

# Private Property Rights to Wildlife: The Southern African Experiment<sup>\*</sup>

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## *Abstract*

In most nations around the world wildlife are owned and managed by the State. However, in the past 30 years Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa have altered their legal regimes to give full control over the use of wildlife to the private owners of the land on which the wildlife are located. Following the privatization of wildlife management in southern African nations, wildlife tourism on private lands has boomed. In Zimbabwe, a majority of many desirable species - including 94 percent of eland, 64 percent of kudu, 63 percent of giraffe, 56 percent of cheetah, and 53 percent of both sable and impala -- are found on commercial ranch properties. In Namibia, wildlife populations on private lands have risen by 80 percent since the creation in 1967 of a regime of private wildlife ownership. Privatization of control over use of wildlife has had more success in promoting biodiversity in the southern African region than any other policy measure. Other parts of the world may be able to benefit from the lessons learned from the successes of southern African nations in privatization and commercialization of wildlife. Based on the southern African experience, many wildlife managers should reconsider whether positive incentives might not be more effective in the future in promoting wildlife populations than the past club of state commands and controls.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In most nations around the world wildlife are owned by the State. In the United States, despite its long history of a free market economy, state game departments have strictly regulated wildlife on public and private land alike. In many countries including the US, land owners cannot benefit from the commercialization of wildlife except through controlling access to their land. Traditionally, it has been argued that the fugitive character of wildlife makes it impossible to manage wildlife under normal property right arrangements. However, this has often resulted in static wildlife populations and in many countries declining populations. Past successes in southern African nations with commercialization of wildlife resources suggests that there may be significant opportunities for improving wildlife habitat and increasing species diversity in other countries as well.

The future of African wildlife is a matter of great international concern. In many parts of Africa wildlife populations have declined sharply from historic levels. Finding a means of stemming these declines has been an urgent priority of the international environmental and conservation communities.

It is thus particularly significant that in the past 30 years Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa have altered their legal regimes to give full control over the use of wildlife to the private owners of the land on which the wildlife are located. Prior to that, private land owners had limited incentives to manage for increased wildlife populations because the state denied them the full opportunity to profit from wildlife.

Following the privatization of wildlife management in southern African nations, wildlife tourism on private lands has boomed. Wildlife ranching is typically more profitable than cattle ranching on the semi-arid lands of southern Africa. It also causes less soil erosion and is generally less environmentally damaging. As many as 20 percent of all the ranches in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa are now managed at least in part for wildlife tourism.

As a result of the widespread conversion to wildlife outputs, populations of plains game animals have risen rapidly on private lands throughout the region. In Zimbabwe, a majority of many desirable species - including 94 percent of eland, 64 percent of kudu, 63 percent of giraffe, 56 percent of cheetah, and 53 percent of both sable and impala -- are found on commercial ranch properties. In Namibia, wildlife populations on private lands have risen by 80 percent since the creation in 1967 of a regime of private wildlife ownership.

Tsessebe - a type of African antelope -- were once threatened throughout Zimbabwe but were able to recover on private ranches, allowing their subsequent restoration to public lands in Zimbabwe as well. The most successful efforts to restore rhino populations - generally decimated by poaching throughout Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s - are

taking place on private lands. Privatization of control over use of wildlife has had more success in promoting biodiversity in the southern African region than any other policy measure.

In order to realize the considerable economies of scale in wildlife operations, private ranchers in the region began in the 1990s to join together in large "conservancies" for the collective wildlife management of their lands. The largest, the Save Conservancy in southeast Zimbabwe, has removed cattle altogether and is now managing 850,000 acres (1,325 square miles) where considerable success has been achieved in restoring the wildlife conditions of the African past (including reintroduction of rhinocerus, elephant, and buffalo) on a profit making basis.

Most national parks and other reserved and protected lands in Africa were originally created in the colonial era and involved the removal of native Africans from the land. It is most unlikely that there will be significant further expansions of African national park systems. Any significant further increases in the areas devoted in Africa to wildlife will have to come on private and communal lands and will have to offer sufficient incentives to justify an affirmative decision for wildlife management on the part of the occupants of these lands.

In many African countries, the best way to maximize the value to the nation of private semi-arid lands will be to encourage commercial wildlife production. The nations of southern Africa are looking to tourism as a main engine of future economic growth. Most international tourists are drawn to Zimbabwe, Namibia and to a lesser extent South Africa to experience the spectacular wildlife populations. The potential for increasing tourism and for providing greater employment and income in these nations thus depends heavily on creating strong incentives to increase wildlife populations on private and communal lands.

Other parts of the world may be able to benefit from the lessons learned from the successes of southern African nations in privatization and commercialization of wildlife. In the United States a large part of the wildlife - including a majority of threatened and endangered species - are found on private lands.

The United States has a long tradition of employing a regulatory approach to wildlife management. There have been growing signs in recent years that this approach is increasingly having counterproductive results - such as powerful incentives for land owners to avoid creating any habitat conditions that might attract endangered species to their land. Based on the southern African experience, American wildlife managers at both the federal and state levels should reconsider whether positive incentives might not be more effective in the future in promoting wildlife populations than the past club of state commands and controls.

## INTRODUCTION

In most of the world the ownership of wildlife lies in the hands of governments. State agencies typically regulate closely the use of wildlife, including the amount of hunting permitted and at what times and places. In the United States – supposedly a bastion of free market economics – wildlife are legally the property of the state. Governments (mostly at the state level) control tightly the actions of hunters on private and public land alike. The commercial sale of meat from wildlife, for example, has long been prohibited by US law.

However, in the southern region of Africa (consisting of the nations of Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and Botswana), an important experiment has been taking place over the past 40 years (G. Child, 1995). To a considerable degree, these nations have legalized and privatized the use of wildlife – encouraging hunting, tourism and the sale of meat, hides and horns. Formally the wildlife remains *res nullius* (without formal owner) or state-owned, but if certain conditions are met, southern African governments have delegated to the owners of private land the full rights to control the use of wildlife on their land. The private owners have the authority to determine the timing, place and extent of hunting, viewing or culling of wild game. Since the 1980s, under a variety of community-based natural resource management property rights regimes, this innovative approach has also been adapted to the management of wildlife by people living on communal lands.

Outside southern Africa, other African nations have adopted different strategies. Kenya, for example, in 1977 banned most sport hunting of big game wildlife. Since then, Kenya's elephant and other wildlife populations have suffered some of the most severe declines of any African nation. The contrast between the southern African strategy of privatization and the typical socialization of wildlife elsewhere in Africa presents a natural experiment of sorts with respect to the consequences of maintaining *de facto* private property rights to wildlife.

