

Project Update: September 2018

We have completed initial surveys of our bat-bushmeat project for conservation planning and disease surveillance in southern Ghana to: (1) monitor bat meat hunting and trade, (2) identify locations at risk of potential zoonoses outbreak, and (3) employ a one health approach to educate and draft a Bat Bushmeat Strategic Action Plan to protect bats and humans. Three regions (Kumasi, Techiman and Nkawkaw) in six communities (Tanoboase, Boayem, Tanokrom, Asikam, Ntomem and Kotoso) were surveyed.

Initial results suggest that people were still actively hunting and eating fruit bats in southern Ghana despite the ebola crisis, which was partly associated with fruit bats in West Africa. Chronic poverty and delicacy for bat meat could be some of the reasons driving the bat bushmeat activities in Ghana (see Appendix). We also uncovered that, some vendors do not only buy from the south but go as far north of Ghana to purchase bat meat. This can either be a sign of increased demand for bat meat, or declining bat populations in southern Ghana.



Left: Smoked bat meat sold in Techiman market. Right: Team member interacting with bat-bushmeat actor at Nkawkaw.

Another potential threat to bats is their alleged destruction of cashew farms. Cashew nut is an important cash crop in Ghana. Some colonies of fruit bats use cashew farms as feeding fields in Ghana. The widely held belief that bats destroy this crop can lead to the massive persecution of bat populations by local farmers in the future.

In addition to the recce, we have started an online education program dubbed Bat Lives Matter in Ghana; to promote knowledge of bats and their zoonoses, and inspire interest in bat conservation. So far, our online blogs have reached about 2000 people on Facebook, LinkedIn and WhatsApp.



Josmy Awuah is with David Kwarteng and 19 others.

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Hello lovely people, my name is Jennifer. I am an environmental sustainability advocate with expertise in public health promotion and wildlife conservation. I am currently leading a Rufford Foundation sponsored project in Ghana (https://www.rufford.org/projects/jennifer_owusua_awuah). As part of this project, we have started an online education program dubbed BAT LIVES MATTER IN GHANA; this is to inspire interest in bat conservation and reduce the consumption of batmeat in Gh... See More

BAT LIVES MATTER IN GHANA

About 150,000 bats are eaten annually in Southern Ghana

- These numbers suggest an increase in populations of destructive insects and reduction of pollination services for crop production.
- Batmeat consumption is also a main breakout of zoonotic viral diseases among humans.

**Please join us and
Say *No to Batmeat* to protect Bats
and Public health**

You can read more about this project @: https://www.rufford.org/projects/jennifer_owusua_awuah

This project is sponsored by The Rufford Foundation



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Appendix

Some important reasons for engaging in bat-bushmeat activities (statements were translated as recorded in the native Twi language).

1. "It's not only because of meat that we hunt, it's because of poverty. Who in his right state of mind will go out at night to search for bats, when all bad and wild animals walk at night? The government is to blame. They are not helping us because they are there only for their stomach. And so, we will also kill the bats to eat and to get money. The great Tano gave us the bats, so we will kill, eat and sell. So long as the great Tano is here, they will be there. If I kill and sell, and I get some Gh¢50, I'm okay for some time. Like I said, it is because of poverty. If we had better

things to do, the bats will be begging us to kill but we won't mind them. The bats are also not good. They spoil our cashew. So if we eat them, then it's in the right direction."

Narrated by Show Show at Tanoboase

NB: great Tano: Tano is a river in the vicinity, which is regarded as a god. So great Tano is the great god of river Tano.

2. "If you see the bats on a tree, you might think they are leaves. I normally gather them on my farm. Sometimes when the hunters shoot them, they don't die on the spot and fall back as they attempt to fly. If you're lucky, you can get some of the dead bats on your farm. Their soup is really nice. Because the whole meat is used for food, it is very nice". Narrated by Nanayere at Asikam.