

CONSUMING NATURE

A PHOTO ESSAY ON AFRICAN RAIN FOREST EXPLOITATION



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CONSUMING NATURE: A PHOTO-ESSAY ON AFRICAN RAIN FOREST EXPLOITATION

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Consuming Nature is a 200-page coffee table book which depicts the devastation of nature in Africa as witnessed by some of the world's most experienced conservation experts. As the senior author and publisher of this ground-breaking volume, I offer this preview of the book and its vital messages to people who are concerned about the future in Africa and worldwide.

In December 2003 the Wasmoeth Wildlife Foundation launched Consuming Nature in Europe by delivering a hard-cover copy to every Member of the European Union Parliament at their year-end meeting in Strasbourg. This year with co-author Dr. Russell Mittermeier, president of Conservation International, we will launch the book in North America, giving it to political and financial leaders all across the continent. It is already in the hands of many conservation leaders in Europe and Africa and a French edition will be published and distributed this spring. But this is only a beginning. Now that the evidence is on the tables of world leaders, the visionaries and change agents of the world must consider options and encourage action.

As Jane Goodall declares in her endorsement on the back of the book: "**Consuming Nature is a testimony to human ignorance and greed, and to awakening humane concern -- a call for compassion and rapid action.**"

The Mystic and Impenetrable African Rain Forests are Being Consumed.



This idyllic river scene is a thing of the past as international exploiters invade the rain forests in search of money and power.



The forest people, the B'aka pygmies, can do nothing but watch the invasion as it destroys their ancient homelands, their society, and their lives.



Trees are cut and stacked for export to Europe and Asia where their wood is sold for enormous profit, leaving behind ecological, economic, and social devastation in Africa.



Gorillas and other endangered species are slaughtered and stacked for transport along logging roads, to be sold in the billion dollar commercial bushmeat trade that is emptying the forests of wildlife faster than the timber companies can remove logs.



Cities and towns across tropical Africa have thriving markets where illegal bushmeat is sold at two to six times the price of chicken or beef. Orphan apes and elephant tusks represent a small but tragic commercial byproduct of the bushmeat trade.



Most infant apes die within a month of their capture. Those that live typically become caged prisoners on starvation diets. None can return to the forests where they were born.



The few orphan apes that find their way to an overcrowded refuge in Africa are held in enclosures that are too small to sustain them, thus they must rely on the handouts of humans the rest of their lives.

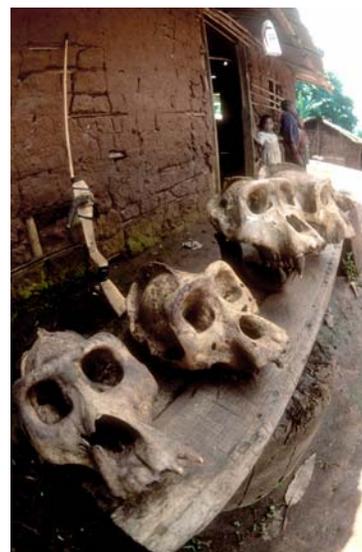
Beyond the destruction of Africa's flora and fauna, its people and its societies are also being devastated by the hegemony of global exploiters.



Once wilderness areas are opened by logging roads they become magnets for government armies and tribal militias seeking whatever riches their guns and power can wrest from the forests and from the people who have lived in harmony with nature for centuries.



But the ill effects spread beyond the natural inhabitants of the rain forests. Medical scientists have confirmed that the commercial invasion of wilderness in Africa and worldwide is tapping the source of virulent new micro-organisms that are bringing disease and death into urban human populations across the continent, and around the planet.



The road to the future in African rain forests is a dead end.



Like the great apes, the poor people of equatorial Africa are being slaughtered, driven from their homes, and deprived of their livelihoods. They are refugees of exploitation, disease, and ethnic conflict, with millions of proud people left reliant on the handouts of outsiders. African civil society is rampant with corruption and chaos. African cultures are unraveling and African community values are vanishing.

Global leaders must decide now to stop treating African forests, wildlife, and people as disposable assets for the rich and powerful of other continents. We must change direction, find the source of our own humanity and benevolence. We must give up the unnecessary and insatiable hungers that drive us to consume all of nature and to control all of life for our private, corporate, and national gain.

If we fail to make these shifts in personal and international strategy, the result will be much more than the tragic breakdown of life in Africa -- the continent of our human origins. If we continue on our current path, consuming nature as if we own all life on this planet, then we shall cause the collapse of crucial life-giving functions of earth's biosphere, and initiate the implosion of human civilization and the downfall of our human destiny.

We dare not leave this crisis for future generations. We must redress our errors now.

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**Websites - <http://bushmeat.net>
<http://consumingnature.org>**

