

PALF Annual Report 2014



42 arrests

55 Cases followed

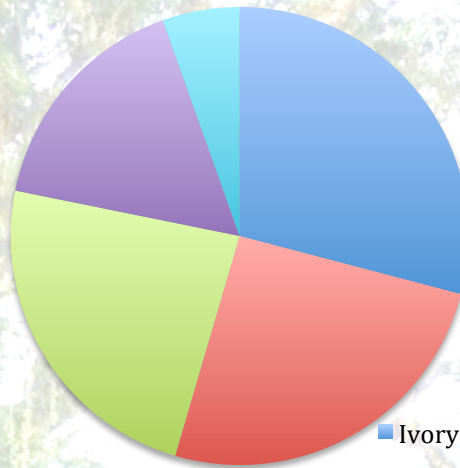


16 Prosecutions

138 Media pieces



2 Sniffer dogs



Ivory
Live animals
Bushmeat
Arms/ammo
Skins

CORRUPTION

- We must move away from the Poacher Paradigm
- Full investigations must be carried out to reach deeper into networks
- Corrupt authorities must be brought to Justice
 - This will leave a lot of illegal wildlife dealers stranded
 - Increasing risk will make people relativize the problem
 - Addressing the problem for wildlife may help natural resources in jeopardy



Executive Summary

As 2013 came to a close, we thought we had built significant pressure to have one of Congo's largest ivory dealers charged in the Brazzaville Court in a hearing for two of his accomplices, who each had already served seven months for ivory. That hearing was scheduled for December 16, 2013. Instead of that hearing, violence struck Brazzaville that day and the court system was blocked up for months to come. A late 2013 changing of all of the country's top prosecutors also served as a net negative, paving the way for months of reestablishing ourselves throughout the country as a force against corruption in the judiciary.

Fortunately, growing collaborations with the national office for the LATF, the Gendarmerie and other forces of law and order enabled us to continue and improve our investigations and operations, leading to 42 arrests, transferred to courts of law in four jurisdictions.

One such investigation unraveled a large bushmeat and elephant-poaching network in the capital city, Brazzaville.

Another led to the shut down of ivory traders tinting their ivory to make it look antique in Pointe-Noire.

Another led to the arrest of an army lieutenant, another army colleague of his, a Customs officer and two other suspects in possession of elephant meat, with the seizure including a firearm and the impounding of a Chevy Tahoe.

Despite enormous peddling of influence, all these cases went to a Prosecutor where in all too many instances across the country, corruption and incompetence saw importance cases disappearing left and right. We managed to make a breakthrough mid-way through the year with some important sentences in Ouesso and Pointe-Noire, although corruption remains rife there. Brazzaville would take us even longer, but an investigation into a major trafficking network spread from Brazzaville to Nigeria helped us build enough pressure after the sting operation was finally carried out to get the Prosecutor to take wildlife crime seriously.

Across Central Africa, we see the backlash of corrupt judiciary officials. Our struggle is still an uphill battle, but every year we understand wildlife trade more and of course, corruption as well.

We built a Sniffer Dog team in Congo in 2014. Two male Malinois add to our tools to detect wildlife crime. We brought about more arrests in 2014 than any other year before in the history of PALF and we are ready to approach 2015 fighting hard to have the Justice improve in sync. Unprecedented support for the founding of the EAGLE Network, which PALF remains a core actor in, helps us move forward and we are excited about approaching 2015 with a more experienced and motivated core team of activists across the whole of Republic of Congo.

Investigations

Undercover investigations were carried out principally in four provincial regions of Congo, although minor investigations were carried out in others. New techniques were employed in urban areas, hence an increase in operations in Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville, despite the traffickers in these small cities being acutely aware of the legal risks of illegal wildlife trade.



PALF also collaborated more intensively with the national office for the LATF (Lusaka Agreement Task Force), notably in an operation named “WENDI II,” but in many other respects as well. The LATF graciously housed the Sniffer Dog kennel as well.

