

ESET RESEARCH

# OceanLotus: macOS malware update

Latest ESET research describes the inner workings of a recently found addition to OceanLotus's toolset for targeting Mac users



Romain Dumont

09 Apr 2019 , 7 min. read

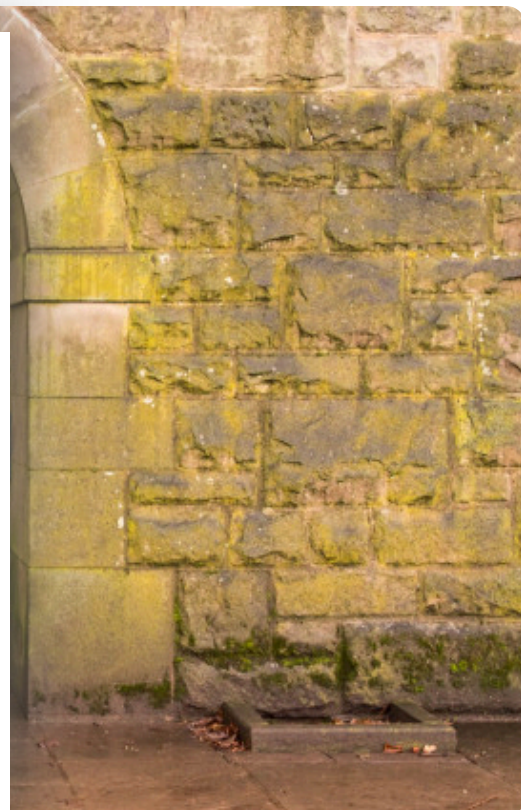


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Early in March 2019, a new macOS malware sample from the OceanLotus group was uploaded to VirusTotal, a popular online multi-scanner service. This backdoor executable bears the same features as the previous macOS variant we looked at, but its structure has changed and its detection was made harder. Unfortunately, we couldn't find the dropper associated with this sample so we do not know the initial compromise vector.

We [recently published a detailed update about OceanLotus](#) and how its operators employ a wide range of techniques to gain code execution, achieve persistence, and leave as little trace as possible on a Windows system. OceanLotus is also known to have a malicious macOS component. This article details what has changed from the previous macOS [version analyzed by Trend Micro](#) and describes how, while analyzing this variant's code, you can automate string decryption using the IDA Hex-Rays API.

# Analysis

The following three sections of this blogpost describe the analysis of the sample with the SHA-1 hash E615632C9998E4D3E5ACD8851864ED09B02C77D2. The file is named flashlightd and is detected by ESET products as OSX/OceanLotus.D

