

# THE BUSHMEAT CRISIS TASK FORCE: COLLABORATION ACROSS SECTORS AND CONTINENTS TO ADDRESS THE BUSHMEAT CRISIS

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"Quite clearly, we need an unprecedented partnership of people and governments and of the private sector with international agencies. We need partnerships between people who want to help in these situations, and people who are in positions to be able to help in this situation."

—Dr. Jane Goodall, 18 May 2000



Students at Garoua Wildlife College, Cameroon

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The use of wildlife for meat has become a highly organized, commercial, illegal and unsustainable trade, known as the 'bushmeat crisis.' A multi-billion dollar industry, it is the most significant threat facing wildlife populations in Africa today. Complex interactions between extractive industries (logging, mining, oil), transportation systems (roads and railroads), declines in other economic sectors, increasing human populations, lack of protein alternatives, insufficient capacity for law enforcement and widespread poverty have resulted in the increase in the commercial trade in wildlife for meat. Bushmeat is often used as a 'free' resource without restraint until it is gone.

The bushmeat crisis affects a broad range of species, some endangered or threatened, as well as human communities. Hunting targets include duikers (forest antelope), elephants, apes, other primates and rodents. Bushmeat hunting and meat preparation may expose people to emerging infectious diseases, such as Ebola and SIV (simian immunodeficiency virus). Over 26 kinds of SIV are currently known to exist, including two which have been identified as the origin of HIV/AIDS. Without immediate attention, this crisis risks erupting into a human tragedy with global repercussions.

Bushmeat is a short-term "band-aid" which cannot ultimately resolve the long-term plight driving it: lack of food security, scarcity of jobs and growing human population pressures. When large-scale commercial exploitation has caused wildlife populations to decline to near-extinction, humans will still face the problems that drove them to enter the bushmeat trade in the first place. Without addressing its causal factors, the bushmeat crisis cannot be solved.

## THE BUSHMEAT CRISIS TASK FORCE (BCTF)

As Dr. Jane Goodall stated in May 2000, solving the bushmeat

crisis requires a coordinated, collaborative effort. The mission of the BCTF is to build a broad constituency aimed at identifying and supporting solutions that effectively respond to the bushmeat crisis in Africa and around the world. The BCTF was founded in 1999 as the result of a meeting of bushmeat experts and interested professionals organized by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association's Conservation and Science Department. BCTF serves as a central forum for information sharing and collaboration. An elected Steering Committee (Table 1) directs the coalition's operations, and Supporting and Contributing Members (Table 2) provide financial and technical support for operations. This allows other funds to go directly toward solving problems "on the ground." With a full-time staff of three, BCTF has worked hard to achieve the goals set by its expert membership. Many sectors—academic, media, private sector, government, general public, professional associations and more—regularly approach BCTF to identify information and actions to address the bushmeat crisis.

## GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The BCTF coalition has brought together the collective expertise and resources of many different institutions and individuals. It has also facilitated an unprecedented collaboration between a broad spectrum of organizations and individuals to affect change on the ground in Africa. BCTF has developed an impressive array of strategies aimed at addressing priority solution areas to resolve the bushmeat crisis. With its partners, BCTF has had great success. Some examples include:

**GOAL:** To enable information sharing and collaboration among partners and stakeholders through establishment of an archive of relevant research, conservation projects and other activities.

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**ACTION:** BCTF maintains a research and project information center on the BCTF Web site (*www.bushmeat.org*), which includes publications from research and the media, on the ground bushmeat project information and reports from bushmeat working groups around the world. With this information, we are able to identify current gaps in knowledge and action. Currently in development, the *Bushmeat Information Map* will cross reference existing research and conservation projects with location, and help identify areas of priority concern. This tool will help BCTF members and key decision makers to coordinate their efforts, identify model solutions, propose needed actions, reach out to potential donors and implement priority actions. It will also serve as an important tool for conveying bushmeat messages to the media and general public.

