

CARPE Abstract

The Potential Role of Safari Hunting as a Source of Revenue for Protected Areas in the Congo Basin

D.S. Wilkie and J.F. Carpenter. 1998. *Oryx* (In Review)

In sub-Saharan Africa conservation of biodiversity is increasingly predicated on finding ways to ensure that the economic value of maintaining a landscape in its 'natural' state meets or exceeds the expected returns from converting the area to an alternative land-use such as agriculture. 'Wildlands' in Africa must generate, directly or from donor contributions, funds sufficient to cover both the operating costs of conservation, and the opportunity costs of foregoing other forms of resource use. Government and donor investment presently meet less than 30% of the estimated recurring costs required to effectively manage the protected area network within Central African countries, and cover none of the growing opportunity costs incurred to maintain protected areas.

Unfortunately, few additional sources of funding are available. Tourism is only economically viable where charismatic species exist in 'safe' areas that are not more than a few hours drive in a 4x4 from an international airport – ostensibly excluding tourism from most of Central Africa. In contrast, a review of available information suggests that safari hunting could offer a significant and sustainable source of financing to offset some of the costs of maintaining protected areas in Central Africa. However, better quantitative data are needed to assess whether trophy hunting is both ecologically sustainable and economically competitive over the long-term relative to other land-uses.