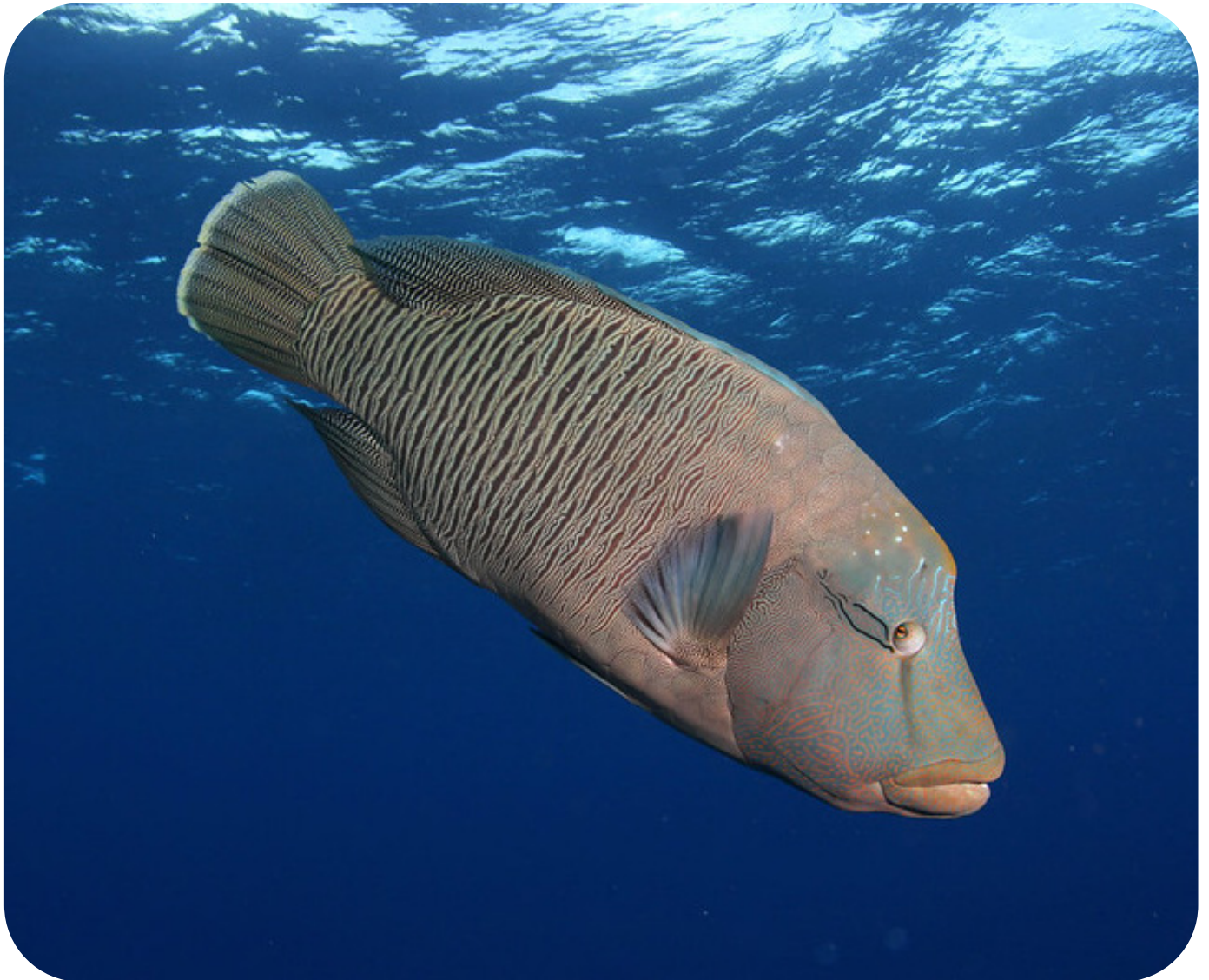
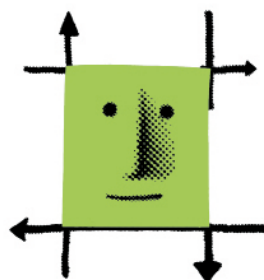


ON_{the} TRAIL

The defaunation bulletin
n°29. Events from the 1st April to the 30th June, 2020



Quarterly information and analysis report on animal poaching and smuggling
Published on March 22, 2021
Original version in French



ROBIN DES BOIS

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NOTE AND ADVICE TO READERS

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

“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. No continent is spared.

- A single event may refer to several species (e.g. simultaneous seizure of ivory, bear bile and snake skins); it is then analysed in the “Multi-species” chapter, with the exception of events that bring together the following species and which have their own chapter:
 - Pangolins + rhinoceroses + elephants
 - Elephants + rhinoceroses
 - Rhinoceroses + elephants + felines
 - Multi-species reptiles (simultaneous seizure of several reptile species)
 - Marine and freshwater multispecies (simultaneous seizure of several aquatic species)
- Geographic regions at the continental scale are based on the UN classification.
- The main sources are indicated at the end of each event. Each event reported and/or analysed is from a recension of one or more articles or press releases. This critical review eliminates inconsistencies in date, price and quantity if necessary, and if possible mistakes or looseness about the description of the species. The original source(s) are sometimes enriched by cross-checking and additional information from previous issues of “On the Trail”, by Robin des Bois’ investigations and archives, and by international bibliography and iconography. Robin des Bois thanks the Species Survival Network, the NGO Save the Elephants and the Eagle Network for their alerts which enrich the daily monitoring carried out by the “On the Trail” team.
- When a species is CITES-listed, the Appendix is specified after its scientific name.

