



Fact Sheet

The Bushmeat Crisis



*The following statistics have been taken from the report **Conservation & Use of Wildlife-Based Resources: the Bushmeat Crisis** (Nasi et al). Original sources can be found in this report.*

Wildlife & Ecological Function

Although every organism contributes to ecosystem processes, the nature and magnitude of individual species contributions vary considerably. Therefore activities, such as hunting, have the potential to not only impact targeted species but the ecosystem more broadly.

Keystone species: those species whose loss has a disproportionate impact on the community when compared to the loss of other species.

For example, large cats' extirpation triggers an uncontrolled growth of the prey population which in turn dramatically increases browsing or grazing intensity to the point where forest regeneration can be totally prevented; Elephants have a tremendous role in modifying vegetation structure and composition through their feeding habits (differential herbivory, seed dispersal) and movements in the forest (killing a large number of small trees).

Wildlife – Economics, Nutrition & Culture

Proteins obtained from hunting wild animals are crucial for the survival of many forest-dependent people of the Congo Basin.

In Gabon, the annual bushmeat trade has been valued at US\$25 million (€18.5 million). In West and Central Africa, estimates of the value of the bushmeat trade range from US\$42 to US\$205 million (€31-151 million) per year.

Researchers estimate that the current harvest of bushmeat in Central Africa amounts to more than 1 million tonnes annually—the equivalent of almost four million head of cattle

The value of wild meat harvested in the Amazon basin exceeds US\$ 175 million per year.

In at least 62 countries world-wide, wildlife and fish constitute a minimum of 20% of the animal protein in rural diets. Hunting provides between 30% and 80% of the overall protein intake of rural households in Central Africa.

Hunting also remains an important social and cultural tradition, with the acquisition of animal parts as cultural artefacts, for personal adornment or for hunting trophies still a widespread practice throughout tropical forest regions and the rest of the world.

For example, a breeding pair of Lear's Macaw is worth around \$100,000; Panda pelts sell for \$10,000 on the black market in Hong Kong and collectors in Asia pay \$40,000 for panda skins.

The overall international trade in animal products is estimated at approximately US\$3.9 billion.

Wildlife Extinction

Historically, hunting pressure has contributed to the extinction and near-extinction of countless animal species, among them the right whale, great auk, Eskimo curlew, red kite and European wolf.

In Kilum Ijim, Cameroon, many species of large mammals, including elephants and gorillas, have become locally extinct in the past 50 years due to hunting and land use change.

In Tangkoko Duasudara Nature Reserve in Sulawesi, Indonesia, the population of crested black macaques declined by 75% between 1978 and 1993.

In Northern Thailand (Doi Inthanon and Doi Suthep) all elephants, wild cattle and tigers have been hunted out.

In Vietnam, 12 species of large vertebrates are either extinct or on their way to extinction as a result of hunting, demographic pressure and land use changes. These extinct species include Eld's deer, wild water buffalo, batagur turtle and Siamese crocodile, while the tiger, elephant and banteng are close to extinction.

Wildlife & Sustainable Management

The best way to maintain source populations varies greatly between sites, depending on the legal status and ecological conditions, the distribution, size, socioeconomics and cultures of local human populations and the wider socioeconomic and political context.

The sustainability of hunting activities will also vary with the age of the settlement being considered and the target species.

If settlements are recent, forest fauna is still rich and diverse and hunters easily find large prey such as tapir, buffalo, large antelopes, apes, and wild pigs. However these densely populated pockets are places where hunting becomes quickly unsustainable.

If settlements are long-established they have generally gone through an extinction filter and the fauna is reduced to the most resilient species, allowing hunters to bag rodents, small antelopes, and small primates. Hunting in these areas can often be sustainable.

Species with low intrinsic rates of population increase and long generation time - like primates, carnivores, lowland tapir, African forest buffalo and giant hog - are less resilient to hunting than species with high intrinsic rates of population increase and shorter generation times - such as rodents, small to medium-sized duikers, brocket deer, and peccaries.

Nasi, R.; Brown, D.; Wilkie, D.; Bennett, E.; Tutin, C.; van Tol, G.; Christophersen, T. 2007.

Conservation and Use of Wildlife-Based Resources: The Bushmeat Crisis. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal, and Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor. Technical Series no. 33, 50 pages.