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End the Commercial Bushmeat Trade

The illegal hunting of wild animals, commonly referred to as “bushmeat,” has become the number one threat to wildlife populations in Africa. The Jane Goodall Institute reported that 15 species, including chimpanzees, will be lost by 2020 if the bushmeat trade continues at today’s pace.¹ The value of the illegal trade is about \$50 million annually, with more than one million metric tons of bushmeat being taken from the Congo Basin alone, every year.²

Animals have been part of forest dwellers’ diets for a very long time, and hunting has been a relatively sustainable practice, but the population of bushmeat consumers has increased, and illegal hunting has become profitable for those who lack an alternative income, bringing a hunter from \$300 to \$1000 a year.³ The hunters sell the meat to distributors or loggers who sell to markets. While wealthy people in the cities pay high prices for exotic gorilla or snake meat, most bushmeat is consumed by families who can’t afford the more expensive, commercially raised meat.

The logging industry is fueling the bushmeat trade by cutting through previously impenetrable

We, in the developed world, have a direct role (in the bushmeat trade) through our exploitation of those countries, and in the waters adjacent. This is an international problem.

— Justin Brashares,
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forest, providing easy access for hunters and transport between markets. It’s not unusual for a logging truck to carry 450 pounds of bushmeat for resale at the next market down the road.⁴

Uniting to Find Answers

The Bushmeat Crisis Task Force (BCTF) was established in 1999 by 28 conservation organizations, including the Jane Goodall Institute, to protect the species threatened by illegal hunting. BCTF gathers information, educates groups, governments and corporate decision makers and raises public awareness, with a primary role of sharing information so NGOs, scientists and governments can find solutions together. In 2002 BCTF ran a series of workshops held at wildlife colleges in South Africa, Tanzania and Cameroon, setting up a bushmeat curriculum for each college.

Caring for the Orphans

In 1992 the Jane Goodall Institute established the Tchimpounga Sanctuary in the Kouilou region of the Republic of Congo. Tchimpounga has become a refuge for chimpanzees orphaned

Bushmeat’s Connection to the Sea

Along the West African coast, people have traditionally supported their families by fishing. In the 1970s governments along the coast sold offshore fishing rights to foreign fishing conglomerates, mostly from Europe, and over the past three decades, fish stocks have declined by over 50%. With their waters seriously overfished and unable to feed themselves, villagers have had to turn inland to find food, and this has led to an increase in the bushmeat trade, as coastal people kill whatever land animals they can find for subsistence and income. Since heavy foreign fishing began in the region, 41 species of mammals have seen their populations decline by 75%.⁵

from the bushmeat trade and, by 2006, was housing 115 young chimps. Between 2004 and 2006, Congolese authorities delivered 40 new orphaned chimps to the sanctuary, most of which had been confiscated from hunters trying to sell them to the pet or entertainment trade after having killed their parents.

The Ngamba Island Sanctuary was established in 1998 and is another safe refuge for orphaned chimps located in the Entebbe region of Uganda. Ngamba is managed by the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust; an alliance of five international conservation groups. By 2006 Ngamba was home to 42 orphaned chimps.

Return to a Sacred Past

The Mount Kupe forest in southern Cameroon is home to many rare and unique animals, including eight primate species and a bird called the Bush Shrike, which was thought to be extinct until 1989. The forest was also held sacred by nearby villagers, since they believed it to be the home of their spirits, and killing an animal from the forest was considered to be killing an ancestor. In the 1970s, an influx of new people from the surrounding grasslands led to logging and poaching and the erosion of the sacred beliefs, and hunting for the bushmeat trade became prevalent; fueled by the strong wildlife population that had benefited from the forest's sacred past. Today 16 villages surround Mount Kupe, with 140,000 villagers who depend on the forest for food, water, medicine and building materials.

- Ape Alliance — bushmeat: www.4apes.com/bushmeat
- Bushmeat Crisis Task Force: www.bushmeat.org
- Bushmeat Project: www.bushmeat.net
- CITES — bushmeat: www.cites.org/eng/prog/bushmeat.shtml
- Jane Goodall Institute — bushmeat: www.janegoodall.org/africa-programs/objectives/controlling-bushmeat-trade.asp



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This Bosman's potto in Zaire is among the many primate species, along with ungulates, birds, and rodents commonly killed for the bushmeat trade.

Enough of the sacred beliefs lived on, however, and enough people were upset by the illegal hunting that a group of village chiefs united in 2004 to establish the Nyasoso Ecotourism Group. Financed by village development associations under the guidance of the World Wildlife Fund, it is an anti-poaching group, providing park rangers throughout the forest and protecting its inhabitants.