CITES APPENDICES

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

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

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

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

PICTOS



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



Judgment and sanction. Condemnation, acquittal, fine...



Trapping. Poaching by jaw trap, snare ...



Poisoning. By chemicals, pesticides and medicines: cyanide, carbofuran, diclofenac, M99 ...



Full moon. Moonlight poaching

ACRONYMS

EAGLE : Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement

ENV : Education for Nature – Vietnam

IBAMA : Instituto brasileiro do meio ambiente e dos recursos naturais renováveis

IEW : Iran Environment and Wildlife Watch

KWS : Kenya Wildlife Service

LAGA : Last Great Ape Organization

OIC : Orangutan Information Centre

PROFEPA : Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente

SAPS : South African Police Service

SPCA : Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

SSB : Sashastra Seema Bal

SVW : Save Vietnam Wildlife

SWT : Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

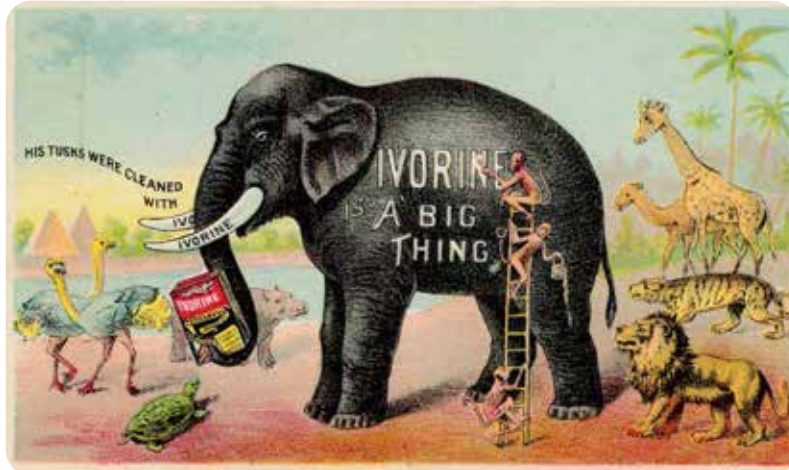
USFWS : United States Fish and Wildlife Service

WCCB : Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

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IVORY AND IVORIES



Advertising for the soap "Ivoryine", 1870-1900. Source Boston Public Library

NORTHERN AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

April 27, 2020

Washington, Columbia District, United States of America

Prohibition in the political capital of the United States of America on the sale by any means of worked or raw ivory of elephant, hippopotamus, mammoth, mastodon, narwhal, whale and other cetaceans. A few exceptions amputate the law without disfiguring it. Objects proven to be more than 100 years old and containing less than 20% of ivory may be sold in antique shops or by auction. Washington D.C. joins New York.

Ivory in Washington D.C., see "On the Trail" n°4 p. 84, n°18 p. 96, n°26 p. 87.

Planet Forward, June 16, 2020 ; Antiques and The Arts, April 14, 2020.¹²³

EASTERN ASIA

CHINA

Early April 2020

Tianjin, Hebei Province, China



Seizure in 2 EMS courier parcels from Japan of 8 ivory necklaces and 2 sperm whale tooth slices. The recipients were fined 11,000 yuan or 1,550 US\$.

Chinese Customs, April 17, 2020.¹²⁴

End of June 2020

Qinghai Province, China

Dismantling of a purchasing, transport and sales network of ornaments and jewellery made of rhino horn, white elephant ivory and red hornbill helmet ivory, more than 3,000 items with a value exceeding 800,000 yuan or 112,000 US\$. 22 suspects were arrested in 14 provinces and in Beijing. The investigation was conducted by the Qinghai police.

China News, June 23, 2020.¹²⁵

WESTERN ASIA

TURKEY

Mid-April 2020

Ankara, Ankara Province, Central Anatolia Region, Turkey

Seizure in a sweatshop of 124 rosaries made of elephant, mammoth, sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*, Appendix I) and rhino horn ivory.

CNN Türk Haber, April 16, 2020.¹²⁶

AFRICA

TANZANIA

April, May, August 2020

Morogoro Region, Enguserosambu, Ngorongoro District, Arusha Region and Serengeti District, Mara Region, Tanzania



- Eight anti-poaching officers including TANAPA (Tanzania National Parks Authority) rangers are under arrest. They accepted more than 2 million shillings (900 US\$) from poachers in Mikumi National Park and let them go.

- Arrest in the middle of the night of 4 suspected poachers in possession of an AK47. Two Tanzanians were handcuffed but their 2 Kenyan accomplices managed to escape. They were about to break into a reserve in the Ngorongoro district (see "On the Trail" n°12 p. 80, n°14 p. 78, n°15 p. 76, n°19 p. 121, n°25 p. 80). The police and NGOs fear that the ivory and rhino horn syndicates benefit from the Covid-19 chaos.

- Sentencing of 9 poachers to 20 years in prison each and 4 others to one year in prison for repeated poaching in 2018 and 2019 inside the Serengeti National Park and the Ikorongo Forest Reserve. Among the species living in these protected areas are gazelles, zebras, giraffes, elephants and black rhinos.

