

Minutes of Bushmeat Briefing: Alternatives, Enforcement and Capacity-Building Examples of Key Solutions to Bushmeat Challenges

Summary

On 29 January 2010, the [Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group](#) hosted a Bushmeat Briefing to share recent developments in field projects in Africa, to learn about policy and law enforcement impacts of bushmeat in the U.S. and to discuss priorities and strategies for better engaging stakeholders and decision makers in addressing the bushmeat crisis. The meeting and discussion were facilitated by Dr. Heather E. Eves of [Virginia Polytechnic and State University](#). Heidi Ruffler ([Zoological Society of London](#)) gave an overview of the conservation, economic and political role of Equatorial Guinea and ZSL's role there, particularly regarding the importance of primate biodiversity and ZSL's work on protein and economic alternatives to bushmeat. Philip Alegranti of [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Division of Law Enforcement](#) reviewed the U.S. government's investigation and prosecution of Mamie Manneh for illegally importing bushmeat into the U.S. Nancy Gelman of [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Wildlife Without Borders-Africa](#) program gave an update on recent developments of the MENTOR/BEAN capacity-building program in eastern Africa, including a high-level workshop held in Uganda in December 2009.

In addition to facilitating the discussion, Heather Eves provided information on the [role of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Bushmeat Liaison Group](#) and an upcoming meeting on planning a bushmeat monitoring system for Central Africa. The discussion that followed the presentations addressed the role and scope of law enforcement efforts and training across international borders, the public health implications of the bushmeat trade, and the challenges and importance of scaling up capacity building efforts in Africa.

Presentations Summary

Alternatives to Bushmeat in Equatorial Guinea

Ms. Heidi Ruffler, Project Manager, Equatorial Guinea, [Zoological Society of London](#)

Equatorial Guinea (EG) occupies a unique niche in Central Africa, in terms of its history, economy and biodiversity. It is the sole Spanish-speaking country in all of Africa. Its economy has undergone a boom-bust-boom cycle and is currently in a boom of oil exploration and development (discovered offshore in 1995). Oil is 95% of EG's current GDP and exports. While it is the 3rd largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa (and the 3rd largest per capita producer in the world), projections indicate that oil is expected to run out within the next 30 years. EG is now looking to diversify its economy via the Plan 2020 which includes, among others, goals for natural gas, hydroelectricity, solar power, agriculture, fishing, tourism and development of the financial sector.

Biologically, EG's primate diversity is significant, with 19 species, including 2 great ape species on the mainland (Rio Muni), and many endemic subspecies on the island of Bioko. EG has the 4th highest primate species richness in Africa, despite being smaller than the state of Maryland.

ZSL has conducted socio-economic research on local people's preferences, hunting patterns and consumption of bushmeat in EG since 2002. People in Bata, the largest city in mainland EG, indicate a

preference for bushmeat and fresh fish, but consume higher amounts of frozen fish and frozen livestock, as frozen foods are more affordable. However, consumption of fresh meat and fish – including bushmeat - increases with wealth. With the oil boom, more people can afford to pay for rare and exotic species as bushmeat. According to Kumpel (2006), the greatest proportion of income in the village of Sendje comes from paid employment and hunting, though people express a great preference for jobs, as the median income from holding a job is more the double the median income earned from hunting. Hunting is a fall-back activity when jobs are scarce. As young men, particularly those from other villages, put in the greatest hunting effort and have the highest offtakes, projects that focus on young men will be important in reducing unsustainable hunting of wildlife for food and income.

In September 2009, ZSL started a new project with the aim of working with local communities to evaluate the socio-cultural acceptability and economic feasibility of proposed bushmeat alternatives, including:

- Marketing of frozen and non-animal protein bushmeat substitutes
- Improved production, distribution and marketing of fresh fish and fresh domestic meat as bushmeat substitutes
- Captive rearing of bushmeat species
- Promotion of alternative livelihoods (e.g. carbon finance, beekeeping, handicrafts, ecotourism)

Pilot projects are planned for each province of Rio Muni and Bioko, with a goal of developing model projects that could be replicated in other villages. Capacity building of local people is critical to assure the continuation of successful pilot projects. Among other partners, ZSL plans to work closely with appropriate ministries (including Agriculture and Forests, and Fisheries and Environment), the national forestry and protected areas institute and the national university.

