

Wildlife Crop Raids: Victims Deserve Support

Nana Owusu-Ansah

Wildlife Division, The Forestry Commission of Ghana, Kumasi, Ghana

Abstract: One of the challenges of wildlife-human conflict that both wildlife managers and local people particularly those who stay near protected areas have to deal with is wildlife crop raids. The effect of crop raids affect farmers negatively on their food security and also it is a challenge to conservation managers in protecting species. The management of crop raids and non-payment of compensation to farmers must be considered from libertarian perspectives of self-ownership and property rights because farmers suffer food insecurity, do not benefit directly from wildlife management and they have no legal rights to kill animals that raid their crops. Crop raid is a human rights issue of food security and the non-payment of compensation to victims affects their private property rights. Conservationists and farmers can work together to prevent crop raids which will result in species conservation and improve farmer's food security.

Key words: Compensation, conservation, crop raids, human rights, property rights, prevent

INTRODUCTION

Concerns for natural resources degradation have resulted in the creation of policies to curtail the increasing biodiversity loss. One such policy creation is wildlife management in both protected and outside protected areas. Brockinton and Igoe reported that between 1890 and 1990 protected areas coverage globally increased from below 500,000-3000,000 km². In some instances communities are displaced for protected areas to be established (Schmidt-Soltau, 2003; Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington, 2007). People who are displaced do not derive any substantial benefit from wildlife management, hence, do not support conservation efforts. The result of this trend of enforcing conservation laws which alienates local people from their resources has been the existence of antagonistic relationship between protected area authorities and local people. However, a new trend of wildlife management is emerging where indigenous people interests are being considered as conservationists collaborate with local people to manage biodiversity (Larsen, 2006).

Protected area's benefits to the larger society cannot be over emphasized. Conservation measures which include setting up of protected areas are to regulate the utilization of wildlife resources, it also aims at conserving rare and endangered species. Protected area management policies also result in the enhancement of provision of ecosystem services such as flood control and carbon sequestration leading to a reduction in global warming. However, the creation of such protected areas and setting up of regulatory mechanism to check wildlife utilization by the local communities in many instances has resulted in

enmity between the regulatory authorities and the indigenous people. The continuous stance of the wildlife conservationists against poaching attest to a serious gap that exists between biodiversity conservational law enforcement and the interest of the public, especially, those communities which fringe protected areas.

With regards to limited budgetary allocation for conservation activities, especially in developing countries, confrontational law enforcement may be socially, economically and politically unsustainable particularly outside wildlife protected areas. Yet, globally, law enforcement remains a core activity of managing wildlife in protected areas to avert the generally accepted notion that biodiversity degradation (at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels) is on the increase due to negative human activities (Jachmann, 2008; Pleydell, 2005). In practice, it is not possible to implement this command and control approach of conserving biodiversity everywhere, especially in off reserve areas (Asibey and Child, 1995) due to sometimes unprofessional attitudes of regulators and corruption.

Notwithstanding the limitations in the implementation of the law, Asibey and Child (1990) remarked that legislation and its enforcement is a major constraint in utilizing wildlife as food in subsistence economies. Asibey and Child (1990) explained that the laws enacted in most sub-Saharan African countries are mimics of what pertains in the developed world or are colonial relics. Thus, concepts such as game animals, hunting seasons, bag limits, trophies, hunting reserves and royal game have been freely adopted. These adopted laws do not take into consideration the biological and ecological viability of the animals under tropical

conditions and more importantly the needs of the local people during implementation. The enforcement of these conservation laws does not consider individual liberties, human rights, especially, those related to farmers food security that are curtailed under centralized government regulation of biodiversity. I argued from libertarian stances on individual human rights concerning wildlife crop raiding that victims needs to be supported. The study contains examples from elsewhere in Africa but the general perspective refers to the Ghanaian farmer situation.

