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AFRICAN CONSERVANCY PARTNERS WITH BUSHMEAT CRISIS TASK FORCE AND ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO FOR EARTH DAY EXHIBIT

—Conservation organizations team to educate San Diegans about leading threat to global biodiversity—

Vista, Calif., April 27, 2003— The African Conservancy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the last remaining African wilderness, today announced it will collaborate with the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force (BCTF) and Zoological Society of San Diego to increase awareness about bushmeat hunting — the unsustainable, illegal, commercial hunting for the meat of wild animals — deemed the most significant, immediate threat to wildlife in Africa. An educational exhibit illustrating the bushmeat crisis will be on display at the African Conservancy's booth #1036-1037 (in front of the Museum of Art) during Earth Fair 2003 on April 27 in San Diego's Balboa Park.

The devastation caused by the demand for bushmeat is staggering, with more than one million metric tons of wildlife killed each year in Central Africa — the equivalent of more than four million heads of cattle. Causes of the crisis include lack of governmental capacity to enforce laws, opening of roads into tropical forest, overpopulation and lack of economic and protein alternatives to bushmeat.

“The last hundred years have witnessed a terrifying decline in African wildlife,” said Corinne Waldenmayer, president of the African Conservancy. “Whether directly, as a result of hunting and poaching, or indirectly, as a consequence of overpopulation, man is architecting the destruction of ecosystems all over the planet. The African Conservancy's goal is to protect those precious remaining resources for the benefit of future generations.”

From its base of operations in Lusaka, Zambia, the African Conservancy has begun implementing wildlife education and anti-poaching programs in an effort to combat bushmeat hunting. In Zambia alone, 37 species of animals and plants are endangered, ranging from the black rhino, wild dog and cheetah to the wattle crane, shoebill and slender snouted crocodile.

In the Munda Wanga Environmental Park, the African Conservancy sponsors a bushmeat exhibit, along with sustainable use action planning workshops to educate African adults and children about the need for conservation.

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The organization also supports the region's wildlife officers by providing transport, rations and fuel assistance to the Zambia Wildlife Authority. When not on patrol duty, the wildlife officers escort tourists and conduct roadblocks and searches to confiscate black market game meat and illegal firearms.

The not-for-profit Zoological Society of San Diego, a local member of the BCTF, has field research programs in Africa. One of these studies has been expanded to include research that seeks to better understand the ramifications of bushmeat hunting on African wildlife populations. "The Zoological Society is very concerned with the effect of bushmeat hunting on many species, particularly critically endangered primate species," said Alan Dixson, Director of Conservation and Science for the Zoological Society. "For example, we have been working to survey existing populations of a critically endangered baboon species, the drill. This species has been slaughtered in large numbers by bushmeat hunters, and we are concerned that they will be driven to extinction by this activity."

The bushmeat crisis is not limited to Africa; it has been recognized as a global problem. The Monterey Bay Aquarium, for example, distributes a Seafood Watch guide that outlines which seafood to buy or avoid, enabling consumers to make environmentally sound purchases at the market.

"Collaboration between organizations and individuals is imperative to prevent this crisis from becoming a widespread wildlife and human tragedy," said Heather Eves, director of the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force. "Efforts to raise awareness, like the one the African Conservancy is sponsoring at Earth Fair, are essential to build public support for identifying and implementing solutions to the crisis in Africa and around the world."

About the African Conservancy:

The African Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the last remaining African wilderness. This is a mission of extreme urgency because Africa's bio-diversity is being destroyed faster than nature can replace it. The African Conservancy's portfolio of programs includes wildlife, environmental, and cultural education; cultural preservation and empowerment; and wildlife protection and rehabilitation. All programs are conceived, designed, and implemented in Africa with local staff, government and community partners, and all programs contribute to economic development and promote self-sufficiency. The African Conservancy is headquartered in Vista, Calif. and maintains a base of operations in Lusaka, Zambia. More information is available at www.africanconservancy.org.

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**About the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force (BCTF):**

The BCTF, founded in 1999, is a consortium of conservation organizations and scientists dedicated to the conservation of wildlife populations threatened by commercial hunting of wildlife for sale as meat. Based at the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, the BCTF operates under the direction of an elected Steering Committee and is funded by Supporting and Contributing Members. Our primary goals are to: a) work with the general members of the BCTF to focus attention on the bushmeat crisis in Africa; b) establish an information database and mechanisms for information sharing regarding the bushmeat issue; c) facilitate engagement of African partners and stakeholders in addressing the bushmeat issue; and d) promote collaborative decision-making, fund-raising and actions among the members and associates of the BCTF. More information is available at www.bushmeat.org.

About the Zoological Society of San Diego:

The not-for-profit Zoological Society of San Diego, dedicated to the conservation of endangered species and their habitats, engages in conservation and research work around the globe. The Zoological Society manages the 100-acre San Diego Zoo, the 1,800-acre San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park (more than half of which has been set aside as protected native species habitat) and the Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species (CRES), and is working to establish field stations in five key ecological areas worldwide.

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