

PALF Annual Report 2013



- 26 arrests from cases spanning across 9 out of Congo's 12 provinces (*départements*)
 - 2 traffickers from one of Congo's largest networks
 - 1 corrupt authority involved in illegal poaching
 - 1 Chinese national attempting to smuggle ivory
- 15 sentences from cases followed by PALF
 - International recidivist ivory dealer sent to Brazzaville Prison for 3 years
 - First progress in two courts in southern Congo
- 320 media pieces
 - Interviews with international and local press
 - Press conferences with US and EU diplomatic missions
 - Billboard campaign
 - Weibo account and Facebook account launched



In the first quarter, we focused mostly on southern Congo, where the illegal detention of protected primates remains a major concern, particularly for chimpanzees and mandrills. We also followed a case up in Conkouati-Douli National Park, where an elephant poacher was arrested with an illegal firearm. The confiscated animals were all sent to the Tchimpounga Sanctuary (one mandrill and two chimpanzees).

In March, the PALF Coordinator joined the Congolese Delegation to the 16th Conference of the Parties of CITES. Many advances occurred, including excellent measures adopted for marine species, including hammerheads, manta rays and oceanic white tip sharks, which occur in Congolese waters. These measures will be implemented in 2014.

The highlight of the quarter was definitely a pair of arrests in Brazzaville – 2 men belonging to a large ivory trafficking network were caught red-handed with lots of sculpted and raw ivory (mostly elephant, but some hippo ivory as well). Unfortunately, a serious case of corruption led to the boss of this network not being arrested, but a case is still pending against him.



In the second quarter, a variety of dealers were arrested in Brazzaville, for leopard skin traffic and live animals traffic. The latter was a case of African fish eagles being trafficked by a citizen of neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, with which there are often links for live animals trade.



A major poacher was also arrested in northern Congo in a case that involved fighting corruption in order to make sure that this man, who had been arrested earlier with 2 AK assault rifles.

A major series of events unfolding in Central Africa revolved around the instability in Central African Republic. Multiple missions up north revealed continued hunting pressure from within Congo, but fortunately no apparent movement of rebels or bandits from CAR into Congo for the purpose of hunting elephants, as had happened in a massacre in Dzanga Bai, not far from the Congolese border. Our Investigations Department remains vigilant.

Things moved more slowly in the third quarter, as the judicial authorities across Congo were changed – many new Prosecutors came into their positions and pending cases went on hold for a while. Unfortunately, violence in Brazzaville halted a lot of judicial processes in Brazzaville in December as well, but before then, a number of key actions took place.



Several investigations were wrapped up in the last quarter, involving the arrest of a leopard skin dealer, an ivory dealer

in a region where ivory dealers haven't yet been arrested, and a series of nine arrests in Brazzaville all involving ivory between November and early December.

During these arrests, a Chinese citizen was also arrested for attempting to smuggle ivory out of Congo by plane. He had bribed someone at the airport to help him. The Chinese Embassy did not try and get this man out of prison and has been very supportive of the fight against ivory trade, having even posted a message in Chinese on its website telling Chinese citizens about an arrest near Odzala, which PALF had followed in collaboration with African Parks Network.

Another Chinese-language medium for communication that PALF experimented with starting in 2013 was Weibo, making an account: **EAGLE_News** – covering wildlife law enforcement mostly that involving Asian citizens in Africa. In addition to Weibo, a PALF Facebook account was made: **www.facebook.com/PALF.Congo**

PALF worked in collaboration with IFAW as well during 2013 on a billboards campaign that educates about the illegality of elephant poaching in Lingala, French and in Chinese. In addition to this campaign, PALF worked with the Jane Goodall Institute in southern Congo on a similar campaign, but more ape-oriented. The former campaign led to newspaper articles as well. Both campaigns ultimately disseminated a PALF Green Line, which is operated by the Investigations unit in PALF to receive tips of illegal wildlife crime.

In addition to these campaigns, PALF also participated in a series of Press Conferences throughout the year in order to address illegal wildlife crime in the media and contribute to diplomatic efforts to do so as well.

Media efforts in general tended to highlight the obstacle of corruption as well. Until now, cases in the CNLCCF (National Commission for the Fight against Corruption, Embezzlement and Fraud)

have failed to produce results; therefore PALF aims to address corruption issues directly in the media and in the Courts.



A major goal with media is to amplify the dissuasive effect of trafficking. Of the 320 total media pieces, 74 were in local languages. 51% were in written press and 43% were on the radio in Congo, while others were on the Internet. Most written press was French language, while radio broadcasts varied a lot.

Strategy going into 2014

Some of our major highlights from 2013 reveal important actions which need to take place in 2014.



The transfer of Mahamat Abdoulaye to Brazzaville Prison to serve a 3-year sentence is very significant. Similar transfers are necessary because northern Congo remains extremely prone to corruption. Similar arrests and prosecutions are of course precursors to that – unfortunately there are many such ivory dealers in northern Congo, particularly in the Sangha Department and this sorely needs to be addressed.

The arrest of a Chinese citizen at the end of the year highlights the vulnerability of the international borders, such as airports, to illegal trafficking. We will need to reinforce this with a Sniffer Dog program in the works as well as increased presence at borders. This of course also highlights the problem of Asian citizens trafficking wildlife products and collaborative efforts with African Parks Network have taught us just how important, yet how difficult that can be. We need to continue this, likely by supporting regular operations in suspicious areas and continuing our normal actions of insisting that interrogations be thorough and court cases be fully followed up on.

Southern Congo needs a lot of attention. First court cases and of course the arrest of a military NCO in Niari are indicators of change, yet we have a long way to go. Complex networks of ivory dealers and bushmeat traffickers reign almost untouched in many parts of Niari and



Lékoumou and increased infrastructure reminds us that we need to act fast in 2014.

If there is a highlight to top the other highlights in 2013, it is the arrest of two ivory dealers in a network involving convicted ivory dealer François Ikama who, until



now, has operated in virtual impunity because of a corrupt peddling of influence from a family member of his. This is one of the larger trafficking operations involving sculpted ivory in Congo and is thus very symbolic – symbolic of our failure to end impunity.

Major goals continue to be arresting high-level dealers like those in this network, high-level traffickers like Mahamat Abdoulaye and corrupt officials involved in the trade (of which we have a list, both for southern and northern Congo).