LIBERTARIAN PROPERTY RIGHTS AND CROP RAIDS

Libertarian principles of full self-ownership of the individuals using their basic human rights to acquire property from external source supports a farmer acquiring farm produce through cultivation. Vallentyne (2010) in discussing property rights of natural resources under libertarian theory presented it as: the right to own by been the first to sight it or reform it with your effort or simply been the first to claim it. Libertarians principles of self-ownership includes the right to own a property, enforce right of usage, immunities against non-consensual loss, right to compensation and right to transfer property. The management of wildlife by a central authority that results in farmers suffering crop raids calls for the victims to be paid compensation based on the libertarian argument. The argument is that, the farmer loses property acquired by his effort to wildlife without his consent when crops are raided. However, these arguments for a farmer to be compensated, property rights to be protected because of self-ownership conflicts with the current centrally managed wildlife policies. In Ghana and in most countries in Africa wildlife conservation laws prevent farmers from hunting wildlife even if they sight it first or the animal lives in their farms based on the objections raised against full self-ownership principles.

Objections to self-ownership principles according to Vallentyne (2010) counteract claims of farmers for compensation from crop raiding and rather support governmental control. The first is that, self-ownership simply promotes the idea that an individual has no obligation to any other person, the second objection is an individual in an extreme need cannot use natural resources to provide that need without an agent consent and the third objection is the right to transfer the use of property to another person can result in an enslavement of the recipient. The fourth is that, the full application of full self-ownership will lead to inefficiencies

in society. The above objections support acquisition of protected areas by governments to manage natural resources for the benefits of all members of society and not only those who stay near the resources. There is a third stance of the libertarian argument on natural resources utilization that can be used to support the two preceding arguments.

The joint ownership and leftist libertarian argument for utilization and appropriation of natural resources could settle these two opposing stances of centrally managing wildlife and the demands for compensation by farmers who suffer crop raids. These libertarians advocate two levels of natural resources usage and appropriation. The first contends that, natural resources cannot be used by an individual without the consent of others (Vallentyne, 2010) and the second contention believes that, agents can use their fair share (Slote, 2010) without seeking any approval. However, in both instances an individual cannot appropriate any natural resources without the consent of others. The need for acquisition for permits before farmers (Asibey and Child, 1990) can kill any wildlife is appropriate under both arguments.

The explanation is that, permits acquisition is a form of requesting for consent of others and through the permit, the regulator can determine the fair share to be taken. But to think of it the principles of social equality seek to promote fairness and libertarian is mthrives on a key demand on governments to ensure equality including protecting property rights of citizens. In this case, it is the biodiversity conservationist's and other interests groups responsibility to ensure the farmer who bears the brunt of wildlife (belonging to all the citizens of the country) crop raids be provided with social safety net to offset his food insecurity. Not doing this breaches the principles of fairness and justice.

CROP RAID VICTIMS SUFFER IN JUSTICE

One of the challenges of wildlife-human conflict that both wildlife managers and local people particularly those who stay near protected areas have to deal with is crop raids. The British Broadcasting Corporation (2013, July) reported the Ugandan Government has used pesticide to kill almost 2,000,000 Quelea bird species to protect cereal crops (Anonymous, 2013). The enormity of crop raids at some levels affects farmers negatively on their food security. It is a challenge to conservationists to find antidote to the problem. The offices of the protected areas in Ghana, for example, receive complaints from farmers every planting season of crop raid by animals. Wildlife-human conflict has been reported in literature (Barnes *et al.*, 2005; Hill, 2000; Monney *et al.*, 2010),

especially, on the issue of crop raids by elephants and primates and its threat to farmer's food security. However, the injustice of nonpayment of compensation to farmers who suffer crop raid has not received much attention.

Wildlife crop raids impact negatively on both cash crops and food staples. Monney *et al.* (2010) reported that in a single planting season elephant's crop raid in the Kakum conservation area in Ghana totaled 2.3 ha of farmlands belonging to 30 farmers in seven communities. Considering the average number of people in households, impact of these crop raids by wildlife on farmer's food security and income cannot be underestimated. For example, Hill (2000) mentioned farmers do not only suffer crop lost but there are other demands such as increasing labor cost to protect farms and replanting of farms badly damaged. Though, there are some management mechanisms put in place to prevent and to reduce the impact of animal crop deprivations, it had not been effective or coordinated well (Monney *et al.*, 2010).

Hill (2000) reported of a farmer reaction in Uganda to wildlife crop raids by intimating why Baboons should eat while he and the family starve. This call is an indignation of a desperate farmer who felt unjustly been denied the right to enjoy from his labor not only because the primate has taken away his food but the law prevents him from killing the animals in retaliation. Monney *et al.* (2010) stated that in the past farmers compensated for their loss of crops to wildlife by killing and utilizing the animals as food. This is not possible without a permit under the current regimes of centrally managed wildlife. Farmers, therefore, suffer injustice for not been compensated for crop losses to wildlife. This study wants to highlight this conservation challenge which affects the farmer and the conservationists.