For copies of ZSL publications related to bushmeat in EG and elsewhere please see www.zsl.org/bushmeat (EG-specific info at www.zsl.org/equatorialguinea) or contact noelle.kumpel@zsl.org / hruffler@gmail.com.

Bushmeat in the United States: The Case in New York

Mr. Phil Alegranti, Special Agent, [US Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

Phil Alegranti provided an overview of the role of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and the federal case of Mamie Manneh, who was recently convicted of illegally importing bushmeat into the U.S. The USFWS OLE conserves fish, wildlife & their habitat by investigating violations of U.S. wildlife laws, monitoring U.S. wildlife trade and working in partnership with international, Federal, State, & tribal enforcement counterparts, as well as NGOs and the public at large. OLE employs 190 special agents, 121 wildlife inspectors, 34 scientists & staff at forensics lab and 4 intelligence analysts.

In early 2006, Mamie Manneh was investigated for a shipment of 12 boxes that were declared to customs as "dried fish and African dresses" but was found to contain commercial quantities of primate parts and other wildlife species. The USFWS forensics lab identified three protected species from the bushmeat: hamadryas baboon, green monkey and warthog, all of which are listed on CITES Appendix II and require export permits to be legally shipped. CDC regulations were also violated. Ms. Manneh claimed the shipment, but said that she only ordered the dried fish and dresses, and that she knew nothing about the bushmeat in the shipment. However, an investigation of her home yielded additional bushmeat, including primate parts. She was arrested and indicted on felony smuggling charges. This is the first criminal prosecution of a bushmeat smuggler in the U.S.

Ms. Manneh's defense sought dismissal of the case under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1992 (RFRA), which stipulates that the government "shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion if the burden results from a rule of general applicability." Ms. Manneh claimed that consumption of bushmeat, primate meat in particular, is religious practice for her. The implications of a RFRA-related defense were important, as this case could establish precedence in future bushmeat cases. If Ms. Manneh were found to have a religious-freedom-related reason for importing bushmeat, then future cases would likely have no teeth. A RFRA dismissal would require that Ms. Manneh had 1) a sincerely held religious belief, 2) that the government regulation placed a substantial burden on that belief, and 3) that there was both. If the defense proves these two criteria, the prosecution can still prevail. To prevail, the prosecution must demonstrate 1) a compelling government interest in regulating the activity and 2) the regulation was the least-restrictive means for furthering that interest. With the RFRA motion, the government and the court took a great deal of time researching, accumulating evidence and testimony and a decision was made on December 31, 2008.

In the RFRA decision, Judge Raymond J. Dearie of the Eastern District Court of New York found that the consumption of bushmeat may be a religious exercise as defined by RFRA, he did not find that Ms. Manneh was sincere in her claim. While the use of bushmeat in religious practices may be valid, the judge notes that "nothing in the record supports the particular claim that...her failure to obtain a CITES permit or import license and her failure to disclose the true nature of her cargo were the result of her religious beliefs," and that there is "not an iota of evidence suggesting any nexus between [failure to file proper forms] and defendant's asserted religious beliefs."

In 2009, Ms. Manneh entered a guilty plea, which carried federal sentencing guidelines of 21-27 months in prison. The Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network (BEAN) and the Jane Goodall Institute submitted letters of support regarding Ms. Manneh's sentencing, citing the importance of wildlife conservation and the threat posed by the illegal bushmeat trade. Judge Dearie sentenced Ms. Manneh to three years federal probation, citing her children and family concerns as primary factors in her reduced sentence. Judge Dearie stated on the record that the bushmeat trade is a "very serious problem that threatens wildlife species. It's not some abstract notion. It's a very serious compelling problem and at the same time, potentially jeopardizing the health of others... This is a real problem and this country is right to do something about it."

