

Chimpanzees in danger

DEFORESTATION!

One of the greatest threats facing the chimpanzees of Africa today is the loss of their home land, the African Forest.

Many acres of forest are cleared by burning, to make room for farmers who grow a few crops on the land and then move on when the soil will no longer produce crops.

Once the forest is gone, the chimpanzees have no place to live; they must either move or die.

You can help: Together with the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, African governments are working to re-educate farmers so that the farmers can co-exist peacefully with the animals that can live only in the forests.



*This part of the African forest was a tropical jungle just a short time ago; now, it is almost a desert.
The chimpanzees that once lived in this forest are gone.*

The African logging industry is constantly cutting down more and more of the forest, resulting in habitat loss for the chimpanzees. Because desirable trees are not clumped together, but are rather dispersed throughout the forests, logging companies must constantly make new roads into the jungle in order to continue harvesting trees. The problem is that these roads are then used by hunters who kill wild life and sell the meat they collect. In addition, logging brings diseases to the chimpanzee populations which had not previously had contact with humans. Recent research has revealed that the HIV virus, which causes AIDS in humans, may have originated in chimpanzees. Scientists now think that this disease may have entered the human population through the bush-meat trade. But as disastrous as HIV and AIDS have been to humans, it is now apparent that contact with humans is exposing the wild great apes to a wide variety of deadly new diseases--and the danger is growing.

POACHING!

A HUGE threat to chimpanzees and other large mammals!

The scrub and forest lands of Africa are called the bush, and animals which are killed for food there are referred to as bush-meat. Everything that lives in the forest, from rats and snakes to chimpanzees, gorillas and elephants, is hunted for bush-meat. In most parts of Africa, hunting bush-meat is illegal, but this has not stopped the killing. Poaching bush-meat is now the most immediate threat to the survival of chimpanzees in the wilds of Africa.

In fact, according to The Bush-meat Crisis statement of 2000, "This illegal trade is destroying free-ranging populations of chimpanzees just when a proposal has been made that their protection in the wild may be important for understanding how to control the spread of AIDS and other infectious diseases among humans."

How has this situation developed to this point? One problem is that over 24 million people live within the forested regions of Africa, and most of these rely on wild bush-meat as their primary source of animal protein. Urban populations in Central and West Africa are growing at 2-4% per year. Within the region, domestic animals are raised by families, but are viewed as savings and insurance, rather than the primary source of protein. Bush-meat offers poor rural families a lucrative, though short term, source of cash and food.

While out hunting antelope, deer, or other game, bush hunters will not hesitate to shoot chimpanzees and other apes when they get the chance. In addition to drastically decreasing the chimpanzee populations, these hunters are also increasing the risks of transmitting diseases from chimpanzees into the human population.

However, the situation can be improved when Africans are involved in the protection of chimpanzee populations. For example, the Mountain Gorilla population of Rwanda survived very well through all the years of the genocidal war that so strongly affected that country.



Chimpanzees are on the menu. Copyright: Karl Ammann