In the United States, the regime of public ownership of wildlife is coming under increasing strain. More and more private owners are restricting access to their land – they may not own the wildlife but they can still keep people from trespassing on their private property. Yet, without control over the disposition of the wildlife, they have little incentive to manage for improved wildlife habitat, adversely affecting the number of some desirable species. In other cases, limits on hunting and the general lack of management authority have permitted wildlife populations to grow rapidly to excessive levels. In some areas of the United States, deer and other game populations have proliferated, causing extensive damage to vegetation (including many private gardens) and property loss (including many collisions with automobiles).

Hunters generally have open access (free of charge) to national forests and other government owned lands that extend over more than 30 percent of the United States (although hunting is prohibited in national parks). Here the lack of pricing or other restrictions on access leads to congestion among hunters, and less desirable hunting conditions. Few trophy animals are available to hunt on publicly owned lands, because the larger animals are successfully hunted long before they reach a trophy age and size. As these problems become more urgent on both private and public lands in the United States, the establishment of private property rights to wildlife may become more attractive – despite longstanding American legal traditions and attitudes to the contrary.

This paper examines the workings of the effective private ownership of wildlife in southern Africa. The paper does not review the efforts to create rights to the use of those found on communal land areas.\* The focus here is on farm and ranch land owned under fee simple title. It also focuses on Zimbabwe, reflecting the central place of Zimbabwe in these developments (and the long experience of one of the authors in the field of land and natural resource management in Zimbabwe).

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\* CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources) was introduced in Zimbabwe in an attempt to involve subsistence farmers in efforts to maintain wildlife habitat and range, to offset the costs of wildlife deprivation and to increase incomes to rural people. Readers are referred to Martin, 1986; Murphree, 1990; Murombedzi, 1994; and Bond, 1999; among many others.

### Wildlife as Private Property

Prior to colonial times, population densities in Africa were low (Zimbabwe is about the size of California and had about 500,000 people in 1990), and hunting pressures did not represent a threat to the abundant populations of most wildlife. In some cases African cultures had beliefs that served to protect wildlife. The Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, for example, believed that wildlife belonged to God, and had stringent codes relating to any killing. In Zimbabwe, the crocodile clan in Matabeleland were forbidden from eating any animal that came from the water. Species such as the hyena aroused a superstitious fear of evil spirits that offered the hyena protection. The amaNdebele in Zimbabwe, among many tribes, considered that elephant ivory was the property of the king, and must be taken to him (much reducing the incentive for ordinary people to hunt elephants). Similarly, the skins of any leopards killed were to be turned over to the king for use on ceremonial occasions (G. Child and Chitsike, 1999) and the pangolin is still brought to the President as a tribute whenever it is found (although the government no longer encourages this).

The arrival of colonialism brought a whole new set of attitudes as well as the powers of modern technology (MacKenzie, 1988). As happened to the passenger pigeon and bison in North America, many game populations were severely depleted by the wanton destruction of wildlife in the earliest days of the European presence. This led to restrictions, partly motivated by a desire to maintain adequate wildlife populations for sport hunting. Also following the North American experience, beginning with the creation of the first national park in 1928, colonial Rhodesia created a large system of parks where wild animals were protected from hunting. However, hunting has rarely led in and of itself to the elimination of wildlife in Zimbabwe. It is habitat loss that is the greatest threat to biodiversity and healthy wildlife populations (G. Child, 1995).

The thrust of the colonial regime was the economic development of Rhodesia – if mainly for the benefit of whites. This was taken to mean the introduction of intensive crop agriculture in those areas with suitable soil types and rainfall, with cattle ranching in the

more arid regions. The numbers of big game wildlife were in fact greatly reduced and eliminated in the areas of large scale commercial farming where tobacco and other crops were grown for the international market. In the cropping areas only a few species remained as habitat was eroded by settlement. In the ranching areas, a systematic campaign was often waged to remove wildlife which competed with cattle (Dasmann and Mossman, 1960).

Prior to the mid 1960s, farmers were not allowed to hunt, cull or sell venison and relied heavily on the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management to deal with problem animal control. There was no incentive for farmers to encourage wildlife and even where farmers did not illegally exterminate them from their land, they did little to enhance the habitat and encourage them. One estimate suggests that more than 680,000 game animals were deliberately killed between 1919 and 1960 as part of efforts to control the tsetse fly (wild animals were believed to be the main hosts) (Murindagomo, 1997, p. 433).

Buffalo were systematically eliminated from ranching areas for fear that they would spread foot and mouth disease to cattle herds. The Department of Conservation and Extension in 1952 stated that “game and cattle do not go together, so the elimination or considerable reduction of the game, and in particular, buffalo, zebra, wild beast and kudu must be considered good for ranching” (quoted in B. Child, 1988, p. 168). Lions and other major predators also had to go. The prevailing attitude was summed up in the aphorism of the time that “one can not ranch in a zoo”.

Yet, much of Zimbabwe consists of semi-arid rangelands with little rainfall where even cattle ranching has always been economically marginal. Zimbabwe has built up large cattle herds on such lands but the industry for many years depended significantly on government subsidies – and the reductions in these subsidies in recent decades has encouraged increased conversion from cattle back to wildlife. Excessive cattle stocking levels that had been encouraged by government often resulted in the degradation of rangeland condition, especially in the more arid areas. As such problems were

increasingly recognized and concerns among conservationists for the rapid loss of the spectacular wildlife populations of Zimbabwe grew, a proposed early solution was the conversion of rangelands to cropping of wild game for meat production. Some observers argued that wild animals were more naturally adapted to Zimbabwe habitat conditions and that cropping of game would result in a higher volume of meat (and greater ranching profits) than cattle operations were showing (Dasmann and Mossman, 1960).

In 1961 a key first step towards the privatization of Zimbabwe wildlife was taken when large scale commercial farmers were allowed to obtain permits to harvest their wildlife for meat under the provisions of the newly enacted Conservation Act. As of 1964 there were at least 33 ranches harvesting 34 percent of their total permitted levels. The level of total meat production was estimated at 2,350 tons per year (Bond, 1999, p.46). However, the predictions that game harvesting would prove superior economically to cattle raising were generally not realized. From 1964 to 1968, commercial production of meat from wildlife fell from 1,200 to 800 tones per year (B. Child, 1988, p. 175). It proved expensive to capture and kill widely dispersed wildlife populations. The marketing of game meat lacked established channels of distribution for the many potential customers who had little previous experience of buying such meat commercially. In addition, the stringent veterinary and health regulations and the subsidies provided to beef production and marketing discriminated against game meat (Muir, 1989).