While Ms. Manneh's sentence was reduced from federal guidelines, her guilty plea and conviction, as well as Judge Dearie's strong words of support for conservation measures, is significant. This case establishes a precedence regarding illegal bushmeat importation into the U.S. and may provide support to future cases. It is a testament to the U.S. government's resolve to vigorously pursue and prosecute people who smuggle illegal wildlife, including bushmeat into the jurisdiction of the U.S. deterrent value

Bushmeat Capacity and Network Building in Eastern Africa

Ms. Nancy Gelman, Program Officer, Wildlife Without Borders, [US Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

The mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Wildlife Without Borders (WWB)-Africa program is to strengthen the in-country capacity of individuals and institutions to effectively manage conservation areas in Africa

In 2008-2009, WWB-Africa funded the [MENTOR \(Mentoring for ENvironmental Training in Outreach and Resource conservation\) Fellowship Program](#) as a cooperative agreement among USFWS, The College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka (Tanzania) and the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group. The

MENTOR program took a team approach to address capacity building, with a cohort of 8 East African professionals working together over 18 months in a multidisciplinary, academic and field-based professional development training. MENTOR has successfully built the capacity of the Fellows and Mentors to lead efforts to reduce illegal bushmeat exploitation in the region and to develop partnerships at local, national and regional levels in Eastern Africa. The Fellows all earned a post-graduate diploma from Mweka College and benefited from training and networking with Mentors and professionals from numerous conservation partners.

Partnerships were at the heart of MENTOR's success, as so many organizations and individuals had an impact on the fellows and their efforts. Visiting lecturers included representatives of many ABCG member organizations (AWF, JGI, TNC, WCS and WWF) as well as partners from BCTF, Foundations of Success, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Lusaka Agreement Task Force, RARE, TRAFFIC, USFWS and Department of Interior, as well as lecturers and supporters funded by the USAID-Biodiversity Analysis and Technical Support (BATS) program. Additional support from communities, conservation organizations and governments was extremely valuable to the fellows, as were the opportunities they had to network with dignitaries and conservation practitioners at the Leon Sullivan Summit in Arusha and the Society for Conservation Biology-Africa meetings held in Ghana in 2009.

Together, the Fellows identified appropriate solutions to the bushmeat problem in the region (including protein and economic alternatives, enhanced awareness, improved law enforcement and policy, and partnership building), and developed a five year plan (2008-2013) for action in the region. Individually, each Fellow conducted national and local bushmeat field assessments for the four countries involved in the program (Kenya, Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda) and implemented pilot solution projects.

As a result of MENTOR, the Fellows and Mentors have founded the Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network (BEAN) to expand the network of professionals working together to address the illegal and unsustainable bushmeat hunting and trade in the region. The vision of BEAN is "a bushmeat-free Eastern Africa through increased protection, alternatives, awareness and sustainable utilization of wild fauna to conserve the region's rich biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations." BEAN takes a two-tier approach to action in the region: 1) addressing bushmeat solutions through field research and action, awareness campaigns, partnership building and information management and 2) using appropriate funding and capacity to implement awareness campaigns on law enforcement, health and culture; improving law enforcement and promoting alternative protein/income strategies at local levels.

MENTOR and BEAN have benefited greatly from using the *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation* in their iterative adaptive management process. The conceptual model and results chain were initially drafted in 2007, and have been revised by experts three more times in the past two years, including most recently at the BEAN workshop in Uganda.

Currently, WWB-Africa supports the following projects regarding bushmeat capacity in eastern Africa in association with BEAN:

- Bushmeat education in Tsavo West, Kenya – East African Wildlife Society
- Bushmeat education, collaboration and information sharing in Masai Mara, Kenya – National Museums of Kenya
- Protein and economic alternatives to bushmeat in Katavi, Tanzania – Nature and Development Care
- Cultural leader capacity building in Murchison Falls, Uganda – Uganda Wildlife Authority
- Eastern Africa Law Enforcement Capacity Building Project – Uganda Wildlife Authority

Please visit www.mentorfellowshipprogram.org and www.bushmeatnetwork.org for further information. WWB-Africa is now accepting applications for its next round of funding, with a deadline of 1 March 2010,

see: http://www.fws.gov/international/DIC/regional%20programs/africa/africa_howtoapply.html for proposal information. Nancy Gelman made the presentation on behalf of the entire BEAN Team (including Heather Eves, the MENTOR/BEAN Chief Technical Advisor) who all contributed.

