



Timeline of recent instances poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Central Africa

This document provides a timeline of recent events involving poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Central Africa.

For additional information or to schedule an expert interview, please contact WWF-CARPO regional communications director Florence Anouboudem at fanouboudem@wwfcarpo.org or +237 75 29 58 70 or visit panda.org/wildlifecrime.

JULY 2012: Rebel leader accused of killing elephants in DRC

According to [media reports](#), on July 30, 2012, the Mambasa civil society accused the notorious elephant poacher, known as Morgan, of killing hundreds of elephants in a DRC wildlife area over two weeks.

JULY 2012: Cameroon man arrested in attack on rangers

According to media reports, a man suspected of poaching and an armed assault on Cameroon's Bouba N'Djida National Park ecoguards is now in custody. A group of 8 community game rangers were allegedly attacked by a group of poachers led by the suspect in late July. The alleged poacher is well known for conducting illegal activities near the park and intimidating community-members. Using a locally-manufactured weapon, the suspect opened fire on the patrol. Two eco-guards were seriously injured; one of them is confined to the general hospital of Garoua. The eco-guards were unarmed.

JULY 2012: President of Chad sends troops after elephant poachers

Following the July 24 massacre of dozens of elephants in southwestern Chad, President Idriss Deby Itno [sent helicopters to the Mayo Lemie – Chari Baguiri area to catch the poachers](#), according to Stephanie Vergniault, president of SOS Elephants, a wildlife NGO based in the area. President Deby also gave orders to check all the country's exit points for both the poachers and smuggled ivory. The President's action followed international media reporting on the incident.

JULY 2012: WWF launches wildlife crime scorecard report

[The report](#) rated African and Asian nations that are facing the highest levels of poaching and trafficking in ivory, rhino horn and tiger parts and gave countries scores of green, yellow or red for each animal, as applicable, as an indicator of recent progress. WWF had found that illegal trade persists in virtually all 23 countries reviewed, but the scorecard differentiated between countries where it is actively being countered from those where current efforts are entirely inadequate. The 5 Central African countries included in the scorecard rated either red or yellow.

The analysis was released as governments gathered for a meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Geneva to discuss a range of issues related to wildlife trade.

JUNE 2012: Military poachers in Campo Ma'an, Cameroon

Three members of the Cameroonian military were caught poaching inside Cameroon's Campo Ma'an National Park, according to WWF staff in the area. The soldiers and two guides were arrested after an operation by Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and WWF. Having been caught red-handed, they tried to bribe the conservator. After tough negotiations, the poachers were left at liberty after the serial numbers of their weapons were recorded. The operation, executed during the week of 25 to 30 June 2012, resulted in the seizure of six new modern weapons and 264 snares, as well as the destruction of six camps of poachers in southern Cameroon.

JUNE 2012: 7 people killed in attack on Okapi Reserve, DRC
[UNESCO reported that](#) on 24 June, poachers armed with AK47 rifles attacked the facility and killed seven people, including two rangers. Led by the notorious elephant poacher known as Morgan, the attackers torched buildings and destroyed equipment. UNESCO noted that unless the facility can be restored very soon, these poachers will have met their objective; to move freely about the reserve in their search for elephant tusks.

The Reserve is a World Heritage site. 15 okapi were killed in the raid.

JUNE 2012: CITES issues report indicating that the killing of elephants has reached record levels in Africa

The report, [released on 21st June](#), highlighted that 2011 was the worst year on record for elephant poaching, with tens of thousands of elephants killed each year. Once again, Central Africa was highlighted as having the highest levels of elephant poaching in Africa. The report estimated that in 2011 between 5.8 - 22.9% of the Central African elephant populations monitored by MIKE (the CITES programme which assesses elephant poaching levels) were illegally killed.

JUNE 2012: Gabon's President burns the country's entire ivory stockpile, after full audit
More than 1,200 ivory tusks plus assorted ivory carvings were burned publicly as [Gabon sent out a strong signal demonstrating its commitment to tackle elephant poaching and illegal wildlife trade](#).

