

WILDLIFE IN ZIMBABWE

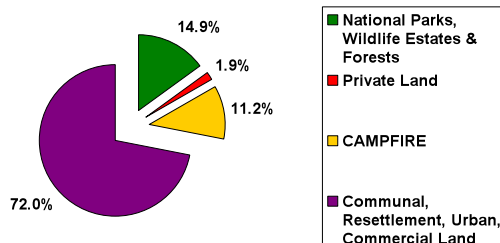
Privilege of a few, well or mismanaged, or a widely indigenised asset?

Zimbabwe had a proud record of excellence in Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation. That no longer applies to the majority of land for Wildlife today. Some 28% of Zimbabwe's landmass is reserved for Wildlife; in itself an incredible statement how much importance the Government of Zimbabwe has given and continues to give to this National Asset. But an asset implies that it provides returns for those who own it, in this case the Zimbabwean people. If the asset of Wildlife is well managed, then, the result is, this will maximise the return for the population in income and wealth creation, in job provisions and enhancing the reputation of the country, thus driving Tourism and related activities. Yet, a varied reply will have to answer the headline question.

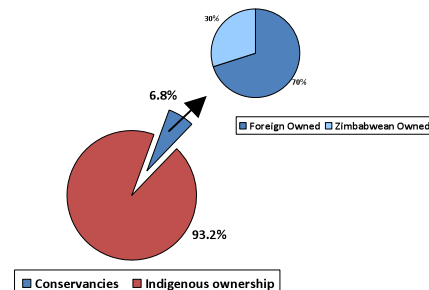
Is Wildlife indigenised, who owns the resource? As can be seen from the pie charts below, which are based on Government information, indigenous players – the Government, Rural and District Councils, Campfire etc control 26.1% of the landmass of Zimbabwe and allow wildlife to roam on it. That translates to a staggering 93.2% of this industry in indigenous hands. Only 6.8% of the entire Wildlife landmass in Zimbabwe is in (partly) private hands of which two thirds is held by foreign investors who are overwhelmingly passionate about conservation.

Private Wildlife Landholding

in relation to the total land mass
National Environmental Policy, September 2003



Ownership of Wildlife Areas



National Parks control 26.1 % and Conservancies are 1.9 % of Zimbabwe.

Hence, the Wildlife Industry is by far the most extensively indigenised industry within Zimbabwe. By conclusion, the huge responsibility of maintaining and conserving Wildlife is not a 'privilege' of a few but rests in the hands of many.

Quality and Success of Wildlife Management: National Parks by admission of one of its former Director Generals generates about 95% of its income from auctioning hunting concessions under an often contentious tender system. National Parks should generate their income from Tourism of any kind rather than hunting but that is hardly possible today. Due to the lack of management or correct allocation of resources many animal species have suffered. National Parks are said to have some 50,000 Elephants too many, a specie which in over

abundance destroys the habitat for many other species. Hence, wildlife management in National Parks leaves plenty to be desired. In addition, camps and roads are often in poor condition, keeping tourists away. And Zimbabweans must understand: there is plenty of excellent competition in our neighbouring countries. Hence, the need for visitors to come to Zimbabwe only exists if we make ourselves attractive to them.

But the current Director General of National Parks has an impossible task:

- Parks have little income and thus no funds to actively do what they should be doing: game counting, assessing the habitats and active game management, all of which is costly.
- Vehicles, computers, camps, roads, fences, water supply, etc. are in dire need of replacement or repair.
- Parks Investigative Unit employs good people but a few 'bad apples' have rendered the unit untrustworthy to the rest of the industry. Therefore, active or proactive anti-poaching activities are hampered severely as evidenced by the very poor results of combating Rhino poaching.



Affective protection of species and...the same Rhino when anti-poaching is not treated as a National priority.

- Offers by European countries to assist in rebuilding National Parks have been made but unless Government engages on these offers, no help will be forthcoming. Unfortunately, the Government has not engaged.

Question: what happened to Zimbabwe's Wildlife, the attractive National Parks, why were these asset permitted to deteriorate to their current sorry state?

Private Wildlife Management: By contrast the country is fortunate to host a private Wildlife Industry better known as **Conservancies**. As stated above, the private industry represents less than 7% of all Wildlife land in the country. The majority of these 6.8% is owned by foreign investors, who came to the country at the invitation of Government. The conservancies are a model of local and foreign investors coming together with the passion for environmental development, embracing local communities directly and through Trusts, by providing employment and job training from the lowest educated upwards and with the ability to earn foreign currency income.

Whether private or investor owned or controlled by Government or Councils, the Wildlife in question makes up the total of Zimbabwe's Wildlife Herd and collectively is the National Wildlife Asset. That is a fact, unless we expect Foreign Investors to carry their animals back to their home country, as impossible as that may seem.

Zimbabwe used to be second to no one, not even South Africa, in the field of Wildlife management. That is different today. As most of the assets and animal herds in National Parks have deteriorated, it is today the almost miniscule private sector, which guarantees the quality of Wildlife Conservation in areas, which – through their surplus of animals - now represent the breeding nucleus of Wildlife in the country.

