

CHANGING COMPOSITION OF THE MALABO BUSHMEAT MARKET, BOKO ISLAND, EQUATORIAL GUINEA

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Bushmeat hunting represents the only significant threat to vertebrate biodiversity on Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea. Since 1997, over 150,000 bushmeat carcasses have been recorded for sale in the bushmeat market in the capital city of Malabo by the Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program. Across this 13 year period, the following trends in the bushmeat market have been observed: 1) an increase in the rate of total carcasses per day, 2) an increase in the number and breadth of species represented in the market, 3) an increase in the number of species and individuals imported from mainland Africa, and 4) an increase in the price for virtually all species so that bushmeat is now considerably more expensive than domestic livestock. While these trends are a threat to a number of forest animals, the increasing wealth of local citizens combined with the fact that Bioko's seven monkey species are among the largest mammals available in the island's forests has placed these primates at particular risk. An attempt by the government of Equatorial Guinea to provide legal protection for primates in the fall of 2007 has subsequently failed due to a lack of enforcement and even with the increased importation of large-bodied wildlife including giant pangolins, red river hogs, and Nile crocodiles from mainland Africa, particularly nearby Cameroon, more than 7000 monkey carcasses were recorded in the market in 2009, more than twice the number as in any previous year. Immediate action is needed to preserve this invaluable, yet unsustainably hunted resource.

Keywords: Bushmeat, Africa, Economics, Sustainability