



SOS Fund number - # 6b.065

Proposal Title: *State-of-knowledge review and assessment of next steps for Intermediate Result 6*

Start date: **3/1/98**
 Duration: **6 months**
 Total Grant amount: **\$12,913**

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Abstract

Wildlife in the forests of the Congo Basin are important ecological agents (seed dispersers, pollinators, consumers) and thus are essential to the long-term structure and function of the forest. They are also the basic resource for subsistence and market hunting, safari hunting, live animal trade, ecotourism, and potentially for small livestock raising. Wildlife contribute not only to local diets and local livelihoods (both as sources of income and, contrarily, as agricultural pests), they can also help defray the costs of managing protected areas. Though forest wildlife have significant dietary and economic value little effort has been made to synthesize our knowledge of the impact of subsistence and market utilization on wildlife populations, and the role that different wildlife uses can play in sustainable economic development and sustainable management of the forest.

The present proposed work is a state-of-knowledge review which will summarize what is presently known about: (a) the scale and economic value of consumptive uses (bushmeat hunting, safari hunting, live animal trade, small-wildlife livestock rearing) and non-consumptive uses (tourism) of wildlife in the Congo Basin; (b) the capacity of wildlife populations to sustain present and projected uses; and (c) present and plausible approaches to effectively control, use, and/or favor those uses of wildlife that do not deplete the resource base. The report will pinpoint gaps in our knowledge, offer suggestions as to the steps that might be taken to fill them, and attempt to derive a conceptual model of the factors driving wildlife use in the Congo Basin

This study will generate the following products: (1) a report in English and French summarizing the current state-of-knowledge and suggestions for future actions; (2) a bibliography of sources of information on the scale and consequences of wildlife uses, and approaches to wildlife conservation; and (3) a key document collection for this sector. These products will be made available on CD-ROM to individuals and organizations in Central Africa, Europe and the U.S.