

UNIT 5 IMPORTANCE OF WILDLIFE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Wildlife
 - 3.2 Importance of Wildlife
 - 3.2.1 Food and raw material benefits
 - 3.2.2 Social services
 - 3.2.3 Monetary benefits
 - 3.2.4 Religious benefits
 - 3.3 Economic Importance of Wildlife in Nigeria
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Wildlife organisms vary in form, nature and behaviour or habit, and these ultimately relate to their economic value to man, with respect to food supply, supply of raw materials, social and religious services and monetary gains. The benefits of wildlife to the Nigerian nation are particularly numerous and significant to its socio-economic and environmental development.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to discuss:

- the scope of wildlife;
- the various benefits of wildlife to man; and
- the significance of wildlife to the economy of Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Wildlife

This refers to all non-domesticated plants, animals and other organisms. The Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF, 1965) defined wildlife as “all living things, plants, invertebrate and vertebrate animals outside the direct control of man, i.e. non-cultivated plants and non-domesticated animals”. However, several wild plant and animal species have been domesticated for human benefit in all parts of the world with a major positive or negative impact on the environment. Wildlife can be found in

all ecosystems; it occurs with distinct forms in deserts, rainforests, plains and other areas, such as the most developed urban sites.

3.2 Importance of Wildlife

There are many benefits derived from wildlife conservation. They are categorized into food and raw material benefits, social services, monetary benefits and cultural/religious benefits.

3.2.1 Food and raw material benefits

- i. Edible meat (Bush meat), obtained through hunting and game, is highly valued as animal protein by most people in both the rural and urban areas,
- ii. Raw materials for traditional medicine, including the aphrodisiac properties of wild species e.g. primates and pangolins,
- iii. Raw materials for clothing, local leather works, and making implements and weapons such as in warm sleeping robes (e.g. muskox), shoes and local drums, and
- iv. Art work (souvenirs) and craft works.

3.2.2 Social services

- i. Outdoor recreation, such as personal pleasure trek, hiking, feeding wild birds, hunting of big games, small mammals, upland bird, waterfowl hunting, sport fishing, canoeing, visits to park, whale watching, seabird viewing, polar bear observation, wildlife photography, wildlife activities at home or cottage,
- ii. Outdoor laboratory for students studying ecology, animal behaviour and biologically-related courses. Wildlife is a common subject for educational TV shows all over the world, e.g. National Geographic Specials, BBC Natural History Programme, Animal Planet, NATURE and Nature Documentary,
- iii. Tourism and Ecotourism- fast becoming a popular industry generating substantial income for poor nations with rich wildlife especially in Africa and India.
- iv. Membership in wildlife and nature organizations, and
- v. Environmental protection through quality maintenance for the proper functioning of the biosphere; health of wildlife is an indication of the health of the environment, and
- vi. Inspiration of human activities such as legend, ceremony, art, music, dance, drama, story-telling and poetry.

3.2.3 Monetary benefits

- i. Gate fees from tourist to national park/reserves,
- ii. Hunting permit,
- iii. Sales of animal (wild harvest generate income through job opportunities from seasonal influx of visitors to wildlife and particularly from wildlife activities),
- iv. Export of live animals, and
- v. Sport hunting e.g. hunting and non-commercial fishing.

3.2.4 Religious Benefits

- i. Sacredness of certain animals in religious rituals due to their perceived spiritual significance in different cultures around the world e.g. muskox in Canada; eagles and hawks, and their feathers to Native Americans.

Generally, wildlife species play a key role in pollinisation, germination, seed dispersal, soil generation, nutrient recycling, predation, habitat maintenance, waste breakdown and pest control. It is important to science, agriculture and medicine, especially the preservation of genetic diversity, development of new drugs (salicin from the bark of willow trees, taxol from bark of western yew, etc.) and treatments.

3.3 Economic Importance of Wildlife in Nigeria

Wildlife as a national heritage and natural endowment to Nigeria is very important in many respects. It has over the years, contributed significantly to the social, economic and environmental development of the country. The benefits include:

- i. Source of animal protein- bushmeat is a principal source of animal protein for the rural majority in Nigeria;
- ii. Game-viewing and Tourism- Two of the 36 wildlife reserves are currently open for game viewing and tourism. However, under the zoos and museums existing in some states provide opportunities for recreation, picnics, parties and education;
- iii. Revenue from export- Nigeria derives a substantial sum of foreign exchange from wildlife exports annually.
- iv. Employment opportunities and local participation- Local hunters are employed as game patrols and guards, who serve as anti-poaching groups, in addition to management appointments such as clerks, typists, drivers and game scouts. Other local groups are involved in conservation and development of reserves.
- v. Education and research- These involve excursions to wildlife parks, zoos and botanical gardens, research on the behaviour of

wildlife animals and the use of common mammals such as rats and primates for ecological and immunological research in medical and science laboratories, ecological stability and perpetuation of the genetic pool.

- vi. Wildlife by-products- Numerous by-products of wild animals such as skins, feathers, beaks, horns, skull, bones, eyes, spines, liver, eggs and tails are used for different purposes in Nigeria. The uses include traditional medicine, sorcery, witchcraft and folklore. Some of the bushmeat by-products and their folkloric medicinal/cultural uses are shown in the table below.

Class/Bushmeat by-product	Local names (Yoruba)	Uses
Monkey's head	Ori obo	Charms for casting away evil spirits
Giant rat (<i>Criceptonys gambianus</i>)	Okete	Protection against witches
Pangolin (<i>Mani tradactyla</i>)	Aaka	Part of the concoction for curing
Shrew (<i>Crocidura</i> spp.)	Asin	Part of the concoction for curing convulsion,
Hydrax's finger-tips (<i>Den drohydrax</i>)	Ori ika ofafa	body pain and easy delivery
Python's head	Ori ere	Charm for safe travel
Chameleon	Oga	Charm for good luck
Duiker's horn (<i>Cephalopus</i> spp.)	Iwo etu	Cure of dizziness
		Holding certain charms

4.0 CONCLUSION

Wildlife serves man not only for food and raw material benefits, but also for social, religious and monetary benefits.

5.0 SUMMARY

Wildlife is an important sub-sector of an agrarian nation like Nigeria. It is particularly significant as a major foreign exchange earner, due to the huge revenue accruable from wildlife exports, game-viewing and tourism. Also, wildlife by-products are highly valued for their use in trado-medical practice.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Enumerate the benefits of wildlife in Nigeria.
- 2) List the major categories of the benefits of wildlife conservation.
- 3) Write short notes on any one of these categories mentioned above.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Boulder County Colorado *Government Online*. The Importance of Agriculture to Wildlife.

http://www.co.boulder.co.us/openspace/resources/agriculture/ag_wildlife.htm

(CSP 201). School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, The Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. *Introduction to General Agriculture*

Hinterland Who's Who- Benefits of Wildlife.
<http://www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?cid=4&id=221>

The Importance of Wildlife Control/Nuisance Wildlife Damage.
http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/news/other_services/nuisance_wildlife_damage_control/the_importance_of_wildlife_control

The value of wildlife.
http://www.oie.int/eng/publicat/rt/2101/A_K2112.htm