

# DRILL INFO

Rettet  
**DEN DRILL**  
save the drill  
...mehr als Artenschutz!



Issue 28, February 2020

Extra edition

Dear members and friends of the drill,

Unfortunately, we have to report bad news from Nigeria today:

At the end of December, the Drill Ranch in Afi Mountain was robbed.

The incident was reported immediately to the local police and two suspects, employees of Pandrillus, were arrested temporarily.

A few days later, three additional witnesses were summoned.

On the way to another police station, a horrible car accident occurred. The exact course of events is still unrevealed, but supposedly, the driver was intoxicated. He died later in the hospital.

On this accident, one of the suspects, Kyrian Tah, died as well. All other witnesses and six policemen are hospitalized since then, some of them in critical state.

Now, the situation starts to become a bit unclear:

The youth of Buanchor, the neighboring village to the Drill Ranch, blamed Pandrillus for the death of Kyrian Tah, as he was a member of their community. Besides, it is very likely Pandrillus – in place of the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary – had a bad standing already, as they prevent the traditional hunting (of protected species) and logging.



photo: Pandrillus



photo: Pandrillus

On the next day, January 9<sup>th</sup>, over twenty young men, part wise drunk, attacked the Drill Ranch, ransacked and destroyed it completely. Liza Gadsby and Zachary (Zack) Schwenneker, members of the staff, were chained and beat up. They were brought to Buanchor where Zack was pulled into the street and savagely beaten. A picture of his injuries is available in an article of The Guardian (see link below).

With the help of some villagers, Liza and Zack were able to escape and both got back to the camp.

Since then, the camp is guarded by four armed policemen day and night.

The situation is frightening to all staff – Zack and Liza as well as the local employees and a Dutch volunteer who also got attacked and injured.

**Zack wrote us:**

*“Peter (Peter Jenkins, Co-Director and partner of Liza), Liza, and myself are irreparably damaged from this incident. None of us will ever be the same. However, we do not have the luxury of tending to our own psychological trauma because tensions are still extremely high and we cannot let down our guard. Right now, Afi is not safe. [...]*

*We are continuing to press upon the police that they need to take responsibility for the wrongful death of our staff members. Until the body of Kyrian Tah, one of our staff who died in the accident and triggered the assault is buried anything can happen.*

*The national staff of Drill Ranch who without hesitation, have been living in camp doing animal care by day and security by night. It has been the only highlight in this dark period. We are all so proud of what they have sacrificed on behalf of the project in this time of disaster.*



photo: Pandrillus

*It is nice to know we are not alone.*

*I wish I had more to say at this time but I am at a loss for words. As I stated earlier, I don't even know how I feel because I have not had the opportunity to address my own personal thoughts. Day by day we are just managing. It is a miracle that after everything has happened we are still feeding 600 animals a day and putting things back together piece by piece. Again, all credit goes to the staff who have risen to the occasion when called upon. We are proud to know that the family that is Drill Ranch sticks together through thick and thin”.*

We receive information, pictures and even financial reports from Zack on a nearly daily basis. Each email shows us how much those people need us at the moment – each email seems like a form of processing the experienced.

Immediately, we held an extraordinary board meeting and decided to address the local government. Also, Carsten Zehrer as international studbook keeper and therefore responsible for all captive drills around the world wrote to the responsible official in Calabar.

These are our **petitions**:

**By our board:**

Dear Sir,

Hanover, 31 January 2020

I take the liberty to write to you on behalf of the NGO *Save the Drill*. We are based in Germany but are supported by members from all over the European area for years, as well. Hence, *Save the Drill* is an internationally renowned organisation.

Our objective is to support the last occurrence of the highly endangered drill monkey (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*) in its natural habitat. An aim we worked for over the last fifteen years.

With great shock and dismay we learned about the incidents on January 9<sup>th</sup> at the Drill Ranch in the Afi Mountains Wildlife Sanctuary. The organisation Pandrillus stands up for the conservation of drills in their natural habitat for decades – with high personal commitment and sacrifice from Directors, Management, and national staff alike. The Afi Mountain region, habitat of the drills, is a unique and extremely important hotspot of biodiversity. Some animal and plants species from this place are not found anywhere else in the world – only in the Afi mountains!

I visited the project myself a few years ago to convince myself personally of the impressive work done by Pandrillus. I got to know the local community as very friendly, honest and warmhearted people. Hence, the events are even more inconceivable to me. I am devastated.

