

Wild meat hunting and trade threatens global sustainability, researchers say

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The hunting and trade of wild animals for meat is a threat to global sustainability that should be managed on the same scale as deforestation, say researchers.

Academics from 45 institutions across 16 countries have published 16 papers in a special edition of the *African Journal of Ecology* to draw attention to the impact of wild meat on biodiversity, and to call for effective monitoring and intervention strategies at a local and global scale.

Professor of Tropical Ecology at the University of Stirling, Kate Abernethy, who is Editor-in-Chief of the *African Journal of Ecology*, said: "If people hunt faster than their prey can reproduce, then we are pushing declines in those species and others in the food chain. This impacts the ecosystems that support people's livelihoods. It also increases vulnerability in the [tropical forests](#) we need to save, to help us fight [climate change](#)."

"These papers show how widespread subsistence still is in the tropics and how integral it is to people's rural livelihoods. They also show that subsistence hunting is having a large impact on [biodiversity conservation](#) in Africa, reducing populations of key endangered species and changing wildlife community structures."

Monitoring and intervention

Dr. Lauren Coad, a senior researcher with the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), who helped co-ordinate the special issue, added: "While much attention is paid to deforestation and [fisheries management](#) in global biodiversity strategies, wild meat hunting and trade is largely flying under the radar. Not only do we need to effectively monitor it, but we also need holistic approach to tackling it."

The papers explore illegal wildmeat in the urban restaurant trade in the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the online trade of mammals and reptiles in Algeria; the decline of large

mammals in Benin; the historical importance of pangolins in Mali; and the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on pangolin trade in Cameroon. Zoonotic diseases have been associated with the wildlife trade, indeed pangolins were initially linked to the COVID-19 outbreak, though that has largely been disproven. The paper found that the bushmeat and pangolin trade continued in a major market in Cameroon during the pandemic despite national bans.

Other papers examine conflicting laws in the Republic of Congo, how national park regulation affects hunting in Togo, and the impact of infrastructure changes on hunting and trade in the Republic of the Congo.

Several others explore in depth how effective different interventions have been, such as local people monitoring hunting in Gabon, and a voucher system to monitor transport of animals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The papers are published in the special issue—"Contemporary wild meat hunting, consumption and [trade](#) in Africa"—of the [African Journal of Ecology](#).

Provided by University of Stirling

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