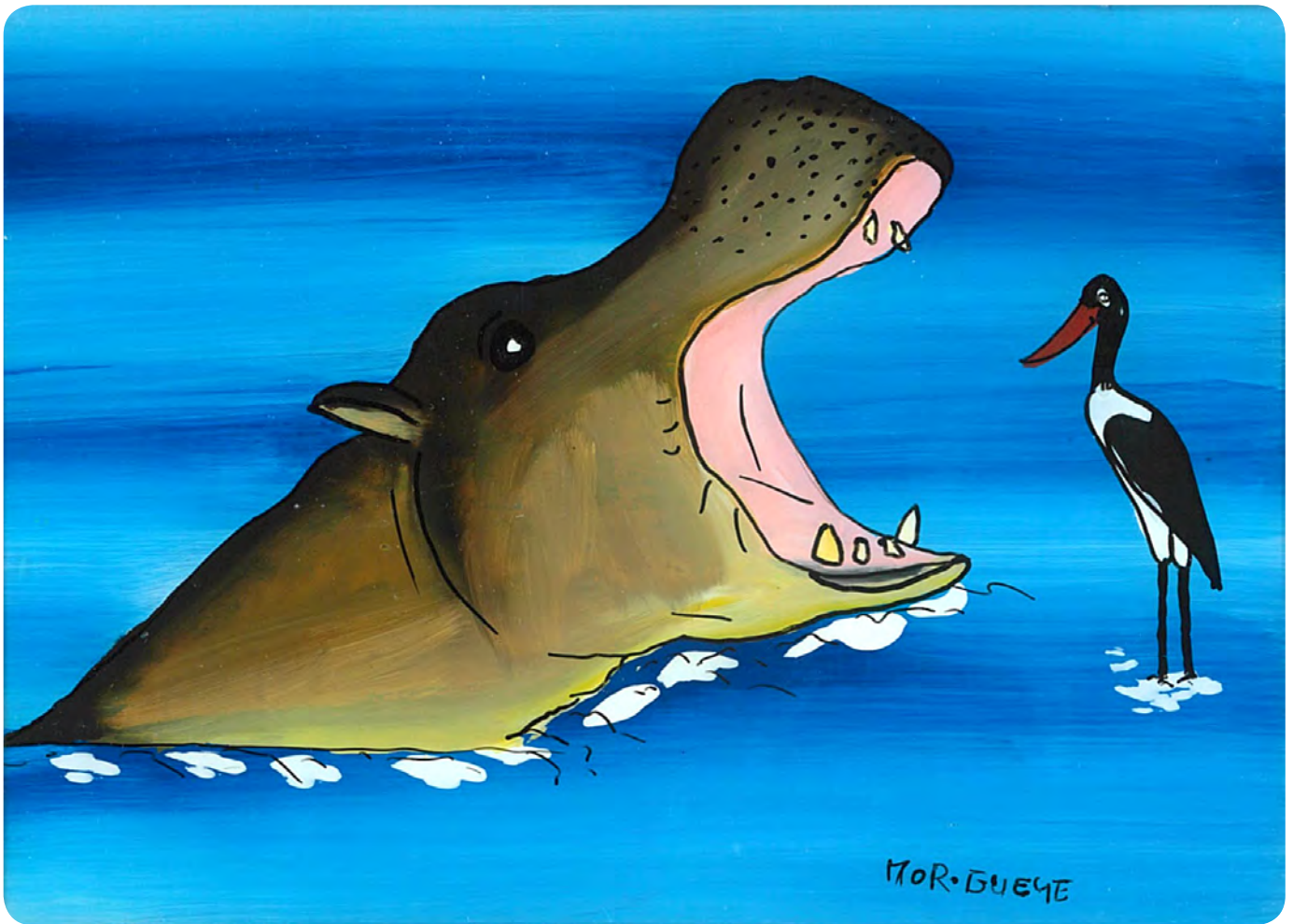


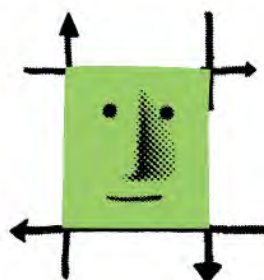
ROBIN DES BOIS

ON the TRAIL

The defaunation bulletin
n°33. Events from the 1st May to the 31th August, 2021



Quarterly information and analysis report on endangered
animals poaching and smuggling
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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 + felines / elephants
- Elephants + hippos / rhinos / hornbills / sperm whales
- Felines + elephants / rhinoceroses
- Marine and freshwater multispecies (simultaneous seizure of several aquatic species)
- Multi-species reptiles (simultaneous seizure of several reptile 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. The US\$ conversion rates used are those applicable during the month of the event.

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, net ...



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



Full moon. Moonlight poaching

ACRONYMS

EAGLE : Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement

ENV : Education for Nature – Vietnam

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

IEW : Iran Environment and Wildlife Watch

KWS : Kenya Wildlife Service

LAGA : The 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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ELEPHANTS / HIPPOS / HORNBILLS / RHINOS / SPERMWHALES



Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*). Photo s9-4pr

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

May 14, 2021

Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa

A Mercedes-Benz was intercepted by the Hawks near the Table View. Raw tusks and hippopotamus teeth (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) were seized. The total value is estimated at 81,000 rand or 5,700 US\$. One arrest was made.

SABC News Western Cape, May 14, 2021; TimesLIVE, May 15, 2021.¹



© SABS News Western Cape

KENYA

May 7, 2021

Busia, Busia County, Kenya. Border with Uganda.

Arrest of Kennedy Wabwire, a lieutenant in the Ugandan army, in possession of two elephant tusks with a total weight of 9 kg and a hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) tooth with a total value of 3 million Kenyan shillings or 27,851 US\$.

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, May 11, 2021; Mara Elephant Project, May 2021.²

UGANDA

July 24, 2021

Hoima District, Western Region, Uganda

Thanks to anonymous information, 10 kg of elephant ivory and 34 hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) teeth were seized. Two arrests were made.

Focused Conservation, August 9, 2021.³

AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

August 31, 2021

Alexandria, State of Virginia, United States of America

Between 2015 (possibly earlier) and 2020, Gary L. Cooper sold worked ivory and raw tusks over eBay and Craigslist, including a pair that measured 71 cm long. He also sold sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*, Appendix I) ivory in the form of scrimshaw. He told he was valuing the estate of an elderly, unhealthy couple when he was sourcing them on the Internet. He was an online broker. In late 2018, he delivered worked ivories from Virginia to New York to a "client," who turned out to be an undercover US Fish and Wildlife agent. Cooper offered then to sell him lots of ivory, worth between 40,000 and 95,000 US\$. At his home, 136 ivories were seized. He was sentenced to 12 months' probation.

