



## **Bushmeat Crisis Task Force Members Celebrate Ten Years of Achievement**

On 19 February 1999, 34 experts, representing 28 different organizations and agencies, assembled at the offices of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) in Silver Spring, Maryland to discuss the commercial bushmeat crisis in tropical African countries and its impact on threatened and endangered species. Together with a growing worldwide network of concerned conservationists, zoo biologists, animal welfare advocates and medical researchers, [these experts agreed to pool their talents and information resources](#) to focus on the growing threat posed by the unsustainable, illegal, commercial trade in wildlife as food. The [Bushmeat Crisis Task Force](#) (BCTF) was formed as a center for action and information on the bushmeat crisis in Africa and around the world.

Ten years later, [BCTF members](#) join together to celebrate its many accomplishments and to highlight the urgent needs that remain. The bushmeat issue is now recognized as one of the most important threats facing wildlife and local communities in Africa today. Dozens of on-the-ground programs, new policies and increased capacity have been developed as a result of BCTF and member efforts. BCTF's work reveals the threats to wildlife and human populations posed by the bushmeat crisis and the [priority solutions](#) needed to resolve it. Resources for implementation, however, remain scarce. The critically important funding for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership has supported governments and NGOs working together on conservation and economic issues in Central Africa, but a significant threat to wildlife and local community livelihoods still remains. In [East Africa](#), alarming new information about the growing trade in bushmeat shows the vital need for additional financial and human capacity.

BCTF has played a crucial role in educating and [engaging policy makers](#), scientists, development officials, donors, and the public about wildlife and the bushmeat trade. Bushmeat policy efforts have been adopted by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the African Forestry Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) agreement, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) with BCTF support. BCTF has been consulted and supported efforts by all three branches of the U.S. Government to address the bushmeat issue. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Agency for International Development support for on-the-ground bushmeat projects in Africa, House and Senate committee hearings related to bushmeat and wildlife trade, and a current Federal prosecution for importation of commercial levels of bushmeat over U.S. borders are examples of BCTF's engagement. Media attention on

the bushmeat issue has mushroomed in the last decade from a few dozen articles prior to 1999 to well over a thousand articles today – many of which BCTF has provided direct input.

As well as raising awareness about bushmeat as a top priority conservation issue, a primary role of BCTF has been to create an information sharing mechanism. In addition to BCTF's world-class website, [BCTF's Information Management and Analysis Project](#) (IMAP) provides a central repository of information on the causes and solutions of bushmeat hunting and trade in Africa and around the world. The Bushmeat IMAP combines technical expertise in mapping forest use in Central Africa with BCTF's worldwide databases and professional networks to provide the most current, site-specific information available on the bushmeat trade. An exhaustive digital library is paired with an online, customizable mapmaker to permit users to quickly find and map information on key elements that impact the bushmeat trade in Central Africa.

[Building the capacity of professionals](#) and educators to address the bushmeat crisis is critically important work, and BCTF has been at the forefront of these efforts. From a collaboration with the École de Faune de Garoua (Garoua Wildlife School) in Cameroon to develop and implement a bushmeat curriculum for mid-career wildlife managers to the current MENTOR (Mentoring for Environmental Training in outreach and Resource Conservation) program that is providing a wealth of bushmeat management capacity-building opportunities for conservationists in East Africa, BCTF has led important collaborative efforts in this regard. Our free, online [Bushmeat Education Resource Guide](#) (BERG) provides tools and resources to benefit students of all ages and backgrounds. Many of BCTF's zoo members contributed important tools to the BERG and even more have benefited from it in their exhibits, programs and events.

The bushmeat issue is widely recognized as one of the highest priority conservation threats facing global biodiversity today. BCTF is recognized as a leading collaborative organization that has facilitated this critical awareness and programs to address the crisis. The members of BCTF are committed to supporting current and future generations of people and wildlife, recognizing that our children and grandchildren need us to effectively manage wildlife resources today.

**Each BCTF Member organization has worked in their own way to solve this crisis on the ground, in the halls of Congress, in international policy arenas and with the public. Please [visit their websites](#) to learn more about their actions.**

**[BCTF members can add their own reflections here]**

BCTF members and staff have worked tirelessly to raise awareness and implement solutions to the bushmeat crisis, as well as invite additional efforts from development organizations and agencies, scientists, policy makers and the public. Wildlife gives so much to so many: it is an important source of protein, a key component to local and national economies, a critical biodiversity resource providing essential ecological services for our world, and a source of wonder to us all. The bushmeat crisis threatens all of this. Please help by visiting [www.bushmeat.org](http://www.bushmeat.org).