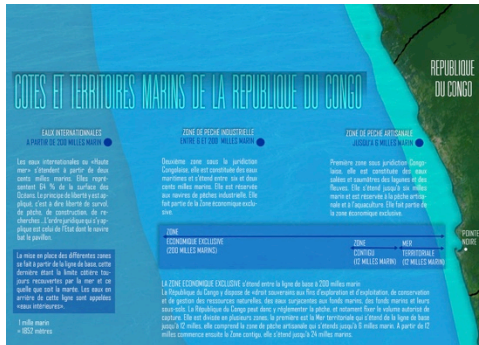
Operations

Collaboration intensified with the Gendarmerie Nationale. We generally worked with Brigades with jurisdiction across an individual city and its environs, for a given city in which we were investigating wildlife crime. This collaboration has been particularly fruitful in Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville. We congratulate the Gendarmerie’s leadership for this and are counting on its continuation in 2015.



Due to the Sniffer Dog program, we also dramatically increased collaboration with a unit of Gendarmerie working at Maya Maya International Airport, both in the training phase and operationally.

We have begun working with various forces of law and order, spanning several Ministries, at specific checkpoints throughout the country as well, as we understand the nature of bottlenecks. We continue to encourage intelligence-led work in combination with these checkpoints, and are working with the various stakeholders in increasing wildlife-related law enforcement around them.

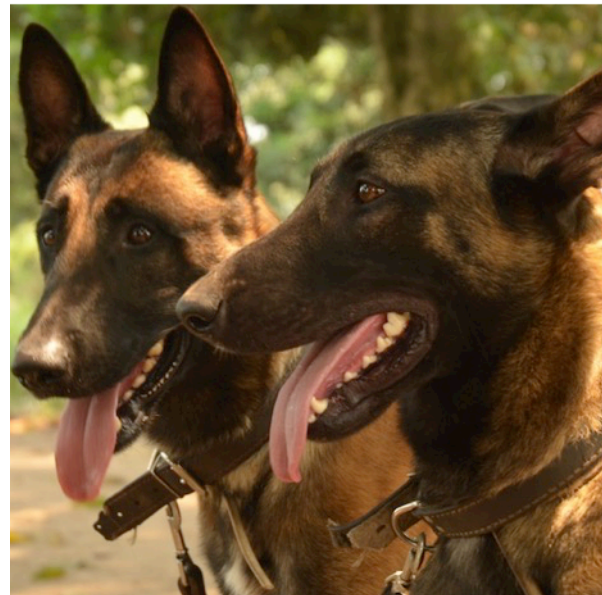


Fisheries-related operations remain an outstanding objective. Despite CITES regulations on shark fins coming into effect in September, national law remains weak and application of existing fisheries law appears encumbered by the threat of corruption and lack of communication between ministries. We

have held discussions about replicating efforts made in Gabon under the program Gabon Bleu and held several meetings with the Marine Marchand, a body capable of enforcing fisheries laws based in Congo's coastal economic capital, Pointe-Noire.

Sniffer dogs

In February we work proud to welcome two beautiful Malinois (Belgian shepherds) named Rick and Shon to Brazzaville. They were trained by Maisha Consulting and accompanied by their trainer, who led a three-week selection and training course that left us with three dog handlers. Over the course of the year, we were obligated to let one handler go, but we remain with two motivated and talented dog handlers, one for each working dog. The handlers each focus on their respective dog to maximize the bond and working relationship



between the two. The man-canine relationship has proven a learning experience for the whole PALF team and we are all working together to make the program function smoothly.



We are grateful to the LATF for having generously allowed us to construct the kennel on their premises. The location proved to be safe and effective. The dogs spend much of the day there, although training exercises take them all around the

city. We are also grateful to the ANAC (National Association for Civil Aviation) for working with us and the Gendarmerie to give the program access to strategic points in the airport where we can detect wildlife crime.

Maisha Consulting provided us with two amazing dogs and a continuous support over the phone. A second phase of training took place in June and served as an important refresher and familiarized Arthur Sniegon, who we later hired to manage the program, to the specific techniques taught by Maisha.



Having a manager for the program proved essential too, in terms of retaining the original dynamism left by the training, and the continued exercising of skills in both an idealized environment and various practical terrains. Continually challenging both dog and handler keeps the team ready for operations. We plan to vastly increase the number of operational days in 2015.