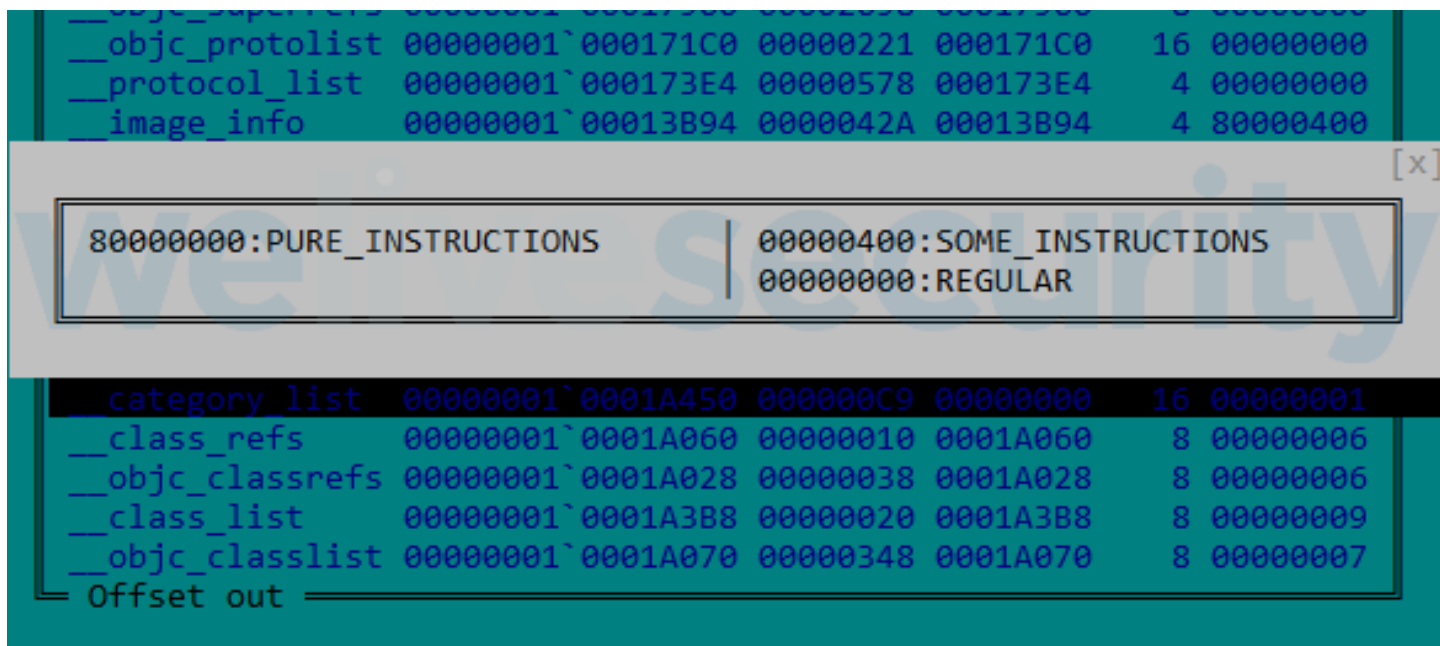


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ed with UPX, but most packer  
cause they mostly include a  
urther, Mach-O signatures are  
haracteristic makes static  
ng is that the entry point is  
TEXT segment. This section has

				[x]	
				Offset	Align
				Attr	
				00000C20	16 80000400
				00000001`00017960	00002698 00017960
				8	00000000



__objc_protolist	00000001`000171C0	00000221	000171C0	16	00000000
__protocol_list	00000001`000173E4	00000578	000173E4	4	00000000
__image_info	00000001`00013B94	0000042A	00013B94	4	80000400

80000000:PURE\_INSTRUCTIONS

00000400:SOME\_INSTRUCTIONS  
00000000:REGULAR

category_list	00000001`0001A450	000000C9	00000000	16	00000001
__class_refs	00000001`0001A060	00000010	0001A060	8	00000006
__objc_classrefs	00000001`0001A028	00000038	0001A028	8	00000006
__class_list	00000001`0001A3B8	00000020	0001A3B8	8	00000009
__objc_classlist	00000001`0001A070	00000348	0001A070	8	00000007

Offset out

Figure 1. MACH-O `__cstring` section attributes

As seen in Figure 2, the fact that the code is in the `__cstring` section tricks some disassembly tools to display the code as strings.



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```
758D48087D8B48F0h, 0E2C101C283FA8910h,\n0E808C18348F67500h, 0FFE8C7890000D626h,\n0FD8949F689495053h, 0C4894900012EC9E8h,\nwelivesecurity
```

ata by IDA

gging watchdog whose sole  
order to do that, this thread:

\_\_ATTACH as a request parameter

Checks if some exception ports are open by calling the `task_get_exception_ports` function

- Checks if a debugger is attached, as seen in Figure 3, by verifying if the `P_TRACED` flag is set in the current process

```

LABEL_6:
    info.kp_proc.p_flag = 0;
    mib[0] = CTL_KERN;
    mib[1] = KERN_PROC;
    mib[2] = KERN_PROC_PID;
    mib[3] = getpid();
    size = 0x288LL;
    sysctl(mib, 4u, &info, &size, 0LL, 0LL);
    v1 = (unsigned __int16)(info.kp_proc.p_flag & P_TRACED) >> 11;

```

Figure 3. Check if a debugger is attached via `sysctl` function

If the watchdog detects that a debugger is present the `exit` function is called. Moreover, the sample then checks its environment by issuing the following two commands:

