



Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Half Year Report (due 31st October 2021)

Project reference	IWT062	
Project title	Disrupting the illegal wildlife trade in grey parrots in Cameroon	
Country(ies)	Cameroon	
Lead organisation	Zoological Society of London	
Partners(s)	Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF), World Parrot Trust (WPT), Association pour la Promotion des Actions de Développement Endogènes Rurales (APADER)	
Project leader	<i>Andrew Fowler</i>	
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	31 October 2021 HYR2	
Project website/blog/social media	www.zsl.org	

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to the end September).

Output 1. Law enforcement personnel operating in the TRIDOM and Douala and Yaoundé air/sea ports have enhanced capacity to effectively investigate, target and intercept trafficking of African grey parrots and other IWT-threatened species; and effectively gather, manage and process evidence, ensuring cases are ready for prosecution.

A three person training team made up from ZSL and Veterans for Wildlife (V4W) was deployed to Cameroon between the 20th of June and the 4th of July 2021. The training event built on previous training for MINFOF staff patrolling the Dja Biosphere Reserve (DBR). 15 students attended the course, comprising ecoguards and other roles within the MINFOF hierarchy.

The event was delivered over 6 days. Class introductions, personal background, experience and learning needs identified topics of training the delegates thought they needed support on. Personal safety in the field was identified as a clear learning requirement. In particular in the safety of female team members in the field. The course was split into two ability groups to ensure individuals were given bespoke skills that matched their knowledge and experience. Many of the delegates had attended previous events with a number being new into service.

Personal safety training level one (Home Office accredited material) was delivered to and addressed students specific safety needs. This module teaches de-escalation tactics, tactical communication, conflict resolution, and practical exercises to practice tactical communication skills.

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The class for further sessions, was split in two, based on experience. Questioning, Recording of evidence, Intelligence, adaptive techniques for crime scene management and collection of evidence techniques and Court

procedures around the giving of evidence conducted during the investigation skills sections. This included practical sessions for students.

The patrols skills focussed on non confrontational techniques in the field. These included, how to recognise threats in the forest, preparation of equipment to go on patrol, briefing and de briefing of patrols, patrol signals, procedures to extract a patrol when engaged and fired upon. The advanced group were also given instruction on how to secure and extract themselves from a patrol base. This group have been identified as future trainers and during the event they led some of the later sessions evidencing good communication and subject matter skills. First aid training was delivered to all students covering assessing a casualty, prioritising casualties, recovery position, wounds, cleaning and bandaging, Covid compliant CPR procedures. All students were provided with a sterile field bandage, post training. Tourniquets were available, but concerns raised on the potential mis-use led to a decision being taken not to issue these. Human rights training based on the “lead ranger” learning module delivered to all students. Students responded well to Bataris box (Your attitude, affects, your behaviour, affects, their attitude and their behaviour). Positive discussion followed in particular how the patrols could better engage with local communities.

Output 2. Key aggregation sites for populations of grey parrots in five target TRIDOM protected areas (Dja Faunal Reserve, Mengame Gorilla Sanctuary and Kom National Park, Boumba Bek National Park) are identified and integrated into MINFOF site-based protection and monitoring programmes (SMART), with anti-poaching detection systems and rapid response protocol piloted.

Once the identification phase was completed, the identified aggregation sites were inserted into the MINFFO patrol itineraries. Of the 14 identified sites, the 06 representing the major sites by the number of grey parrots observed were secured through regular patrolling. Fifteen LAB (Lutte Anti-bracconage; anti poaching patrols) antipoaching missions have been carried out since the start of the year, among which 10 have been carried out in the forest clearings, including 7 in the Ndja clearings and 3 in Thomas’ clearing. These two clearings are the ones under the most pressure. This could be explained by their easy accessibility, proximity to villages and the size of the parrot population. The following photo shows a shelter used by the trappers in the clearings.



Fig 1. Trappers shelter in Ndja clearing

Generally not far from the clearing, a temporary camp is established within which we can find a shelter, a cage built to keep grey parrots. During the same trip, a parrot (figure 2) was seized after the escape of trappers. This parrot, whose wings have been sheared, unmistakably represents “l’appellant” (decoy). “l’appellant” is the parrot used to trick the other parrots in the population into landing, where they are trapped.



Fig.2: parrot seized

The parrot was brought back to Djoum conservation office where he stayed for nearly 6 days before being transferred to the Mvog-betsi zoo for rehabilitation.

Output 3. Key local communities, adjacent to identified aggregation sites and trafficking hubs within the TRIDOM are actively engaged in monitoring and reporting of IWT through Community Surveillance Networks (CSNs), incentivised through establishment of VSLAs and enhanced local livelihoods.

The villages enrolled in this project in accordance with the African Grey Parrot (AGP) aggregation sites have not changed. They are still Akom, Biba 2, Nomedjoh, Alat Makay, Ayene and Lomie. Within the last 6 months, some have evolved with their involvement in alternative livelihoods for AGP conservation. The VSLA summary is the following:

	Total savings (FCFA)	Total secure funds (FCFA)	Total loans given (FCFA)
Biba 2			
Ayene			
Akom			
Nomedjoh			

AKom finally received a band of 50 chick reproducers. Since then, the chicks have grown-up and the group was trained to use the incubator. Egg incubations have just started there.

Nomedjoh and Biba 2 finalized their PIF (growing plants from cuttings) plantation creation.

All the communities are continuously sensitized on the role they have to play by informing authorities of illegal activities witnessed in the area through the Community Surveillance Network (CSN) and this has led to some results. Intelligence from the communities enabled the Conservation Service to track a group of AGP captors. After verification, a patrol spotted the group of poachers who had already captured "the decoy bird" who would serve as a beacon to attract other parrots and to capture a larger number of parrots. The Conservation Service therefore seized the parrot already captured and thus put an end to this AGP poaching expedition.

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2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Site-based protection: There is still a high turnover of MINFOF staff in different protected areas and divisional services of MINFOF divisions in the TRIDOM landscape. Some highly trained ecoguards who were involved in the planning and implementation of patrols targeted towards the protection of roosting sites are either being transferred to Protected Areas (PAs) of different divisions or regions, which usually causes a tardiness in the patrol plans of the roosting sites.

Law Enforcement challenges: Ecoguards remain under-equipped and often go for periods without salary. However, ecoguards respond very positively to our training and ongoing mentoring and are very engaged. We hope that this will result in a continued trajectory of improvement but it will need to be sustained over the coming years through refresher courses and planned ‘train the trainer’ events.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The main impact of COVID on implementation of activities has been around meetings and public gatherings. We have had to reduce field visits and to make sure that all meetings that occur follow strict COVID precautions.

Meetings with government personnel have been significantly reduced. Over time, this may result in a loss of engagement with key authorities. We have used telephone and WhatsApp communication channels to reduce the impact of this as much as possible.

Community engagement:

All engagement with local communities is carried out while observing COVID precautions, including hand-washing, face mask wearing and social distancing. Communities remain committed to activities.

2c. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS:	No
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Formal change request submitted:	No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	NA
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3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend

in your budget for this year?

Yes No X Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget, so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to IWT Challenge Fund management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: IWT001 Half Year Report.**