US Department of Justice, June 29, 2021; Medium, August 31, 2021.⁴



ASIA

CHINA

April-Beginning of June 2021
China

Stitch after stitch, a network specializing in importing, processing and marketing elephant and sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*, Appendix I) ivory and rhino horns was dismantled by the police forces in Henan, Guangdong, Fujian and Inner Mongolia. The overall value of the seizures is estimated at 100 million yuan or 15 million US\$. 37 people, including a Fujianese who is said to be the head of the ring, are being questioned by the judicial authorities. The inter-provincial investigation was prompted by information an ivory seller based in Dongtai (Jiangsu province).

Modern Express Post, June 25, 2021.⁵

Beginning of May 2021
Hefei, Hefei Prefecture, Anhui Province, China



A 25-year-old woman had her assets confiscated and was sentenced to 10 years in prison. The assets were worth 500,000 yuan (77,290 US\$). Between February and December of 2019, sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*, Appendix I) teeth concealed in iron packaging were shipped at her request from Japan to several addresses in the Sichuan, Jilin, and Anhui provinces. Elephant ivory, sperm whale teeth, and other parts of endangered animals were photographed and sold through social media. With the help of her brother, she reportedly earned nearly 1.5 million yuan (215,000 US\$) from this illegal trade. Hefei Evening News, May 11, 2021.⁶

May 2021

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

Fifty hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) ivory items with a total weight of 775.9 grams and 17 elephant ivory items with a total weight of 120.1 grams were confiscated from a passenger on a flight from Africa. The expatriate worker claimed the items were made of boar ivory. Chinese Customs, June 1st, 2021; The Paper, June 2nd, 2021.⁷

May 2021

Qinghai Province, China



Sentencing of "Chen Moulin" to 10 years in prison and a 50,000 yuan fine (7,730 US\$), of "Fang Mouqun" to 8 years in prison and a 40,000 yuan fine (6,180 US\$) and of "Chen" to 4 years in prison and a 30,000 yuan fine (4,640 US\$). They were part of a wide buying and selling network specialising in wildlife products dismantled in 2020 after an 8-month investigation. The gang was operating in 10 provinces and autonomous municipalities. More than 3,000 wildlife by-products were seized at the time, mainly rhino horns and elephant ivory, but also hornbill ivory objects, skins, and stuffed animals (wolves, felines, birds of prey, etc.), all worth 800,000 yuan (114,500 US\$).

Chinapeace.gov.cn, May 18, 2021.⁸



INDIA

July 1, 2021

Dibrugarh, Dibrugarh District, State of Assam, India

Police confiscated a rhinoceros horn, an elephant tusk, 19 grams of heroin, 130,000 rupees in cash (1,750 US\$) and 2 cell phones while searching the home of Miraz Khan, a drug trafficker well known to the police. Khan and his accomplice Anish Rahman were arrested.

The Times of India, July 3, 2021.⁹

EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

August 18, 2021

Derby Unitary Authority, England, United Kingdom

Ngie Law, a Malayan engineer, was sentenced to 2 suspended years in prison and a 6-month curfew period for selling ivory objects worth 65,000 pounds (91,000 US\$) on eBay and shipping them to China between 2011 and 2016. The sentence also punishes him for having held raw or worked ivory (tusks, brushes, cutlery, figures, billiard balls, a cigarette lighter...) in his home for trade purposes. Carbon-14 analysis proved that most of them came from elephants who died between 1970 and 1990, one hippopotamus ivory (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, Appendix II) and several walrus ivories (*Odobenus rosmarus*, Appendix III in Canada). He bought them in auction rooms, flea markets, and antique shops.

The Mirror, August 20, 2021; Derbyshire Unitary Authority, August 26, 2021; The Star, August 25, 2021.¹⁰



ebay

Trafficking in hippo teeth, see also page 146.
Trafficking in hornbill helmets, see also pages 231 and 239.



RHINOCEROSES



Black rhinoceroses (*Diceros bicornis*). Photo Jan Ebr

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°33
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\$	Ref. (year)
Africa	Kenya	17,635	2 (2021)
	South Africa	25,000	23 (2021)
		26,690	26 (2021)
Asia	China	39,500	45 (2018)
		38,000	46 (2021)
		60,000	47 (2019)

EASTERN AFRICA

KENYA

June 1st, 2021

Solio Game Reserve, Laikipia County, Kenya

The scenario is the following: the rhino was down possibly after a fight with another rhino or another wild animal. He was then attacked by humans, stabbed 10 times, and had his horns cut off. The agony and death occurred several days ago.

SWT/KWS Mount Kenya Mobile Veterinary Unit, June 2021.¹

June 10, 2021

Narok, Narok County, Kenya

Appearance of Marima Ole Pesi, 64 years old. In his car, he was carrying a 1.10 kg horn with an estimated value of 2.1 million shillings (19,400 US\$ and 17,635 US\$/kg) around midnight. Nation, June 12, 2021.²

June 23, 2021
Solio Game Reserve, Laikipia County, Kenya



The scenario is the following: a bullet fractured 2 ribs, penetrated the left lung, and triggered internal bleeding. It was recovered with a metal detector and kept as evidence. The victim, who was 7 to 9 months pregnant (gestation period is about 16 months), had her horns amputated by the poachers. The firearm was powerful. SWT/KWS Meru Mobile Veterinary Unit, June 2021.³

June 23, 2021
Solio Game Reserve, Laikipia County, Kenya

The scenario is the following: a female was hit by a bullet that fractured a rib and penetrated her lungs and heart, leading to massive hemorrhaging. The poachers seized her horns. She was in her third trimester of gestation and a female fetus was removed from her uterus during the post-mortem examination. SWT/KWS Mount Kenya Mobile Veterinary Unit, June 2021.⁴

July 26, 2021
Solio Game Reserve, Laikipia County, Kenya

It is the terror in Solio and the 4th deadly poaching in 2 months. The scenario is the following: the shooting took place at night. The bullet passed between the 5th and 6th rib and went through the rib cage before getting stuck in a muscle. The bullet was recovered with a metal detector.



The horns were cut off by the poachers. The victim was a female. She was carrying a female fetus of about 4 months. Two days before her discovery, it was a full moon. See "On the front lines" p.6. SWT/KWS Meru Mobile Veterinary Unit, July 2021.⁵

ZIMBABWE

Report from May 28, 2021
Zimbabwe

Human hordes prey on antelope, zebra, and buffalo and steal solar panels near waterholes. " Covid-19 has had a massive effect in the tourism industry across Africa. It is having devastating consequences and we are seeing an alarming surge in wildlife and fish poaching." The Bhejane Trust is issuing an SOS or rather a SOW (Save Our Wildlife). 11 black rhinos are reported to have been poached since the beginning of the year compared to 8, black and white together, during the whole of 2020. Centre for African Journalists News Zimbabwe, May 28, 2021.⁶

July 2, 2021 and February 1, 2022
Harare, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

On July 2, 2021, Brent Lunt and Nyasha Mutendawafa were driving through Harare when agents from the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) stopped them. In the car, they discovered a bag containing 4 horns. A veterinarian later certified that these horns came from rhinos. They were valued at 240,000 US\$ by the CID.



