

WILDLIFE UTILIZATION SURVEY IN SELECTED AREAS OF SARAWAK

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Abstract

A survey on wildlife utilization and regulation in Sarawak was carried out from November 2011 to April 2012. Interview and market survey was made at selected areas of South and Central region of Sarawak while secondary information from Forest Department Sarawak was gathered. A minimum of twelve species was recorded with some species receiving protection from Sarawak Wild Life Protection Ordinance 1998. The pangolin (*Manis javanica*) is listed in the IUCN 2012 Endangered category. Bearded pig (*Sus barbatus*) is the most frequently utilized wildlife and sold as preserved meat during the survey. Increased resources to the enforcing agencies with evenly distributed enforcement staff according to regional areas may help mitigate this matter. This is a complex issue that needs careful attention. Additionally there is an urgent need to revise the existing legislation. Strong socio-political advocacy is desperately needed which will assist this process.

Key words: conservation category, regulation, wildlife utilization, Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1998

1. INTRODUCTION

The forest in Sarawak can be classified into beach forest, mangrove forest, brackish swamp, peat swamp forest, heath forest, limestone forest, lowland evergreen rainforest, lower and upper montane forest (Kavanagh, 1985). This diverse habitat is host to a variety of large animals, which are frequently utilized in local livelihood including for traditional medicine (Abdullah, 1996; Mohd-Azlan and Mohd. Faisal, 2006).

In the 1990s the wild meat trade was conservatively estimated to be more than 1000 tons per year, with almost all of the meat coming out over logging roads where the annual catch by hunters in a single logging camp resulted in 1149 animals or 29 metric tons of meat per year roads (Wildlife Conservation Society and Sarawak Forestry Department, 1996).

The rate of deforestation in Sarawak is higher than in Sabah and Peninsular Malaysia (Mohd Azlan and Lawes, 2011). The logging activity contributes significantly to hunting activity, especially through providing easy access to hunters (Caldecott, 1986). The hunting activity is intensive once logging roads had been built (Francis *et al.*, 2001). This has created an extensive road network which created a vast commercial trade in wild meat in Sarawak (Bennett *et al.*, 2002).

Demand for wildlife meat becomes increasing in many parts of Southeast Asia partly due to the region's economic status and cultural needs (Abdullah, 1996; Caldecott, 1986; Bennett *et al.*, 2002; Lee *et al.* 2005; Mohd-Azlan and Mohd. Faisal, 2006). Wildlife trade plays an important role in economic development and affects many aspects of livings especially to the local community especially in rural areas (Corlett, 2004). Because wild meat has a high value compared to other forest products, it is a valuable commodity and has become the main target by poachers with special interest and skill (Robinson *et al.*, 1999). The commercial trade is extensive and supplies mainly urban market and for traditional medicine (Sumrall, 2009). Illegal wildlife trade can do maximum harm and possess serious threat to a number of endangered and vulnerable species (Yiming, 2005). The effect can be amplified in areas with high endemism such as Borneo.