

## **FROM HUNT TO HARVEST**

Bushmeat, or hunting and eating wild animals, has always been central to human life, all over the world. Now, too many people hunting too few animals has, in many places, left the forest silent and empty. There can be no profit and no enjoyment of meat or of wildlife that is gone. Hunting 'sustainably' is very difficult as it can be impossible to know how many people are creeping into the forest or savannah from the other side, while we hunt near our home.

What can seem like an endless resource turns out to be the very last duiker, warthog or chimpanzee.

In Zambia, people have been handing over their guns voluntarily! Why would they do that?

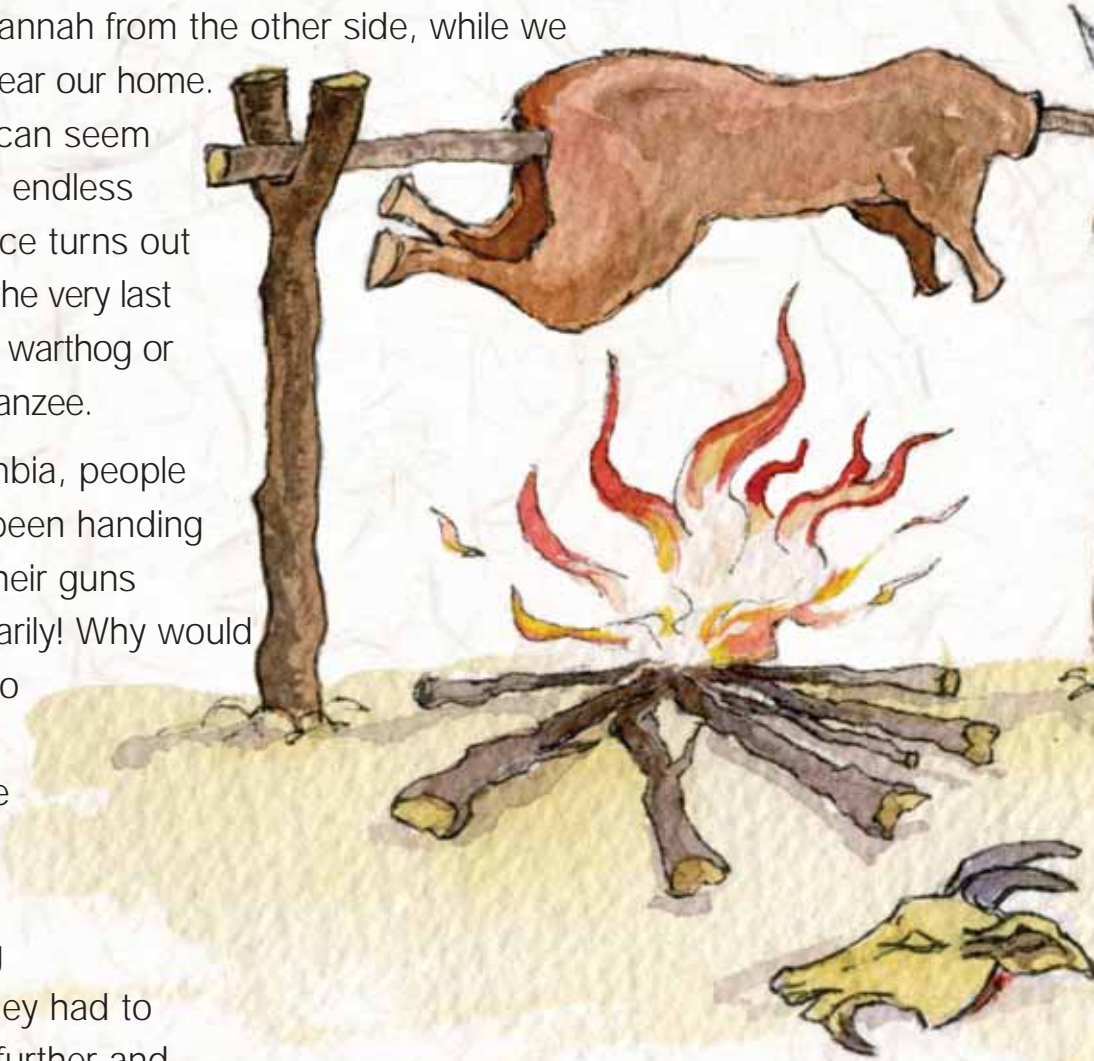
People there were finding

that they had to travel further and

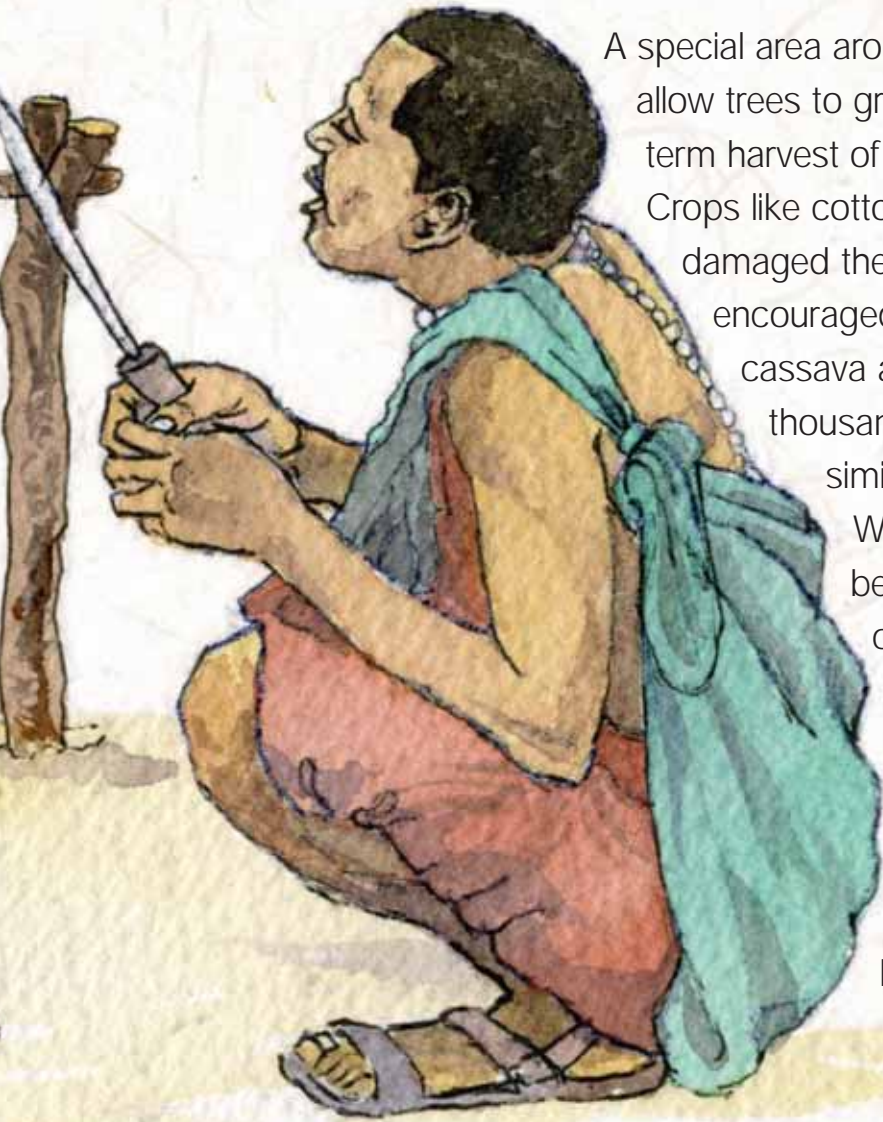
further to find wildlife when once

they could hunt very close to home. Travelling fifty kilometres to hunt a few dik-dik was not proving profitable or enjoyable.

The men decided to change things.



With funding from a charity (the Wildlife Conservation Society's COMACO project), they organised for anyone who handed in a gun to receive a bag of maize to support their family for a whole month. They are also given information and support to start new enterprises, like conservation farming, bee-keeping, fish farming and carpentry.



A special area around the forest was set up, to allow trees to grow. This provided a long term harvest of seeds, firewood and fruit. Crops like cotton and tobacco had damaged the soil. Instead, people were encouraged to plant soya beans, cassava and groundnuts. Over ten thousand farmers now do so. In similar projects in Central and West Africa, people have begun to farm cane rats and chickens.