Wildlife managers have dodged the payment of compensation for crop raids because of the fear of unsustainable nature of such schemes with the fear of possible large number of claims by farmers who suffer crop raids. It is only reported elsewhere in Ghana in two communities (Boaben and Fiama) which do not demand for compensation when they suffer crop raids. According to Wiafe and Arku (2012) due to respect for tradition (taboos associated with two primate species that occur in both communities), the local people do not consider crop raids by these primates as offensive even though crop losses are substantial. The above notwithstanding, the management of wildlife crop raids and nonpayment of compensation to farmers must be considered differently for these reasons: farmers suffer food insecurity do not have direct income/kind benefits from wildlife conservation and farmers have no legal rights to kill animals that raid their crops without taking permit.

CROP RAIDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The nonpayment of compensation by the biodiversity conservationists to victims of wildlife crop raids is not only an injustice but also a human right issue of food security. The United Nations (UN) Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 Articles 23 Sub-Articles 3 states workers dignity and those of their families must be maintained through proper remuneration. It goes on to state it is not out of place to supplement workers income to ensure their continuous existence. Farmers who suffer crop deprivation without compensation cannot be said to have received a fair wage for their work let alone supplementation. Again the UN Declaration on Universal Human Rights Article 25 Sub-Article 1 affirms everyone's standard of living be improved upon through provision of food, clothing, housing and social security. Crop raids by wildlife therefore compromises victim's standard of living through the food and social insecurity.

Monney *et al.* (2010) reported in Ghana elephant crop raiding is becoming more sophisticated since, now the animals eat and sometimes destroy all types of crops which in the past was not part of their diet. The increase in crop raiding could be due to increasing populations of both animals and humans with dwindling habitats for animals and increasing farmlands for humans. In this instance, the cost of producing food increases as farmers spend more time and money on equipment to protect their farms from crop raids. The sad thing is that, farmers report crop raids to the Wildlife Regulator's Offices in Ghana but do not receive any material support except placating words (Anonymous, 2009). It is only in situations where the problem escalates that wildlife guards move in to control raiding animals. For example in Ghana, there is a National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) that support victims of natural disasters. Crop raids by wildlife such as elephants and primates is not categorized under natural disaster, however when large tracts of farms are attacked by insects such as locust, it is considered a natural disaster and victims are supported. This is a conservation challenge (Anonymous, 1948).

CROP RAIDS AND CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

The major issues confronting the Wildlife Regulatory Agencies in the management of crop raids by animals is lack of capacity to manage it and funds to compensate victims. Monney *et al.* (2010) mentioned three methods are currently applied to ward off elephant crop raids. These are pepper fencing on the boundaries of farms, guarding farms at night and making loud noise. There had not been proper monitoring of these methods to ascertain

their effectiveness. Hill (2000) reported crop raids prevention methods effectiveness wanes over time as animals get accustomed to them. The ineffectiveness of these methods and nonpayment of compensation results in illegal killing of animals in retaliation (Oppong *et al.*, 2008).

The conservation agencies have to address wildlife crop raiding issue to avoid the following consequences. Ecotourism is a key activity for generating income for the conservation agencies. Incidentally, crop raids are done by keystone species such as the elephants and primates (Monney *et al.*, 2010) and these species are key to attracting tourists. If crop raid victims retaliate to such animals, species richness in abundance, diversity and distribution will decrease thereby affecting tourism negatively. Again, if animals such as elephants and other species of international importance are killed by victims of crop raids wantonly, it will affect a nation's biodiversity conservation image negatively.

CROP RAID VICTIMS CAN BE SUPPORTED

The arguments for equality, property rights, human rights and justice make it abundantly clear that the nonpayment of compensation to crop raid victims should be considered again. Also there, is a need to develop better monitoring systems to ensure biodiversity conservation that is harmonious with other land uses such as farming. This becomes important since, wildlife crop raid victims do not have direct income/kind benefits from wildlife conservation. Wildlife regulatory agencies should put in mechanism that will scientifically collect crop raids data, especially on periods of raids and the types of crops susceptible. It will ensure the organization's preparedness to counteract crop raids by wildlife. There is a need to put in place an animal control unit in each protected area that will respond to crop raid in time. Wildlife regulatory agencies should liaise with their counterparts in Food and Agriculture Agencies to advise farmers on crop varieties that are less susceptible to raids while at the same time researching to come out with methods that can prevent or minimize the negative effect of crop raid.

