

# Bats as bushmeat: a survey by Fauna & Flora International

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The consumption and trade of bushmeat is considered a significant conservation issue in many parts of the world (Robinson & BENNETT 2000) with attention usually focused on larger species, especially primates (e.g. BOWEN-JONES & PENDRY 1999). However, in some areas there has been growing concern about the potential impact of the bushmeat industry on bats: for example on the Pacific island of Guam, hunting is officially recognised as the chief cause of the decline of the Marianas flying fox *Pteropus mariannus*, Desmarest, 1822 (MICKLEBURGH 2002). Despite the potential problems that bushmeat consumption may evidently pose, there has been no overall global view on the impacts on bats from their use as bushmeat.



Fauna & Flora International (FFI) is undertaking a preliminary survey of the use of bats as bush meat to assess the scale of the problem and identify where issues relating to trade and hunting need to be addressed. Having identified any priority areas, FFI will then fundraise for projects that will be undertaken as part of FFI's Global Bat Conservation Programme. FFI is the world's longest established international conservation body, and acts to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, are based on sound science and take account of human needs. Further information about FFI's wider aims and activities can be found at [www.fauna-flora.org](http://www.fauna-flora.org).

Whilst some regions of the world report negligible bat consumption, preliminary information from the Western Indian Ocean suggests that this is a region where bat consumption is relatively common. For example, there have been several reports from the Comoros that bats are eaten, but many consider this to have no significant impact on bat populations. This may also be the case in the Seychelles. However, in the Mascarenes the impact of hunting on the Rodrigues flying fox *Pteropus rodricensis* Dobson, 1878, is relatively well recognized, and local hunting is known to have played a part in the decline of some other species. For example, both deforestation and hunting are thought to have contributed to the extinction of the dark flying fox, *Pteropus subniger* KERR, 1972 in the late 19th Century.

FFI is seeking your cooperation with this preliminary survey and is asking that you spend a short time filling out a questionnaire (see below for link). Every piece of information about hunting and trade in bats is useful, even if it is just to say that there is no evidence that bats are used in these ways. Specialist knowledge is not necessarily required. When you have completed the questionnaire please e-mail it back to the address below by the 30th September. It would also be extremely useful if you could pass on the details of this

investigation to any other individuals who might be able to help. If you are interested in developing collaborative projects on research into hunting and trade in bats please contact SIMON MICKLEBURGH at FFI [simon.mickleburgh@fauna-flora.org] to discuss this further.

The questionnaire may be obtained from the website of the Sustainable Use Specialist Group of IUCN, [http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/susg/bushmeat\\_bats\\_questionnaire.doc](http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/susg/bushmeat_bats_questionnaire.doc), and the project coordinator is able to provide the questionnaire in French.

#### REFERENCES

- ENTWISTLE, A. & CORP, N., 1997. *Oryx* **31**(2): 135-142.  
MICKLEBURGH, S.P., HUTSON, A.M. & RACEY, P.A., 2002. *Oryx* **36**(1): 18-34.  
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