Initially, the court deemed that the facts provided sufficient grounds for a conviction, even though the CID agents and appointed veterinarian did not know that there are 5 rhinoceros species in the world. On February 1, 2022, the verdict of the High Court undermined justice. The 2 men were released on the grounds that the investigation file did not specify whether the horns came from white or black rhinoceroses, and did not exclude that the horns could have come from an Asian species. If this were the case, then Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Act would not be applicable. The High Court's verdict was provocative, but it will push investigators to better characterize evidence going forward and provide magistrates with, if not indisputable, then at least better supported cases. Julian Rademeyer, February 1, 2022; The Herald, February 1, 2022; NewsDay, February 8, 2022.⁷

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

May 7-26, 2021

Greater Kruger National Park, Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces, South Africa



Times are very hard. Money is tight. Covid has emptied the parks and reserves. The Kruger Park is infiltrated. "We know that our staff are approached to provide information and the sums of money involved are big," a Kruger Park spokesman tells The Times. "We have suspicions that some of the rangers have been planted there by gangs, but this is difficult to prove if you don't have clear evidence." And there is the moon that reveals the shadows of the rhinos in the savannah and makes their backs shine like a silver spoon. The full moon on May 26 played at the fullest its role as an informant: 12 rhinos were killed over 14 days in and around Kruger park.

Council of Contributors, May 21 and June 6, 2021.⁸

May 11, 2021

Limpopo Province, South Africa

Limpopo Rhino Conservation reports that 3 rhinos were poached on May 10th alone, including a pregnant mother and a young adult. Private ranchers in the province note that poaching is declining in the state-run Kruger Park and shifting to the private sector, despite many physical and technological protection efforts. The organization laments that there are "there are some ruthless people out there that are trying to capitalize on the loss of these rhinos for their own fundraising efforts!"

Limpopo Rhino Conservation, May 11, 2021.⁹

May 13, 2021

Buffalo Kloof Private Game Reserve, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Radioactive rhinos.

Rosatom, the prime contractor and spearhead of the Russian nuclear industry, has found a new way to extend its influence on the African continent in the fight against poaching.

The "Rhisotope project" consists of injecting into the horns of rhinos stable, long-lived radioactive substances likely to be detected by control devices installed in ports and airports. "Rhisotope" would thus allegedly facilitate the traceability of horns and the fight against international smuggling while helping to reduce the demand. In the Buffalo Kloof private reserve near Port Elizabeth, 2 rhinos have just been used as guinea pigs for this initiative. For the next 3 months, the 2 rhinos, one of whom was nicknamed Igor after Igor Kurchatov, the Soviet atomic bomb pioneer, will be monitored radiologically to study the behavior of the radioactive isotopes and their possible migration in the animals' bodies and organs.



Rosatom and its South African, Australian and American partners intend to extend this radioactive labelling to other endangered species. Rosatom's chief executive officer for Central and Southern Africa shows little



modesty: "We believe that science and particularly nuclear science will play a fundamental role in not only protecting the rhino but our planet in general." As early as 2010, similar unsuccessful attempts were made in South Africa to deter poachers and consumers by injecting so-called indelible dyes and toxic chemicals into rhino horns.

Rosatom has been supplying enriched uranium to South Africa's Koeberg nuclear power plant since the 90's and has been building its network in Africa since the 2010s. Rosatom company signed cooperation agreements with Burundi and Ethiopia in April 2021.

This animal experimentation is self-promotion for Rosatom.

SABC News, May 13, 2021; Africa Newsroom (with Rosatom), May 19, 2021; SciTechDaily, June 20, 2021; Dr. William Fowlds, July 11, 2021; Sud Ouest (with AFP), September 10, 2021; Forbes Africa, September 10, 2021; Afrik.com, September 21, 2021; National Geographic, September 22, 2021; The Rhisotope Project, October 11, 2021.¹⁰

May 14 and 17, 2021

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



- Nito Mathebula was sentenced to 13 years in prison for immigration offenses, breaking and entering the Tshokwane section of the Kruger Park, and poaching a rhino in January 2019.

- Phineas Dinda, a former Kruger Park ranger, Arlindo Manyike, a Mozambican national, and Alfa Gwebana, a South African national, were sentenced to 16 years in prison for breaking and entering the Tshokwane section of the Kruger Park, possession of an undeclared weapon and ammunition, and conspiracy to poach rhinos. The facts date back to May 1, 2019 (see "On the Trail" #25 p.80).

=>

According to Annerie Weber, Democratic Alliance MP and member of the Committee for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry, “ these ongoing incidents raise the very worrying trend of insiders at KNP assisting criminals to poach rhinos. It also speaks to the lack of effective security on the eastern borders of KNP and the Mozambican border.”The Democratic Alliance is calling for an audit of all park employees who have been compromised in poaching cases. Some were reportedly reinstated after the routine internal investigation was completed. SANParks, 18 May 2021 ; Newsi, May 20, 2021.¹¹

May 18, 2021

Pretoria, Gauteng Province, South Africa



Hugo Ras is a regular in the rhinoceros’ section of “On the Trail” (see “On the Trail” n°6 p.67, n°7 p.71, n°10 p. 47, n°13 p.77, n°14 p.64, n°15 p.82, n°17 p.78 and n°20 p.81). He was sentenced to 8 years in prison for fraud, 6 years for theft, and 15 years for possession of a weapon without a license. The sentences are not mixed -- that makes 29 years in total. Ras has been caught casino swindling and in possession of rhino horns, M99s and guns in almost every province in South Africa. Yet, he was able to get away with it thanks to his slew of 21 lawyers. At the age of 53, he was finally apprehended and sentenced to 29 years in prison after a scheme that only earned him a handful of rand; he sold a small boat that did not belong to him.

Wildlife at Risk, May 18, 2021; Specialised Security Services, May 20, 2021; News24, May 22, 2021; National Prosecuting Authority South Africa, May 24, 2021.¹²

May 2021, 2021

Northern Cape Province, South Africa

A one-month-old rhino, whose mother has just been fatally poached and had her horns cut off, arrived at Wild Hearts Wildlife Rehab Centre. Wild Hearts Wildlife Rehab Centre, May 19 and 20, 2021.¹³



© Wild Hearts Wildlife Rehab Centre

May 19, 2021

Limpopo Province, South Africa



© Saving the Survivors

Rescue of a male rhinoceros with 2 large nasal and frontal horns and victim of an attempted poaching in a private reserve. The bullet that hit his left front leg fortunately did not reach his ligaments and bones. Prognosis is relatively good. Saving the Survivors, May 19 and 21, 2021.¹⁴

May 25, 2021

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



The Rhino Court of Skukuza sentenced Solly Ndima, a 34-year-old Mozambican national, to 25 years of imprisonment. His sentenced included 3 years for breaking into the park, one year for violating the immigration law, 5 years for possession of a prohibited weapon, 3 years for possession of ammunition, 12 years for illegal hunting and “killing” of a rhino, and one year for possession of an axe. The sentences are combined. Ndima will, in principle, have to spend 12 years in prison.