Ranching of wildlife on private lands might have proven a dead end but a more promising use of wildlife arose. For much of the twentieth century safari hunting had been associated primarily with Kenya and other parts of east Africa. A safari industry began to grow rapidly in Zimbabwe in the 1960s. By 1974, before the war of independence (against the breakaway Rhodesian government of Ian Smith) heated up, one study found 17 ranchers owning 1.7 million hectares were active in wildlife ranching for safari hunting and another 150 owning 1.4 million hectares were showing an interest (B .Child, 1988, p. 178).



With leadership provided by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, detailed training programs and tight licensing requirements would be adopted for hunting guides, and today the guides of Zimbabwe are often said to be the best qualified in Africa. Safari hunting did not depend on large numbers of animals as much as the presence of trophy animals. It thus offered the possibility of large revenues with low demands on both the land and the wildlife – and less likelihood of “mining” semi-arid rangelands, as excessive cattle stocking often seem to be doing. At the same time the transfer of responsibility for wildlife on private land from the state to the landholder reduced the considerable demands of finances and personnel created by problem animal control. It freed the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management to concentrate on wildlife research and the development of the Parks estate.

In 1975 the Parks and Wildlife Act delegated to large scale commercial farmers the management control over safari hunting, harvesting and other wildlife activities on their lands – they were designated in the law of Zimbabwe as the “appropriate authority” for deciding the wildlife use of the land. Hence, the owner could now decide the time and place of hunting, the number of animals to be hunted, the age and sex of the animals, minimally acceptable trophy sizes and other conditions of hunting. The owner of private ranch land might choose to run safari operations from his or her property, or might instead choose to lease the hunting rights to an independent safari operator. The principal author of the Act, then the director of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management Graham Child, stated its philosophy in 1975:

For species other than those accorded special protection, the new Act adopts the philosophy that land holders are better placed than anyone else to conserve their wildlife and that by permitting them to use it profitably this conservation will be more fully justified to the benefit of both the resource, in the face of competing land use practices, and rural productivity. Landowners are given a very large measure of discretion in how their wildlife is used, subject to the controlling influence of the local community of which they are a part, or in some cases curbs imposed by Central Government, which retains the ultimate responsibility for the resource. In order to foster the profitability of such use, most Government license fees will be abolished in favor of a system whereby the landowner may raise charges for activities such as

hunting or fishing which he permits on his land (quoted in B. Child, 1988, pp 179-80).

### The Rise of Wildlife Ranching

As Rhodesia became a full fledged war zone in the late 1970s, big game hunters proved more willing than most tourists to take the risk posed by armed conflict but the rapid development of game ranching had to wait until after independence in 1980. Tourism in general then grew rapidly in Zimbabwe (as the new nation taking the place of colonial Rhodesia was now named). Total visitation to the park system, for example, grew from 161,572 in 1980 to reach 719,347 in 1990, drawn in large part by the extraordinary wildlife found in Zimbabwe (Heath, 1992a). Other than the Great Zimbabwe ruins and the world famous Victoria Falls (one of the seven natural wonders of the world, shared with Zambia), Zimbabwe has no ocean coastline or other powerful tourist attractions capable of pulling visitors from thousand of miles away in Europe, North America and Oceania (Heath, 1992, p 72). As the Zimbabwe government reported in 1998, “most tourist destinations [in Zimbabwe] are on land that is managed by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management” (Ministry of Mines, Environment and Tourism, 1998, p. 78).

B. Child (1988) recognized the growing importance of wildlife ranching on private lands in Zimbabwe and was the first to undertaken a comprehensive study of its development up to about 1986. Surveying the origins of game ranching in Zimbabwe, Child found that the cropping of meat from wild game had stagnated at modest levels by the early 1970s. However, it was also true that, as Child reported, “cattle ranching is faltering economically, and inducing costly ecological degradation” (1988, p 167). According to one estimate, 40 percent of cattle ranching operations in Zimbabwe’s semi-arid rangelands were not viable (Bembridge and Steenkamp, 1976). The overall situation was one where;

Conventional systems of rangeland utilization are neither sustainable nor conducive to development. They are already unable to maintain existing, and in many cases inadequate, levels of human welfare, despite subsidization by the environmental capital -- present

production is at the expense of future welfare. A self-perpetuating, and potentially catastrophic, degradation process is rapidly emerging. In an attempt to maintain income levels, falling productivity, exacerbated by declining profitability, is countered by greater over-exploitation. The costs of such degradation escalate as these land use systems founder, especially as the people dependent on them become poorer and less able to avoid this degradation-viability gap (B. Child, 1988, p. 28).

The solution, as it was now hoped, would be to arrest the cycle of environmental deterioration by the introduction of a more profitable form of private land use, wildlife ranching with a safari and tourism orientation (Martin, 1986). Some ranches might convert entirely to safari operations and other wildlife activities, others might jointly run cattle and manage for wildlife. A major economic advantage of wildlife was that it offered a wider number of potentially valuable ranch outputs, some of them putting little pressure on the land and environment. In addition to game cropping for meat and safari operations, there might also be money to be made in photographic and adventure tourism, the sale of live wild animals, harvesting of hides, and running lodge operations and ranch properties based on wildlife attractions.

In some areas of Zimbabwe by the 1980s, commercial wildlife operations were demonstrating in practice that they could be more profitable than cattle raising. Ranchers located near the Matesti Safari area in northwest Zimbabwe benefit from proximity to Victoria Falls and Hwange National Park, the region of the country experiencing the most rapid increases in tourism. The land in this area is also marginal for cattle raising with many ranchers in the past experiencing financial losses. By contrast, most ranchers who converted to wildlife operations experienced significant financial gains. Child investigated the experiences of wildlife and cattle operation in this area, finding that by the early 1970s there had been a conversion of ranch operations to hunting concessions and then again in the mid 1980s a “rapid swing” towards game ranching (B. Child, 1988, p. 313).

