

Assessment of livestock and human settlement encroachment into the Northern Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe

Patience Gandiwa, Wadzanai Matsvayi, Mary M. Ngwenya and Edson Gandiwa

Abstract

Livestock and human settlement encroachment into protected areas and associated interactions with wildlife is a global issue with implications for sustainable development particularly in developing countries. We examined the changes in the northern Gonarezhou National Park (GNP), Zimbabwe, following the livestock and human settlement encroachments into the park in 2000. The main objective of this study was to determine the history, extent of livestock and human settlement encroachment, and discuss potential impacts associated with the resultant human-livestock-wildlife interactions. Our results show that livestock encroached up to 10–20 km deep inside the park to graze and access surface water mostly in the dry season. Several wildlife species were reportedly sighted in the settlement area and adjacent livestock grazing areas. Some of the wildlife species were reported to kill livestock and damage crops. Developing approaches to minimise human-livestock-wildlife interactions would help enhance natural resources conservation.

Keywords: Africa, Conservation, Large herbivores, Protected Area