Xinhuanet, April 29, 2020 ; The Citizen, August 20, 2020 ; The Guardian, May 13, 2020.¹

ZIMBABWE

April-May 2020

Zimbabwe

The CNRG (Centre for Natural Resource Governance) points out that since the implementation of the anti-Covid measures, poaching has rebounded. "In January and February, 3 elephants were killed by poachers, in March and April, at least 7 elephants have been lost". "Two white rhinos were killed in April and their deaths were not reported publicly." Lions and buffaloes are also indirect victims of the Covid according to the CNRG. The Justice for Wildlife Commission notes that poachers are taking advantage of the reduction of ground patrols and the focusing of the forces of law on the application of anti-Covid measures. "For the poachers, these are ideal opportunities for exploitation." The absence of tourists, who normally act as auxiliary guards, is an additional advantage for poachers.

New Zimbabwe, May 25, 2020.²

AFRICA-AMERICA

SENEGAL-UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

GANG

April 2-3 and July 1st, 2020

Dakar, Dakar Region, Senegal - State of New Jersey and New York, United States of America

Extradition to the United States of America of the Guinean citizen Amara Chérif alias Bamba Issiaka. As detailed in "On the Trail" n°25 p. 81, he joined a Liberian citizen Moazu Kroma arrested in Uganda in June 2019 and immediately extradited to the United States of America. The 2 men are involved in a massive traffic of rhino horns and elephant tusks between Africa and the United States of America and Africa and Asia via the United States of America. Amara Chérif, 54, was heard the same day he arrived in New York City by a Judge of the Southern District. He crossed the Atlantic on a plane chartered by the American justice system. He appeared before the same judge by video conference on July 1st because of the Covid-19 lockdown and was charged with trafficking in protected species of wild fauna and money laundering. Two other gang members, Mansur Mohamed Surur alias Mansour and Abdi Hussein Ahmed alias Abu Khadi, are on the run. The DEA (US Drug Enforcement Administration) suspects them in addition of heroin trafficking. Dakaractu, July 2, 2020.³

ASIA

CHINA

April 17 and 23 and June 12, 2020

Jiangmen, Guangdong Province, China

Guangdong Customs, with the assistance of police in Jiangmen, Guangzhou, Foshan and Shenzhen, searched vein after vein a mine of ivory and rhino horns and seized 413 kg of white gold and 28 kg of brown gold (keratin). The apotheosis was undoubtedly this search in a luxurious residence where 23 raw tusks, sections of worked tusks, statuettes, thousands of pearls in necklaces, bracelets or rosaries were meticulously gathered by masked and gloved police and customs officers. The nicknamed Li Moushen seems to be the conductor. The ivories and rhinoceros horns or horn objects came, with few exceptions, from South Africa by sea. The investigation continues. Computers, accounting books and other incriminating evidence have been seized. Chinese Customs, June 23, 2020.⁴



RHINOCEROSES



White rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*), South Africa. Picture Bernard Dupont

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

The 3 Asian rhinoceros species are in Appendix I: the Indian rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, the Sumatran rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, and the Javan rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus*.

"On the Trail" n°29
Black market horn quotation from media or official sources
The values were estimated at the time of the seizures

Value of 1kg of raw horn

Continent	Country	US\$/kg	Ref. (year)
Africa	South Africa	30,000	8 (2019)
	Eswatini	68,300	25 (2017)
Asia	China	34,950	29 (2020)

EASTERN AFRICA

MOZAMBIQUE

End of May 2020

Mozambique

A young female white rhinoceros has recovered from a poaching attempt. She had been shot 2 months earlier and suffered a fracture. Saving the Survivors, May 29, 2020.¹



ZIMBABWE

End of May 2020

Bubye Valley Conservancy, Matabeleland South Province, Zimbabwe

They had killed and dehorned a rhinoceros on May 4, 2019. They were arrested on January 23, 2020 (see "On the Trail" n°28 p. 93). Nhlanhla Nkomo, a former police inspector, Owen Nyoni, a former ZimParks ranger, and Stanley Katandiza, a Zambian, were sentenced to 9 years in prison. They have to pay 120,000 US\$ to the State to compensate for the rhino's economic loss. The Herald, May 20, 2020.²



SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

April 2020

South Africa

In South Africa, the Covid-19 lockdown is said to have slowed rhino poaching. In the Kruger Park, 5 poaching incidents were recorded in April 2020 compared to 46 in April 2019. "We believe that the closure of our borders and the complete shutdown of international air travel removed the key-way that syndicates used to supply horn to transit and consumer countries," says Barbara Creecy, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries. Independent Online, August 21, 2020.³

April 22, 2020

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

On April 28, 2019, Naomi Engelbrecht, president of the regional courts in the province, ordered the closure of the Skukuza court and the transfer of all its existing caseload to the Mhala court. According to her, the Skukuza Regional Court has no legal basis. Its establishment had been announced by Mrs Edna Molewa, then South Africa's Minister of Environment, and was never challenged by the Department of Justice (see "On the Trail" n°17, p. 75). The Skukuza "rhino" court had, until it ceased to operate, proved remarkably effective, a fact which was hailed by the rangers, the management of the Kruger Park and wildlife conservationists. Between 4 and 8 poacher trials were opened each month. Thanks to the immediate proximity of this new regional court, the rangers who had taken part in the arrests were systematically present, the investigation files were supported by incriminating evidence and the hearings were consolidated by the contradictory statements of the presumed culprits and the rangers. The transfer of documents and evidence at the Mhala regional court 60 km from the Kruger Park are increasing the risks of loss or misappropriation and are making easier the work of the poachers' lawyers, whose main strategy is to play for time and have hearings postponed while their clients are granted bail.