On a prototypical ranch analyzed by Child, wildlife trophy fees would be expected to yield \$40,000 per year, safari operating fees another \$40,000 and the sale of game meat \$5,000. Child calculated that cattle ranching would lose money even on a variable costs basis, yielding a “gross margin” (total revenues minus variable costs) of negative \$1.18 per hectare, while wildlife would yield a positive gross margin of \$8.95 per hectare.

On one ranch in the area, the Rosslyn ranch, it had originally been managed for cattle beginning in 1948 but in the 1950s had lost money every year except two. With such poor results a decision was made in 1967 to convert to wildlife ranching. Wildlife populations expanded in four years by as much as 50 percent. In terms of meat production alone, the land proved viable, producing 1.3 kilograms per hectare, compared with 0.8 kilograms per hectare for cattle. However it was the growing revenues from safari operations that gave the greatest boost to profitability. A losing cattle ranch was converted to a wildlife life operation that made money for all six years of its operation. (After 1972, the ranch area was taken over by the Rhodesian government for incorporation within the Matetsi Safari Area where it is now regularly leased as state owned land to safari operators) (B. Child, 1988, pp. 305-310).

The northwest of Zimbabwe was not the only area where wildlife management was proving economically viable. In 1986, Child surveyed ranchers in the southeastern area (the “lowveld) of Zimbabwe asking what was the most profitable use of their land. None said cattle ranching by itself. Thirty percent said “mostly cattle, some wildlife”. 40 percent said “mostly wildlife, some cattle” and 30 percent said “wildlife only”. Child summarized the overall conclusions of his 1980s research on wildlife ranching as follows: “economic indicators (profits, land use trends, ranchers’ opinions) are unanimous in suggesting that wildlife has a comparative advantage over cattle production in semi-arid rangelands” (1988, p. 526). He found that “in all cases wildlife profits were twice as high as those from cattle relative to the limiting factor, and wildlife demonstrated an ability to perform four to five times as well as cattle”. Reflecting such economics, by 1987 the number who were registered as wildlife producers equaled 10 percent of all private farm and ranchland owners (Muir 1989, p 311).

The private gains to ranchers from their wildlife operations were supplemented by significant social gains, including

- reduction of the large government subsidies to the beef industry;
- attraction of greater tourism to Zimbabwe that could offer benefits well beyond immediate tour and safari operators and ranchers;
- reduced rangeland erosion and degradation with consequent improvement in the overall environmental quality of Zimbabwe
- enhanced biodiversity.

### **Private Wildlife Management in the 1990s**

Child's findings with respect to the superior economics and environmental impacts of wildlife ranching relative to cattle raising would generally be confirmed by a number of further reports in the 1990s (Dean, 1990; Muir 1993; Nudging, 1996; Bond, 1999). Jansen, Bond and Child (1992) surveyed 89 cattle, wildlife and combined cattle and wildlife operations located in the semi-arid rangeland areas of Zimbabwe. Thirty-nine percent of the cattle only ranches were losing money. The average rate of return on investment of cattle raising alone was 1.8 percent. The addition of wildlife in combination with cattle could rise the rate of return to 3.6 percent. The highest profitability was achieved by ranchers with wildlife only, a return of 10.5 percent -- although there were some wildlife ranches losing money, usually due to a lack of management skill. A further analysis estimated the social returns to Zimbabwe as opposed to the individual rancher returns (correcting for foreign exchange rate and other price distortions, external costs of environmental degradation, and other market imperfections). It reached much the same conclusions with respect to the greater desirability of wildlife ranching.

Kreuter and Workman (1994) complemented the analyses of Jansen et al with an analysis of 15 large cattle-only operations, 7 wildlife and 13 mixed ranches in the Midlands Province where the climate is generally less arid (see also Kreuter and Workman, 1992). For these ranches, those with wildlife only were less financially successful than those

with cattle only. The mixed ranches, however, had the highest profitability. Considering also the advantages of risk diversification and reduced environmental pressures on the land, Kreuter and Workman (1994 p. 268) concluded that “mixed ranching appeared to be financially, economically and ecologically optimal where wild animals were abundant”.

Reflecting the growing awareness among ranchers themselves of the advantages of wildlife, Hill (p. 226) reported in 1994 that along with growing horticultural and tobacco production, wildlife ranching is “one of the fastest growing new uses of commercial farming land in Zimbabwe”. The Zimbabwe Commission of Inquiry into Appropriate Agricultural Land Tenure Systems (1994) found that 10 percent of the land under large scale commercial farming was being put to wildlife use, reflecting the “higher returns from game in comparison to farming in this sector” (Volume II p. 76). In that year, at least 370 professional hunts were recorded on 53 properties.

In the arid rangelands of Natural Region IV (Zimbabwe is commonly divided into five broad ecological zones), 44 percent of the land was either in wildlife ranching alone or mixed wildlife-cattle (Commission of Inquiry, p. 453). By 1995, 18 percent of all Zimbabwe farmers were registered as being in the wildlife business (at least in part if not exclusively). A 1995 survey (achieving 50 percent coverage) of members of the Wildlife Producers Association showed that their lands held 250,000 wild plains animals, including 10,000 sable, 10,000 zebra and more than 2,000 giraffe (Muir, 1998, p.9). Taking account of increasing communal land management for hunting and tourism purposes, the government of Zimbabwe reported in 1998 that “today about 30 percent of Zimbabwe is under some form of wildlife management and it is the fastest growing sector and a major foreign currency earner in the national economy” (Ministry of Mines, Environment and Tourism, p. 361).

As a result of the increasing amounts of land being dedicated to wildlife ranching, private land had begun by the 1990s to make a major contribution to the levels of species diversity in Zimbabwe. Commercial lands contained a majority of every plains game

species except zebra (of which they held 46 percent). Ninety-four percent of the eland in Zimbabwe were on privately owned commercial farm and ranch lands, 64 percent of the kudu, 63 percent of the giraffe, 56 percent of the cheetah, and 53 percent of both sable and impala (Hill, p. 237). Tsessebe were once threatened throughout Zimbabwe but were able to recover on the Debshan and other ranches, subsequently allowing their restoration to many other private and public lands in Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe Trust, p. 42).

In terms of the “big five”, 32 percent of leopard in Zimbabwe were found on commercial lands (owing to their nocturnal habits and wariness of humans, leopards are still commonly found over much of Africa). In 1997 seventy-seven percent of black rhino were found on commercial ranch land (unlike the resilience of leopards, rhino were virtually wiped out on two occasions – first by white hunters in the 1890s and then by poachers in the 1980s and early 1990s). The remaining rhino on private land are mostly found on large conservancies that include assemblages of private land owners operating under collective management agreements, (du Toit, 1998). However, because of the threat of cattle predation and the danger to humans, only 6 percent of lions were found on commercial lands.