The South African, May 25, 2021.¹⁵

May 25, 2021

Renosterpan Reserve, Limpopo Province, South Africa



Deadly poaching of 2 male rhinos. Bane, the tracking dog, was unable to trace the poachers’ tracks in the 11,000-hectare reserve. Dogs4Wildlife, May 26, 2021.¹⁶

May 29, 2021

Limpopo Province, South Africa

Arrival to the orphanage of a young male, about 18 months old, who was hit by a stray bullet and whose pregnant mother just died of poaching. He died a few minutes later. The Rhino Orphanage, May 29, 2021; Roberto Cardella, September 9, 2021.¹⁷



June 3, 2021

Barberton Nature Reserve, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

A 2-3-month-old orphaned rhino enters the sanctuary's intensive care unit after his mother was poached. The Care for Wild Rhino sanctuary is located within the 280 square kilometer Barberton Nature Reserve. The exact location is not disclosed for security reasons.



The Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2018. The volcanic and sedimentary rocks in the reserve are over 3 billion years old. Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary, June 3 and 5, 2021.¹⁸

June 8, 2021

Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

Anesthesia was given by veterinarian Dr. Chris Smith to free a rhino's left hind foot from wires snatched from a trap. The prognosis was favorable. The wire was donated to the NGO Down to the Wire, who will transform them into handcrafted jewelry. African Wildlife Vets, June 8, 2021.¹⁹



June 17, 2021

Hazyview, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



Mister Big, whose real name was Petros Sidney Mabuza, was murdered at 1 p.m. outside a shopping center at the age of 57. His double cab Ford Ranger was hit with 17 bullets. He died on the way to Mbombela hospital. Considered by some

Hazyview residents as a Robin Hood who gave gifts and created jobs, he was on bail, awaiting trial for trafficking rhino horns (see "On the Trail" n°21 p.77, n°22 p.79 and 81 and n°23 p.104). Colonel Leroy Bruwer led the investigation into Mister Big, but was fatally ambushed while driving to work on March 17, 2020 (see "On the Trail" n°28 p.4). Mr. Bruwer was in close contact with the magistrates of the Skukuza Rhino Court.

Mister Big's stronghold was Hazyview, home to a major banana and macadamia nut industry and a population of 5,000 people. It is also a hub for horn trafficking, located about 100 km from the Kruger Park. Mister Big was buried with great pomp.

Hazyview is also the stronghold of another notable horn trader, Big Joe, whose real name is Joe Nyalungu. He too has been on bail awaiting trial for a decade now. Big Joe will no doubt in turn create new jobs by strengthening his personal guard.

Lowvelder, June 17 and 25 and July 19, 2021; Richard Spoor, June 17, 2021; SAPS, June 17, 2021; Sowetan LIVE, June 17, 2021; TimesLIVE, June 17, 2021; News24, June 18, 2021; Rhino Review, June 30, 2021.²⁰

June 18, 2021

Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa



Conviction of Alsony Valoyi, a 50-year-old Mozambican man, to 23 years in prison. Along with Siyabonga Freedom Ndlovu, whose trial is disjointed, he had been caught red-handed with 6 rhino horns in the Stolznek section of Kruger Park in August 2016.

DefenceWeb, June 18, 2021; News24, June 18, 2021; SA-People, June 18, 2021; The South African, June 18, 2021.²¹

June 18, 2021

Limpopo Province, South Africa



The orphans are pouring in. New arrival to the orphanage Friday night of a white rhinoceros, about 7 months old, after his mother was poached. On Saturday afternoon, it was still impossible to approach him and feed him milk. Same attitude on Sunday.

The Rhino Orphanage, June 21, 2021.²²

June 19, 2021

South Africa

The Ministry of the Environment is pleased with the statistics, but in truth, they are catastrophic. In 2021*, for the third year in a row, they might reach their target of fewer than 250 rhino killings in Kruger Park. The Democratic Alliance (DA) believes that this target is driving the state's rhino heritage to irreversible extinction. Just over 10,000 rhinos in Kruger Park in 2011, just over 3,000 by 2021. 7,000 animals lost in 10 years. Out of the 14,000 horns, it is reasonable to estimate, in the absence of reliable statistics, that 12,000 have gone to Asia or are stored in South Africa or neighboring countries waiting for an opportunity or for the value of the matter to rise again. Their price may now be 25,000 US\$/kg on the international market, but 5 years ago, it was 50,000 US\$/kg and more.

The DA believes that the only reasonable target that the government should set and SANParks to meet is zero poachings in the Kruger. This would involve revolutionary advances in the guarding of 20,000 km² and security at the Kruger-Mozambique border (about 350 km).

* The official figure for 2021 is 209 poachings in Kruger Park and 451 in the whole country.

Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, July 31, 2021 and February 8, 2022; Daily Maverick, August 1, 2021; SABC News, August 19, 2021; DefenceWeb, September 7, 2021; The Herald, September 21, 2021.²³

June 24, 2021

Waterberg District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Arrest of 3 suspected poachers and 2 guards of a private reserve who, since the beginning of the year, would have helped them locate 4 ambushed, fatally wounded and dehorned rhinos. Seizure of firearms, ammunition and knives. SAPS, June 28, 2021.²⁴



June 24, 2021

Komatipoort, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

George Vasco Tibane and Joao Matshinga Sithole, Mozambican subjects, sentenced to 3 years in prison for breaking into and entering the Kruger Park, one year for violating the Immigration Act, 10 years for poaching a rhino, 6 years for possession of a firearm with serial number obliterated, 6 years for the possession of a firearm silencer, 5 years for the possession of a firearm with the intention to commit a crime, 2 years for the possession of ammunition and one year for having been in possession in the park of an axe, that is 34 years in prison for 8 counts.

As reported in "On the Trail" n°25 p.77, the trio had stumbled upon a roadblock near Komatipoort after their crime and worst of all, in the car, there were 2 fresh horns. The driver of the vehicle, Thembi Juliegirl Mhangane, pleaded not guilty and her trial is disjointed.