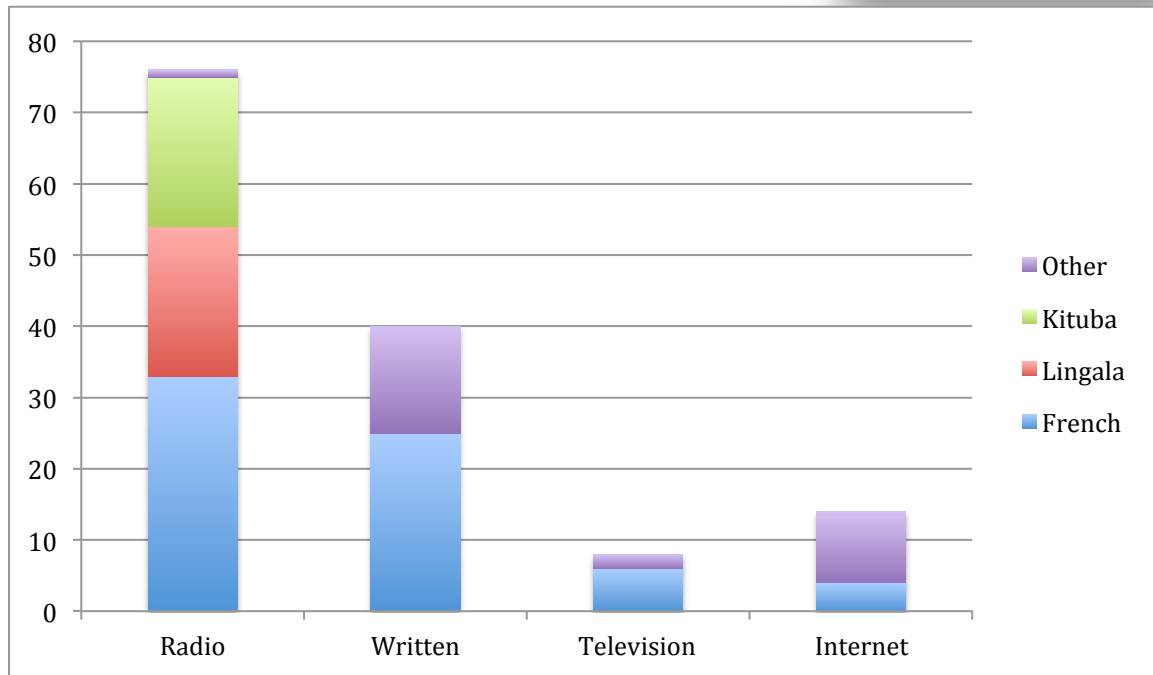
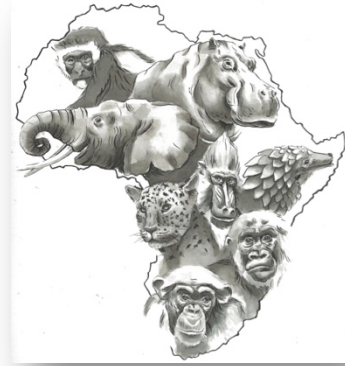
For context, an overview of South Africa's conservation working dogs proved extremely useful. It helped PALF make many informed choices about its own program in the Congo, and to participate in efforts to build regional standards and guidelines. This was made possible by Working Dogs for Conservation and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). PALF can now also bring important knowledge to the table in advising other Member Projects of the EAGLE Network – as, for some, working dogs might not be a viable choice, while for others it could potentially prove effective.

PALF is also working together with a Czech NGO, Save-Elephants, to build a volunteer base of motivated activists with dog handling experience to help in the everyday oversight of the dog program. This is an especially important option for us at this stage, as keeping fixed costs down is important while the program only has two dogs. While we would love to expand the program, we intend to do so slowly, without becoming overzealous, as we strive to stay lean, effective and of course look out for the best interest of our canine companions.

A one-year report will be compiled with further details and PALF will contribute to other reports in order to help dog programs throughout Africa, both those just starting up and those already underway.

