



Competitive uses of wildlife

A Cameroon wildlife officer tells how policy is turned into practical management

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In developing countries in particular wildlife may have to serve a number of needs, some of which may be in competition with each other. This article deals with how the Government of Cameroon comes to terms with these problems.

Cameroon tries to base its wildlife policies and management practices on three realities:

- Game is an important source of protein and a preferred traditional food much in demand.
- Wildlife also means tourism and sport hunting under safari arrangements, especially from December to April. Therefore, it represents a significant income in foreign exchange.
- Wildlife has to be perpetuated as an important part of the national heritage. The Government has delineated five national parks in the northern part of the country with a total area of 580 000 hectares.

Conservation education in Cameroon has now begun but it is still in its infancy. In what was formerly East Cameroon, the Government started setting up game reserves in 1950: Waza, Kalamaloue, Benue, Faro, Dja, Douala-Edea, Campo, Pangar Djerem (a closed area) and others cover altogether about two million hectares. In former West Cameroon, the first reserve - Kimbi River Game Reserve - was created in 1963, followed by the Mbi Crater Game Reserve, with a total of some 5000 hectares.

Some people question why these areas are protected; clearly they are still not well enough informed to judge the importance of having conservation areas.

Today more than ever before, the change from purely traditional subsistence hunting to organized sport and commercial hunting with sophisticated guns and transport calls for urgent programmes to inform people about the need to manage and conserve our wildlife heritage. This is preoccupying the minds of policymakers, and the Government is contemplating a number of action programmes of information and education.

Director Andrew Allo Allo of the Wildlife College at Garoua has, for instance, formed wildlife clubs in the north, mainly consisting of schoolchildren and has enrolled a total of 400 in Maroua, Mokolo and Garoua. The college staff are sent out from time to time to talk to them

and show slides and films. Excursions into the bush to view animals and to appreciate the way various elements in an ecosystem depend upon each other have also been undertaken. It is hoped that these activities will gain popularity and spread, especially in the south of the country, where the wildlife environment needs to be well managed.

The Agriculture Ministry's Information Service has given radio talks on wildlife conservation and has plans to operate mobile units which will go to remote villages with slides and films. Under the auspices of the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation there are plans to assist the Government with a conservation education programme similar to that in Botswana. They also plan to provide technical advice, staff and equipment to the Wildlife College at Garoua which serves all of west Africa as a training centre in this field.

In Cameroon, as in most of west and central Africa, wildlife is by tradition regarded as a regular and God-given source of protein. Our people believe that hunting should be free and cannot understand why they should be restricted in this activity. After all, they have always hunted since the time of our forefathers. It should not be surprising, therefore, that despite legislative measures, poaching has been the order of the day for years and is entrenched among the habits of the people.

Past and present wildlife legislation has recognized that hunting is deeply rooted in the culture. This is true for the whole of the south and for a part of the north of the country. Consequently, legal provision has been made for traditional hunting without permits. This authorizes hunting and trapping with weapons and devices made from traditional materials and the use of spears, bows and arrows, and dogs. Guns, however, require a permit.

In the north, there are cattle and this is the main source of protein. But in the south forest, only the dwarf cow exists, particularly among the Bakweris of Fako and the Bakossis of Meme, and the major protein source is local wildlife, together with cattle brought in from the north.

There are also certain depressed areas of the country where hunting provides virtually the only means of living, as in the regions of Akwaya, Ndian, Nkam and Mouloundou. In these areas, cattle from the north are rarely seen, there are no farms, and the people hunt to feed themselves, selling or trading some game meat for the other necessities of life. In many parts of the east, and particularly from Lomie to Mouloundou, there are pygmies whose sole way of life is hunting. They are never at any time expected by the Government to take out permits and are allowed to hunt freely in all seasons of the year.

