

Country Focus: **Uganda**

Field Assessment of Urban Centers: Masindi, Gulu, Kampala and Kasese



- ▶ **Wildlife in Uganda has experienced considerable declines in the last 40 years with a number of species becoming extinct within Uganda's borders.**
- ▶ **A majority of urban consumers interviewed consume bushmeat on a weekly basis.**
- ▶ **There is lack of capacity and coordination for law enforcement efforts in addressing illegal bushmeat hunting and trade.**
- ▶ **Improved capacity for providing awareness coupled with adequate enforcement and protein and income alternatives is needed in Uganda.**

Wildlife Trends in Uganda

Decline in wildlife populations globally, including eastern Africa, due to human activity is proceeding at an unprecedented rate. Permanent wildlife loss will hurt not only today's populations, but also future generations. Wildlife declines are exacerbated by increasing human populations. In Uganda, the human population increased from 11.4 million in 1977 to 30.2 million in 2007. In Uganda, there are recommendations for developing a sustainable wildlife trade amidst reports indicating significant declines (50% to 90%) in most large mammal species over the last forty years, including several local extinctions (Black Rhinoceros, White Rhinoceros, Bright's Gazelle, Oryx and Darby Eland). Although a few species may be increasing, others (e.g. carnivores and hippopotamus) are in serious decline. An improved arena for enabling more effective wildlife management and governance in Uganda is needed.

Study Area Focus

Four urban areas in northern (Gulu), western (Kasese and Masindi) and central (Kampala) Uganda were selected for bushmeat assessments. A bushmeat assessment was conducted in April-May 2008 within these four urban areas. Kasese is associated with Queen Elizabeth National Park and Masindi is associated with Murchison Falls National Parks, two significant national parks in Uganda.

Overview of the Uganda Urban Bushmeat Assessment

This assessment was designed to evaluate the scale and nature of the bushmeat problem, examine socio-economic conditions influencing the bushmeat trade, assess ecological and socio-cultural aspects of the trade, and evaluate potential for alternative ways in which to meet the dietary and cultural needs of the human population. Trends in wildlife and human populations were evaluated. Review of poverty, information gaps, contradicting institutional policies, disease threats, and civil war in the region are some of the considerations that were undertaken during this assessment.

Wildlife trends in Uganda were evaluated through literature review of wildlife census data and reports from wildlife authorities. Methods were employed to evaluate bushmeat consumption and trade through an assessment of perspectives from different stakeholders across four urban centers in the country. Methods included literature review and direct observations. Wildlife managers (n=30), police officers (n=40), consumers (n=80) and traders (n=80) within four urban areas were interviewed using questionnaires. Additional information was gathered using focus groups and key informants.



BUSHMEAT

The bushmeat trade is the illegal, over-hunting of wildlife for meat and income. Already in West and Central Africa this trade has resulted in declines and local extinctions of many wildlife species and the economic, cultural and ecosystem services they provide. In addition, a number of human health threats have emerged from the trade in bushmeat including linkages with HIV/AIDS, ebola and the threat of anthrax.

Bushmeat trade is not regulated or managed by any authority. Economic benefits from the trade go mainly to hunters and traders. If current trends continue, future generations of citizens in Africa will not have the opportunity to access benefits from wildlife. Using wildlife to meet protein and income demands cannot be supported in the long term. The immediate threat of loss of economic opportunity, cultural and ecological services, and other values to a wider community must be addressed today.

Results and Findings

Wildlife trends in Uganda are in dramatic decline for a number of species. From 1960 to 2006, significant declines occurred in populations of: elephant (30,000 to 4,200), black rhino (400 to 0), white rhino (300 to 0), hippopotamus (26,000 to 7,500), buffalo (60,000 to 30,000), hartebeest (25,000 to 4,500), topi (15,000 to 1,750), and giraffe (2,500 to 240) among many others.

Based on questionnaire interviews, species identified as commonly hunted and traded are hippopotamus, Uganda kob, warthog, and cane rats. Species noted in considerable decline (less available in markets) are hippopotamus, buffalo, and elephant. A majority of the respondents stated that current law enforcement efforts are not sufficient to curb illegal bushmeat hunting and trade activities due to limited capacity and lack of coordination among agencies.

Higher consumption levels of bushmeat occur among households interviewed that were in closer proximity to national parks where bushmeat is primarily traded directly through households. Respondents reported that some trade also occurs in restaurants and markets. Most respondents suggested they consume bushmeat on a weekly basis. Bushmeat is less expensive than domestic meat in urban areas that are closer to national parks. In urban areas that are farther from national parks (Kampala and Gulu), bushmeat is more expensive than domestic meat but is still a consumer choice.

A majority of the respondents suggested that they are aware of the laws relating to bushmeat and they get their information from friends, newspapers, radio and sometimes hunters themselves. Awareness about bushmeat is limited in Uganda. Average monthly income for bushmeat traders is \$317 USD per month. There is a high turnover rate of police personnel and very low investigation or prosecution of bushmeat cases in the courts.



Photo: Vincent Opyente

Confiscated bushmeat in Uganda.

Recommendations

Coordination of stakeholders (law enforcement, wildlife agencies, development agencies, local communities, reformed-hunter groups, academic institutions, private sector, and media) to build partnerships and capacity to raise awareness, apply alternatives and improve governance to effectively address overhunting of wildlife. Develop public awareness campaigns in urban areas coupled with increased focus on protein and income alternatives. Engage local leadership (e.g. Kings) in working with other stakeholders and local communities to identify and develop alternative protein and income sources.



For more information about BEAN and bushmeat in eastern Africa please visit: www.bushmeatnetwork.org

The Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network (BEAN) is an interdisciplinary and multi-institutional network consisting of stakeholders (wildlife professionals, human development experts, government representatives, private industry personnel, academic experts, local community leadership and citizens etc.) who work collaboratively to raise awareness, focus attention, share information, analyze, evaluate and report on trends, and leverage resources to build local partnerships and capacity to implement grassroots solutions that directly address bushmeat exploitation problems affecting protected and surrounding areas in eastern Africa.



MENTOR

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