

Tackling the bushmeat crisis

Research and action on bushmeat in West and Central Africa

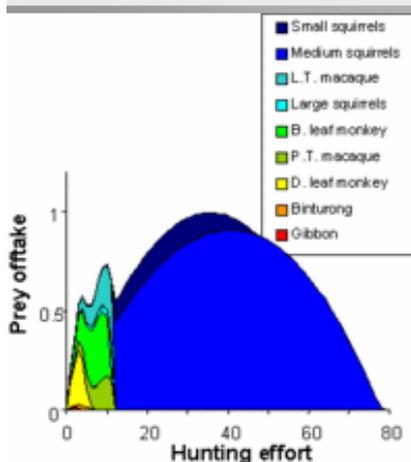
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ZSL's bushmeat work

- Research to understand the issues driving the problem
- Taking action on the ground guided by best science and tested methods
- Providing the latest policy guidance for decision-makers



Developing solutions to the unsustainable bushmeat trade

The harvest of bushmeat (wild meat) has become a focus of global concern due to increasingly unsustainable levels of hunting and trade. This is particularly so in the tropical forests of West and Central Africa, leading to reports of a 'bushmeat crisis' in the region. Extinctions resulting from unsustainable hunting will not only threaten biodiversity and ecosystem services but are also likely to seriously impact upon the food security and livelihoods of the people who use this resource. There is therefore an urgent need to develop successful initiatives that will promote the long-term sustainability of the bushmeat harvest, both to protect threatened wildlife and to secure the trade's social and economic values. ZSL has been taking a lead working in this field for the past decade, carrying out cutting-edge research to understand the issues behind unsustainable harvesting of bushmeat, developing, testing and applying strategies to address the problem and seeking to inform decision-making at the policy level.

Bushmeat research at ZSL

ZSL, through its Conservation Programmes department and the Institute of Zoology's Bushmeat Research Programme, is involved in research to enhance our understanding of bushmeat hunting and trade in West and Central Africa, to assist both policy makers and project managers in the development of effective methods of regulation and management for sustainability. The work is interdisciplinary in its design, tackling the biological, economic and social aspects of the trade, using a variety of approaches and involving fieldwork across the region. Projects include:

- Understanding the patterns driving use of bushmeat and species' vulnerability to hunting through theoretical approaches such as modelling in order to predict future trends and impacts of management actions;
- Analysing factors influencing the commodity chain in **Ghana**;
- Studying long-term offtake and market surveys in **Sierra Leone** and **Ghana** to understand patterns of use over time and impacts on hunted species;
- Evaluating hunter incentives and rural dependence on bushmeat in **Equatorial Guinea**, providing insight into the factors that drive hunting as a livelihood choice and the role that bushmeat plays in people's diets;
- Exploring the impact of armed conflict and extreme poverty on bushmeat use in **DRC**;
- Studying the role logging plays in bushmeat use in **Cameroon, Gabon** and **Ghana**;
- Taking a spatially-explicit approach to studying supply and demand of bushmeat in **Cameroon, Nigeria** and **Equatorial Guinea**;
- Researching public health risks from hunting, butchering, trading and consuming bushmeat, focusing on great apes in **Gabon**, bats in **Ghana** and trade to **Europe**.

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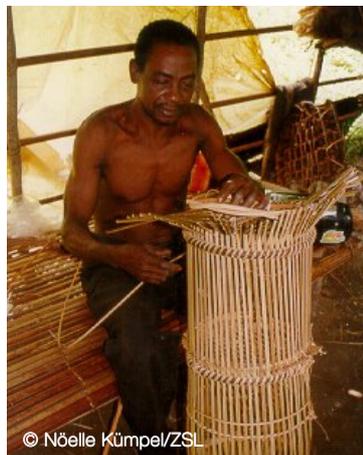
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Implementing and testing solutions

Research to gain a thorough understanding of the factors that might influence unsustainable use of bushmeat in the region is a crucial first step in identifying strategies to address the problem. A number of ZSL's conservation projects are now implementing the recommendations of this research, working with timber companies, protected area authorities and local communities to tackle the unsustainable bushmeat trade in West and Central Africa while monitoring the impacts of these actions. This includes:

- Working with local communities to develop alternative foods and livelihoods in **Equatorial Guinea** and **DRC**;
- Through our Wildlife Wood Project, assisting progressive timber companies in **Cameroon** (as a model for the Congo Basin forest) and **Ghana** (as a model for the Upper Guinea forest) to develop practical management actions that can minimise the impact of unsustainable bushmeat harvesting in their concessions;
- Building capacity for protected area management in eastern **DRC** through improved anti-poaching measures and wildlife monitoring;
- Working with local communities around Lopé National Park in **Gabon** to minimise disease risks from use of bushmeat;
- Monitoring the illegal bushmeat trade from **Africa** to **Europe**.



Informing policy

Action to help address the issues surrounding use of bushmeat also needs to be taken at policy level and ZSL works to influence decision-makers by:

- Acting as Secretariat for the UK Bushmeat Working Group, a forum started in 1999 which brings together UK government, civil society, researchers and industry to work to understand, build consensus on and disseminate information about bushmeat in the context of development, sustainable livelihoods and conservation;
- Producing policy briefing papers for the UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI);
- Convening international meetings and symposia on topics such as bushmeat, fisheries and livelihoods (June 2009), bushmeat in timber concessions (January 2007) and bushmeat and livelihoods (October 2004, joint with ODI and resulting in a book of the symposium proceedings);
- Leading the UK's Bushmeat Campaign and inter-ministerial bushmeat conference in 2002.

Collaborators and supporters

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More information

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www.zsl.org/bushmeat