

CARPE Abstract

Bushmeat Hunting in the Congo Basin: An Assessment of Impacts and Options for Mitigation.

D.S. Wilkie, and J.F. Carpenter. 1998. Biodiversity and Conservation (Accepted)

Hunting of wild animals is an important component of household economies in the Congo Basin. Results from the growing corpus of quantitative studies show that: a) bushmeat remains the primary source of animal protein for the majority of Congo Basin families; b) bushmeat hunting can constitute a significant source of revenue for forest families; c) bushmeat consumption by low density populations living in the forest may be sustainable at present; d) demand for bushmeat by growing numbers of urban consumers has created a substantial market for bushmeat that is resulting in a halo of defaunation around population centres, and may be driving unsustainable levels of hunting, even in relatively isolated regions; and e) large bodied animals with low reproductive rates are most susceptible to over-exploitation compared with more r-selected species that apparently can tolerate relatively intensive hunting (1). As urban populations continue to grow and economies revitalise, unless action is taken to alter the demand for, and the supply of bushmeat, the forests of the Congo Basin will be progressively stripped of certain wildlife species, risking their extirpation or extinction, and the loss of values they confer to local economies. Consequently, it is essential that a) logging companies are encouraged or coerced not to facilitate bushmeat hunting and transportation in their concessions, b) we develop a better understanding of the elasticity of bushmeat demand, c) that pilot bushmeat substitution projects are supported and their impact on demand evaluated, and d) social marketing activities are put in place to attempt to direct consumer preferences for animal protein away from bushmeat species that are particularly susceptible to over-exploitation.