

# Equatorial Guinea

*Home to the fourth highest species richness of primates in Africa including many endemic subspecies.*



**The frog species** *Afrivalus paradorsalis* sits on a leaf in a forest in Equatorial Guinea.  
Credit: Matt Muir/USFWS.



Equatorial Guinea (EG), the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa, is home to an incredibly diverse range of species. In addition to a mainland, it stretches across an archipelago of islands in the Gulf of Guinea. The largest is Bioko Island, which hosts the country's capital, Malabo. Equatorial Guinea has more than 700,000 inhabitants, most of whom live in rural villages and towns. Slightly smaller than the state of Maryland, Equatorial Guinea is the smallest country in the Congo Basin. Despite its small size, Equatorial Guinea has the fourth highest species richness of primates in Africa. In addition to 19 primate species on the mainland, there are 11 on Bioko Island. Of these, eight are endemic subspecies, making Bioko Island a particularly important area for primate conservation. Equatorial Guinea's vast beaches and coastal waters are visited by four species of threatened marine turtle (green, leatherback, olive ridley, and hawksbill). Bioko Island's southern black sand beaches represent important marine turtle nesting sites,

while waters off the coast of the mainland are particularly important as feeding sites. The dense forests on Equatorial Guinea's mainland contain the endangered forest elephant and central chimpanzee, and the critically endangered western lowland gorilla.

Given its small size, Equatorial Guinea has remarkable biodiversity. Following the discovery of large offshore oil reserves in the 1990s, this small country is now the third-largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 2002 and 2011, Equatorial Guinea experienced the fastest economic growth per capita in the world. This economic growth is exerting amplified pressure on natural resources.

## Current Threats to Biodiversity in Equatorial Guinea

### Commercial bushmeat trade

The commercial bushmeat trade refers to the over-hunting of wildlife for its meat and income. In 2007, Equatorial Guinea's President Obiang issued a decree banning the hunting and consumption of all primates, but the ban was only effective for a short time.

Unsustainable hunting is the single greatest threat to the majority of wildlife in Equatorial Guinea's forests.

Equatorial Guinea's national development plan, *Horizonte 2020*, has led to rapid infrastructure development which also represents a severe threat to the country's wildlife and their habitat. New road network exacerbate commercial bushmeat hunting and trade by increasing access to forests and urban bushmeat markets. Higher income among the urban elite and a lack of suitable alternative protein options and jobs in rural areas is leading to an increase in bushmeat demand. The lack of wildlife law enforcement exacerbates the bushmeat trade.

### Marine Turtle Mortality

The intentional or incidental capture of marine turtles and the raiding of nests for eggs constitute the greatest threats to marine turtles in Equatorial Guinea. Poachers often target nesting females. In urban areas on Bioko Island and on the mainland, turtle meat sells for as much as \$10 per kilogram and a live adult turtle for more than \$500. Logs on beaches are also a major threat; logs originate from logging concessions near beaches and result in nest flooding or disorientation for hatchlings. In more developed areas, garbage, pollution from light, noise and water traffic are additional threats. Nest predation by domestic dogs and other species are also detrimental to the turtles.

### Extractive Industries

Extractive industries – including logging, mining and oil exploration – threaten EG's wildlife directly by destroying or degrading habitat and indirectly by establishing road access to poachers and the bushmeat market. The camps bring new human settlements who have agricultural and protein needs. Oil exploration and resource extraction in EG's waters are also a significant disturbance to marine turtles in EG.

*Since 2006, USFWS has supported conservation in Equatorial Guinea (EG) through 13 grants, totaling nearly \$573,500. These USFWS funds were leveraged with more than \$500,800 matching donations.*

**Mammalian Survey of EG (mainland)**

Between 2010 and 2011, USFWS supported Conservation International, in collaboration with the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and Equatorial Guinea’s National Institute for Forestry Development and Protected Area Management, *Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Forestal y Gestión del Sistema de Áreas Protegidas* (INDEFOR-AP), with a grant of \$170,000, to conduct the first-ever widescale biological survey across Equatorial Guinea’s mainland. Focusing on apes and elephants, the survey built the capacity of national partners and provided comprehensive baseline data on ape and elephant populations and threats. The survey results estimated 884 (437–1,789) elephants and 11,097 (8,719–13,592) chimpanzees and gorillas remaining in Equatorial Guinea’s mainland. The results confirmed strong local and commercial hunting pressure, while roads show a negative impact on elephants and mammalian body mass. Significant signs of hunting were found within protected areas, which illustrated a lack of law enforcement.