But the law also provides for strictly regulated hunting for which hunters are expected to possess permits costing from 10000 to 20000 Cameroon francs for residents and from 20000 to 40 000 francs for non-residents. With the Cameroon franc at 278 to the U.S. dollar this comes to the equivalent of \$36 to \$72 for residents and \$72 to \$143 for non-residents. Under former regulations, sport hunters were not allowed to sell game meat. They usually gave it to the local population for food and the villagers usually consumed what they could and sold the rest. Recent legislation has now made it permissible for hunters to sell their meat. In some instances under the former regulations when meat was given away, some meat was never used and went rotten and it is hoped that the new legislation will discourage this.

FOREST SERVICE STAFF AND VILLAGERS WITH CARCASS OF ELEPHANT THAT THREATENED A VILLAGE - "...a God-given source of protein "

Under other regulatory provisions, game controls are authorized by the Forestry Department and game guards may be sent to kill marauding animals. First, however, it has to be well established that there was actual game damage to crops and property before control operations are carried out. The former West Cameroon forestry law provided for the cheap sale of meat resulting from such missions to the local people and a tradition developed

whereby about half of the meat of marauding animals was given free to the people who had suffered damage while the other half was sold locally by the Government. Such activities can make a significant contribution in protein for village populations.

There have, of course, been instances when villages, in their desire to have game meat, would raise false alarms of crop destruction just to cause game guards to kill animals for them. It shows, in any event, how important game meat is for the diet of our people.

In the former East Cameroon, meat of animals killed by game guards was left entirely without charge for those who had suffered damage. If there were no government game guards, licensed hunters were usually asked to kill the animals and were compensated with either the or the trophy, or, as was the case in the former West Cameroon, by a bounty of up to 7 000 francs (\$25) in cash.

Apart from legal hunting, there is today widespread hunting by poachers. Furthermore, poachers will also use outlawed devices and methods, from unauthorized firearms to traps which may endanger human lives. The amount of poaching is high as a result of the limited number of control staff and the limited resources at their disposal. The Government is aware of the problems facing those charged with controlling poaching and is doing everything it can to help them.

Some poaching is done only for meat but there are also poachers who operate commercially. Game animal products sold for cash include cuts of meat, as well as trophies such as skins and tusks.

Whatever the basic objective, almost all of the meat from poaching activities is consumed locally. Market sheds are known to be full of game meat; traders will sometimes hide the meat under some other produce such as fish which is widely sold. Night poaching is often practiced as a more secure means of avoiding the police. Game restaurants in Cameroon are well patronized and the meat is very expensive. There are certain stops along the main roads where restaurants specializing in game meat do thriving business.

Most of the poachers in the field are not operating strictly on their own account. Persons who may not know how to use guns skillfully, or may have no time to hunt, will buy arms and ammunition and give them to talented hunters who poach for them. This results in a particularly serious threat to elephants which are illegally hunted for their tusks. Pygmies, because of their privileged position under the law, are sometimes recruited as poachers and paid a pittance for their work in the form of tobacco and other inexpensive items.

There are certain main roads which go through national parks, such as the Kalamaloue National Park, and lorry drivers on long-distance routes between Nigeria and Chad will time their journey in order to arrive at these conservation areas at night, spend some time in illegal hunting and, before morning, be off with their vehicles loaded with meat.

Other poaching problems involve game reserves under timber exploitation permits, such as Campo Game Reserve. Forest workers in such remote areas, finding themselves without beef, think nothing of killing wildlife while they are on the job in order to enrich their diets. Many animals can be lost that way.

National borders are also frequently crossed by professional poachers. On a number of occasions, groups from neighbouring countries enter national parks to hunt and shooting has occurred in which poachers were seriously wounded or killed.

Hunting permit holders receive quotas of ammunition from the administrative authorities, but because of the great demand for bush or game meat in some areas, such quotas usually have not been enough. Villagers have tried to fool the authorities by asking for ammunition for

traditional ceremonies in order to use it for hunting. Even when such requests were genuine, ammunition left over after the celebrations has ended up being used for hunting.