Getaway, June 25, 2021.²⁵



June 24, 2021

Vryburg, North West Province, South Africa

Seizure of 2 horns (4.6 kg and 1.9 kg) with an estimated cumulative value of 2.4 million rand (173.500 US\$ or 26,690 US\$/kg). Two men, ages 31 and 72, were arrested by the Hawks. SAPS, June 25, 2021; SA PROMO, June 25, 2021.²⁶

July 17, 2021

OR Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa

Thanks to the nose of an expert dog, 32 horns and fragments of horns with a total weight of 160 kg found in 6 packages supposed to contain "plants" were seized. The packages were addressed to Singapore.

News24, July 17, 2021; The South African, July 17, 2021.²⁷

REPEATED OFFENSE

July 21, 2021

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

2 bakkies intercepted near the Mozambique border. 19 horns acquired with an estimated value of 2.6 million rand or 180,000 US\$. 2 men arrested: Abraham Steyn, 48 years old, a cattle and wild animal dealer, sentenced in Pretoria in May 2018 to 5 years in prison with a suspended sentence for trafficking buffaloes; and Dawie Groenewald, under indictment since 2010 alongside a dozen accomplices with more than 1,700 total charges, ranging from international horn trafficking to money laundering to various schemes. He was released on a 50,000-rand (3,850 US\$) bail. The trial is constantly postponed thanks to his lawyers' tricks and South African justice system's patience, which borders on connivance. Groenewald also had problems in the United States of America where he spent 8 days in prison and, for a "damned leopard", was treated "like a serial killer". "On the Trail" traced his path, as well as that of his brother, wife, and band of men and women also seduced by the horn (see "On the Trail" n°6 p.62, n°7 p.71 and 72, n°8 p.65-66, n°9 p.64, n°17 p.78 and 79, n°20 p.81, n°21 p.74, n°22 p.78 and n°32 p.60)

Here we go again. The value of the seizure is 180,000 US\$, the guarantee is 3,500 US\$. On July 23, Steyn and Dawie Groenewald were released with the obligation to attest their presence at the police station once a week. Steyn had to surrender his passport to the police while Groenewald escaped this protocol. He previously surrendered his passport to the Authority when he was first released on bail in 2010.

SAPS, July 22, 2021; Lowvelder, July 23, September 17, and December 10, 2021; Save the Beasts, September 9, 2021 and January 13, 2022.²⁸



**July 30 and August 5, 2021
Vierfontein, Free State Province, South Africa**

Arrest of 2 suspected poachers inside the Letsatsi La Africa Wildlife Park, near the rhino enclosure where the fence had already been cut. A gunfire exchange took place when the 5 poachers were spotted. The first suspect was injured in the leg and in the right arm. He was taken to hospital under police escort. The 2nd suspect was arrested nearby. A pistol, ammunition, a .375 caliber rifle, and an axe were seized as evidence. The other 3 accomplices fled.



SAPS, August 5, 2021.²⁹

**August 17-18, 2021
Steynsrus, Free State Province, South Africa**

Deadly poaching of 2 male white rhinos. Their horns were cut off. A 3rd male was wounded in the head, but the poachers failed in dehorning him and instead managed to flee. An appeal for witnesses is launched via the Crime Stop alert number 08600-10111 and via My SAPS App. The information can be given anonymously.

SAPS, August 20, 2021.³⁰

**August 27-early September 2021
Greater Kruger National Park, Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces, South Africa**

September 2. It's getting busy all over the place. The next full moon is on September 21. The vets are not happy to dehorn, but everyone agrees to adopt a preventive attitude rather than end up with 3 large caliber bullets through the ribs and crazy people taking an axe to a head that might still be breathing.

It's the weekend and aircrafts are spotting the dehorned rhinos. 8 days ago, the dehorned rhinos were tagged on their backs with a dye that lasts a fortnight when it doesn't rain. The big males, the ideal targets, the ones who may already have 3 contract killers on their backs, are anesthetized from the air. A few minutes after the etorphine kicks in, they are dehorned with an electric saw or chainsaw in a great whirlwind of keratin shavings. If the Chinese were passing by, they would pick up them with tweezers and send them to the Guangdong province inside a plastic toy. This could bring the recipient the equivalent of about 30 US\$ per gram and significant prestige and influence in his professional environment.



September 4th. Dehornings, everyone knows that they are not infallible, but still, dehornings are done in private reserves near the Kruger and the shantytowns where big German sedans drive by from time to time. And dehorning is sometimes the same as healing. On the 4th day of the campaign, the vets and APU (Anti-Poaching Unit) discovered a bullet wound on the rib cage of one rhino to be dehorned who had to be sanitized and disinfected in 5th gear before the animal woke up. Council of Contributors, August 26, 27 and 31, September 2, 3, 4, 6 and 10, 2021.³¹

**August 28, 2021
Thornybush Private Game Reserve, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

Faced with the resurgence of poaching, a campaign for preventive dehorning under anesthesia was launched.

Rhino Revolution, August 28, 2021.³²

BOTSWANA

**May 7, 2021
Moremi Game Reserve, North West District, Botswana**

Discovery of a rhinoceros fatally poached, with amputated horn stumps. A few months ago, the victim had been dehorned as a preventive measure. Seretse Khama Ian Khama, May 11, 2021.³³

**May 13, 2021
Mombo Camp, North West District, Botswana**

8 years ago, Botswana presented itself as a wildlife refuge safe from the onslaught of poaching. Times have changed. Rhinos are under attack. A new victim is found in Mombo, located in the Okavango Delta. Mombo is accessible by boat, horse or helicopter. Within the Moremi Game Reserve, managed by Rhino Conservation Botswana and defended by a BDF (Botswana Defence Force) unit, Mombo appears to be the victim of leaks. A transnational poacher raids during the military's shift; the team before has left and the new team has not yet arrived.

Seretse Khama Ian Khama, May 15, 2021; NewZimbabwe.com, May 16, 2021; Africa Geographic, June 10, 2021.³⁴

NAMIBIA

May 16, 2021

Farm Ghaub, Oshikoto Region, Namibia

Deadly poaching of 2 female rhinos. The first, known as Zanna, was found at the crime scene. The second was found 2 days later, 5 km from the crime scene after a solitary escape. The body examination proved that the bullets passed through the stomach. Fifteen days later, the female rhino calf whom Zanna was nursing was found dead after drones, helicopters and field patrols frantically searched the reserve's 5,000 hectares. A post-mortem examination found a gunshot fracture to the left front leg.

Martin Rust, who manages the private reserve, is offering a reward of 3,500 US\$ to whoever leads to the arrest of the culprit and locates the 2 horns. Martin Rust acknowledges the horns may have already left Namibia.

Namibia Economist, May 18, 2021; Informanté, May 21, 22 and 24 and June 7, 2021; The Namibian, June 8, 2021.³⁵

REPEATED OFFENSE

June 4, 2021

Amarika, Omusati Region, Namibia

Johannes Valombola Kefas (24), Gustav Tukaleni (29) and Ruben David Nuuyoma (28) were arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to poach rhinos. They were in possession of a rifle, ammunition and a machete. Nuuyoma had already been arrested in 2020 on the same charge. Kefas was also arrested in 2020 for possession of 2 horns.