Key Points from Q&A and Discussion

- **Capacity building** is greatly needed at multiple levels, including law enforcement training, wildlife and protected area managers and community leaders throughout sub-Saharan Africa. MENTOR is a model program that started with 8 Fellows and 4 Mentors but now has a broad and expanding network throughout Eastern Africa. The team-based training approach was very successful and now more training efforts are moving towards this approach. While BEAN needs more time for results on the ground, replication and expansion of the MENTOR model would be beneficial for other regions and issues. There is a need for scaling up resources and funding to carry out such efforts. High-level champions for such efforts would be very beneficial.
- Regarding **wildlife law enforcement**, several participants pointed out the need for in-country capacity building for African wildlife law enforcement officials to address both local and international trade. The USFWS Office of Law Enforcement does some training of African wildlife law enforcement counterparts at the [International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana](#), but funding and additional capacity are needed to scale up these efforts. While only a small proportion of the international bushmeat trade enters the U.S., the manner in which the US Government responds sends a message to our counterparts in range states. To date, there have been no investigations of commercial-level imports of bushmeat by sea freight, only that which arrives carried by hand or in air mail.
- The **public health** implications of bushmeat trade are important, but challenging. With bushmeat links to the transmission of SIV in chimpanzees to HIV in humans and to outbreaks of Ebola, monkeypox and potentially other diseases, there is a strong need to address health and disease regarding bushmeat. However, the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force and colleagues at Responsive Management, Wildlife Conservation Society and the Centers for Disease Control have found that African populations in the U.S. hold great skepticism regarding the linkages between bushmeat and disease. Rather, these populations feel that bushmeat is healthier than domestic meat purchased in American grocery stores since bushmeat is “fresh” and “fed on organic grasses.”
- **Public awareness campaigns** can build public pressure for changing policies but can also be very sensitive and challenging. One participant shared his experience in televising bushmeat necropsies on Equatorial Guinean television and the negative consequences that occurred following that experience. However, some people did express their gratitude and assurance that they would not consume bushmeat after viewing the program. In China, [WildAid](#) has had success with public awareness efforts using celebrities to highlight the negative impacts of consuming wildlife. Careful, strategic approaches linked to those with appropriate high-level influence are preferred.
- **International policy processes** are important components to addressing bushmeat on the ground, including the recent meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity’s Bushmeat Liaison Group at the World Forestry Congress in October 2009. (Report available here: [Report of CBD Bushmeat Liaison Group, October 2009](#)). The statement prepared by the Liaison Group

included key recommendations regarding sustainable management of wildlife, climate change and REDD+, forest concessions and certification, local rights and tenure, good governance, landscape-level management, partnerships, capacity building and science. CBD is now planning a bushmeat side event at its SBSTTA meetings in Nairobi in May 2010.

- A **bushmeat monitoring system** is now being planned for Central Africa, with the TRAFFIC-Central Africa office taking a lead role. A meeting will be held in early February in Douala to follow up on an initial expert planning meeting held in the region in December 2008. This meeting will bring together regional and international bushmeat experts to define indicators needed for a regional bushmeat monitoring system, identify an appropriate organizational and operational structure (including national focal points, selection of pilot sites, and structure of the database, among others), and identify potential collaborators and donors. Further information may be obtained from Nathalie van Vliet, TRAFFIC-Central Africa Advisor, at vanvlietnathalie@yahoo.com.
- Working in **partnerships** is critical for success with a conservation challenge that touches on so many issues. This includes multiple government, conservation, private sector and community partnerships, as each has a role to play in solutions. In addition, actors must have the tools to understand the drivers of the local situation and be able to reach out to new partners with new skills and resources to apply to solutions.

Links and Documents

- Zoological Society of London
 - Zoological Society of London/Institute of Zoology [Bushmeat Research Programme Fact Sheet](#) and [website](#)
 - [Zoological Society of London Equatorial Guinea Fact Sheet](#) and [website](#)
 - [UK Bushmeat Working Group](#)
- MENTOR website: www.mentorfellowshipprogram.org
- Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network (BEAN) website: www.bushmeatnetwork.org
- [Report of CBD Bushmeat Liaison Group, October 2009](#)
- [International Law Enforcement Academy, Gaborone, Botswana](#)
- [Alternatives to Bushmeat in Equatorial Guinea, presentation by Heidi Ruffler](#)
- [Bushmeat Capacity and Network Building in Eastern Africa, presentation by Nancy Gelman](#)
- WWB-Africa proposal information:
http://www.fws.gov/international/DIC/regional%20programs/africa/africa_howtoapply.html