Projects like these can stop a desperate situation by changing people's dependency on wildlife, maybe stopping people from killing off the last of the wild animals in an area.

However, it is very important that they are run alongside projects to protect wild lands. This is because historically, as people have developed agriculture, they have cleared wild space which has never returned.

## *Is it legal?*

In many countries there are laws against the killing of certain species, in certain areas or at certain times of the year. For example, killing chimpanzees anywhere, shooting cheetah in Namibia, and killing wildlife without a license in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe are all illegal: Laws have been made by the government or local council to prevent it happening. If you do something illegal and you are discovered, you may be fined by the police, or even put in prison. If you do not agree with a law it may be better to try to change it by making representations to the authority that has made the law, rather than breaking the law.

## *Is it causing extinction or extirpation?*

Throughout history humans have been too eager to kill and use animals. Extinction is forever. An animal which has gone extinct exists nowhere in the world. When an animal on which we depend becomes extinct it is a many-sided tragedy. Not only is the unique nature of that animal gone forever, but so too are the products it gave to humans. We have used them all up – leaving none behind. If a wild animal is used up locally, it is called extirpation.

To hunt wildlife sustainably you must know the MAXIMUM SUSTAINABLE YIELD – the number you can catch without causing the population to start to decline towards extinction. To know this, you need good answers to a lot of questions:

*How many animals die naturally from starvation, predation, lack of water and other natural causes?*

*How many do you need to reproduce the population, and of what age and how many of each sex?*

*How many are left surplus after these things are considered?*



It is easy to understand these 'population dynamics' if you think of a herd of cattle or goats. Very often the farmer knows each animal by name, when they have young and of which sex. The cautious farmer would not dream of killing all his cows in one go, because the breeding herd would be gone. In the forest or bush, such information is hard to come by. You need to have an eye on the whole area, the animals there and those that come and go. Not so easy.

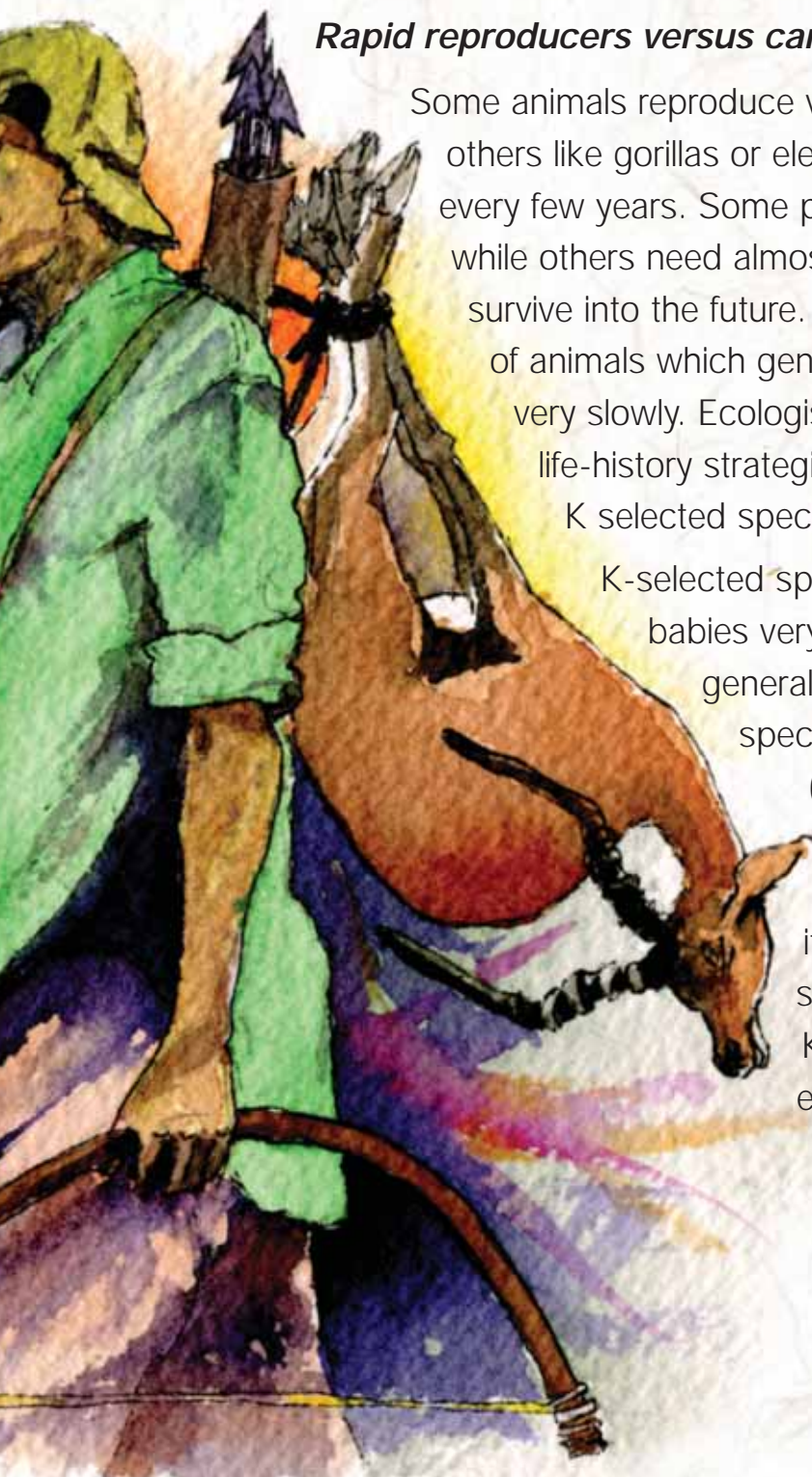
An estimated 3.4 million metric tonnes of game meat is taken from Central African forests each year.