Media

A reduction in the efficacy of our Media Officer led to a change in personnel and a revamping of the Media department. New collaborations began in Brazzaville and in Pokola in an effort to reach wider audiences, especially through radio. A total of 138 pieces were produced throughout the year, divided up as shown in the graph here.



Legal

Of the 42 arrests brought about by PALF, all were transferred to a court of law. This meant that the legal team was able to fight corruption well especially in the first, mostly tenuous, 48 hours after a criminal's arrest and incarceration.

PALF is a project under the Ministry of Forest Economy and Sustainable Development (MEFDD) and a consortium of two NGOs, The Aspinall Foundation (TAF) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). As such, PALF also followed a number of the heavier cases brought to court by WCS's other projects, notably PROGEPP, with its strategically situated anti-poaching operation in an entirely forested swath of northern Congo

which buffers Nouabale-Ndoki National Park and its high elephant population from more populated areas along the Sangha River and beyond. A further 13 cases were followed, notably in the Ouessou Court in 2014. Of these 13 cases, 12 came from Sangha Department (for which Ouessou is the provincial capital) and 1 came from Lesio-Louna Reserve in the Pool Department of southern Congo. In 2015 we plan to improve monitoring techniques for how prisoners serve time – although prosecution rates were unacceptably low in 2014, many perpetrators served significant jail time while on trial. Corruption proves to be a ticking time bomb though.

Record prison time served by Abdoulaye Mahamat. In 2014, PALF assisted in one additional prison transfers, assuring the secure detaining of these prisoners as opposed to times in the past when such traffickers would, within a few weeks time, inevitably find their way out of jail. A legal expert trained by PALF and now operating autonomously in and around Odzala-Kokoua National Park was able to assist in many such transfers.

Management

PALF was funded in 2014 largely by four principle donors: The WildCat Foundation, via WCS; the European Union, via the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); and the USFWS funded PALF's general activities. The Arcus Foundation generously donated the money that allowed us to build up the Sniffer Dog program.



Personnel expanded greatly in 2014. Sniffer dog staff, including auxiliary personnel such as night watchmen, grew the PALF budget in 2014. A full-time accountant was hired but unfortunately left us without any advance notice. Fortunately nothing was stolen, but it left us with some temporary difficulties that have been remedied by a very effective new accountant who is expanding his role at PALF to include other managerial tasks as PALF works further expanding the capacity of its national staff. New legal personnel were taken on as well, and after a selection process, we



currently have four interns at PALF. These new hires were particularly helpful as two legal experts went on to pursue higher education, one in Morocco and one in France, and one temporarily left us on maternity leave. Fortunately she has since returned to work.

PALF embarked on an ambitious training program in 2014, training seven people from two different NGOs from the Democratic Republic of Congo in the procedures and techniques of the EAGLE Network.



PALF continues to play a strong role in the EAGLE Network, as its Coordinator is a Founding Director of EAGLE (Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement) and is the President of EAGLE-U.S.

In other training-related news, Kevin Tsengou Elenga, a Juriste with PALF, has participated in two Ecoguard trainings, teaching the application of wildlife law and the fight against corruption. The sniffer dog training not only trained the PALF



handlers, but also a number of other authorities who now at least know the ropes and can facilitate the detection dog aspect within sting operations.

PALF presented a number of functions

in 2014. In October, a Congo Basin Forestry Partnership meeting was hosted in Brazzaville. PALF was a presenter and spoke about corruption. Similar presentations were made by the PALF Coordinator, also on behalf of the EAGLE Network, at the London Symposium in February, at the Clifford Chance law firm in Amsterdam in October, and other smaller venues.

The PALF Coordinator also received an award in September called the Protector of African Parks award, in New York City.

PALF expanded its English language skills significantly in 2014 as well. Three new projects members speak conversational English and one has been enrolled in an English language course, which WCS is providing to a number of staff.



Having put well over a hundred traffickers behind bars at this point, we feel we understand the playing field in such a manner as to be able to address wildlife crime much more seriously in 2015. We have a long road ahead of us in terms of the judiciary in Congo, but our key successes build our confidence to move forward. We are excited about participating in the training of activists from across the continent in 2015 and working within the context of the EAGLE Network to provide a stronger and more complete application of wildlife law in times ahead of us.