Many observers see the closure of the Skukuza court as a new manoeuvre by the traffickers and their affiliates to undermine the efforts of rangers and investigators, less brutally than the murder of Lieutenant Colonel Leroy Brewer ("On the Trail" n°28, p.4) but just as effective. All methods to prevent justice to deliver quickly and quietly deterrent sentences against the poachers and principles. Suzy Ellis, on behalf of the International Rhino Foundation based in the United States of America, denounces "a laissez-faire atmosphere". When on February 24, 2020, the High Court of the province wanted to hear Mrs Engelbrecht and assess the validity of her arguments, she did not appear in person, letting Kgama Shai, a lawyer specialising in poachers' defence, develop her main argument before the three judges. The Skukuza court would be an operetta chamber created ex nihilo and with no legal basis. On April 22, convened in special session under the chairmanship of the senior North Gauteng judge, the High Court of the province ruled that the establishment of the Skukuza court was consistent with the Magistrates Court Act of 1944, supplemented by Government Decisions 219 and 492 dated January 2004 and April 2016 as published in the government Gazette. Naomi Engelbrecht appealed the decision to the Supreme Court. Lowvelder, September 21, 2019; News 24, April 22, 2020; Stop Rhino Poaching, April 22, 2020; National Geographic, August 18, 2020; The Citizen, August 20, 2020.⁴

April 24, 2020

Pienaar, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Arrest of Martin Prince Lekhuleni, Sipho Alfred Nyundu, and his companion Banele Georgina Nyalunga. During a search, police found 6 rhino horns estimated at 6 million rand (335,500 US\$) in outdoor toilets, hunting knives in a car and a large sum of money in the house. Banele is not being prosecuted because she would only have been visiting her companion. On April 29, the 2 men were released on bail of 8,000 rand (450 US\$). They are suspected of having links with the Mabuza-Nyalunga-Mnisi gang. See "On the Trail" n°6 p.62, n°7 p.62, n°9 p.66, n°12 p.69, n°15 p.82, n°21 p.77 n°22 p.79 and 81, n°23 p.104.

SAPS, April 26, 2020 ; Wildlife at Risk, April 29, 2020.⁵



May 2020

South Africa

Rhino 911 in agreement with the government proceeded in a fortnight to the express dehorning of 400 rhinos in 3 private reserves of which the names are kept secret. The initiative, which is the culmination of a practice prevailing for about ten years, was triggered by the desertion of tourists from the animal parks. Under normal circumstances, 60% of animal protection would be provided by visitors to the parks and 40% by the guards. The eyes and ears of visitors are weapons feared by poachers. They can notify rangers of any suspicious behaviour. But the Covid-19 pandemic has emptied the parks. Poachers are on their own. The time is right for them. They are redundant and the rangers affected by the illness or tied up by lockdown measures are outnumbered.

However, dehorning exposes the rhinos to the medical risks of anaesthesia and antidote waking up, human control and amputation of two multi-purpose organs. Dehorning 400 rhinos in a fortnight implies a lot of helicopter flights, hypodermic guns, M99 anaesthetics and electric saws. Will they some day come to organise preventive campaigns to deantler deer, unscrew the canines of tigers and paint polar bears black? (...)

(...) Notification n°625 published in the Government Gazette on June 3 under the signature of Barbara Dallas Creecy, Minister for the Environment, Forests and Fisheries, prohibits powdering or chipping rhino horns, cutting them into thin slices, drilling them to extract fragments, filing them down or inviting a third party to do so.

However, these prohibitions do not apply to debris resulting from preventive dehorning or any intervention related to security, management, veterinary or autopsy purposes, or to debris resulting from the insertion of microchips into the horn.

Given that one gram of rhino horn sells for around 25 US\$ in Asia, it is not impossible that a traffic from the dehorning or chipping of rhino horns could emerge. The rhino horn powder is sold in China and countries around China as a preventive and curative agent for a whole bunch of ailments and diseases. With Covid-19, it is experiencing a rebound in popularity.

The Liberty Times, June 5, 2020 ; Nederlandse Omroep Stichting, June 5, 2020 ; Robin des Bois.⁶



May 16, 2020

Citrusdal, Western Cape Province, South Africa

Arrest of 4 men, aged between 23 and 46, in possession of a rhino horn and protected plants. News 24, May 17, 2020.⁷



June 5, 2020

Brits, North West Province, South Africa

John Hume is followed step by step by "On the Trail".
N°1, July 2013 issue: 3 of his preventively dehorned rhinoceros are victims of poachers who were taking over the regrowth of the 6 horns. John Hume is said to have operated 800 rhinoceros at that time and to have held 500 kg of horns.

N°11, March 2016 issue: John Hume contests the government's decision of February 2009 to ban the trade in horns within South Africa in court and the judges ruled in his favour. It is feared that this reopening of the domestic market will be an opportunity for the illegal horn export sector in crushed or raw form. Edna Molewa, Minister of the Environment, appeals the judgement.