Because of concern about hoof and mouth disease, buffalo had been systematically eliminated from private lands in earlier years – and less than one percent of Zimbabwe buffalo remained on commercial land (Hill p. 237). However the numbers are once again building and were 3 percent in 1995 (Foggin and Taylor 1996, p 144). Stocking buffalo on ranches outside the European Community (EC) beef areas has escalated rapidly in recent years, despite the legislation which strictly controls buffalo rearing on private land. Owing to the destructive impact of elephants on farm crops and ranching operations (the typical elephant consumes about 200 kilograms of vegetation per day), elephants had also been virtually eliminated from commercial ranching areas of Zimbabwe. Here again private lands held less than one percent of the Zimbabwe total elephant population (Hill p. 237). More recently, however, consistent with their efforts to reestablish the wildlife conditions of the past, the larger private conservancies have embarked on a program to reintroduce buffalo and elephants within their boundaries.

In terms of the total land area in Zimbabwe dedicated to wildlife purposes, the national park system has the largest share, 48 percent, followed by private commercial lands with 31 percent. However, the land set aside in Hwange, Mana Pools and other places officially designated as national parks (the park system has various kinds of designations) was not available for hunting. The largest portion of safari land available to hunting (40 percent) was found on private commercial lands (Hills, 1994, p. 238).

Given the distribution of game animals in Zimbabwe, safari operators typically offer packages that include hunting for plains game (eland, impala, gazelle, etc.) on commercial land in combination with hunting of the dangerous big game (elephants, buffalo, lions, etc) on state owned and communal lands. For such packages, big game hunters (predominantly from North America) pay prices typically in the range of \$500 to \$1,000 per day. A safari including the hunting of big game (along with various types of plains game) takes 14 to 21 days.

All in all, except for the large and dangerous big game, the preservation of Zimbabwe wildlife by the early 1990s had become more of an affair of private management for financial gain than of government protection. It had resulted in both increased wildlife numbers and increased return to the land. Such a circumstance probably could not be found in any other place in the world outside the nations of southern Africa. In Zimbabwe it was made possible by the property right innovations of 1961 and 1975 that enabled private land owners effectively to take possession of wildlife as private property. As reported by Murphree (1995, p. 48), in the 20 years since the 1975 law had been enacted in Zimbabwe, “a new and flourishing wildlife industry is in place, wildlife revenues have increased dramatically, wildlife populations have expanded and their habitat has improved”. This had contributed significantly to the international goals of promoting species diversity and sustainable development in Zimbabwe.



### **Other Southern African Nations**

South Africa (as of 1990) consisted of 78 percent private farm and ranch land, Namibia of 45 percent private land and Zimbabwe of 35 percent (no other country in southern or eastern Africa had more than 10 percent of their land in private farm and ranch ownership) (Cumming, 1990, p. 6). Like Zimbabwe, legislation has been enacted in Namibia and South Africa to allow private owners to manage wildlife on their land. The results in both these countries as well have shown a rapid growth of wildlife ranching, boosting wildlife populations and promoting biodiversity.

Namibia in 1967 was the first southern African nation to give owners effective ownership of wildlife on their land (Jourbert, Brand and Visagie, 1983). Indeed, the Namibian example helped to inspire the similar law enacted in Zimbabwe in 1975. (G. Child, 1995). In South Africa the legal regime for wildlife is established at the Provincial level but it is similar across the four Provinces. A private land owner can apply to register as a wildlife operator as long as the ranch meets certain criteria for size and perimeter fencing. If the government grants approval, no permit is then required for hunting which is under the full control of the land owner (including even the option of night hunting) (Cumming, 1990).

Although few current aggregate statistics exist for wildlife ranching in South Africa, Cumming (pp. 14-15) estimated in 1990 that more than 19 percent of South African farmland, involving more than 160,000 square kilometers, was being put to use in one or another form of private wildlife use. This involved more than 8,000 farms and ranches, about 17 percent of the more profitable farming operations in South Africa. Farmers and ranchers earned on average about 14 percent of their gross revenues from wildlife. Much as Kreuter and Workman found in the Zimbabwe Midlands, the most profitable land use in typical land conditions for South Africa involved a mixture of cattle and wildlife.

More recent estimates by G. Child (1999) characterize the status of the South Africa wildlife industry in 1997, based on data from the Centre for Wildlife Economics at the University of Pocheestroom. There are an estimated 6,000 wildlife ranches with perimeter

fencing enclosing about 10 million hectares in South Africa. About 5,000 foreign hunters spent around \$22 million in 1997 – and there were still larger numbers of domestic South African hunters (who spent an even larger sum in total). The wildlife industry altogether yielded spending of \$115 million that generated around 42,000 jobs in the South Africa economy (the jobs per unit of land in wildlife ranching in South Africa are greater than the number of jobs per land unit for cattle ranching in Zimbabwe).

The sale of live game for the purpose of restocking other ranch areas has become a significant part of the wildlife industry in South Africa. In 1997, wildlife ranchers earned \$809,262 from sales of white rhino, \$599,607 from disease free buffalo, \$388,153 from eland, and \$364,754 from sable.

Almost half of Namibia consists of around 6,000 large ranches with a history of cattle ranching since the early days of colonial settlement. Prior to the 1967 delegation of management control over wildlife to private land owners, “farmers viewed wildlife as competition for their livestock and therefore a cost rather than a benefit” (Jones, 1999a, p. 10). Species such as the endemic Hartmann’s mountain zebra were declining and elephant, rhino and lion had become virtually extinct on private freehold land. However, the establishment of de facto private rights to wildlife reversed this longstanding condition of declining Namibian wildlife populations and has now resulted in an 80 percent increase in wildlife on freehold land and a major boost to the national economy (Jones, 1999a, p.1). The new wildlife industry captures significant revenues from consumptive uses of wildlife such as sport hunting, culling for meat, trophy hunting and live sale and from non consumptive uses such as photographic tourism. On some ranches the operators have even begun to reintroduce elephant, rhino, and lion (Jones, 1999a, p. 10).

