

## **Economic Benefit of Wild Animals: A Possible Threat to Conservation in Ovia Southwest, Edo State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract :** This study was carried out to assess the contribution of bush meat to Edo people's livelihood and the consequence of utilization on conservation. Five markets were selected in Ovia Southwest local government area of Edo State, twenty bush meat sellers were selected from each market. Direct observations were made to document the composition of wild animals under sale in the study area. A total of one hundred questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The questionnaires were all retrieved and analyzed using descriptive analysis. The results show that thirteen animal species are being traded in the area. The price for the animal species (whole animal) ranged from N200 to N9,520. Respondents reported that there is a decline in the animal population over time. Between 64% and 95% of the respondents acknowledged population decline in seven of the thirteen animal species available for sale compared to what it used to be some ten years ago. Sales of wild animal species could be regarded as a profitable business in the rural community, supporting livelihood of the community, but could have devastating effect on conservation as already observed in this study if harvesting of wild animals is not regulated on controlled or sustainable basis.

**Keywords :** conservation, economic benefits, hunting, population, wild animals

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