

5.0 REVIEW OF THE 'CLOSE SEASON' POLICY

5.1 *Impact on Wild Animals Species*

The annual closed season on hunting, originated from the traditional practice of avoiding hunting during the rainy season, in order to allow wild animals to breed without hunting pressure. The Annual Closed Season on Hunting, as prescribed by the Wildlife Conservation Regulations, Legislative Instrument 685 of 1971, was thus intended to facilitate the successful breeding of wild animals and prevent their over-exploitation, by ensuring that no hunting took place during the period 1st August to 1st December. The hunting of other animals could only be allowed for justifiable reasons (WD, 1999). However, the survey has revealed that all animals regardless of the conservation status are hunted and marketed publicly.

The open display of as many as fourteen (14) wholly protected wildlife species (Appendix C) on the open market during the Annual Closed Season, indicates that the hunters and traders do not differentiate between the animals whose hunting and trade is prohibited and the ones that are allowed for hunting. Therefore if no restraint is exercised in the choice of the animals that are legally protected at all times, then there is virtually no protection for all wild animals in the country. There is therefore the need to review the wildlife laws, strengthen the enforcement and improve upon awareness campaign.

Ntiamoah-Baidu (1997) estimated that the total volume of bushmeat traded in Ghana annually is 384,000 metric tonnes worth about \$350 million. Since the Grasscutter (*Thryonomis swinderianus*) remains the most preferred bushmeat (65.1%) of the animals listed in terms of volume of trade and preference, not only in Ghana but the rest of West Africa, the species needs to be considered as a very important economic commodity. The management and utilization of the species should therefore be given more attention.

Even though the species is of such high economic importance, its contribution to the economic development of the nation is not reflected in the national accounting system. One way to cater for that and to sustain the high consumer dependence is to constitute a body such as Grasscutter Utilization Board that could be assigned responsibilities for the sustainable management, harvesting and marketing of the commodity similar to cocoa and timber.

The shift in preference from Royal Antelope to Maxwell's Duiker is a good indicator of consumers' behaviour with regards to the demand and supply of bushmeat. The latter was probably an equally good substitute that was also readily available. Domestication schemes should therefore not only focus on single species such as the Grasscutter, but on a variety of species so that the pressure of bushmeat consumption could be distributed among several and not borne by a few species. This could enable the populations of such species to thrive well in the wild.

The fact that primates are not a traditionally preferred bushmeat is worth noting by conservation practitioners. This means that the population of primates stand the best chance of recovery where traditional conservation norms are respected. There is therefore the hope that should this opportunity be pursued, the population of species such as the Miss Waldron's Red Colobus (*Procolobus Badius waldronii*) and other endangered primates could recover significantly. However, there is still the need to investigate the possible changes in other ecological factors which could be contributing to the decline of the primate populations.

The survey also revealed that some totems such as the Crested Porcupine (*Hystrix sp*) and Buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*), were also being hunted and sold. This practice was traditionally prohibited, as totems were revered as sacred animals by some members of society, especially clan members and chiefs. Traditionally, it is maintained that the welfare of an individual or lineage depended on its members maintaining a relation of respect towards a particular species of animal (Ntiamoa-Baidu, 1997). As such they refrained from killing

and eating such totems. It is worth noting that such traditional practices affirmed the ecological truth that human welfare is dependant on plant and animal welfare (BSP, 1993). It is therefore obvious that modern conservation practices, such as legislation alone cannot be effective in ensuring sustainable utilization of the wildlife resources. There is therefore the need to consider a combination of both modern and traditional practices that are sensitive to biodiversity conservation, while providing adequate levels of sustainable utilization that could also enhance food security.

5.2 The Appropriateness of the Annual Closed Season on Hunting

The idea of closed season on hunting had its origin from the traditional knowledge of the reproduction of wild animals, especially in the forest zone of Ghana. It is therefore not surprising that the current prescribed period of the Annual Closed Season on Hunting appears to favour only the large-bodied mammals of the forest zone of the country. The law is therefore of limited coverage as a few species, such as the forest ungulates were the targets. The greater part of the wild animals in Ghana, especially the ungulates, wild pigs and primates of the savanna zone were not adequately catered for by the law since most of them breed soon after the closed season. There is therefore an urgent need for a scientific review of the regulations on the existing prescribed period of the Annual Closed Season on Hunting, to ensure a wider coverage based on a combination of indigenous knowledge and modern ecologically sound practices that could promote sustainable utilization, food security and at the same time protect a greater number of the wild animal species.