President Bongo spoke of the importance of inviting the international community to witness the symbolic act of destroying the country's ivory, noting it was a matter of national security. He told the assembled dignitaries about the special unit Gabon had created within the National Parks Agency to tackle ivory poaching, and how Gabon, as the country with the most elephants in Central Africa, was issuing a strong message to the poachers and traffickers that their actions were unacceptable.

Crucially, President Bongo reiterated that Gabon would work with the Department of Justice to review penalties, and ensure people committing wildlife crimes would be prosecuted and sent to prison.

JUNE 2012: Central African countries sign groundbreaking regional plan to strengthen law enforcement and better combat poaching of elephants and other species at risk from illegal wildlife trade.

[The plan was adopted by the ten member states](#) of Central Africa Forest Commission, known as COMIFAC, on June 6, 2012. The plan includes unprecedented levels of cooperation between law enforcement agencies, such as the police, customs and the judiciary, as well as provisions to increase anti-poaching efforts in each of the countries and to enable joint-country patrols in some trans-border areas.

APRIL 2012: Poaching sentences stiffened in Cameroon

According to WWF, in April 2012 [a court in the East Region of Cameroon handed out high fines](#) and lengthy prison terms to a group of wildlife poachers and traffickers, revoking a previous ruling that meted out only mild penalties, and caused outrage in the conservation community. The ruling was unprecedented in the history of wildlife crime cases in the southeast of Cameroon, and included sentencing 17 individuals to damages amounting to nearly FCFA 80 million (US \$160,000) and prison terms as high as 30 months.

MARCH 2012: Poachers arrested in South-East Cameroon

[Twelve suspected poachers were arrested](#) and 14 elephant tusks confiscated outside protected areas in southeast Cameroon, WWF reported on the 28th March. Forest rangers carried out the arrests and seizures near Boumba-Bek and Nki National Parks after receiving intelligence information from village monitoring groups formed by WWF. Rangers confiscated six firearms and 30kg of elephant meat in the joint anti-poaching operation that involved rangers from both national parks.

MARCH 2012: Elephants killed from professional marksmen firing from helicopter in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

According to an African Parks Foundation news release, forensic investigations conducted by DRC's Garamba park management for the killing of 22 elephants on March 15, 2012 have revealed that the elephants were killed from a helicopter. Although there was evidence of a number of tracks around the elephant carcasses, no tracks were found between the groups of carcasses or leading to or away from the poaching scenes, indicating an attack by air. Further forensic evidence showed that at least 15 of the 22 elephants were shot with a single shot to the top of the head - evidence of professional marksmen firing from a helicopter.

The 22 elephants, 18 adults and four calves, were found in a distinct group in the middle of the park and are believed to have been encircled before being shot, as the carcasses were found grouped together. Garamba National Park is found in the northeast corner of DRC, near its border with South Sudan. It is one of the first national parks in Africa and was proclaimed a UNESCO Heritage Site in 1980.

FEBRUARY 2012: Mass elephant poaching incident in Bouba Ndjida National Park, Northern Cameroon
[Hundreds of elephants were killed in Bouba Ndjida National Park](#) by a heavily armed gang crossing the border from Chad and believed to be supplying Sudan ivory markets that service ivory trafficking to Asia.

The Cameroonian government subsequently launched a [full military response](#).

JANUARY 2012: 2011 is found to be the highest year on record for large scale ivory seizures
WWF's wildlife trade arm [TRAFFIC warned in January](#) that 2011 saw a record number of large ivory seizures globally, reflecting the sharp rise in illegal ivory trade since 2007.

DECEMBER 2011: Suspects arrested for trafficking 44 ivory tusks in South East Cameroon
WWF reported in December 2011 that game rangers and the military in Cameroon [confiscated over 100 kilograms of elephant ivory](#) hidden in a truck transporting cocoa. Authorities say four people were arrested in the case, including a businessman believed to have arranged for the transportation of the ivory. The seizure was conducted near Lobéké National Park in Southeast Cameroon, close to the country's borders with Congo and Central African Republic.

The seizure brought to about 100 the number of ivory tusks confiscated in 2011 from poachers around Lobéké and Nki parks. Some 65 people were detained in 2011 on ivory trafficking and other poaching related charges. Cameroon has increased law enforcement in the area around Lobéké and Nki National Parks recently in response to high levels of elephant poaching and ivory trade.