



## Overview of the Mara Ecosystem Assessment

An assessment of bushmeat hunting and trade was conducted in the Masai Mara Ecosystem in April and May 2008. This bushmeat assessment attempted to answer questions concerning the nature, extent and trends in bushmeat utilization in the Mara ecosystem. The data collection methods used during the course of the research included direct observation, informal interviews, literature review and formal questionnaires.

## Results and Findings

The assessment revealed that illegal hunting for meat and income is a serious issue in the Mara ecosystem. An estimated 61% of Trans Mara and 38% of Narok South District households interviewed stated they had utilized bushmeat in the past, while other households have not consumed bushmeat but are aware that bushmeat is utilized in their neighborhood.

Bushmeat utilized is obtained from both the protected and unprotected areas. Poachers from different communities prefer to hunt in different areas of the ecosystem. In the protected area, the Mara Triangle is the entry point of poachers and migrating wildlife coming from across the border. Community members from neighboring Tanzania frequently hunt illegally in the Mara ecosystem as they get lighter sentences from the Kenyan courts once apprehended. Immigrant communities who have settled in the wider areas of Transmara and Narok south districts practice extensive snaring for bushmeat. Snare-removal programs remove thousands of snares every year from the area.



Many species of wildlife are poached for illegal bushmeat. Most of the species are plains game that are free-ranging and migratory. The demand for the species is subject to people's tastes for different types of bushmeat and the price. The species which are most in demand are wildebeest, buffalo, zebra, impala, Thomson's gazelle, hippopotamus, and bushbuck. Poaching is at its peak during the prolonged periods of the annual Mara/Serengeti migration. Free ranging species are very difficult to monitor by authorities.

## Recommendations

This bushmeat assessment provided first-hand insight to the often neglected but ecologically damaging practice which for years has been perceived as a purely subsistence activity. The absence of location-specific data on different types of animal species poached and the impact to the ecosystem indeed create the impression that bushmeat poaching is insignificant. There needs to be additional purposeful collection, recording and analyzing of this information in order to facilitate informed decision making regarding illegal bushmeat utilization.

In light of increased trends of bushmeat poaching and significant wildlife declines in the Mara region alternative sources of livelihood should be sought that would enable the communities to access alternative sources of income and protein. This would call for empowering of the community economically through favorable government policies, working with development partners and the involvement of the private sector.



For more information about BEAN and bushmeat in eastern Africa please visit: [www.bushmeatnetwork.org](http://www.bushmeatnetwork.org)

The Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network (BEAN) is an interdisciplinary and multi-institutional network consisting of stakeholders (wildlife professionals, human development experts, government representatives, private industry personnel, academic experts, local community leadership and citizens etc.) who work collaboratively to raise awareness, focus attention, share information, analyze, evaluate and report on trends, and leverage resources to build local partnerships and capacity to implement grassroots solutions that directly address bushmeat exploitation problems affecting protected and surrounding areas in eastern Africa.



## MENTOR

BEAN emerged from the USFWS MENTOR Fellowship Program [[www.mentorfellowshipprogram.org](http://www.mentorfellowshipprogram.org)] a funded cooperative agreement from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service [[www.fws.gov/international/DIC/regional%20programs/africa/Africa.html](http://www.fws.gov/international/DIC/regional%20programs/africa/Africa.html)] to the College of African Wildlife Management- Mweka, Tanzania [[www.mwekawildlife.org](http://www.mwekawildlife.org)] and the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group [[www.abcg.org](http://www.abcg.org)].



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