**GOAL:** To establish mechanisms for cooperative planning and facilitate information sharing among members, with the goals of reducing duplication, increasing collaboration and improving the effectiveness of field programs and evaluation.

**ACTION:** In May 2001, BCTF hosted a Collaborative Action Planning meeting of more than 150 bushmeat experts from more than 20 countries. The participants drafted a bushmeat action plan with eight priority solution areas: education, protected areas, sustainable financing, policy development, hunter/market seller associations, private industry partnerships, media and economic/protein alternatives. This effort will be integral to the project planning of its members and the development of the *Bushmeat Information Map*. In addition, BCTF facilitates information sharing and collaboration by publishing the quarterly *Global Bushmeat Update* (including activities of Supporting Members and collaborating organizations and activities), and by managing the bushmeat listserv, an electronic forum for communication.

**GOAL:** To engage national and international key decision makers in addressing the bushmeat crisis in Africa.

**ACTION:** Domestically, BCTF played a key role in the recent Bushmeat Oversight Hearing in the House Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, Chaired by Congressman Wayne T. Gilchrest (R-MD) and frequently works with numerous government agencies and elected representatives to develop action items to address the trade. Internationally, BCTF worked with three of its Supporting Members (AZA, WCS, Chicago Zoological Society) to draft a successful bushmeat resolution for IUCN—the World Conservation Union. Resolution 2.64 has formed the basis for a major IUCN effort on bushmeat. BCTF played a key role in the establishment of the CITES Bushmeat Working Group (CBWG), for which Directors of Wildlife and National Parks from Central African nations are linked in their efforts towards policy development, wildlife management training and capacity building, development of logging codes of conduct and bushmeat monitoring systems and development of a public awareness campaign for Central Africa. BCTF has also been invited to

participate in the World Bank CEO Africa Working Group, which brings together logging company executives with operations in Africa and other institutions.

**GOAL:** To raise awareness about the bushmeat crisis among organizations, professionals and the public in the U.S. and Africa.

**ACTION:** In the US, BCTF has worked with major news media, including *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post* and *National Geographic*. With the support of AZA's Conservation Education Committee (CEC), BCTF and many volunteers are developing a *Bushmeat Resource Guide* to help facilitate educational efforts in the US. With the CITES BWG, the Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA), and the Pan African Association of Aquariums, Zoos and Botanical Gardens (PAAZAB), BCTF will collaborate to develop educational and outreach resources appropriate for an African audience. Graduate students from the University of Maryland's program in Sustainable Development and Conservation Biology are currently working with BCTF to assist in the development of funding proposals for a public awareness campaign in Central Africa. BCTF is planning a media workshop in the coming year to develop a coordinated system for generating additional media on the issue throughout the globe.

**GOAL:** To engage communities in Africa, the U.S. and partner organizations around the globe in the BCTF process.

**ACTION:** BCTF works closely with numerous African partners and stakeholders to share information and other

resources, to build capacity and to promote collaborative action. In addition to the CITES BWG, BCTF works with dozens of bushmeat focus groups and professional



BCTF Steering Committee Members, Supporting Member Representatives & Partners

institutions, including the three African Regional Wildlife Colleges (Garoua Wildlife College, Cameroon; College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka, Tanzania; and Southern African Wildlife College, South Africa) to build the capacity of wildlife and protected area managers to address the crisis throughout sub-Saharan Africa. BCTF is currently supporting the college's efforts to build relevant bushmeat curriculum for wildlife managers. With PASA, PAZAAB, CEC educators and other colleagues, BCTF aims to develop bushmeat educational and outreach materials for use in the African zoos and sanctuaries that provide care for the orphans of the bushmeat crisis.

