAMILY AFFAIRS

January 5 and 10, 2020

Luasong and Tawau, State of Sabah, Malaysia

Hendrikus Pale and Anastasia Daton worked in an oil palm plantation. They are of Indonesian nationality. Four pygmy elephant tusks were seized from their home. They admit that they bought them for 1,500 to 2,000 rupees, or 360 to 480 US\$, in the hope of selling them for more in their home countries. They were sentenced to 4 years in prison.¹⁰⁰



February 26, 2020

Sandakan, State of Sabah, Malaysia

Sentencing of Supriadi Juman to 18 months in prison and a fine of 12,000 US\$ for holding 2 elephant tusks in his home. An Indonesian national, he wanted to transform raw ivory into necklaces. Juman's dirty dealings were uncovered by the investigation into the poaching of an elephant in October 2019.¹⁰¹



Kinabatangan District; Sukau; Deramakot Forest Reserve and Banjaran Bagahak, State of Sabah, Malaysia

The slow extermination of the pygmy elephants (*Elephas maximus borneensis*) on the island of Borneo has been going on since the beginning of the year.

- An anonymous source informs, with photos in support, of the burying of an elephant corpse inside an oil palm plantation. The plantation management failed to report the suspicious death to the Sabah Wildlife Department for the protection of fauna and flora.

- Saturday 8 February. Discovery of a dead adult female aged around 30-35 years old in the protected Deramakot Forest. After an autopsy, the veterinarians conclude that she was acutely poisoned. Blood flowed from the mouth, ears and anus.



- Sunday 9 February (the next day). Discovery of dead adult female in an oil palm plantation in Bagahak 200 km from Deramakot. Death by poisoning is confirmed by Christina Liew, Sabah state environment minister.



The death toll (4 or 5) has inconsistencies in the number, age and sex of the victims. The last parameter is important. Only bull elephants have tusks in Asia and in some cases, behind the poisonings, ivory trafficking may be hidden. The smuggling of tusks between Malaysian Sabah and Indonesian Kalimantan proves it (see "On the Trail" n°15 p.103, n°18 p.102, n°26 p.94 and n°27 p.108).

We will therefore stick to the statement by Christina Liew, according to whom since the beginning of the year the death toll has been 2 adult females, 1 adult male, 1 calf and a 2 year old bull calf.⁹⁹

MYANMAR

January 24, 2020

Sinma Forest Reserve, Patheingyi District, Ayeyarwady Region, Myanmar



For lack of ivory, the skin is taken.

A new skinning of a poached elephant is noted in the region.

It is the first of the year. In addition, the trunk has been cut. The unfortunate 28-year-old elephant was killed by poisoned arrows. The barbarians fled when they heard the patrol approaching.¹⁰²

NEPAL

January 23, 2020

Lagankhel, Lalitpur District, Bagmati Pradesh Province, Nepal

Tarakanta Chaudhary stumbled upon a security check while carrying a tusk. Before presenting him to the Forestry Division, police questioned him to find out whether he had poached the elephant himself or bought the tusk.⁸⁰

SRI LANKA

January 20, 2020

Polonnaruwa, North Central Province, Sri Lanka

An elephant died. He was between 20 and 25 years old and lived in the Wasgamuwa reserve away from the towns, farmers and conflicts with men. But the men still came to give him a hard time. He was shot dead.¹⁰³

January 24, 2020

Kataragama, Uva Province, Sri Lanka



Death of a baby elephant near the compost bin of the preserved forest. Poisoning is suspected.¹⁰⁴



Elephas maximus borneensis

February 18, 2020
Batumulla, Central Province, Sri Lanka

Tragic death of 2 elephants, electrocuted by an agricultural fence.¹⁰⁵



VIET NAM

March 22, 2020
Dien Hong, Nghe An Province, Viet Nam

Seizure around 1.30 a.m. on the A1 highway by a patrol acting on information of 225 kg of raw ivory divided into 65 sections in a truck coming from Vinh and heading towards Hanoi (300 km). The driver, Nguyen Van Hung, and his passenger, Le Huu Truong, are under lock and key.¹⁰⁶

EUROPE

GERMANY

Between 8 and 10 January 2020
Frankfurt am Main International Airport, State of Hesse, Germany