```
ioreg -l | grep -o "Manufacturer" and sysctl hw.model
```

own virtualization system strings:  
d:

```
| awk '/Boot ROM Version/'
```

"MB", "MM", "IM", "MP" and "XS".

te, "MBP" stands for MacBook

nce the Trend Micro article, we

r this sample are quite recent as




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- daff.faybilodeau[.]com
- sarc.onteagleroad[.]com
- au.charlineopkesston[.]com

The URL resource used has changed to /dp/B074WC4NHW/ref=gbps\_img\_m-9\_62c3\_750e6b35.

The first packet that is sent to the C&C server contains more information regarding the host machine. All data gathered by the commands in the following table are included.

Commands	Description
system_profiler SPHardwareDataType 2>/dev/null	
• awk '/Processor / {split(\$0,line,""); printf("%s",line[2]);}'	Gather processor information
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	Gather memory information
	Gather network interface MAC addresses
• awk '/IOPlatformSerialNumber/ { split(\$0, line, "\\");	Retrieves the serial number of the device

```
printf("%s", line[4]); }
```

On top of this configuration change, this sample does not use the [libcurl](#) library for network exfiltration. Instead, it uses an external library. To locate it, the backdoor tries to decrypt each file in the current directory using AES-256-CBC with the key `gFjMXBgYXWULmVVVzyxy` padded with zeroes. Each file is “decrypted” and saved as `/tmp/store` and an attempt to load it as a library made using the [dlopen](#) function. When a decryption attempt results in a successful call to `dlopen`, the backdoor then retrieves the exported functions `Boriry` and `ChadylonV`, which seem to be responsible for the network communication with the server. As we do not have the dropper or other files from the original sample’s location, we could not analyse this library. Moreover, since the component is encrypted, a YARA rule based on these strings would not match the file found on disk.

As described in the analysis of the group’s previous macOS backdoor, a *clientId* is created. This identifier is the MD5 hash of the return value of one of the following commands:



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```
PlatformSerialNumber/ {
```

```
PlatformUUID/ { split($0,
```

```
the MAC address)
```

```
uidgen" in the previous samples
```

```
the return value indicating root
```

```
le System/HFS/25cf5d02-
```

```
code runs as root, or in
```

```
s/drivers/snippets.ecgML
```

```
ction and its timestamp is
```

modified using the “`touch`” command with a random value

modified using the `touch -t` command with a random value.

## String decryption

Like previous variants, the strings are encrypted using AES-256-CBC (hex-encoded key: 9D7274AD7BCEF0DED29BDBB428C251DF8B350B92 padded with zeroes and the IV is filled with zeroes) using the `CCCrypt` function. The key has changed from previous versions but since the group is still using the same algorithm to encrypt strings, decryption could be automated. Along with this article, we are releasing an IDA script leveraging the Hex-Rays API to decrypt the strings present in the binary. This script may help future analysis of OceanLotus and the analysis of existing samples that we have not yet been able to obtain. At the core of this script lies a generic method to obtain the arguments passed to a function. Moreover, it looks for the parameter assignments in order to find their values. This method could be reused to retrieve the list of arguments of a function and then pass them to a callback.

Knowing the prototype of the *decrypt* function, the script first finds all cross-references to this function, finds all the arguments, decrypts the data and puts the plaintext inside a comment at the address of the cross-reference. In order for the script to work correctly, the `key` variable must be set in the script and the global `key_len` must be a DWORD in this case; see



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```
74h, 0ADh, 7Bh, 0CEh, 0F0h, 0DEh, 0D2h, 9Bh
; DATA XREF: f_MachineCheck+491to
; f_MachineCheck+424to ...
28h, 0C2h, 51h, 0DFh, 8Bh, 35h, 0Bh, 92h
; DATA XREF: f_MachineCheck+3E1to
; f_CheckMachineType+4B1to ...
```

key\_len

In the *Function* window, you can right-click the decryption function and click "Extract and

decrypt arguments". The script should put the decrypted strings in comments, much as in Figure 5.