The Namibian experience thus closely parallels the positive wildlife developments on private land in Zimbabwe over the past several decades. Overall, Cumming comments with respect to the entire southern African region,

There is within the region an enormous area presently available for wildlife production and utilization. Given the large area, the diversity of species and options for utilization, and increasing demands for both consumption and non consumptive tourism, there is a firm basis for an expanding wildlife industry. Despite the parlous state of the data base for most countries those data that are available indicates an expanding industry with increasing demand and commodity prices. This is in sharp contrast to the beef industry where real commodity prices have been declining steadily over the last two decades (Cumming, 1990 p. 16).

### **Private Land Conservancies**

Although the game ranching industry has continued to expand during the 1990s, it faces several potential limitations on its future growth. Most individual ranches are too small to accommodate a full range of wildlife in a natural setting; animals are not free to roam over the long distances that characterized their historical patterns of behavior. On smaller ranches visitors may have the perception that they are entering into a game enclosure – or as it may easily seem, a large zoo rather than a true encounter with wild animals. In addition, the costs of building and maintaining internal perimeter fencing for many ranch properties will significantly exceed the costs of one fence of the exterior of all the ranch properties together. There are other kinds of economies of scale as well that make the economics of wildlife ranching more attractive over a larger area than the typical ranch.

The institution of the private land conservancy has been pioneered in Namibia, South African and then Zimbabwe as one solution to these problems (De Alessi, 1999). At present there are 12 conservancies on freehold land in Namibia that cover an area of about 1.2 million hectares (Jones, 1999a, p. 11). In Zimbabwe there are an increasing number of conservancies covering more than 6000 sq.km (the Save Conservancy alone is some 3400 sq. km). In essence, a conservancy involves a group of land owners (thus far individual private owners in Zimbabwe but the approach is being applied to communal areas in Namibia as well) who band together to manage their lands as a joint wildlife unit (Murphree and Metcalf, 1997). They enter into agreements for common management of the wildlife, for sharing revenues derived from wildlife operations, for allocation of costs for joint wildlife projects, and for any other collective sharing of benefits and

responsibilities. In Zimbabwe the best known conservancies are the Save, Bubiana and Chiredzi River, all located in the “lowveld” area of semi-arid rangelands of southeast Zimbabwe, bordering on South Africa to the south and Mozambique to the east.

A crucial role in the creation of these Zimbabwe conservancies was played by the Beit Trust and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). As poachers were decimating rhino populations, throughout Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s, WWF was desperate to identify a few refuges where the last remaining black rhinos could be successfully protected, hopefully laying the basis for a future recovery of the species. In a major – and at times controversial – shift of strategy within the conservation movement, WWF turned to the owners of private ranch land as a more promising venue for establishing effective black rhino protection. The governments of Zimbabwe and other African nations were finding it difficult to meet the transitional and managerial requirements – even in the best protected areas of government owned lands – necessary to fend off the international rings that engaged in the lucrative Asian trade in rhino horns.

However, few ranches individually had the large area required to provide suitable habitat for black rhinos. It was thus necessary for WWF’s Rhino Conservancy Project to find ranchers willing to join together in a collective management endeavor – and, inevitably, this collective undertaking would be likely to extend beyond rhino management to other animals. In the event, the Project was able to identify groups of landowners in the areas covered by the three conservancies. Today, effective protection for some 165 black rhino is maintained in the Save, Bubiana and Chiredzi River conservancies. Private ranches are estimated to offer protection to 285 black and 66 white rhinos (WWF, personal communication).

The Save conservancy involves the largest number of rancher members (23), and the largest area (340,000 hectares), requiring a perimeter fence of more than 300 kilometers. The Save conservancy also has the most complicated sharing agreements, and has gone the farthest in making wildlife their economic mainstay. Indeed, cattle have been removed altogether, thus making possible the reintroduction of buffalo and elephant. The

decision to turn in the direction of wildlife reflected in part the conclusions of a Price Waterhouse (1994) study, as summarized by Rauol du Toit (the principle WWF staffer then and now in the rhino conservation effort) as follows:

From a financial perspective, wildlife operations would generate about US\$8 per hectare in gross annual revenue, compared to less than half of this from cattle operations, and the wildlife revenue could increase fivefold as the areas becomes an established tourist destination. The return on capital employed would be 1-3% for cattle operations, compared to 10-22% for wildlife operations. Over half the wildlife revenues would be in the form of foreign currency, whereas veterinary constraints on the export of Lowveld beef would not allow for the direct generation of foreign currency from cattle operations.

From a socio-economic perspective, wildlife operations (based on low-volume tourism) would double employment in the short-term, quadruple employment in the long-term, and generate higher average wages than the cattle industry. With wildlife, local economic linkages (with impoverished Communal Land communities) could be strongly developed whereas cattle operations mitigate against such linkages (du Toit, 1998, p6).

Rates of growth of the black rhino population in the large area enclosed within the boundaries of the Save conservancy have been double those achieved in smaller rhino enclosures in other parts of Africa. No rhinos have been lost to poaching. Following the introduction of 300 buffalo in 1995, the buffalo population has grown at a rate of about 10 percent per year. More than 500 elephants were purchased in 1992-1993 from nearby lands of drought-stricken Gonarezhou National Park and this population has grown rapidly as well. With leopards common as they are through much of southern and eastern Africa, only lions are missing among the “big five” - and they may be introduced in the future. A substantial wild dog population (70 animals) is found in the Save conservancy – of special biodiversity note because the wild dog is an indigenous African species almost as endangered as the black rhino in terms of total numbers continent-wide (estimated to be only a few thousand) (du Toit, 1998).

The Malilangwe Trust is also located in the southwestern lowveld in proximity to the Save conservancy and Gonarezhou national park. The Trust is similar in many of its land characteristics, goals and methods of operation to Save but differs in that the entire area of the Trust is consolidated under one ownership. Large financial contributions by a wealthy American benefactor have made the acquisition of a land area of such large size possible. In 1998 the Trust spent about \$1 million to purchase 28 black rhinos from the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service in South Africa. Another \$300,000 was spent to import 33 roan antelope and 20 Lichtenstein's hartebeest – animals once common in Zimbabwe but now very rare. All this was part of implementing the core vision of the Trust that the “habitats and wildlife populations ... have been restored and are maintained in their former pristine state”. (Malilangwe Trust Annual Report, 1998). While this goal is yet to be fulfilled, all of the big five are present and commonly seen by visitors, including besides the rhino, 145 elephant, 413 buffalo, 45 leopard, and 25 lions (Malilangwe Trust Annual Report, 1998).

