

October to
December
2013

No° 004

Did you know?

It is estimated that Cameroon has a total of 340,000 privately-owned guns, both legal and illegal, which means that there are 2.8 guns for every 100 people.

*Karp, Aaron. 2007.
'Completing the Count:
Civilian firearms - Annexe
online.' *Small Arms Survey*
2007: *Guns and the City*;
Chapter 2 (Annexe 4), p. 67
refers. Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press. 27 August.

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We're blogging!

[http://www.zslblo
gs.org/wildlife-
wood-project-
cameroon/](http://www.zslblo.gs.org/wildlife-wood-project-cameroon/)



RADIO AS AN IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION TOOL FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural communities dependent on the forest are some of the most isolated communities in Cameroon, where population densities can reach as low as 1 person per km². Their geographic isolation, combined often with very poorly maintained roads makes communicating with them extremely challenging. While they can at times spend several months without hearing from the government or conservation groups, they often get several visits a week from buyam-sellams, middle "men", usually women, who visit communities to purchase agricultural and forest products, including wildlife products, to re-sell in nearby cities.

These frequent visits demonstrate the economic value of wildlife and the financial benefit that community members can gain by engaging in illegal hunting activities. Because the buyam-sellams are the ones taking the risk to transport the wildlife products, community members see very little risk involved in illegal hunting, and this increases the difficulties faced by the government and conservation NGOs alike to change the nature of the wildlife trade.

When three men, including one mototaximan found transporting ivory, from Lomié town in the East Region were arrested in October because of their implication in the ivory trade, it seemed that everyone in Lomié was talking

about it. This kind of news travels fast, and mototaximen started to talk about the need to check bags and packages before agreeing to transport them. Because one of their fellow mototaximen was affected, the perception of the risk associated with package transport increased and mototaximen were discussing ways to avoid similar scenarios.

The government and conservation NGOs need a way to effectively and consistently convey conservation messages, and rural community radio stations can fulfill that need. They reach wide audiences and, assuming that the messages are clearly developed and conveyed in French and in local languages, can provide for an open discussion forum amongst the different stakeholders. ZSL is exploring ways to support communication through local radio stations, to encourage feedback through participatory call-ins, and to increase awareness of the risks associated with illegal hunting that have recently increased as repressive efforts are being multiplied and potential consequences have become reality for community members engaged in illegal hunting. Our first radio shows have already begun in Mindourou and Lomié and have been met with enthusiasm from community members who are actively engaging to learn more about their rights, wildlife law, and the risks of poaching.

Is there still hope for our elephants?

International news is filled daily with information related to deaths of African elephants. Cameroon is often central in the news of this massacre considering its geographic and political positioning in Central Africa. Because we know very little about these elusive forest animals, there are many questions about their conservation: What is causing this international poaching crisis? Is it related to the rising of price of ivory and growing market demand? Do elephants not receive enough protection or attention? Has the conservation world dedicated enough financial

and human resources already for their protection? Do we even have enough baseline information about their population status or the significance of threats to their population?

ZSL Cameroon recently carried out a survey to respond to this last question to better understand the distribution and status of elephants in the South and East Regions of Cameroon. Early results show that areas with high elephant populations are unfortunately also the areas with the highest pressure on elephants, mainly the areas located along and near-to Cameroon's borders with Gabon and Congo. ZSL will soon publish a report with detailed and complete results.

Ivory trafficking is maintained by a large network of traffickers and their activities are sometimes facilitat-

ed by powerful people, commonly called "big fish" by people in village. The administration charged with the protection of wildlife is understaffed, overworked, and poorly equipped to effectively carry out their jobs. Wildlife authorities are also affected by the social context of their work, and they are often afraid of social reprisals. For example, one wildlife authority working in the Ocean Division was beaten after trying to seize 2 ivory tusks from the hands of poachers. There are other examples of government employees who are harassed, threatened, or injured from trying to carry out their job, but many that go unnoticed because of pressure to stay quiet.

Despite the difficulties faced by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, they have garnered necessary support from international conservation NGOs, local communities, and government counterparts including the army and the "BIR" who support their work during anti-poaching field missions. Unfortunately this support is relatively insufficient considering the escalating nature of the poaching crisis, and a more tactical approach may be necessary.

Staff changes in Cameroon

WELCOME TO OUR NEW SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT!

Salomon AYOUBA ZINTSEM is the new social assistant for ZSL Cameroon since December, 2013. He holds a professional master's degree in biodiversity and forestry, and comes to ZSL from Sustainable Alternatives for Development (ADD-Mbalmayo) where he supervised a wide array of projects. He also has experience in the forestry sector where he trained community members in how to report cases of illegal logging.