N°17, July 2017 issue: John Hume and the PROA (Private Rhino Owners Association) definitely win the battle. Intra-South African trade in horns is authorised and John Hume announces an auction of horns in August. At this time, he is reputed to be operating 1,500 rhinos and to hold 5 to 6 t of horns in vaults. This stock would come from the preventive dehorning of his livestock.

N°18, November 2017 issue: Save the Rhino is concerned about the upsurge in poaching and attributes it to the snowball effect of the auction organised by John Hume. At the same time, John Hume deplores the insufficient number of bidders and attributes the relative failure of the auction to legal harassment by the Department of Environment which allegedly prevented or dissuaded interested people from participating.

N°25, January 2020 issue: seizure in April 2019 of 167 horns near Hartbeespoort dam. The value of the lot is estimated at 300 million rand, i.e. around 100 kilos on a 30,000 US\$/kg basis. The 2 suspects are released on bail of 1,360 US\$ and 6,800 US\$. Their names are Petrus Steyn and Clive Melville. They had been caught by the Hawks, the elite South African police force, inside a bungalow unpacking 181 horns or pieces of horns, weighing them and sorting them into packs of 3 and 5.

This issue : This issue: Petrus Steyn was sentenced to 25,000 rand (1,435 US\$) fine or 18 months in prison in case of non-payment and 18 months suspended imprisonment. Clive Melville was fined 50,000 rand (2,870 US\$) or in case of non-payment 18 months imprisonment for illegal horn transport and 3 years and 6 months suspended imprisonment for forgery of a horn transport permit. The 2 horn deliverers, whose declared incomes as a seller of used cars and spare parts for one and as a handyman in a mechanical plant hire company for the other are obviously modest, were defended by a big shot in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape province, counsel of the Ndlovu trio who were poaching rhinos with M99, of Marnus Steyl who issued rhino hunting licences to Thai prostitutes and Morne Blignault who with his wife and his crew of mercenaries engaged in mass poaching and abalone trafficking.



Melville and Steyn

Clive Melville is related through marriage to John Hume. John Hume is entangled in this nasty business. The stock belonged to him and came from the Bidvest Protea Coin based in Centurion, Gauteng Province. The Bidvest is one of the fortresses where John Hume stores the horns from his rhino farm in the North West Province. John Hume is believed to now own 1,806 rhinos, about one tenth of South Africa's rhino population. Through his counsel, John Hume denies any wrongdoing in this case. Steyn and Melville are alleged to have acted as conveyors of the horns on behalf of a certain Rossouw who held a permit to transport the horns from Centurion to the Knox Titanium vault in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province. When they were caught by the Hawks sorting out the horns, Steyn and Melville were nevertheless heading away from Johannesburg and venturing into the North West Province, whose administration had not been informed of the transit of 181 horns. Through his private secretariat, John Hume says that he never met Allan Rossouw and that, in insisting upon a legal sale in urgency, he took the risk of losing control of the horns by entrusting them to a middleman he had never worked with before.

At last some truth in a shady file. John Hume's financial problems are common knowledge. He needs dough to avoid bankruptcy. He confirms this in an interview with the Daily Maverick in August 2019: "skyrocketing security and food costs have put my project in danger of collapse in the coming months". The tricky sale of about 100 kg horns was Hume's way to get out of the bankruptcy. Yet he claims not to have received a penny from Rossouw when the value of the batch is estimated at the very least at 3 million US\$. Through his lawyer, Hume says he was to be paid after Mr Rossouw sold the horns. Allan Rossouw would therefore only be a link in the chain and declines to comment. The Hawks believe the shipment was actually destined for Asia. "I want my horns back!" now claims John Hume, banging his fist on the table and warning that if necessary he will go to court. To be continued in n°30.

Daily Maverick, June 14, 2020 ; Department of Environmental Affairs of South Africa, June 10, 2020 ; IOL, June 23, 2020; Save the Beasts, 5 June 5, 2020 ; News24, August 22, 2017.⁸



Julien Perreaut, extracts from the "Atlas du Business des Espèces Menacées" written by Robin des Bois (2019 Editions Arthaud).

June 15, 2020 - South Africa

Conservation Letters publishes a study on the strategies of rhino keepers faced with the pressure of poaching. Work was conducted between 2015 and 2018 and therefore does not take into account the immediate and delayed effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In South Africa, 7,000 rhinos are in the hands of private owners. They are bred like productive livestock with veterinary supervision, medication and feed supplements and assured watering even in long periods of drought. The members of the PROA (Private Rhino Owners Association) were questioned by e-mail in 2015 with a follow-up in 2018. 339 members were contacted. 171 responded.

- 28% of private rhino owners tackled the poaching epidemic by selling a large number of their animals, sometimes up to 2/3 of the herd. Described by the study as "disinvestors", most of them have at the same time increased and even more than doubled the costs of the fight against poaching. The "disinvestors" hold 30% of the global herd. Their main income comes from the sale of live rhinos. They are financially weakened by the 75% drop in selling prices.

- 57% of private rhino owners have maintained their numbers despite the poaching epidemic, without any clear-cut trend to buy and sell or to preventively move their animals. Described by the study as "business-as-usual", this category has not significantly increased its anti-poaching costs. Many "business-as-usual" people derive their main income from ecotourism. The density of their herds is low. For the "business as usual" category, the rhino turn over is lesser than for the hunting safari operators or live rhino salers.

