

# Combating Wildlife Trafficking

## *The USFWS Role in Central Africa*



*A ranger on patrol in Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo.* Credit: Virunga National Park

Wildlife species in Central Africa face escalating threats from organized poachers and global wildlife traffickers. These increasingly sophisticated trafficking networks take advantage of poor governance to exploit high-value resources such as ivory to finance their operations. Weak institutions, corruption, and a lack of in-country financial and technical capacity to manage natural resources allow these groups to infiltrate and destabilize resource-rich areas.

Approximately two-thirds of all U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) funding in Central Africa supports projects that directly address wildlife trafficking. USFWS engages in a three-pronged approach to fight wildlife trafficking in alignment with the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking. Priorities include: 1.) strengthening enforcement by securing habitats and wildlife and preventing poaching; 2.) reducing demand for illegal wildlife products; and 3.) expanding international cooperation and commitment. All USFWS investments in Central Africa seek to strengthen individual and institutional capacity to achieve effective natural resource management over the long term.

Since its first grant to the region in 1989, USFWS has provided ongoing technical and financial support to manage key wildlife populations and habitats in Central Africa. This has continued in the midst of armed conflicts that can wipe out wildlife populations. Effective natural resource management reduces the opportunity for exploitation by insurgent groups while allowing local people to benefit from legal, sustainable access.

---

*As the lead wildlife agency of the U.S. government, USFWS plays an important role in Central Africa to support the U.S. National Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking, which emphasizes law enforcement, demand reduction, and increased international cooperation.*

---

### Program Highlights

- Through its cooperative agreements and competitive grant programs, USFWS strengthens in-country institutional and individual capacity to secure wildlife populations from immediate and long-term threats.
- USFWS provides leadership to address wildlife trafficking by leveraging its expertise in law enforcement and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- As the lead wildlife agency of the U.S. government, USFWS plays an important role in Central Africa to support the U.S. National Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking, which emphasizes law enforcement, demand reduction, and increased international cooperation.



*Above: Ivory figurines seized in Philadelphia by USFWS Law Enforcement in 2012, in one of the largest seizures of ivory in the U.S.* Credit: Richard Ruggiero / USFWS



**Above: Arrest of Nigerian ivory trafficker in Cameroon with 12 ivory tusks and 200 kg of pangolin scales.** Credit: EAGLE Network

### The EAGLE Network

Support for the EAGLE Network is a USFWS priority in Central Africa. Over the last decade, the EAGLE Network has succeeded in reversing the lack of enforcement of wildlife laws that persisted throughout Central Africa.

The EAGLE Network is a coordinated regional innovative approach designed to stop large-scale poaching through stronger enforcement of wildlife laws and fighting corruption. Currently active in 10 countries across Africa, EAGLE's activities have resulted in more than 1,500 significant wildlife traffickers jailed to date. In 2015, the USFWS entered into a five-year with the EAGLE Network. This partnership builds on more than 10 years of USFWS support to EAGLE.

The EAGLE Network model includes:

**Investigation** of wildlife traffickers to obtain evidence that can be used during arrests and prosecutions.

**Arrest operations** of at least one prominent wildlife trafficker per week.

**Legal follow-up** to ensure that each arrest is prosecuted and convictions are comprehensive.

**Media exposure** to raise awareness among the general public about the severe penalties and risks associated with wildlife trafficking.

**Replication** of the EAGLE Network's model and activities in at least two new countries per year.

### Strategic Objectives

The first critical step in reversing the devastating threat presented by the wildlife trafficking crisis is to secure threatened wildlife populations and habitats while developing the capacity of in-country partners to effectively manage their resources. USFWS partners range from local and national governments to non-governmental organizations and local communities.

Our mechanism for providing support is two-fold: we deploy small, competitive grants for on-the-ground projects that respond to immediate threats; and we develop long-term investments, or cooperative agreements, with key partners that focus on building in-country capacity to effectively manage wildlife populations and their habitats over the long term. This combined approach allows us to respond quickly to emerging threats while providing support and technical assistance to achieve long-lasting results.

### On-the-Ground Investments

USFWS secures and conserves wildlife in Central Africa through five mechanisms: the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE); three Multinational Species Conservation Funds appropriated by the U.S. Congress through the African Elephant Conservation Act, the Great Apes Conservation Act, and the Marine Turtle Conservation Act; and a new program on Combating Wildlife Trafficking.

### Achievements

- Development of a coordinated regional network to stop large-scale poaching through stronger enforcement of wildlife laws with the EAGLE Network, which is now active in 10 countries across Africa.
- Reinforcement of the institutional capacity of Gabon's National Park Agency (ANPN) to combat poaching through a five-year cooperative agreement between USFWS and ANPN. Gabon is home to more than 50 percent of Africa's remaining forest elephants. In the Wonga-Wongué Presidential Reserve, elephant poaching was eliminated within a year of entering into the cooperative agreement. ANPN is now working to replicate that success in its other parks.
- Partnerships with local communities and other civil-society partners to secure wildlife in the Sangha Tri-National and Northern Congo contiguous forest landscape in Cameroon, Congo, and the Central African Republic (CAR). This project seeks to improve protected area management, extend the protected area network, and reduce poaching.
- Continued support to projects in conflict areas, including Zakouma National Park, Chad; Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas, Central African Republic; Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); and Garamba National Park, DRC.
- 12 years of continuous support, including a cooperative agreement, to DRC's Virunga National Park to support rangers and the families of fallen rangers and to protect wildlife from poaching in the face of intensified pressure from militia groups.



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
International Affairs**

<http://www.fws.gov/international>

 @USFWSIntl

 USFWS\_International Affairs

January 2017