Politically forced “indigenisation”: Success breeds contempt and envy. Under the disguise of “Indigenisation” a group of politically allied forces in Masvingo Province (list attached) have tried massively to either force partnerships onto the private conservancies or threatened to destroy them. Laws of Zimbabwe, International Law of Cross Border Investment, Bilateral Investment Protection Treaties between Zimbabwe and other countries are ignored. Contrary to the country’s policy, a former Governor relocated the poorest in the Province to these Wildlife areas, thus destroying the resident wildlife, and the job-creation it could offer by rendering the livelihood of these people unsustainable.

Wildlife is the only legal and physically possible form of land use in most of the areas in question. The land in question is unfit for agriculture or cattle ranching. It is either Wildlife or nothing. Relocating humans into these region five areas is cruel and irresponsible. Wildlife left to flourish will represent one of the three largest employment sectors in Masvingo Province.

CITES and Zimbabwe’s Global Reputation: Zimbabwe’s reputation in the world is tarnished. Whether we agree with the reasons or not, the fact remains. This reflects on tourism figures and visitors to the country at large. The effect on the private Wildlife Industry has been dramatic and most owners / operators have struggled to contain their losses over the past several years. The private Wildlife Industry is known for high capital investments and slow as well as low returns. Anyone without the passion for Wildlife is unlikely to put his or her capital into this business. The Director General of National Parks understands and agrees with these facts.

Early in 2010, CITES (*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species*) a UN body was close to condemning Zimbabwe for its poor protection of fauna and flora. The private Wildlife Industry was instrumental in averting a ban by CITES, an action which would have devastating effects on the entire Tourism and Hunting industry. However, the country’s reputation with CITES will remain patchy unless a dramatic improvement in the protection of Wildlife is recorded shortly.

SOLUTION: In view of these severe challenges, National Parks and the private Wildlife Sector have agreed to formulate an amended Wildlife-based Investment and Indigenisation Policy. Discussions and consultations are ongoing and a National Workshop will be held on November 15 and 16 with participation from a host of Ministries, their Ministers and Permanent Secretaries, Ambassadors of Countries who’s investors are involved in Wildlife, experts and academia.

The outcome should be a policy document fit to be discussed and approved by Cabinet to govern the national, rural and individual use of Wildlife in Zimbabwe. As a result 10% of Zimbabwe’s GDP could again be generated on a sound

sustainable basis, with international competitiveness being restored in due course.

Recent comments in The Herald made certain allegations and claims as to Conservancies; these are dealt with below:

- **“...problem lies with unrepentant rogue elements that resist change from a skewed colonial ownership structure...”**: Some 95% of all land within private Conservancies changed hands after Independence, holds Government’s Certificates of no Present Interest, mostly have Zimbabwe Investment Centre or ZIC/ZIA approvals, and foreign ownership, some 70%, is governed and protected by Bilateral Investment Protection Treaties as well as International Law as it applies to Cross Border Investments. Hence, Conservancies today were formed with express approval of the Government after Independence and investors were actively invited and encouraged by Government. Colonial ownership? Hardly so, unless the Governments after Independence are considered to be of Colonial nature...
- **“...recently enacted law of Indigenisation, which requires that indigenous people take up 51 percent stake in any business venture, becomes handy.”**: The law is not prescriptive and certain indigenization criteria will be negotiated suitable to each Industry. (1) The Wildlife Industry is in indigenous hands by over 93% (!) and counts as fully indigenized as confirmed by many Members of Cabinet. (2) If a further indigenization is agreed willingly by parties, due value recognizing capital invested, interest and good will must change hands; the law is explicit in this regard.
- **“... indigenous people are denied access to Wildlife investments or participation...”**: A maliciously wrong statement. Indigenous or other investors had the same opportunities and still do. There is not currently and has never been any discrimination against anyone since inception of the Conservancies. Government would never have allowed the formation of the latter otherwise. Several black indigenous investors participate in Conservancies as do Government bodies such as ARDA and Bikita RDC as well as other councils.
- **“...as rash issuance of leases to those that cannot deploy usefulness in the sector can only spell doom for the program.”**: It appears that leases of a bogus nature have been issued to specific individuals of a political leaning. These “leases” cover land in control or possession of investors and landholders who are oblivious to these actions. At a recent meeting of Permanent Secretaries and Principal Directors these “leases” were considered illegal, ill advised and the issuing authority acting without authority.
- **“...community-based conservation projects . . . suggest that**

communities are as good guardians of their environment ...”:

Correct and well stated. Conservancies have active relationships with their neighbouring communities direct or through jointly administered Trusts. Political interference has made working in this fashion often impossible, as those who feel to be in power would take away the benefits from those who should be the recipients. The structures are in place, the willingness is there, the foreign investors serving as catalysts for NGO's and donor Nations getting involved are active. Good and constructive neighbourhood is good for all.