```
000000001000012C3 movaps xmm0, xmmword ptr cs:a_vmware ; "Y?:zC?????^?"
000000001000012CA movaps [rbp+var_50], xmm0
000000001000012CE mov [rbp+var_40], 0
000000001000012D2 lea r12, key_len
000000001000012D9 mov ecx, [r12]
000000001000012DD lea rbx, key
000000001000012E4 lea rdi, [rbp+var_50]
000000001000012E8 mov esi, 10h
000000001000012ED xor r8d, r8d
000000001000012F0 mov rdx, rbx
000000001000012F3 call f_decrypt ; vmware
000000001000012F8 mov r13, rax
000000001000012FB movaps xmm0, xmmword ptr cs:a_virtualbox ; "??????\x15???\x7F????"
00000000100001302 movaps [rbp+var_70], xmm0
00000000100001306 mov [rbp+var_60], 0
0000000010000130A mov ecx, [r12]
0000000010000130E lea rdi, [rbp+var_70]
00000000100001312 mov esi, 10h
00000000100001317 xor r8d, r8d
0000000010000131A mov rdx, rbx
0000000010000131D call f_decrypt ; virtualbox
00000000100001322 mov r15, rax
00000000100001325 movaps xmm0, xmmword ptr cs:a_oracle ; "-?????,?1\x05A?????"
0000000010000132C movaps [rbp+var_90], xmm0
00000000100001333 mov [rbp+var_80], 0
00000000100001337 mov ecx, [r12]
0000000010000133B lea rdi, [rbp+var_90]
```



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ivesecurity

ments

's xrefs to window for that



```
... p t_MachineCheck+B9 call f_decrypt; orac1e
... p f_MachineCheck+F0 call f_decrypt; parallels
... p f_MachineCheck+155 call f_decrypt; ioreg -l | grep -e "Manufacturer"
... p f_MachineCheck+43A call f_decrypt; sysctl hw.model
... p f_CheckMachineType+67 call f_decrypt; system_profiler SPHardwareDataType 2>/dev/null | awk '/Boot ROM Version/
... p f_CheckMachineType+16C call f_decrypt; MBP
... p f_CheckMachineType+1D4 call f_decrypt; MBA
... p f_CheckMachineType+23C call f_decrypt; MB
... p f_CheckMachineType+2A4 call f_decrypt; MM
... p f_CheckMachineType+30C call f_decrypt; IM
... p f_CheckMachineType+374 call f_decrypt; MP
... p f_CheckMachineType+3D8 call f_decrypt; XS
```

Figure 6. Xrefs to of `f_decrypt` function

The final script can be found on our [Github repository](#).

## Conclusion

As recently documented in another of our [articles](#), the OceanLotus group keeps improving

tools for targeting Mac users.

Mac users don't run security

of less importance. ESET

the network library used for the

t network protocol used remains

tributes, are also available in our



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- daff.faybilodeau[.]com
- sarc.onteagleroad[.]com
- au.charlineopkesston[.]com

## URL resource

- /dp/B074WC4NHW/ref=gbps\_img\_m-9\_62c3\_750e6b35

## File paths

- ~/Library/SmartCardsServices/Technology/PlugIns/drivers/snippets.ecgML
- /Library/Storage/File System/HFS/25cf5d02-e50b-4288-870a-



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#### ESET detection name

C77D2	OSX/OceanLotus.D
-------	------------------

Tactic	ID	Name	Description
Defense Evasion	T1158	Hidden Files and Directories	The backdoor hides the <i>clientID</i> file via <b>chflags</b> function.
	T1107	File Deletion	The backdoor can receive a "delete" command.
	T1222	File Permissions Modification	The backdoor changes the permission of the file it wants to execute to 755.
	T1027	Obfuscated Files or Information	The library used for network exfiltration is encrypted with AES-256 in CBC mode.
	T1099 (macOS)	Timestamp	The timestamp of the file storing the clientID is modified with a random value.



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ckdoor performs a fingerprint of the  
ne on its first connection to the C&C

ckdoor encrypts the data before  
tion.

ckdoor implements a specific format  
packet involving random values. See  
[Micro article](#).

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