Kormos and Bakarr (2001) noted that Ghana's wildlife legislation had failed to maintain an appropriate balance between use and conservation, focused mainly on hunting licenses, and protection of individual species. The existing legislation was thus considered to be more of a constraint rather than a tool for conservation. This view is particularly applicable to the current legislative instrument (Wildlife

Reserves Regulation, LI 685, 1971) on the closed season on hunting, since it is limited in species coverage, lacks enforcement and does not in any way promote biodiversity conservation. There is therefore the need for a review of such legislation to ensure that they are sensitive to biodiversity conservation and the promotion of food security.

5.3 *Bushmeat Trade as a Means of Livelihood.*

A greater number (61.4%) of all the traders interviewed, indicated that they traded in bushmeat throughout the year. This revealed that most of them depended on this trade as a full-time occupation. Their persistence in the trade during the Closed Season could be due to non-availability of suitable alternative income generating options. The volume of bushmeat available in all the markets confirmed the assertion (Molade, 2000) that despite the decline in the population of some key species in the wild, the supply to the markets remained stable. This also confirmed that there had been an increase in the hunting effort to maintain the regular supply.

On the other hand the increasing number of traders in full-time could be a contributory factor. According to some of the full-time traders who were interviewed, in their effort to stay in business throughout the year, some of them engaged and paid for the services of commercial hunters who provided them with their regular supplies. Such hunters aimed at killing the large-bodied mammals which could afford them the greatest return in monetary terms. This high level of dependence on the bushmeat trade as a regular means of livelihood could therefore easily be used to facilitate any possible wild animal domestication programme.

5.4 *Evaluation of Pre-survey Awareness Programme*

The fact that the bushmeat trade was still thriving during the period of the Annual Closed Season, attested to the fact that Wildlife Conservation Regulations, LI 685 of 1971, together with all the

amendments are not known by civil society as a whole. Despite all the efforts made by Conservation International to create awareness through the News Conference, Radio and Television programmes, very little impact was made on the bushmeat trade during the period. All the respondents indicated that they were aware that they were not supposed to trade in bushmeat, except the Grasscutter (*Thryonomis swinderanus*) during the period. However those involved in hunting perceived it as a threat to their source of livelihood. The most noteworthy impact was the reports on the consumer boycott of bushmeat, as reported by the traders themselves. This confirmed that CI's awareness campaign made a positive impact on consumers as compared to the traders. Some of the consumers, who had decided to boycott the bushmeat, were probably made aware of the dangerous health implications. Should this trend be sustained, there is the likelihood that, both the bushmeat hunters and traders may go into the domestication of some of the preferred species as an alternative option.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The persistence of the bushmeat trade during the Annual Closed Season on Hunting indicates that bushmeat still remains an important source of protein in Ghana. However the ineffectiveness of the existing regulatory mechanism has largely contributed to the escalation of the bushmeat crisis, thus posing a major threat to efforts to ensure food security and effective wildlife conservation.

While enormous efforts are being made to ensure that the exploitation of other natural resources, such as timber and mineral deposits, are effectively regulated, no such attempts have been extended to the bushmeat trade. Even though the legally recognised Annual Closed Season on hunting has been in place over more than thirty (30) years, there has been virtually no efforts at awareness creation or effective enforcement and hence virtually no adherence.

Conservation International welcomes the Closed Season on Hunting and is of the opinion that if well implemented, it has the potential to facilitate the successful breeding of a number of endangered and rare species. However, the lack of awareness and enforcement could be contributing to the bushmeat crisis, since hunting and sale of bushmeat continued during the Closed Season and could completely disrupt the recruitment and the replacement generation of a number of key species of wild animals. The lack of enforcement of such a law has serious implications on biodiversity conservation and food security in rural communities and suggests a low perception of the economic importance of this commodity on the part of decision-makers.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *The Annual Closed Season on Hunting is ineffective and should be reviewed and strengthened with incentives for compliance and surveillance.*
2. *The use of toxic chemicals for hunting bushmeat is very significant and must be stopped through awareness programmes and prosecution in courts in order to avoid wildlife extinction.*
3. *Awareness creation should be intensified to ensure that consumers are well-informed about the health implications of bushmeat consumption in order to promote consumer boycott.*
4. *Apart from the Grasscutter (*Thryonomis swinderanus*), which is already being domesticated, the others which were recommended for domestication, such as the Maxwell's Duiker (*Cephalohus maxwellii*), should be actively promoted.*
5. *There is the need for an ecological assessment of the appropriateness of the period for the Annual Closed Season on Hunting.*

6. *The possession of guns, especially automatic weapons in the local communities, is not only a threat to wildlife conservation but also national security. In order to reduce such threats, appropriate action should be taken to retrieve unauthorised weapons in the society.*
7. *Age old traditional conservation norms, such as sanctions and taboos that prohibit the hunting of totems and other sacred animals, need to be promoted by assisting the Traditional Authorities to enact them into bye-laws at the District Assemblies.*
8. *Community Resource Wildlife management areas should be promoted to provide sustainable protein sources for the rural communities and study tour to Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka under-study similar local initiative.*
9. *Alternative and sustainable protein sources should be identified and promoted to reduce demand on the wildlife resources.*
10. *There is also the need to train hunters in the use of safe hunting methods.*

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APPENDIX A: Articles Published by the Print Media after News Conference Announcing the Closed Season on Hunting.