The Malilangwe Trust operates two high end luxury lodges, and a safari operation (catering mostly to bow hunters) that in 1998 yielded successful hunts of 7 buffalo, 2 crocodile, 12 zebra and 9 kudu, among other species. Although it is still a long way off from being realized, the goal is that the Malilangwe Trust lands should become self-financing. Nevertheless, whether through the continuing contributions of international benefactors or as a self financed operation at some point in the future, an outstanding area of biodiversity preservation and restoration of original African wildlife is in the process of being created. A necessary precondition for all this is a regime of effective private property ownership of wildlife such as has existed in Zimbabwe since 1975, making it feasible for the Trust to invest large sums of money in restocking endangered African fauna in areas from which they had long ago disappeared.

The process of creating a conservancy is likely to involve difficult negotiations and other transactions costs (Jones, 1999b). The leading examples of Zimbabwe conservancies owe their existence in large part to the entrepreneurial efforts of NGOs seeking to find a home for endangered black rhino populations. If the institution of the conservancy is to

spread more widely in Zimbabwe, it may also need outside facilitation in more normal circumstances. An NGO might consider funding a technical advisory and facilitation service for the formation of new wildlife conservancies. Government might consider changes in the law that would more clearly define the legal status and otherwise encourage the formation of new conservancies, thus allowing for wider collective ownership and management of wildlife over the large areas of land needed by many species.

### Benefits to the Nation?

The evidence seems overwhelming that the existence of effective private property rights to wildlife is advancing the goal of the conservation of the wildlife and the maintenance of biodiversity in Zimbabwe and other southern African nations. This is the principal objective of many of the wildlife NGOs operating in Zimbabwe, and a principal concern of the international community and their governments more generally. Preservation of the unique wildlife populations of Africa, in short, arouses the strong interests of people all over the world.

However, the nation of Zimbabwe has other important concerns as well. In any democratic society the welfare of the people of Zimbabwe will ultimately come first. An estimated 76 percent of the population at present lives below even the minimum standards used to define poverty in Zimbabwe. Most wage earners are paid less than \$100 per month, barely adequate for the survival of a family.

The picture is further complicated by the distribution of the ownership of land in Zimbabwe. About 4,500 largely white owners of private land occupy about 35 percent of the area of the country, including most of the best farmland in a nation of 12 million people. These lands were in essence confiscated from the native black populations during the Rhodesian settlement period (in much the same way that the native people lost their land in North America). In the semi-arid rangeland areas of Zimbabwe, the same lands are now often the ones being converted to private wildlife use. In Namibia a similar circumstance holds; about 6,000 largely white owners occupy about 40 percent of

the land in Namibia, including many of the areas where wildlife ranching holds the greatest promise.

An inevitable question thus is raised: does the private wildlife industry largely benefit initially a group of wealthy white land owners, and internationally the wealthy (certainly relative to Zimbabwe standards) community of Europeans and North Americans who have a great interest in wildlife conservation in Africa? This question is caught up in the policy debate relating to the land redistribution program of Zimbabwe (admittedly a program where there have been many more promises than results). It might be rephrased as follows: if Zimbabwe does at some point embark on a serious program of land redistribution, should private lands being devoted to wildlife management be specifically targeted for redistribution purposes as appears to be the case in the land rhetoric? Strictly in economic terms, such a policy would not be justified if the net social benefits of wildlife are positive; moreover, it seems illogical to promote tobacco, flower exports and other horticulture (as at present) but to discourage wildlife ranching. Wildlife as a land use can be equally or more advantageous than conventional cattle ranching in the arid areas in terms of foreign exchange, domestic employment, the environment and in retaining future options. In addition it provides significant positive externalities to the international community as well.

Nevertheless, at present the government of Zimbabwe seems to accord a low priority to private wildlife conservation. Some would say the government is antagonistic. It is partly a “legacy of hostility toward wildlife resulting from the biased legislation of the colonial period”. It is within living memory that many people were “severely damaged by wildlife ... Even today, the maintenance of eco-systems and wildlife involves them (the people on the land) in large social and economic costs”. (Zimbabwe Trust, 1992, pp 1,8).

Recently, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management imposed a new regulation (Statutory Instrument 26 of 1998) requiring that private land owners should submit proposed plans for individual safari operations on their land (including planned



hunts and numbers of animals) and that the operator must have government approval before the safari can proceed. Such a policy would effectively reverse the privatization of wildlife in the 1975 Parks and Wildlife Act. It would amount to the resocialisation of wildlife ownership in Zimbabwe – perhaps an easy step in a nation founded on socialist economic principles and with the United States and other “advanced” countries all having their own forms of state ownership of wildlife. Up to the present, however, the Zimbabwe government has not enforced the new regulations, leaving this in limbo. As du Toit commented recently with respect to the Save conservancy, it is with respect to “socio-political issues” and establishing a sound working relationship with the people living in neighboring communal lands that the rancher members of the conservancy currently face their “greatest challenges”, (du Toit, 1998, p. 10).

The current negative attitude of the Zimbabwe government with respect to private wildlife (in part a matter of continuing adherence to cultural traditions of cattle raising extending back over 1,000 years or more) is matched by at least an equally great – and in some ways contradictory – enthusiasm to boost tourism. Tourism is the most rapidly growing sector of the Zimbabwe economy and a main earner of foreign exchange. In terms of the economics of international trade, one of Zimbabwe’s greatest “comparative advantages” is the spectacular wildlife population that it possesses. Total tourism revenues in 1998 amounted to about 7 percent of Zimbabwe’s Gross National Product (GNP); and direct employment in the tourism sector was around 80,000 jobs (8 percent of total employment). The indirect employment and high multiplier effects add considerably to the role of wildlife in Zimbabwe’s economic growth.

If long distance air fares could be reduced (a real possibility in a newly deregulated international airline arena), airline service improved, and the personal security of foreign tourists assured, Zimbabwe thus far may have only touched the tip of the iceberg of international tourism. Zimbabwe might want to follow the example of South Africa where “all concerned are hoping tourism will become the new engine of South Africa’s economic and employment growth”. In South Africa “broader business interests –

mining houses, insurance companies and the like - ... want to see more people employed in SA and believe tourism is best able to do it” (Financial Mail, 1999, pp 42-43).