- 15% of the owners are the bulk of the market. They own 45% of the total private livestock. They tend to move their herds to places considered safer within South Africa or exceptionally to neighbouring countries. They are described by the study as "investors". They have not reduced the size of their herds because of the poaching epidemic. On the contrary, they have bought more rhinos by taking advantage of lower prices in auctions or private sales. "The investors" are all in favour of the legalisation of the international trade in horns. They have "deep pockets", are supported until now by the banking sector but their financial resistance is challenged by the increasingly distant prospects of total or partial resumption of legal international trade.

Clements HS, Knight M, Jones P, Balfour D. Private rhino conservation: Diverse strategies adopted in response to the poaching crisis. *Conservation Letters*. 2020;e12741.⁹

June 28, 2020

Madikwe, North West Province, South Africa

Discovery of a rhino carcass amputated of her 2 horns. A 4-year-old orphan was wandering by her side. Save the Beats, June 28, 2020. ¹⁰

BOTSWANA

May 2020

Okavango Delta, North-West District, Botswana

The delta is in flood, poaching too. As a precaution, black rhinos are being moved. It is apparently easier to anaesthetise rhinos than poachers. However, the poachers will not let themselves lulled and will relocate their targets by following the tracks of the trucks. "The destination of the rhinos remains confidential." "All I can say is we are taking all the necessary precautions," says Cyril Taolo on behalf of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. Among these precautions, a new preventive dehorning is likely.

The operation is being carried out thanks to the logistical means of Rhinos Without Borders, which had transferred to Botswana about 20 black rhinos threatened by poaching in South Africa. National Geographic, May 4, 2020.¹²

Early June 2020

Moremi Game Reserve, Okavango Delta, Botswana

On June 3, discovery of a rhino carcass. A few days later, the poachers shot 2 dehorned white rhinos and took the horn stubs that had grown back. Botswana Safari News, June 6, 2020.¹³

June 27, 2020

Chief's Island, Okavango Delta, Botswana

Further proof that rhinoceros dehorning is not enough to discourage poachers. Discovery of a dead rhinoceros; the poachers have torn off the horns that were just beginning to grow back.

INK Centre for Investigative Journalism, June 28, 2020.¹⁴

NAMIBIA

April 13, 2020

Purros, Kunene Region, Namibia

Discovery of 2 rhinos who have been dead for 1 to 2 weeks. No arrests. However, according to the Ministry of the Environment, wildlife crime is decreasing thanks to the arrests of some gang leaders. The Covid-19 stay at home order is also believed to be contributing to the decline in poaching.

The Namibian, April 29, 2020.¹⁵

April 27, 2020

Oshivelo, Oshikoto Region, Namibia

Arrest of Samuel Kambonde and Sodomu Lazarus, accused of preparing in conspiracy the poaching of a rhino.

The Namibian, May 8, 2020.¹⁶

Week of May 25, 2020

Okahandja, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia



Four rhino poachers sentenced.

Sentencing of 3 rhino poachers:

- Fine of 80,000 N\$ (4,590 US\$) of which 40,000 N\$ (2,295 US\$) suspended, or in case of non-payment a prison sentence of 12 and a half years of which 7 years and 3 months suspended for Kandje Ngumbi.
- Fine of 58,000 N\$ (3,328 US\$) of which 29,000 N\$ (1,664 US\$) suspended, or in case of non-payment a prison sentence of 9 years of which 5.5 years suspended for Kunouwa Tjambiru and Lubasi Mufaya.

Africa Sustainable Conservation News, June 4, 2020.¹⁷

Week of May 25, 2020

Okahandja, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia



The investigation proved that Riatoorora Ndiaombe and Uapenduka Tjatjituraije Ndiaombe had planned the poaching of a rhino in conspiracy. They are sentenced to a fine of 100,000 N\$ (5,738 US\$), of which 50,000 N\$ (2,869 US\$) are suspended, or in case of non-payment to 12 years in prison, 8 of which are suspended. Their accomplice Uatenguainja Ngumbi is sentenced to a fine of 55,000 N\$ (3,156 US\$), of which 27,500 N\$ (1,578 US\$) are suspended or, in case of non-payment, to 4 years in prison, of which 2 are suspended.

Africa Sustainable Conservation News, June 4, 2020.¹⁸

May-June 2020

Namibia

Arrests of Jackson Babi, Frizans Naululu Dumeni, Ananias Ananias, Elias Nashivela, Onesmus Haufiku, Vaaruka Musuta, Alberto Mbwale and Joseph Matheus for poaching 2 rhinos in the Gobabis district, attempting to sell 2 fresh horns in Otjiwarongo, possession of the other 2 horns in Kleine Kuppe near Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia.

Jackson Babi is the founder of the evangelical group House of Joy. He is also accused of attempting to bribe an exculpatory testimony from one of the officers responsible for investigating with 13,000 US\$ in order to get out on bail. His lawyer is accusing the press of damaging his client's image by distributing photos and other documents relating to the investigation file. The self-proclaimed prophet's release on bail was denied. His followers filled the courtroom during the hearing. One of his accomplices was, at the time, attached to VIPP (Very Important Persons Protection). Babi had opposed the search of his home and place of worship for several hours. War-weary, he had finally given in, going upstairs on his own and downstairs again to give the policeman a plastic bag containing 2 horns straight out of a fridge.