Game animals commonly used for food

FOUND IN SAVANNA LANDS:

Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)
Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*)
Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*)
Warthog (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus*)
Giant eland (*Taurotragus derbianus*)
Roan antelope (*Hippotragus equinus*)
Buffon kob (*Kobus kob*)
Hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*)
Topi (*Damaliscus lunatus*)
Gazelle (*Gazella* sp.)
Patus monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*)

FOUND IN SAVANNA LANDS AND FORESTS:

Baboon (*Papio* sp.)
Lion (*Panthera leo*)
Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)
Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*)
Sitatunga (*Tragelaphus spekii*)
Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*)
Buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*)
Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*)
Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*)
Serval cat (*Felis serval*)
Civet cat (*Civettictis civetta*)
Reedbuck (*Redunca redunca*)
Duiker (*Cephalophus* sp. and *Sylvicapra*)
Aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*)
Waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus* and *K. defassa*)
Oribi (*Ourebia ourebia*)
Tantalus monkey (*Cercopithecus aethiops*)
Crocodile (*Crocodylus* sp.)

FOUND IN FORESTS:

Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*)
Mangabey (*Cercocebus* sp.)
Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*)
Colobus monkey (*Colobus* sp.)
Drill (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*)
Mandrill (*Mandrillus mormon*)
Bush pig (*Potamochoerus porcus*)
Bongo (*Boocercus eurycerus*)
Porcupine (*Hystrix* sp.)

There are also annual hunting parties in areas especially set aside at villages or in a chief's own hunting grounds. On such occasions, the villagers will furnish themselves with large quantities of bush meat.

Control of legal and illegal hunting in Cameroon is not a sophisticated affair as in many developed countries. The authorities concentrate on doing their best to discourage poaching but they do not engage in gathering statistics on the wildlife situation. Consequently, it has not been possible to evaluate the amount of game meat consumed in the country, nor would this

be an easy task. Attempts to distribute questionnaires about fisheries, for instance, have met with a negative reaction. According to the Veterinary Department's data on cattle consumption in the whole of north Cameroon, about 9 640 tons are consumed annually. The only study on game meat was done by Dr. J. Esser of the Garoua Wildlife College on animals killed mainly by tourist hunters. It indicated that the total weight of all species taken in north Cameroon in 1973-74 was 514 tons. It has to be appreciated that this is a zone where poaching is not intense and the residents depend more upon cattle for their meat supply.

Considering that in many parts of the south people depend entirely on game meat, it may, therefore, be estimated that at least 2 000 tons of game meat are consumed in the country annually. On the basis of casual observations in trains from the Lom and Djerem and the Upper Sanaga, at railway stations, in vehicles from Yoko to Yaoundé, on markets in southern towns, the regular supply of game meat to private customers and to restaurants, and taking into consideration Dr. Esser's study, it would not be out of line to estimate that the consumption of meat is 90 percent cattle and 10 percent game meat in the north, and 70 percent cattle and 30 percent game meat for the whole

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As we have said most Cameroonians have a taste for game meat and prefer it to meat of domestic animals. But there are also other reasons for hunting wildlife, such as procuring parts or specific organs of certain species for medicinal or ritual uses. The bones of certain primates and the fat of pythons fall into this category of use. Furthermore, during certain ceremonies or holidays, game meat may be indispensable to the menu in order to give the occasion the traditional respect it deserves. This, of course, is no different from any culture in the world where certain feasts are not feasts without the appropriate traditional dishes.

All of which merely shows that the demand for game meat in this part of Africa is very high, and, as we pointed out at the start, the realities which the authorities have to deal with in wildlife management are inherently in conflict to one degree or another. What we know we have to do is to utilize our wildlife for the good of the people while, at the same time, using it in such a way as to maintain it as an essential part of our culture. Management, utilization and conservation combined is our approach and goal.