### ***Rapid reproducers versus carers: r and K selection***

Some animals reproduce very quickly, like rats, while others like gorillas or elephants have only one baby every few years. Some produce many 'spare animals' while others need almost every one to ensure they survive into the future. Primates are an example of animals which generally produce very few young, very slowly. Ecologists describe these two life-history strategies as belonging to r and K selected species.

K-selected species look after their few babies very well (like humans) and generally live a long time. r-selected species have lots and lots of babies (like rabbits) and die young.

If you have good information and control of hunting rates, it is possible to hunt r-selected species sustainably, whilst K-selected species are extremely easy to over-exploit.



## ***Nightmare snares!***

One way to ensure a problem for the animals is to leave snares unattended in the forests for days on end. This is not an intelligent way to look after our harvest of wild meat. We leave the snares, forget about them, let them kill animals, which just rot where they died. Conservationists patrolling wild areas come across many animals killed in this shameful way. At least if a resource is taken from nature it should be used properly and sensibly.

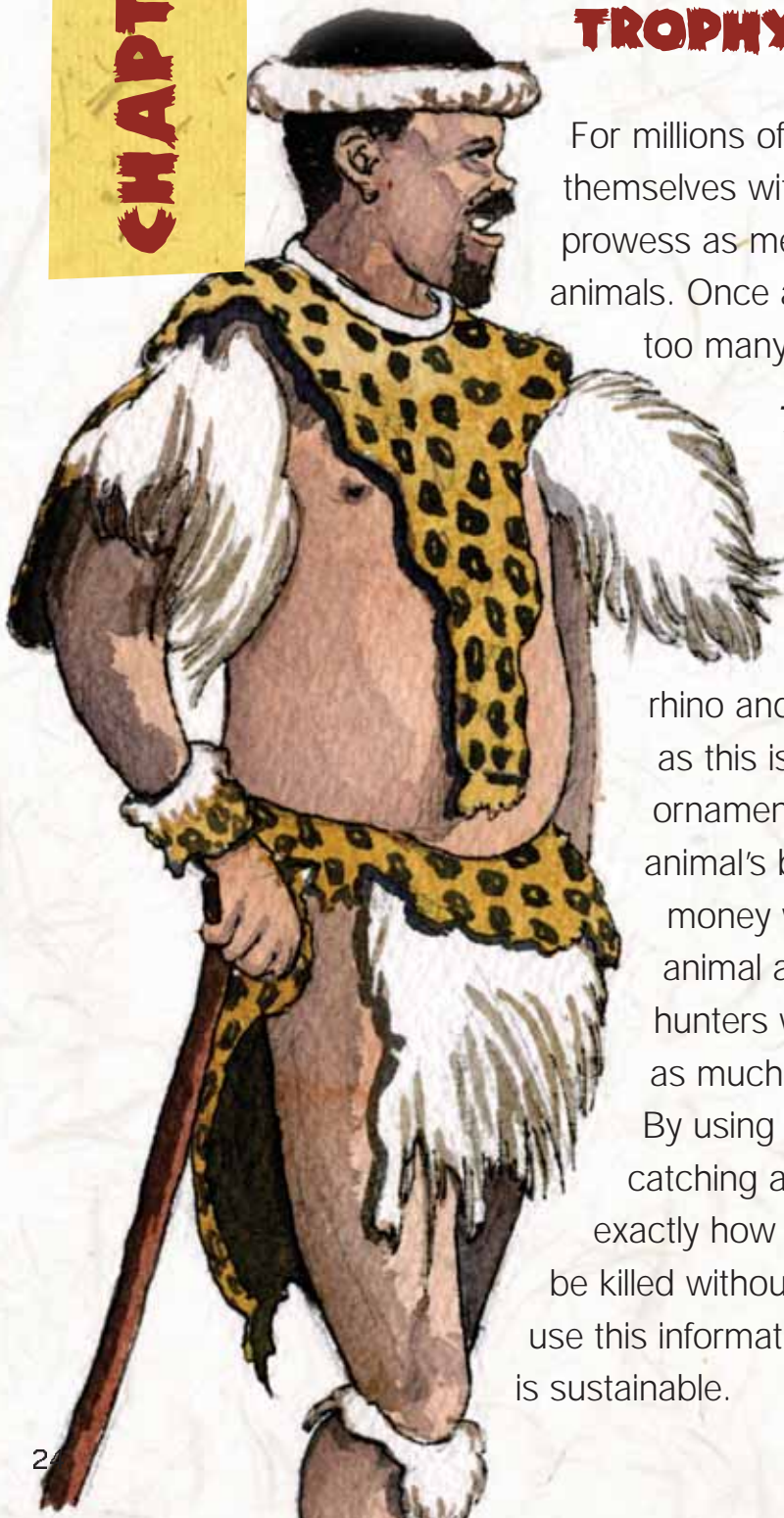
## **TROPHY HUNTING**

For millions of years humans have adorned themselves with the skins of animals, shown their prowess as men, and husbands by killing fierce animals. Once again, things have become a problem as too many people compete for too few animals.