The requirements to execute these recommendations are provision of the needed logistics to ensure better delivery of the services mentioned before. For example, the rapid response unit if set up needs to have vehicle that will make them mobile to respond to crop raids timely. The already existing conservation education unit in protected areas can be strengthened to disseminate information to farmers on practices that will prevent or minimize crop raids. Wildlife management has shifted from

a command and control approach of conservation to a more friendly community collaborative approach over the years (Larsen, 2006) and therefore the trajectory of collaboration be improve upto promote protected area fringe community relationship. Funding constraints to the implementation of these recommendations should not be too expensive for wildlife regulatory agencies considering the cost of inaction to conservation.

CONCLUSION

It is expected that, if the recommendations are carried out, wildlife conservation generally in the developing countries will improve with animal numbers increasing through possible reduction in retaliatory poaching. Increasing animal numbers will lead to benefits not only to the organization but also to farmers and local residents of protected areas. First, there will be more animals available for culling for farmers/hunters to generate income from sale of bushmeat and improve food security from direct consumption of bushmeat. Wildlife regulatory agencies will also generate funds from the sale of permits to farmers/hunters. An increase in animal numbers will lead to increase in tourism which can generate employment with tourism ancillary services. The ultimate beneficiary for an effective collaboration will be a reduction in operational expenditure of Wildlife Regulatory Agencies as poaching decreases and farmer's food security improves, less anti-poaching patrols would be required. What is the benefit to society if both the conservationist and the farmer lose out?

REFERENCES

- Anonymous, 1948. Universal declaration of human rights. United Nations, New York, USA.
- Anonymous, 2009. Field operations manual. Forestry Commission of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.
- Anonymous, 2013. World news. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), London, England, UK.
- Asibey, E.O. and G.S. Child, 1990. Wildlife management for rural development in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Unasylyva*, 41: 3-10.
- Barnes, F.W., E.M. Hema, A. Nandjui, M. Manford, U.F. Dubiure, E.K. A. Danquah and Y. Boafo, 2005. Risk of crop raiding by elephants around the Kakum conservation area, Ghana. *Pachyderm*, 39: 19-25.
- Hill, C. M., 2000. Conflict of interest between people and baboons: Crop raiding in Uganda. *Int. J. Primatol.*, 21: 299-315.
- Jachmann, H., 2008. Monitoring law-enforcement performance in nine protected areas in Ghana. *Biol. Conserv.*, 141: 89-99.

- Larsen, P.B., 2006. Reconciling indigenous peoples and protected areas: Rights, governance and equitable cost and benefit sharing (Discussion Paper). International Union for Conservation of Nature, Gland, Switzerland.
- Monney, K.A., K.B. Dakwa and E.D. Wiafe, 2010. Assessment of crop raiding situation by elephants (*Loxodonta africana cyclotis*) in farms around Kakum conservation area, Ghana. *Int. J. Biodiversity Conservation*, 2: 243-249.
- Oppong, S.K., E. Danquah and M.K. Sam, 2008. An update on crop-raiding by elephants at bia conservation area, Ghana from 2004 to 2006. *Pachyderm*, 44: 59-64.
- Pleydell, G., 2005. Wildlife in Ghana: The work of the Wildlife Division. Forestry Commission of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.
- Schmidt-Soltau, K. and D. Brockington, 2007. Protected areas and resettlement: What scope for voluntary relocation?. *World Dev.*, 35: 2182-2202.
- Schmidt-Soltau, K., 2003. Conservation-related resettlement in Central Africa: Environmental and social risks. *Dev. Change*, 34: 525-551.
- Slote, M., 2010. *Justice as a Virtue*. CSLI Publications, California, USA.,.
- Vallentyne, P., 2010. *Libertarianism*. CSLI Publications, California, USA.,.
- Wiafe, E.D. and F.S. Arku, 2012. Victim's perspectives of Lowe's Monkey's (*Cercopithecus campbelli lowei*) crop raiding events in Ghana: A case of Buabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary. *J. Biodivers. Environ. Sci.*, 2: 1-8.