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Status of African manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis* Link, 1795) along Cameroon coastline: Uncertain future

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Recent surveys have demonstrated that along the Cameroon coastline, the African manatee is common in many rivers and streams; however this vulnerable species is facing too many threats as hunting, by-catches and habitat degradation despite the legal protection. Literature reviews from various libraries of NGO, Research Institutes and Universities reveal this fact. The bush meat trade is the main threat, because the manatee is common in local market which is hunted by local fishermen. According to the earlier reports, 34 individuals were caught yearly in Douala-Edea Wildlife Reserve. According to the previous work reports, around 292 individuals are caught incidentally per year in gillnet along Cameroon Coastline, 18 individuals are caught in three weeks in Yassoukou hamlet by one hunter and actually 5 to 6 individuals are caught monthly during raining season around Mouanko in Douala-Edea Wildlife Reserve. The manatee can be viewed as pests in some agricultural and fishing areas. They consume crops as coco-yams in the field and eat small fishes caught in gillnet. This can result in animals being killed. The coastal wetlands have already been heavily damaged and are further severely threatened. Deforestation of mangroves habitats by fisheries for firewood and furniture construction results in the extermination of mangroves stands. Mangrove clearance and erosion due to the forest clearance upstream are resulting in increased sedimentation that silts up lagoons and estuaries. The exploration of oil by seismic method, the pollution from various neighbor towns and agro-industry farms are also one of the reasons to increase sedimentation. However, there is no system for monitoring and quantifying these threats and how they affect populations of these species in Cameroon. Having very limited information about their current distribution and abundance, it becomes difficult to understand population dynamics, local status and trends.

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