New Era, 10 June 2021.³⁶

June 6, 2021

Oshikango, Ohangwena Region, Namibia. Border with Angola.

The small group consisting of a policeman assigned to the Etosha National Park (200 km away), a military officer, a civil servant and a shopkeeper was arrested at 10:00 p.m. In their vehicle, 2 horns were hidden in a 10 kg bag of flour.

New Era, 7, 8 and 10 June 2021; Informanté, 7 June 2021; The Namibian, 8 June 2021.³⁷

June 27, 2021

Etosha National Park, Oshikoto Region, Namibia

A rhinoceros was shot during the night near the Chudop Waterhole. His 2 horns are missing. This is the eighth rhino poached in Namibia since the beginning of the year.

Republikein, June 30, 2021.³⁸



Mid July, 2021

Oshakata, Oshana Region, Namibia

Uatjesavi Murumba, Richardt Kandjii and Uevisiano Ngovi Muzuma were denied bail. The 3 suspects were arrested while attempting to sell 2 rhino horns to 2 undercover police officers. Murumba was carrying the horns. He was brought to the meeting place by Muzuma. Kandjii was the sales agent. He was the one looking for clients. He was part of the bargaining and fled when Murumba was arrested.

New Era, July 22, 2021.³⁹

July 19, 2021

Gobabis, Omaheke Region, Namibia

Gerson Kandjii, 56, who was the former caretaker of the Brave Warriors, the soccer team of Namibia, dies from Covid-19 in his cell under the Gobabis police. Since the end of 2016, he had been charged with poaching 4 rhinos, breaking and entering, burglary and homicide of the farmer Reinhard Schmidt (see "On the Trail" n°15 p.84 and n°16 p.69).

New Era, July 20, 2021.⁴⁰



July 19, 2021

Kamanjab, Kunene Region, Namibia

Two men, aged 20 and 46, are arrested in a minibus leaving for Opuwo, 250 km away. Among their belongings are 4 rhino horns wrapped in aluminum foil.

Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism Namibia, July 20, 2021; The Namibian, July 20, 2021.⁴¹

July 29, 2021

Outjo, Kunene Region, Namibia

Kanana Liyeekeni arrested for poaching a rhino 4 days earlier.

Nine rhinos have been poached since the beginning of the year.

Namibian Sun, July 27 and August 9, 2021.⁴²

August 17 and 19, 2021

Otavi Constituency, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

A car drives north of Otavi. It is checked by the police at the Ohorongo cement factory. Simeon Namene, 51, Gotlieb Wilhelm, 32, and Shimbilinga Mateus, 41, were carrying a knife, a machete, a shotgun, a silencer and ammunition. Suspected of wanting to poach a rhino from a nearby farm, they were arrested and appeared in court in Otavi on August 19.

Namibian Sun, August 19 and 25, 2021; Allgemeine Zeitung, August 20, 2021.⁴³

NORTHERN AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

August 28, 2021

Aspinwall, Pennsylvania State, United States of America

A 40 kg stuffed rhinoceros head lay on a sidewalk. It was discovered by a man walking his dog at the intersection of Freeport Road and Western Avenue. Police were alerted and began investigating video surveillance in the area to identify the ex-holder.

Tribune-Review, August 31, 2021.⁴⁴



EASTERN ASIA

CHINA

May 2021

Fuzhou, Fuzhou Prefecture, Fujian Province, China

Xie Yanzhang was sentenced to 12 years in prison and the seizure of 200,000 yuan or 31,000 US\$ in assets and Huang Zhaogang was sentenced to 7 years in prison and a 100,000 yuan fine for attempting to smuggle rhino horns into mainland China on March 24, 2018 when disembarking a flight from Johannesburg. Dai Qingu, an airport employee, was sentenced to 6 years in prison and a fine of 100,000 yuan. The 3 men had devised a set up to facilitate the smooth passage of 2 suitcases containing 32.92 kg of horns with an officially estimated value of 8.23 million yuan or 1.3 million US\$ and 39,500 US\$/kg, but the customs officers were not fooled.

Customs Legal Affairs Review, May 22, 2021.⁴⁵



May 7, 2021

Fangchenggang, Fangchenggang Prefecture, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China



Two Vietnamese nationals involved in fraudulently introducing 4 horn fragments (139.81 grams in total) into Dongxing, whose value is officially estimated at 34,952 yuan or 5,313 US\$ and 38,000 US\$/kg. The people's court, in a large meeting (3 judges, 4 people's representatives, one interpreter), appointed 2 lawyers to defend the 2 defendants in accordance with the rule that any first instance trial must be fair and "show judicial humanism".



The 2 defendants are accused of having violated national law and international conventions by smuggling, and of having damaged wildlife and the environment. "They are likely to be held civilly responsible for repairing the damage and to be forced to make a public apology." The trial will take place at a later date.

Guangxi Court, May 8, 2021.⁴⁶

May 21, 2021

Xiamen, Fujian Province, China

It is not the first time either that “On the Trail” mentions cargoes of ivory, pangolin scales or rhinoceros horns on board container ships bound for Asia.

But this is the first time that the story of a substandard ship dedicated during her last voyage to the exclusive transport of 250 kg of rhinoceros horn is told and deciphered.



The *Chang Jiang No.8*, March 2010, Kanmon Strait (Japan)

The *Tatsuhiro Maru* n°5, 74 m long, 1,600 tons deadweight, was built in 1988 by Higaki shipyard in Imabari, Japan and started operating in 1989 under the Japanese flag. She connected Japan and China and began to be examined very closely by port State inspectors at the age of 12. Between the year 2000 and 2018, she accumulated 567 deficiencies and 9 detentions. Her bad reputation was well established among Tokyo Memorandum of Understanding member States. The fact that the *Tatsuhiko Maru No.5*, which became the *Chang Jiang No.8* in December 1998 and then the *Shun Fa 16* in April 2013, was deflagged from Japan to Cambodia in 1998 and was flying the Sierra Leone flag in 2013 did not change anything. She even got collared in South Korea and acquired the high risk ship status in 2014. In March 2018 and May 2018, 21 deficiencies were reported in the ports of Chiba and Niigata (Japan).



The *Shun Fa 16*, June 2016, Kanmon Strait

It was then in July 2018 that the destiny of the small multi-sanctioned general cargo ship changed. At the age of 30, she is now called the *Marine Pioneer* and is flying the Belizean flag. Her owner is the Hongkong Zhontuo Shipping Co of Hong Kong (China), founded on July 17, 2018 at the same time as it purchased the vessel. Her manager is Kind Glory Shipping Co Ltd also Hong Kong-based. In addition to the *Marine Pioneer*, Kind Glory Shipping Co Ltd is officially the manager of seven other vessels (three general cargo ships, two bulkers, one tanker and one chemical tanker), mostly since the years 2020-2021.