SA People, May 31, 2020 ; The Namibian, June 10, 2020 ; New Era, June 30, 2020.¹⁹

Early June 2020**Omaruru, Erongo Region, Namibia**

Arrest of Albert Nangolo. He is suspected of poaching a rhino in February 2020. The Namibian Sun, June 11, 2020.²⁰

June 3, 2020**Sesfontein, Kunene Region, Namibia**

Arrest of Murujani Hevita and Andani Heputi for a poaching incident in April 2020. The Namibian Sun, June 11, 2020.²¹

June 3, 2020**Orupembe, Kunene Region, Namibia**

Andani Hepute arrested for poaching a rhino in October 2015. The Namibian, June 11, 2020.²²

June 3-5-6, 2020**Outjo, Kunene Region, Namibia**

Six arrests for poaching a rhino: Jan Haodom, Kamati Tchipito Mutenha, Thomas Eino and Josef Homateni on June 3, Michael Ntsambo Jonas on June 5, and Alfred Horaseb on June 6. Seizure of a rhino horn and a vehicle. The Namibian Sun, June 11, 2020.²³

June 26, 2020**Oshikango, Ohangwena Region, Namibia**

Arrest of Immanuel Musenge, Natnael Jonas Frans, Immanuel Shigweda and Jeremia Mukuve. Seizure of one rhino horn and a vehicle. Between December 2018 and May 2020, 1,790 alleged poachers were arrested. Environment Minister Pohamba Shifeta attributes these good official statistics to the joint action of the Anti Poaching Unit, the NAMPOL (Namibian Police Force) and the Namibia Central Intelligent Service. Namibian Economist, June 13, 2020 ; The Namibian Sun, July 1st 2020.²⁴

ESWATINI**Around May 24, 2020****Eswatini**

After attempting to export from King Mswati III Airport 35.14 kg of horns worth an estimated 2.4 million US\$ at the time of the facts (February 2017), two Taiwanese nationals were sentenced to 11 years in prison (November 2017), see "On the Trail" n°16 p. 70 and n°19 p. 87. Hsiao Jen-se and Chen Pei-hsun, by virtue of an agreement between Eswatini and Taiwan are to be transferred to Taiwan and should receive a substantial mitigating of punishment. The offences of illegal detention, transport and attempting to smuggle horns in Taiwan are to the highest liable to 5 years in jail. Liberty Times Net, May 24, 2020.²⁵

June 4, 2020**Costa Rica**

"I don't think there are many Costa Ricans going to Africa and hunting rhinos, but there must be a few." This is how Deputy José María Villalta justified the passing of a law prohibiting Costa Rican citizens from importing and marketing trophies from sport hunting. "Most importantly, our country sends a strong signal to the world against sport hunting," noted Paola Vega, President of the Parliament's Environment Committee. The President of the Neotrópica Foundation has forced the issue: "Sport hunting has been banned in Costa Rica since 2012 and our country vigorously regulates the arms trade"; "In Costa Rica there is no economic pressure, unlike in the United States of America, where the arms trade is a constitutional right"; "This law consolidates Costa Rica's leadership role in this area."

Amelia Rueda, June 5, 2020.²⁷



**FONDATION
FRANZ
WEBER**

ASIA

CHINA

April 8, 2020

Hong Kong, China

Sentencing of 2 traffickers to 26 months in prison. Customs officers found 24 rhino horns weighing 40 kg in their luggage on February 14, 2019. They were arriving from Johannesburg, South Africa. This is the harshest sentence to date for smuggling endangered species. See "On the Trail" n°24 p. 67. Government of Hong Kong, April 8, 2020.²⁸



End of April 2020

Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China

Arrest of X. A parcel intended for him contained a rhino horn hidden in a bag of sweets. At his home, the police found 1.75 kg of pieces of rhino horn, estimated at 437,500 yuan (61.158 US\$). Chinese Customs, April 30, 2020.²⁹



INDIA

April 6, 2020

Lohore Chapori, Golaghat District, State of Assam, India

Inhabitants surprise suspicious movements. They notify the police and the forest officers. With the help of the villagers, they arrest Gagam Iko, aged 35. He was carrying 2 rifles, 30 rounds of ammunition, a dagger, a slingshot, a silencer and medicines. Two accomplices are on the run. The 3 men were planning to poach a rhino who had been out of Kaziranga National Park since February 24. The Sentinel, April 8, 2020 ; The Telegraph, April 8, 2020.³⁰

From April 7 to 14, 2020

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

Carried by the winds, the rumour settled on the hills and on the opposite bank opposite of the Brahmaputra. The Chinese think that the horn would be effective against the Covid. The poachers plot, weigh the pros, reject the cons, wait for the full moon, are wary of the full moon. All scenarios are considered. Beginners are taking up poaching. All the roads are deserted. The curious and the snitches are cooped up. The rangers are also victims of illness.

On April 11, gunfire broke the curfew. It came from Biswanath side. A guy from the Special Rhino Protect Force was hit. Two days later, 6 rascals were flushed out. They said they wanted to store horn and make a great deal of money when traffic and business recovered. Horn makes still dream.

The management of the park says that in one week 6 attempts of incursions were foiled. Not a rhino in the park (more than 400 km²) has been poached for one year.