BCTF is also pilot testing the *Bushmeat Promise*, a tool for collecting individual commitments from people around the world to address the bushmeat crisis. Each person who signs the *Promise* commits to specific activities, from abstaining from participating in the bushmeat trade, to committing their time or money to support relevant projects. BCTF will track those actions to demonstrate a collective voice for African

wildlife and communities. Pilot tests during the summer of 2002 at Supporting Member institutions (Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Oakland Zoo and Columbus Zoo) will be followed by tests in African range states during the remainder of the year. As a mechanism for engaging the public, key decision makers, corporations, academics, hunters, market sellers and others, the *Bushmeat Promise* has the potential to further our progress towards the goals listed above.

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Through the *Bushmeat Information Map* and the *Bushmeat Promise*, BCTF will further fulfill its mission of becoming the primary source of reliable coordinated information on the

bushmeat crisis in Africa and around the world. Ongoing work on several established projects (CITES BWG, African Wildlife Colleges and Media and Public Awareness Campaigns) will continue to address the remaining priority solution areas identified by bushmeat experts, including developing protein and economic alternatives to bushmeat, protected area management and establishing further linkages with the private sector. BCTF's strong support from and connection with AZA members places it in a unique position to raise U.S. awareness and develop unique linkages with programs in Africa. We hope that you will join us in ensuring the future for African wildlife and human communities. **G**

**Table 1**

<b>BCTF STEERING COMMITTEE</b>
Michael Hutchins, <i>American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Co-Chair</i>
<b>ANIMAL PROTECTION</b>
Christine Wolf, <i>The Fund for Animals, Vice-Chair</i> Kelvin Alie, <i>International Fund for Animal Welfare</i>
<b>ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION</b>
Elizabeth Bennett, <i>Wildlife Conservation Society</i> Russ Mittermeier, <i>Conservation International</i> Richard Carroll, <i>World Wildlife Fund, U.S.</i> Katie Frohardt, <i>African Wildlife Foundation</i>
<b>SPECIES CONSERVATION</b>
Janette Wallis, <i>American Society of Primatologists</i> Christina Ellis, <i>Jane Goodall Institute</i>
<b>ZOOS AND MUSEUMS</b>
Reg Hoyt, <i>Philadelphia Zoo</i> Rebecca Rose, <i>Columbus Zoo and Aquarium</i> Kristen Lukas, <i>Lincoln Park Zoo</i> Anne Warner, <i>Oakland Zoo</i>
<b>AT-LARGE SC MEMBERS</b>
David Wilkie, <i>Wildlife Conservation Society</i> Kenneth N. Cameron, <i>Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden</i> Brian A. Rutledge, <i>Zoo New England</i> Tony Mokombo, <i>World Wildlife Fund, U.S.</i> Dieter Steklis, <i>Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International</i> Rebecca Hardin, <i>Harvard University</i> Tony Rose, <i>Biosynergy Institute</i> Samuel Fopa, <i>Bushmeat Crisis Discussion Group, Cameroon</i> J. Bryan Carroll, <i>Bristol Zoo Gardens, UK</i>

**Table 2**

<b>BCTF SUPPORTING AND CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS</b>
African Wildlife Foundation American Society of Primatologists American Zoo and Aquarium Association Chicago Zoological Society/ Brookfield Zoo Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden Cleveland Metroparks Zoo Columbus Zoo and Aquarium Conservation International (CABS) Dallas Zoo Detroit Zoological Park Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International Disney Wildlife Conservation Foundation Fund For Animals, The Happy Hollow Park & Zoo Humane Society of the United States International Fund for Animal Welfare Jane Goodall Institute Lincoln Park Zoological Gardens Louisville Zoological Garden Oakland Zoo Oklahoma City Zoo Philadelphia Zoo Saint Louis Zoo San Antonio Zoological Garden and Aquarium Sedgwick County Zoo Toronto Zoo Wildlife Conservation Society World Wildlife Fund, US Zoo Atlanta Zoo New England Zoological Society of San Diego
<b>CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS</b>
Folsom Children's Zoo & Botanical Garden Conservation and Recycling at the Tulsa Zoo (CARATZ)