Seizure in the hand luggage of an African “tourist” of a worked elephant tusk.¹⁰⁷

SPAIN

Early January 2020
Sabadell, Autonomous Community of Catalonia, Spain

5,000 € (5,600 US\$) on the Internet. Seizure of a pair of raw ivory tusks mounted on a wooden base and skilfully staged. Not enough to be considered as carved tusks to be sold legally under strict conditions.¹⁰⁸

Early January 2020
Palencia, Autonomous Community of Castile and León, Spain

Seizure of 9 worked objects made of elephant ivory and one object made of hippopotamus ivory (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II). Seizure of an elephant ivory letter-opener in the shape of a crocodile. Three arrests, one woman aged 28 and 2 men aged 65 and 68. All the objects were for sale via the Internet without any document attesting to their legal origin.¹⁰⁹

End of January 2020
Avilés and Salinas, Community of Asturias, Spain

Seizures by the Guardia Civil of a chess set in elephant ivory offered for sale for 2,000 € (2,200 US\$) and 2 sculptures representing birds 20 and 25 cm high in hippopotamus ivory (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) offered for sale for 550 € (600 US\$). The 34 ivories worked were lacking certificates of origin and dating.

Last year, the Guardia Civil de Gijón arrested 8 people and seized 45 elephant ivories, 2 hippopotamus ivories, an item made of rhinoceros horn, a sea turtle shell, 8 brown bear claws and a primate skull.¹¹⁰ Gijón, see “On the Trail” n°21 p. 11.

Early February 2020
Elche and Torreveja, Province of Alicante, Valencian Community, Spain

They were 4 selling elephant ivory items via the Internet. Two statuettes, a tusk carved in the shape of a crocodile, a bracelet and a set of dominoes were seized by the Guardia Civil. Their value is estimated at 4,200 €, i.e. 4,630 US\$.¹¹¹

OPERATION DENTINA
Beginning of March 2020
Province of León, Autonomous Community of Castilla y León, Spain

Seizure at an antique shop of 113 worked ivories and 4 tusks of undetermined origin with a commercial value of 240,000 € (265,000 US\$). Carbon 14 dating on several samples revealed that the ivory is post-1947 and the items cannot be considered antiques. Therefore they cannot be commercially exploited.¹¹²

OPERATION FILDISH
Mid-March 2020
Province of Huelva, Autonomous Community of Andalusia, Spain, and Portugal

Seizure at the shops of an antique dealer from Hueva, and in Lisbon and Porto (Portugal), of 355 worked ivories, netsukes, statuettes, dice, pens, cigarette smokers, 2 raw tusks, a large assortment of colonial relics lying around in attics or fake old things worked in today’s workshops. The cumulative value of the seizure exceeds 120,000 € (132,000 US\$). The articles without certificates of origin and date were sold via the internet and sent by courier from Portugal to a dozen Spanish provinces including Mallorca. Eight people are caught in the net in Spain and Portugal. The investigation, which began in June 2019, was completed thanks to the pooling of information between the Spanish and Portuguese services in coordination with Europol.¹¹³

ITALY

January 28, 2020
Tromello, Province of Pavia, Region of Lombardy, Italy

He was trailing towards Milan with a 156 cm tusk on the back seat of the car. The Albanian subject is unfavourably known to the police. He lives in Broni, in the province of Pavia.¹¹⁴

February 26, 2020
Pordenone, Province of Pordenone, Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, Italy

On sale on eBay for 1,900 € (2,100 US\$) of an ivory crocodile presented as dating from the 60s and coming from Sudan. It was visited by Carabinieri. Without identity papers, it was seized until further notice. Its owner is summoned to prove that it pre-dates 1947 and that it can be honoured as an antique.¹¹⁵



February 28, 2020, Talavadi, India



March 3, 2020, Halli, India



January 24, 2020, Sinma Forest Reserve, Myanmar



February 18, 2020, Batumulla, Sri Lanka



March 22, 2020, Dien Hong, Viet Nam



February 12, 2020, Jalpaiguri, India



Early February 2020, Elche and Torrevieja, Spain



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Mid-March 2020, Province of Huelva, Spain

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