Date.	Name of Paper	Title of Publication
31/08/01	The Accra Mail	Chaos in the Forest
31/08/01	The Evening News	Wildlife Division is Understaffed
01/09/01	The Daily Graphic	Prosecute Group Hunters
04/09/01	The Independent	Bushmeat Hunting Banned
05/09/01	The Despatch	Observe Ban On Hunting
07/09/01	Weekend Agenda	Danger! Your Akrantie May be No More

Appendix B: Major Sources of Supply of Bushmeat in Ghana

ASHANTI	BRONG-AHAFO
Kwamang	Atebubu
Mampong	Droboso
Ejura	Yeji
Effiduase	Kintampo
Fomena	Kenyasiase
Nkawie	Droboso
Offinso	Goase
Konongo	
Abofour	UPPER WEST
Kumawu	Wa
Bekwai	
Tepa	UPPER EAST
	Navrongo
NORTHERN	Gambaga
Damongo	Bawku
Bamboi	Sandema
Salaga	
Buipe	CENTRAL
Bole	New Edubiase
	Ajumako
WESTERN	Winneba
Sefwi Bekwai	Mankesim
Bibiani	EASTERN
	Akim Abuakwa
GREATER ACCRA	Nsuta
Accra	
Shai Hills	VOLTA
Amasaman	Denu
Pokuase	Nkwanta
	Ho

Source: Conservation International, 2002

Appendix C: Species on Sale in Ghanaian Markets

Common Name	Scientific Name	Akan Name	National Status
PRIMATES			
Mona Monkey	<i>Cercopithus mona</i>	Okwakuo	PP
Black & White Colobus Monkey	<i>Colobus vellerosis</i>	Efoo	WP
RODENTS			
Grasscutter	<i>Thrynomis swinderanus</i>	Akrante	PP
Giant Forest Squirrel	<i>Proteoxerus stangeri</i>	Opro	PP
Ground Squirrel	<i>Xerus erythropus</i>	Amuokua	
Pel's Flying Squirrel	<i>Anomalurus peli</i>	Otra	PP
Giant Rat	<i>Cricetomys</i>	Okusi	PP
Brush-tailed Porcupine	<i>Atherurus africanus</i>	Apese	PP
Beecrofts Flying Squirrel	<i>Atherurus africanus</i>		PP
Palm Squirrel	<i>Epixerus ebi</i>	Opro	WP
CARNIVORES			
Two Spotted Palm Civet	<i>Nandinia binotata</i>	Abrebee	WP
Civet Cat	<i>Viverra civetta</i>	Kankani	WP
Honey badger	<i>Melivora capensis</i>		WP
UNGULATES			
Maxwell's Duiker	<i>Cephalophus maxwelli</i>	Otwe	PP
Black Duiker	<i>Cephalophus niger</i>	Oyuo	PP
Royal Antelope	<i>Neotragus pygmeus</i>	Adowa	PP
Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>	Wansane	PP
Buffalo	<i>Synceros cafer</i>	Ekuo	PP
Bay Duiker	<i>Cephalophus dorsalis</i>	Odabuo	WP
Bongo	<i>Tragelaphus euryceros</i>	otrom	WP
Water chevrotain	<i>Hyemoschus aquaticus</i>		WP
Yellow-backed Duiker	<i>Cephalophus sylvicultor</i>		WP
SCALY ANTEATERS			
Giant Pangolin	<i>Manis gigantia</i>	Apraa	WP
Long-tailed Pangolin	<i>Manis tetradactyla</i>	Apraa	WP
Aardvark	<i>Oryctopus afer</i>	Ekuo	WP
PIGS			
Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus aethiopicus</i>	Sanka	PP
Bush Pig	<i>Potamochoerus porcus</i>	Kokote	PP
REPTILES			
Nile monitor	<i>Veranus niloticus</i>	Mampam	WP
BATS			
Fruit bat		Apae	PP

ELEPHANTIDAE			
Elephant	<i>Loxodonta Africana</i>	Osono	WP
OTHERS			
Snails	<i>Archachatina marginata</i>	Nnwa	NP
Francolin	<i>Francolinus spp</i>	Kokohwe dee	PP