On January 28, 2019, Xiamen Customs received a tip-off that “Wang”, a Chinese expatriate in Mozambique, was organising an exceptional delivery of rhino horns by sea. The port of Xiamen, Fujian province, was until then used by smugglers to import ivory. Between 2011 and 2015, several tonnes of “white gold” were seized there, in containers from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, officially carrying sandalwood, cashew nuts, scrap metal and bovine hides. In Fujian province, many workshops specialised in the processing of illegal ivory and other animal materials, with downstream sales and distribution channels in other Chinese provinces, have gone through time and defied bans. Considering that in 2019 the price of ivory is falling (2,000 to 2,500 US\$/kg) and that the price of rhino horn is at its peak (60,000 US\$/kg), it was plausible that Xiamen would become a horn hub. The networks are stable but the materials they trade are as fickle as the stock exchange prices. The Chinese customs took the information seriously.



Marine Pioneer, June 2019

The *Marine Pioneer* is indeed about to become a pioneer and to our knowledge a unique case. She left Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, on March 5, 2019. This departure was spotted by Chinese investigators with all the more interest as “Wang” resides in Wenzhou when he is in China. The *Marine Pioneer* arrived in Mozambique in mid-April. Mozambique in southern Africa is one of the favourite countries for smugglers to ship ivory, pangolin scales, precious woods and rhinoceros horns by sea to Asia, particularly from the port of Pemba. Most of the horns originate from poaching in South Africa’s Kruger Park.



On May 5, the *Marine Pioneer* left African waters, sailed across the Indian Ocean again and was spotted at the beginning of June in Malacca Strait, thanks to her AIS which was switched on discontinuously.

Chinese customs and police were waiting for her in the wings.

Eight patrol boats and 288 sailors and customs officers were on the alert. On 17 June at 2 p.m., the *Marine Pioneer* was spotted off Guangdong. During the night, she was boarded and arrested off Xiamen. The 11 Chinese and Burmese crew members were gathered on deck. Fourteen sports bags were finally discovered in a lubricant oil tank. They contained 145 horns and horn sections with a total weight of 250 kg. The value of the seizure was 100 million yuan, i.e. 14.85 million US\$ and 59,400 US\$ per kilo. Also seized from “Wang” and his accomplices were an elephant tusk, a leopard skin and worked ivories.



The investigation is not over. The *Marine Pioneer* was moved from Xiamen to the port of Longhai in the Jiulong River estuary, west of Xiamen Bay. She is still docked there.

Chinese Customs, May 21 and 25, 2021; China Central Television, May 22, 2021; Ersanli, May 22, 2021; China News Weekly, July 18, 2021.⁴⁷

Beginning of August 2021
Daluo Border Post, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China. Border with Myanmar.



Seizure of 39.8 grams of rhino horn chips in an incoming package.
 Chinese Customs, August 11, 2021.⁴⁸

SOUTHEASTERN ASIA

VIET NAM

June 1, 2021
Viet Nam

Viet Nam is handing over the genetic analysis of 56 horns seized in ports or airports to South Africa via its embassy in Hanoi. The 2 parties to CITES are demonstrating their willingness to cooperate in the fight against trafficking. The DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acids) should allow investigators in South Africa to specify the age, sex, species, and origin of the rhino victims of trafficking.
 VietnamPlus (with VNA), June 1, 2021.⁴⁹

SOUTHERN ASIA

INDIA

May 9, 2021
Karbi Anglong District, State of Assam, India

Welson Teron, Dereshang Rengma and Alo Rengma are arrested. 2 AK47s, ammunition, 2 flashlights, bags and foodstuffs of the authentic poachers are seized. They were approaching the park of Kaziranga. They were betrayed by a confidential information.
 India Today, May 10, 2021.⁵⁰



July 3, 2021
Kaziranga National Park, Golaghat District, State of Assam, India

As a result of some sort of trickery, 2 park employees in the Bagori section were in possession of a broken rhino horn and were trying to sell it, an unsuccessful attempt in this Covid-19 period when the park is deserted by tourists. It is known that wildlife traffickers slip in from time to time to buy directly from corrupt agents. The 2 men, Sonia Orang and Dipen Kumar Nath, ended up in a quarrel and their illicit agreement reached the ears of the Authority. They were arrested by Officer Ramesh Kumar Gogoi.
 Northeast Now, July 4, 2021.⁵¹

July 11, 2021
Seitheke Basa, Dimapur District, State of Nagaland, India



Arrest of an NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland) activist. He was in possession of 3 AK47s, 4 magazines, a 22-long rifle, 87 rounds of ammunition and a horn worth an estimated 10 million rupees (134,624 US\$).
 DY365, July 13, 2021; India Today, July 14, 2021.⁵²

July 13, 2021
Gangpimual, Churachandpur District, State of Manipur; Panbari Reserve Forest, Golaghat District, State of Assam, India

Arrest of Thangouchin V Khamkhopau, alleged member of the Zomi revolutionary army and suspected head of the poaching gang of the district of Biswanath ("On the Trail" n°27 p.90, n°29 p.50, n°30 p.50 and p.87, n°31 p.61 and n°32 p.66). He tried to seize the weapon of a police officer escorting him to his weapons' hiding place. In the scramble, he was shot in the leg. He was taken to Dibrugarh Hospital in critical condition.
 Guwahati Plus, July 13, 2021; Imphal Free Press, July 13, 2021; GP Singh, July 14, 2021; Indian Today, July 14, 2021; News Live, July 22, 2021.⁵³

REPEATED OFFENSE

August 8 and 11, 2021

Nilbagan, Hojai District; Kuthari Village, Kaziranga National Park, Nagaon District, State of Assam, India

Arrest of Bimala Saikia, an employee of Kaziranga Park. This “enemy of the interior” provided (the terms of the transaction are unknown) 2 horns to Abdul Ali (Asian rhinos have only one horn) who gave them to a businessman in the Hojai district, 200 km from Kaziranga Park. “It is a big racket which has been running for last many years and some forest officials of Kaziranga National park were involved in the racket. The smugglers lured the forest officials with money and got them involved in the crime” said an anonymous senior official. This is not the first time Bimala Saikia has been caught in such a case. Whether in South Africa’s Kruger or in India’s Kaziranga, authorities have a hard time getting rid of rogue agents.

The Times of India, August 10, 2021; News Move, August 11, 2021; Northeast Now, August 11, 2021; East Mojo, August 13, 2021.⁵⁴

August 26, 2021

Morigaon District, State of Assam, India



Arrest of 3 men ages 24–65 in possession of a horn by police and Assam Forest Protection Force in Seconi.