The survival of Pandrillus allows the preservation of the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary in its current function. If the work there is threatened – or not even possible any more – the world will face an irretrievable loss of an incredibly valuable treasure of animal species.

Over 600 drill individuals live at the Drill Ranch – one of Africa's most endangered monkey species. Those animals only live in a very small range in Cameroon and Nigeria. At the drill ranch, they experience protection and care by the staff.

Beside it is the habitat of the western most population remaining of the critically endangered Cross River Gorilla. A species which is in danger of extinction. The survival of these last animals of their kind is only possible by strong protection. As well as a lot of other, more unpopular species like the Nigerian Chimpanzee and other, smaller monkeys only found in Nigeria and nowhere else in the world!

For all those reasons we – with plenty of international backing - support Pandrillus and Liza Gadsby's work as a director with high financial efforts. Those contributions mainly benefit the local community, as salaries are paid and food for the animals is bought by it.

It is of greatest interest to us, that the whole issue is resolved as soon as possible.

The staff of Pandrillus spent the last 30 years of their lives standing up for the protection of one of Nigeria's most beautiful places – and now they urgently need *your* protection!

We plead you sincerely and wholehearted: Please, help to assure that the work at Drill Ranch can be continued safely and without any danger for the staff members of this sanctuary!

Yours faithfully,

Kathrin Paulsen....

**By Carsten Zehrer:**

Dear Sir,

Munich, 08.02.2020

Please let me introduce myself first: my name is Carsten Zehrer, I am Biologist and Deputy Zoological Director at Hellabrunn Zoo Munich (Münchner Tierpark Hellabrunn), Germany.

I was horrified to learn of the events that happened on January 9<sup>th</sup> at the Drill Ranch in the Afi Mountains, Cross River State, Nigeria.

In my role as International Studbook Keeper for Drills I take care for the breeding and development for all of these highly endangered primates living under human care worldwide. Nearly 100 Drills are currently kept in zoos outside their natural West African range.

Each and every one of these valuable animals is an ambassador for its fellow species living in the wild.

To give you an example: Hellabrunn Zoo Munich annually inform more than 2,5 million (!) visitors about the protection work for the Drill – but also about the impressive work of Pandrillus and the local staff in Nigeria.

Not only Hellabrunn Zoo Munich, but also all other drill-holding zoos work tirelessly every day for these endangered primates and the protection efforts on site in Nigeria. The World Association of

Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) have already supported Pandrillus' work financially and thus also ideally.

The work of the local staff at Drill Ranch is invaluable to maintain the Drill in its natural habitat. Over 600 animals live at Drill Ranch, which corresponds to almost a quarter of the entire world population.

I sincerely ask you – on behalf of all the zoological gardens that bring the Drill closer to the millions of visitors and thus point to the situation in Nigeria: Please help that the valuable work at Drill Ranch for this endangered species can be continued. Otherwise, the world will lose a great treasure trove of biodiversity.

Sincerely Yours

Carsten Zehrer....

**Zack wrote:**

*"It is our hope that your letter, which was eloquently written, may encourage the state government to take greater action in resolving the continuing security threats at Afi.*

*We are incredibly grateful to have individuals like yourselves, and the entire RdD community, supporting us.*

*Hope is fading but not lost".*

**Though nobody can foresee right now how the situation at Drill Ranch will develop, there are currently 648 drills living in the Afi Mountains which need daily care. Besides, the local employees who stand by Pandrillus loyally and in literally every situation need ongoing regular salary.**

**There was so much destroyed that every single cent is needed.**

Liza Gadsy will return back to the USA, whilst Zack and Peter Jenkins currently stay at the Drill Ranch in the Afi Mountains.

On Sunday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, the following article was published by Guardian Nigeria:

<https://guardian.ng/sunday-magazine/600-baboons-chimpanzees-under-threat-at-drill-ranch-in-cross-river/>

At the moment, none of the involved parties can say if or how the work on Drill Ranch can be proceeded. The experience is still too recent and everybody is trying to process everything for themselves. Final decisions are very much depending on the local government's actions, as well.

In the meantime, a few additional international organizations wrote to the local authorities. We all hope that together, we can make a future for the drills of the Afi Mountains possible.

**We want to thank TIERPARK NORDHORN for the support of their association through transfer- and mail costs. We also want to thank VisionConnect GmbH for their regular support of our homepage and for their provision of the transfer volume.**

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