Anticipating environmental consequences of livelihood activities

Many communities dependent on Cameroon's fisheries are aware of trends of decreasing populations of the fish they depend on for survival. Fisheries collapse is a phenomenon felt all around the world as overfishing, climate change, and uncontrolled pollution become regular challenges that have no evident solution. There is perhaps no better example than the United States of America where the emblematic native cod of "Cape Cod" in Massachusetts is experiencing a fisheries collapse and cod is now being imported from other countries. On a recent visit to the Douala-Edéa Reserve for the planning of our new initiative to support the management of Lake Ossa Wildlife Reserve, ZSL staff witnessed the intersection of rural coastal livelihoods and modern economies, such as fishing, bi-valve digging, and sand harvesting. Groups of men, responsible for the harvesting of clam, deliver clams to groups of women, responsible for the removal of the clams from the shells and their smoking. Not only is the meat prized, but the shells are sold for their use in poultry feed, making their extraction an important livelihood activity for both men and women. Similarly, sand harvesting for urban markets is common in the area, as sand ends up in cement blocks used to construct buildings. These are important economic opportunities for rural coastal communities, and while their consequences locally may not yet be known or felt, it is important to draw on local science and lessons learned in other countries to better understand how to anticipate the inevitable consequences.



EDITORIAL

It is time to take action !

In the past, forest people made their hunting tools from materials found in the forest. They used fibres from native vegetation to make cords to trap animals and they used wood to carve bows and arrows that were filled with poison concocted from plant saps to kill animals in trees or on the ground, camouflaged within the natural ground cover.

In modern times, those natural fibres have been replaced with inexpensive and readily-available steel cable and bows and arrows have been replaced by guns. People in the forest have studied conventional guns so well that they have become skilled at crafting homemade, illegal guns, locally referred to as "Goumta", the predominate weapon that ZSL staff encounter in the forest when they organize anti-poaching patrols in logging concessions.

"Goumta" are carried openly along forest roads, and because they are inexpensive to make and can be purchased for between 20.000 and 40.000 fcfa, almost all households in the rural, forested zone have at least one. Ammunition cartridges « 00 » have been sold at the same price, 500 fcfa, for over 20 years now.

Unfortunately for wildlife, bow and arrows limit the size of the off-take while homemade guns allow the hunter to kill very large animals, including gorillas, chimpanzees, and even elephants, which have recently become the target of many poachers looking for big kill.

The fight against poaching must urgently focus on preventing the fabrication of these homemade guns, and to seize and destroy the ones that have already been made.



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Elephants, gorillas, chimps, and leopards of the forested Southeast Cameroon are the biggest victims of the uncontrollable proliferation of homemade guns, known locally as “goumta”. Because the technology is simple and raw material is readily available, people who can not afford to spend the 20.000 to 40.000 fcfa for a “goumta” will turn to the local motorbike shop for spare parts and auto mechanic garages to find the necessary tools such as a saw, spring, sharpener, concrete iron, tube, wood, and iron plates. These materials, once in the hands of a practiced hunter or gun maker, are sculpted, straightened, sharpened, and polished into the elements that make a gun: the trigger, the magazine, the barrel, the butt, the firing pin, etc. These pieces are carefully assembled to make another gun that contributes to the collection of illicit guns entering the forest. Assembly happens in the forest or in village, day or night, alone or together with a group of poachers.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW: ZSL CAMEROON, 2013

The year 2013 has brought with it many changes and additions to the ZSL Cameroon Country Program. For the first time since ZSL came to Cameroon, the Wildlife Wood Project became just one component of the in-country conservation initiatives. ZSL Cameroon, drawing on experience from established ZSL programmes in other parts of the world, has begun an engagement with the **oil palm** sector, one of the fastest-growing industries in the region. Specifically, ZSL's Global Biodiversity and Palm Oil Technical Advisor, and other staff from Indonesia provide a guiding framework for ZSL Cameroon to promote better practices for conservation. To date, workshops have been organized with the goal of increasing uptake of RSPO practices, including one with Wild Asia on High Conservation Values and one with the Forest People's Programme to develop a monitoring protocol for HCV 5 and 6.

In addition to working on land, ZSL Cameroon, in close collaboration with ZSL's marine and freshwater specialists, hopes to leverage our international expertise to apply lessons on **mangrove and aquatic system conservation** from the Philippines and Mozambique to Cameroon within the Douala-Edéa landscape and have developed a project plan for current work in Lake Ossa.

The **Wildlife Wood Project** itself continues to support our forestry sector partners to **protect and manage wildlife** and comply with their legal and certification commitments. **Wildlife protection plans** have been finalized for two forestry company partners, and one has already been set in motion. We have begun implementing SMART for law enforcement monitoring and are also developing a toolkit for wildlife protection in timber concessions which will be available in 2014. We have also strengthened the **social component** of the WWP with the goal of empowering local communities to contribute to the fight against poaching.

ZSL plan to scale up our interventions in south east Cameroon to a landscape level to ensure effective wildlife monitoring, management and law enforcement across these forests. To this end we are engaging with the Conservation Service to support their work in the **Dja Wildlife Reserve**.

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