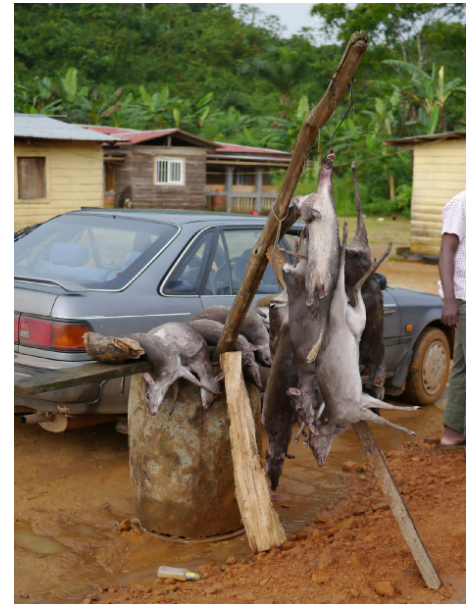
**Bushmeat alternatives project**

Between 2010 and 2012, USFWS supported the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) to launch a bushmeat alternative pilot project in mainland Equatorial Guinea to prevent the hunting, sale, consumption, and possession of great apes and other threatened species. In order to evaluate culturally acceptable and economically feasible alternatives

to bushmeat, ZSL conducted participatory research in communities around protected areas of particular importance to apes. In collaboration with the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE), ZSL conducted value chain analyses to identify market, distribution and supply opportunities for domestic meat and fish production. With support from this project and from Conservation International, the Ministry of Fisheries and Environment successfully confiscated three live primates from a popular expatriate beach restaurant in July 2012. The Ministry then led a tour to raise awareness, distributing leaflets about wildlife laws and publicly burning confiscated primate carcasses.

**Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program (BBPP)**

Bioko Island lies adjacent to Cameroon and Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea. It represents one of the world’s original 25 “Biodiversity Hotspots”. Although the government established two protected areas on Bioko, comprising approximately 40% of the land area, enforcement of wildlife laws in these areas is severely lacking. Bushmeat is the main threat to terrestrial wildlife on Bioko and the demand is high. Since 2011, USFWS has supported the Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program (BBPP), an academic partnership between Drexel University and UNGE, to protect Bioko’s wildlife against threats including the bushmeat trade. BBPP’s work, focusing on endangered primates, amphibians, marine turtles, and forest biodiversity on Bioko, received nearly \$70,000 from USFWS, which was leveraged by \$60,000 in matching funds. With USFWS support, BBPP conducted surveys of the endemic and critically endangered Pennant’s red colobus and two species of critically endangered amphibians,



**Bushmeat sold on the side of the road in mainland Equatorial Guinea.**

Credit: Matt Muir/USFWS

and continued patrols of marine turtle beaches along Bioko’s southern coast.

**Marine Turtle Conservation**

Since 2007, USFWS supports INDEFOR-AP, in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society and BBPP, to protect marine turtles in Equatorial Guinea. Activities include night patrols targeting important marine turtle nesting beaches, protection of nests, environmental education and outreach, economic alternatives, and law enforcement efforts. Increased awareness on the mainland recently resulted in the confiscation and release of several marine turtles by government officials. These releases were broadcast on national television. Since 2007, USFWS awarded \$170,000 to INDEFOR-AP to support this project, which leveraged an additional \$144,000 in matching funds.

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| USFWS Support to Equatorial Guinea, FY2006-FY2013 |             |
|---|-------------|
| Grants Awarded                                    | 13          |
| Amount Awarded                                    | \$573,489   |
| Amount Leveraged                                  | \$500,845   |
| Total Investment                                  | \$1,074,334 |