### ***Tourist's trophies – right and wrong***

Conservationists can seem hypocritical, referring to local hunters as 'poachers' while foreign hunters are allowed to shoot highly endangered animals like rhino and elephant. At its best, 'trophy' hunting as this is called (because the hunter makes an ornament or trophy for their home from the animal's body) can provide people with jobs and money which make it possible to protect the animal and its habitat. This is because foreign hunters will pay large amounts of money, maybe as much as US\$15,000, to hunt one lion.

By using helicopters to survey an area, or by catching and collaring animals, biologists know exactly how many are in the area and how many can be killed without damaging the population, and they use this information to make sure that the trophy hunting is sustainable.



However, too often the money from such hunting goes into the hands of a few wealthy individuals, rather than to the community who have to live alongside the animal. If local people do not see a benefit from tolerating the presence of large and potentially scary animals, they will not accept them. In this case, trophy hunting just becomes one more pressure. Lion hunting in Botswana has been estimated to be worth \$4.5 million a year. The Botswana Government gets just \$2,250 for each lion, much less than is paid by the hunters. Now many governments are realising these animals are probably worth more alive than dead. In fact, in 2000, Botswana made US\$495 million from tourism, mostly based on wildlife viewing.



### **CONSERVATION AND ANIMAL WELFARE**

People who are concerned about **ANIMAL WELFARE** see animals as 'sentient' creatures, capable of feelings similar to humans. They argue that we should try to do all we can to prevent animals from suffering at the hands of humans.

**CONSERVATIONISTS** may be concerned about this too, but they worry mainly about killing too many animals or destroying ecosystems. They are mainly interested in preventing extinctions and allowing the world to function properly in its brilliant ways.