

Report: Illegal hunting and trade of wildlife in savanna Africa may cause conservation crisis

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A young lion killed in a snare - Savé Valley Conservancy (SVC), Zimbabwe. This was one of 10 lions reintroduced into SVC. Several pride members were killed in a snare line. While the lion population subsequently recovered, these incidents can severely affect small populations. Credit: Pete Wood/AWCF

A new report published today by Panthera confirms that widespread illegal hunting and the bushmeat trade occur more frequently and with greater impact on wildlife populations in the Southern and Eastern savannas of Africa than previously thought, and if unaddressed could potentially cause a 'conservation crisis.' The report challenges previously held beliefs of the impact of illegal bushmeat hunting and trade in Africa with new data from experts.

While the bushmeat trade has long been recognized as a severe threat to the [food resources](#) of indigenous peoples and to [wildlife](#) populations in the forests of West and [Central Africa](#), far less attention has been focused on the issue in African savannas, in part due to the misconception that illegal hunting for bushmeat in African savannas is a small-scale phenomenon practiced for subsistence living.

Motivated by a growing concern about the impacts of illegal hunting and the bushmeat trade in these savannas, Panthera, the Zoological Society of London and the [Wildlife Conservation Society](#) organized a workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa attended by key [wildlife experts](#) to identify the drivers of illegal hunting and the bushmeat trade, and the interventions necessary to mitigate these issues.

[TRAFFIC](#), the [wildlife trade monitoring network](#), has highlighted a new report, entitled [Illegal Hunting and the Bush-Meat Trade in Savanna Africa: Drivers, Impacts and Solutions to Address the Problem](#), at the [Convention on Biological Diversity's](#) (CBD) eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CBD, CoP 11) in Hyderabad, India. This report provides the first comprehensive overview of the threat posed by illegal hunting and the bushmeat trade in African savannas for twelve years, and provides new insights into just how grave the issue has become.



This shows two towers holding thousands of snares collected over nearly five years on Senuko Ranch, Savé Conservancy, Zimbabwe. From August 2001 to July 2009, 84,396 wire snares were removed in this area and at least 6,454 wild animals killed. Credit: Peter Lindsey/AWCF

Lead author and Panthera's Lion Program Policy Initiative Coordinator, [Dr. Peter Lindsey](#), explained, "Dramatically more effort, focus and resources need to be invested to address the illegal hunting and the bushmeat trade. In the absence of such an effort, one of Africa's most valuable resources, the continent's wildlife and comparative advantage, will wane rapidly and disappear from many areas."

The workshop's findings confirm that illegal hunting for bushmeat is emerging as one of the most severe threats to wildlife in several countries in the savanna biome. Dramatic ecological consequences include local disappearances of many species within and outside protected areas, reductions in the sizes of protected areas and, in some cases, complete collapse and disappearance of wildlife populations. Furthermore, scientists estimate that as wildlife populations dwindle, the

pressure on remaining populations, including those in protected areas, is likely to increase.

Along with these damning ecological impacts, the report shows that the bushmeat trade imparts serious negative economic and social impacts on indigenous peoples and local communities. According to the report, the bushmeat trade is foreclosing options for developing wildlife-based tourism and other forms of wildlife-based land use in many areas, threatening a primary potential driver for economic growth and the generation of employment for local communities.

Furthermore, the report highlights the impact of the bushmeat trade on food security within local communities. While the bushmeat trade currently contributes to household protein needs in many local regions, the practice is not sustainable, due to wasteful and unselective hunting methods, and a lack of regulation of harvest. By contrast, the report explains that regulated legal hunting of wildlife has the potential to sustainably generate massive quantities of meat protein for local households.

The report additionally outlines the infrastructure and logistics of illegal bushmeat hunting and trade. Snaring, or the setting of wire snares, is the most common illegal hunting method and is highly effective, difficult to control, and has severe impacts on wildlife due to its non-selectivity and frequent incidents of severe, non-lethal wounding of animals. Such hunting, and the subsequent trade in wildlife parts, typically occurs on a continuum – from that done to obtain meat for direct consumption and/or community trade, to large-scale commercial trade in urban centers or international markets.

Experts found that the drivers of the bushmeat trade in savanna areas are varied, and include: increasing demand for bushmeat in rural and urban areas; human encroachment on wildlife areas; inadequate penal systems

and lack of enforcement; lack of alternative livelihoods and food sources for people living in or near wildlife areas; lack of clear rights over wildlife or land; political instability, corruption and poor governance; demand for wildlife body parts for traditional medicine and ceremonies; and abundant supplies of wire (which is used by bushmeat hunters to make snares).

Finally, the report outlines a variety of solutions required to mitigate illegal bushmeat hunting and trade, including: land use planning to ensure retention of wilderness areas far from human populations; measures to enable communities to benefit legally from wildlife in a sustainable way; improved legal protection of wildlife and law enforcement; the provision of alternative livelihoods and food sources; and measures to reduce the availability of wire to create snares.

At CBD CoP11, Roland Melisch, Head of TRAFFIC's delegation in Hyderabad (India), called upon Parties to include this essential document on bushmeat on the agenda for considerations by the Parties, "A comprehensive set of recommendations on sustainable use of wild meat has been negotiated by Parties, experts and indigenous peoples and local communities through a multi-year process. It is now time for Parties to CBD to act and adopt those recommendations."

Provided by Panthera

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