The Hindu, April 14, 2020 ; The Times of India, April 7, 2020.³¹

GANG / REPEATED OFFENSE

May 9-June 2, 2020

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

- These ones chose the full moon. They were not armed with patched guns. Bullets from AK47s were found on the spot. The rhinoceros was discovered in the late afternoon. He had been dead for 2-3 days. His unique horn was cut short. Poachers did not lose a crumb. A manhunt is underway.



- On May 28, an attempted arrest ends badly. Mangboi Paite was shot by the police a few kilometres from Kaziranga.



- On June 2, Thapa, Lakra and Siama do not resist the police ambush. Fortunately! They were in possession of a Chinese-made hand grenade, 3 state-of-the-art firearms and 400 rounds of ammunition.

Autonomist and communist-inspired insurgent groups are believed to be partly financing their activities with the rhino horn trade.

The Hindu, June 3, 2020 ; The Indian Express, May 10, 2020 ; The Hindustan Times, May 10, 2020.³²

SINGAPORE

April 8, 2020

Changi Airport, Singapore

In October 2019, Thurman Shiraazudin Aiden Matthews, a 44-year-old South African, met in Johannesburg a Chinese citizen who offered him to earn a little bit of money by transporting rhino horns or lion bones to Viet Nam. Recently released from prison for theft, Matthews accepts. Two Chinese women give him instructions on how to proceed. He starts by travelling from South Africa to Viet Nam via Singapore 3 times to train.

On January 4, he takes off with 2 locked suitcases and cash to buy return tickets. The suitcases contain 11 pieces of rhino horn weighing 22 kg. An accomplice had to pick them up at Ho Chi Minh airport before the X-ray screening. Matthews was to receive 20,000 rand (1,118 US\$ or 51 US\$/kg) for this service. On January 5, Singapore customs officials suspect the presence of horns in the suitcases. After assessment, it turns out that the horns come from 5 white rhinoceroses.

Turman Matthews is sentenced to 17 months in prison. This is the most severe conviction ever handed down for smuggling wildlife products.

Channel News Asia, April 8, 2020.³³



VIET NAM

June 1st, 2020

Hanoi, Viet Nam

Sentencing of Nguyen Van Pho, A Vietnamese national and expatriate construction worker in Angola, to 5 years in prison. He was arrested on November 7, 2019, at Noi Bai International Airport. His luggage contained 2 black rhino horns, weighing 1.9 kg in total, wrapped in aluminium foil. His boss, a man named Anh, is said to have asked him to transport the horns in exchange for 1.2 million dong (52 US\$).

VnExpress, June 2, 2020.³⁴



RHINOS, ELEPHANTS AND FELINES

ASIA

CHINA

June 3, 2020

Pingxiang, Jiangxi Province, China

Seizure in a shop of 10 ivory bracelets and 2 alleged tiger bones.

Chinese Customs, June 15, 2020.¹

INDIA

REPEATED OFFENSE

April 9, 2020

Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, Erode District, State of Tamil Nadu, India

B. Sennanjan is a multi-recidivist, animal killer and arsonist. He was spotted on April 7 by a forest ranger patrol in the Gumtapuram forest area and managed to fly away. He was setting traps to capture deers or wild boars and also intended to pour poison into a water point. A special task force came to capture him today in his hiding place. A native of Chamrajanagar district in Karnataka, B. Sennanjan has a plethora of cases on his back: charged with poaching tigers and elephants in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, he is also allegedly responsible for several forest fires on the border between the two states.

The Hindu, April 11, 2020.²



VIET NAM

Early April 2020

Thach Thanh District, Thanh Hoa Province, Viet Nam

Settling of accounts between mobsters. On April 8, Thang buys 56.7 g of tiger bones for 453 US\$. On the 9th, Thang and a comrade realize that the bones are not tiger bones. On the 10th, Thang's gang lures the seller into an ambush by ordering 141.7 g of tiger bones and a piece of rhino horn. They pretend to be pleased with the merchandise. They want more and make an appointment in a motel in the country that Thang is believed to have the full enjoyment of. The salesman, accompanied by a trusted friend, arrives at Thang's place by motorbike with the new order and is caught cold by surprise by a severe beating. He admits that the tiger bones are goat bones and that the alleged fragment of rhino horn is of the same stripe. The seller is held hostage and his father agrees to go to the bank to withdraw an enormous ransom, but before reaching the bank, he tells the cops. The police storm room 304 and subdue both the fake's deliverymen and the 4 hostage-takers, 2 of whom are under the influence of hard drugs at the time of the events.

Soha.vn, April 11, 2020.³



TIGERS, LIONS, LEOPARDS, CHEETAHS, ASIAN GOLDEN CATS, LEOPARD CATS, FISHING CATS, JAGUARS, OCELOTS, PUMAS AND SERVALS



Etude of lionesses (c. 1930), Jacqueline Suzor de Panafieu (1903-1981)

“On the Trail” n°29

The value of felines or felines parts on the black market, according to media or official sources
The values were estimated at the time of the seizures

Animal	Part	US\$	Country	Ref. (year)
Amur tiger	Skin and almost complete skeleton	170,000	China (Jiangsu)	4 (2020)
Lion	Skeleton	1,700 - 2,870	South Africa	21 (2020)
	Skin	4,500	Tanzania	31 (2017)
Leopard	Skin	9,240	India (Odisha)	57 (2020)
		2,640 - 3,960	India (Odisha)	59 (2020)
		1,320	India (Chhattisgarh)	60 (2020)