In Zimbabwe, given that the national park estate is unlikely to expand further, any increases in the total amount of land devoted to wildlife tourism (the main source of Zimbabwe tourism) are likely to occur in the private ranching and communal lands sectors. The wildlife activities in communal areas are in fact complementary to those of the ranching sector – with big game such as elephant and buffalo likely hunted on the communal lands and plains game on the freehold ranches. The urgency of increased tourism revenues is all the greater at the current time of high inflation and generally poor economic performance in Zimbabwe, caused in significant part by the inability of the nation to earn sufficient foreign exchange through exports to cover its import demands. Significant areas of additional private lands will be converted to wildlife as a simple matter of the current economics of ranching, unless government intervenes to restrict land size or acquire the lands for land redistribution and rural resettlement.

The price of policies discouraging the growth of the wildlife industry might be large, not only in terms of lost wildlife tourism but also in the opportunities to increase incomes in rural areas and to find sustainable and economic use of poor land in semi-arid areas. More analysis is required to consider the effects of different options in promoting viable patterns of economic growth that can also be equitable. Zimbabwe urgently needs strategies capable of both boosting foreign currently earnings and increasing the incomes of the rural poor.

The existence of a large national park system poses similar politico/economic issues as the private wildlife estate. One observer finds that “under present circumstances much of the Zimbabwean electorate would probably welcome the elimination of protected wildlife areas and most large mammals” (Zimbabwe Trust, 1992, p. 8). Since the parks are seldom visited by the average Zimbabweans, the strongest justification for their existence – other than the bureaucratic imperative that a parks department already exists with many civil servants who are Zimbabwean – lies in the foreign tourism revenues that they

generate directly and indirectly (as well as the wildlife conservation motives that many native Zimbabweans share with the international community). Jansen (1994) undertook an analysis of the financial inflows to Zimbabwe resulting from increased tourism, using visitors to Hwange and Mana Pools national parks as illustrative case studies. Some portion of tourist expenditures made in Zimbabwe “leak” out of the country in the form of purchases that require foreign exchange. Jansen estimated this leakage in the tourism sector at 25 percent. The remaining 75 percent of foreign tourist expenditures represented net inflow of foreign exchange to pay for local wages, purchases of food and other safari supplies, lodging costs, souvenirs, etc.

G. Child (1999), drawing on comparisons with South Africa (where the wildlife ranching data base is better and more up to date), recently estimated that wildlife ranching was generating about US\$25 million in gross revenue per year in Zimbabwe. Based on Jansen’s estimates, the private wildlife industry in Zimbabwe would be responsible for inflows of around US\$19 million of foreign exchange each year (about Z\$700 million). Because of concerns for hoof and mouth and other diseases, beef can only be exported from limited parts of Zimbabwe. As a result, over much of the country the foreign exchange inflows coming from wildlife ranching can be expected to substantially exceed those from cattle raising.

Wetenhall in a 1991 analysis for the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management concluded that the promotion of tourism – especially high end tourism with low volumes and high charges to visitors – offered major economic gains for Zimbabwe. As he stated:

For Zimbabwe the benefits of tourism almost certainly outweigh the costs. Net forex receipts are relatively high, jobs are created for a fast growing population and use of wildlife as a natural resource is generally thought to be beneficial to the economy. At the same time the social and ecological cost of controlled amounts of high end tourism is relatively limited. Therefore further growth of the tourist industry is likely to be advantageous to Zimbabwe. (Wetenhall, 1991, p. 25)

Such growth of tourism, so important to the nation, will occur only if the government of Zimbabwe takes a strongly supportive position, providing necessary assurances to the wildlife industry of investment security and establishing a climate of investor confidence (Bond, 1997, pp 5-7). Yet, the most recent actions of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management might seem headed in the opposite direction. Doubts have been further raised by an August 1999 Draft “Zimbabwe Policy for Wildlife”, prepared by the Department and at an advanced stage of internal governmental review. Potential investors are not likely to be reassured by statements such as “The Minister may impose a hunting restriction on any land or any wildlife species in Zimbabwe in the interests of conservation” or that “the Department will approve hunting quotas for all Appropriate Authorities” – presumably including the private land owners who were given appropriate authority status by the 1975 Parks and Wildlife Act.

The newly gazetted restrictions on land size throughout the country pose a further threat to investment in wildlife. It is unclear how conservancies and other forms of cooperative ranching can be established when many ranches are forced by decree to be restricted to uneconomically small sizes upon death or change of title. The system will have to be amended to allow for conservancies and other forms of cooperative ranching. There is an urgent need to address land inequities in Zimbabwe, but it would be much more equitable and efficient if widespread subdivision was freely possible and land taxes used to encourage sub-division. The static nature of centrally decreed land size distorts resource allocation and dynamic response to changing circumstances.

If Zimbabwe takes instead more supportive actions, over time there are likely to be more and more black Zimbabweans entering high level managerial position in the private wildlife industry, and eventually moving into ownership positions. It is also incumbent on the private wildlife industry to take strong actions on its own to encourage a greater role for black Zimbabweans in the future business of wildlife tourism. Greater efforts should be made to coordinate tourism on private ranches with tourism on communal lands, ensuring that the residents of these lands capture a growing share of the overall benefits.

Such an effort is presently being made at the Save conservancy which perhaps can offer a useful model of other wildlife management areas of Zimbabwe (du Toit, 1998).

### **Conclusion**

The southern region of Africa holds some of the most spectacular wildlife populations in the world. Initially, the protection of this wildlife took the conventional form of creating national parks and other special areas where most economic activity was excluded, borrowing on North American and European park models. However, by the 1970s it was apparent that few additional areas could be set aside in such a status. Indeed, the possibility even existed that some previously protected areas might be abolished in response to extensive poverty, growing populations, and increasing pressures to make more land available the nations of the region.

Conservationists in southern Africa gradually came to two realizations: (1) the survival of existing protected areas would depend on showing their economic worth to the nation as a whole, and (2) any efforts to add to the areas of protected wildlife habitat would depend on making wildlife conservation economically advantageous to the existing residents of these areas. The greatest successes of this latter strategy have been found on large commercial farm and ranch lands where many landowners have converted to wildlife management as the most profitable use of their land. In communal areas, the Districts there have also been given the authority under Campfire to manage use of the wildlife, enabling the residents to start the process of gaining some greater measure of wealth and income and a greater degree of control over their lives.

The need to reconcile wildlife conservation objectives and human welfare requirements is perhaps most compelling in Africa but similar tensions are emerging throughout the world. Other nations may want to explore the privatization alternative more seriously, given the remarkable record of success that this experiment in private management of wildlife has already demonstrated in several southern African nations.

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