Time8, August 26, 2021; Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (India), August 27, 2021.⁵⁵

NEPAL

May 21, 2021

Thulechaur, Tanahu District, Gandaki Province, Nepal

Sagar Praja alias Birendra Singh has just been arrested. He had been on the run for 4 years. He had been sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined 100,000 rupees (840 US\$) for poaching a male rhino.

The Rising Nepal, May 23, 2021.⁵⁶



June 27, 2021

Kawasoti, Nawalpur District, Gandaki Province, Nepal

Rajman Thapa Magar is in custody. He is suspected of poaching 4 rhinos in the Chitwan park. Until now, he had evaded all the summons of justice. He has in a way surrendered by contacting the defenders of the rhinos.

Scrling, June 28, 2021; Tukhabar.com, June 28, 2021.⁵⁷

August 24, 2021

Chitwan National Park, Bagmati Province, Nepal

A rhino was shot in Bandharjhula. His horn was stolen. 6 people are being interviewed by the police.

The Rising Nepal, August 24, 2021.⁵⁸

July 26, 2021

Batulichaur, Chitwan National Park, Bagmati Province, Nepal



A dead rhinoceros. Its gender is unknown. The body is decomposing at the edge of a swamp. He or she was about 20 years old. The head is pierced by rifle bullets. The horn is missing.

Online Khabar, August 15, 2021; The Himalayan Times, August 16, 2021.⁵⁹

EASTERN EUROPE

POLAND

July 1, 2021

Opole, Opolskie Voivodeship, Poland

A Polish hunter was going to shoot rhinos in South Africa. The total cost of the expedition was between 40,000 and 60,000 US\$. He returned home with their horns, weighing between 5 and 10 kg, and sold them to a Vietnamese man who lived in Poland. Another Polish hunter would do the same, and so would a 3rd, a 4th, and so on.

The network was composed of travel agencies specialized in sport hunting and taxidermists. 33 people were arrested and charged. 23 have settled with the courts and have agreed to pay fines of up to 40,000 zlotys (10,520 US\$).

The trial of the other 10 suspects will take place in Rybnik.

Prosecutor’s Office in Opole, July 1, 2021.⁶⁰

FELINES, ELEPHANTS / RHINOS

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

May 2, 2021 South Africa

Barbara Creecy, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, has presented the first lessons of the High Court Panel appointed in October 2019 and responsible, under the presidency of Pamela Yako, for reviewing the regulation, the uses, the management, the hunt and the trade of species as emblematic as rhinos and lions.

For lions, the prospects are clear: in the medium term, all lion farms that eke out a living by offering to bottle-feed cubs and hunt lions cut-rate in enclosures should be closed. Sport hunting, which is considered to be authentic and attractive, is not affected by this sweeping change.

For rhinos, the High Court Panel's vision is hazier, but in vague terms it advocates an end to rhino farming, which, despite its cautious words, immediately caused an angry reaction from the Private Rhino Owners Association.

Daily Maverick, May 2, 2021; Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, May 2, 2021; Independent Online (with AFP), May 2, 2021; Mail & Guardian, May 9, 2021; Conservation Action Trust, June 10, 2021; Africa Geographic, June 14, 2021; Elizabeth Margaret Steyn Foundation, July 6, 2021.¹

GABON

May 21 and July, 2021 Libreville, Estuaire Province, Gabon

Shi Guibin, a Chinese national, was arrested in possession of 3 elephant ivory bracelets and 4 leopard (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I) fangs. 2 months later he was sentenced to 2 years in prison, one of which was suspended, as well as a fine of 2 million CFA francs (3,625 US\$) and 2 million CFA francs in damages. Conservation Justice, May and July 2021; Non au commerce illicite d'espèces de Faune et de Flore, May 28, 2021.²



REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

May 20 and August 3, 2021 Pointe-Noire, Department of Pointe-Noire, Republic of the Congo

Ibayi Koumba and Landry Ngoma Sota were caught carrying a black opaque plastic bag that contained a piece of elephant tusk and a carefully rolled leopard skin (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I). They came from Kotovindou, a small village in the neighboring department of Kouilou Koumba was sentenced to a 6-month suspended prison term and Ngoma Sota to 18 months in prison. The 2 partners also have to pay one million CFA francs (1,800 US\$) in damages and a fine of 300,000 CFA francs (540 US\$).

EAGLE, May 21 and August 2021; Groupe Congo Médias, May 24 and June 7, 2021; Projet d'appui à l'Application de la Loi sur la Faune sauvage (PALF), May and August 2021; First Médiac, August 17, 2021.³



AMERICA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

June 23, 2021 Tampa, State of Florida, United States of America

Sentencing of Steven Phillip Griffin, 36 years old, to 1 year and 1 day in prison, followed by 2 years of supervised release. After 2 years of talks with an undercover US Fish and Wildlife agent, he travelled to Texas in May 2019 and paid 9,750 US\$ to buy 2 pairs of white rhino horns, 4 elephant tusks, 3 leopard (*Panthera pardus*, Appendix I) skulls and one lion (*Panthera leo*, Appendix I or II) skull. The authorities searched his home immediately afterwards and confiscated the trophies as well as 10 illegally held firearms and ammunition.

US Department of Justice, June 23, 2021.⁴



ASIA

CAMBODIA

August 11, 2021

Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh Autonomous Municipality, Cambodia

Confirmation on appeal of the conviction of Dang Van Minh and Nguyen Van Nam on January 26, 2020. The 2 Vietnamese were each sentenced to 3 years in prison and fined 10,000 US\$. They had been intercepted while receiving 1,000 kg of ivory and tiger bones at the landing of a flight from Mozambique. They explained that the packages did not belong to them and that they had been hired by a fellow countryman, a certain "Nguyen Soeung Thanh", to recover the goods at the airport and then travel to Viet Nam by bus. They had been paid 500 US\$ each for this purpose.

Khmer Times, July 28 and August 12, 2021.⁵



VIET NAM

July 18, 2021

Port of Da Nang, Viet Nam

Successful interception by customs. They had considered a MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company) container coming from Durban, South Africa, and bound for Da Nang as suspicious. On arrival, the box was isolated. It was declared as containing wood. It contained 138 kg of rhino horns and 3.1 tonnes of lion skulls, bones and teeth, which, based on an average of 9 kg per skeleton, corresponds to the death of 345 lions. The South African newspaper Daily Maverick attributes this massive smuggling of lion bones to the anticipated liquidation of farms after the prospects of closure raised by Barbara Creecy in early May. Farmed lion bones are used in Asia to make fake tiger wine. The Vietnamese and Chinese channels are ready to take advantage of this golden opportunity.

Elizabeth Margaret Steyn Foundation, July 18, 2021; Ho Chi Minh City Law Journal, July 18, 2021; Ho Chi Minh City Police Newspaper, July 18, 2021; Daily Maverick, July 19, 2021; ENV, July 22, 2021.⁶

