



**MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK, SAPI
& CHEWORE SAFARI AREAS
WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY**



STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

December 2022

PROPERTY DETAILS

State Party: Zimbabwe

Name of property: Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore
Safari Areas World Heritage Site

Property Identification Number: (N0. 302)

Reporting period: 2022 Reporting

Date: 08 January 2022



Executive Summary

The Mana Pools National Park, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas World Heritage Property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in the year 1984. It was inscribed as a Natural Property under the then natural criteria (ii), (iii) and (vii), now renumbered as (vii) and (xi) and (x). The Property is located in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. The property extends over 6766km² with Mana Pools National Park (2196km²), Sapi Safari Area (1180 km²) and Chewore Safari Area (3390 km²) which is considered relatively intact and adequately sized to maintain the diverse natural processes, functions and interactions including the riverine ecosystem, breeding ground and habitat or landing base for migratory endangered bird species making it an important Bird Area (IBA). The three areas (Mana Pools, Chewore and Sapi) form a sufficient conservation unit for naturally functional ecological processes. This property is well protected by (natural barriers) the Zambezi River on the north and a steep escarpment on the south from environmental and alternative land uses. The Boundaries are of sufficient size to capture the natural and aesthetic values of the property.

The Mana Pools World Heritage Property is known for its unique (exceptional) geological and geomorphologic features and active land formation processes which are of outstanding universal value. The property has rich and varied fauna with large mammal populations concentrating on the floodplain. Well grassed *Brachystegia* communities dominate mountainous escarpment, Mopane woodland and pockets of Jesse thicket on the valley floor. Mana Pools NP constitutes a wilderness recreational amenity for tourists with several activities including the famous unguided walks in the open flood plain. Sport hunting in the Chewore south area is strictly controlled (using sustainable hunting quotas) and is only carried out from May to October, yearly.

Several wildlife research and monitoring projects are undertaken by Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA) ecologist and sometimes in collaboration with foreign researchers. These projects are key for effective monitoring, to advise the management and to ensure species protection in the World Heritage Property. This year, Zimbabwe and Zambia hosted their first Hippo survey along the Zambezi River from Luangwa to Kariba dam wall which was funded by the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). In addition, a total of 101 elephants were translocated from Save Valley Conservancy (South-east Lowveld) to Sapi Safari Area (Mid-Zambezi Valley) and some of them were collared to allow for post-release monitoring.

RESPONSE TO THE DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

1. **Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7B.Add,**
2. **Recalling Decision 42 COM 7B.97 adopted at its 42nd session (Manama, 2018),**
3. **Welcomes the State Party's continued actions to further strengthen its anti-poaching measures, including through the sufficient resourcing for the mobilisation of its operation units, ongoing collaboration with the State Party of Zambia, community involvement initiatives, and the further expansion of the use of Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART);**
4. **Takes note that data from satellite collaring of elephants to track their movements have shown that they are not crossing over into Zambia and that these findings are being further examined, requests the State Party to ensure the outcomes inform future management of elephants and the property, and to keep the World Heritage Centre informed of its progress;**

The state party of Zimbabwe acknowledges the commendations from the committee for its efforts to further strengthen its anti-poaching unit through resource mobilisation in the world heritage property. The state party of Zimbabwe also appreciates the continual support from various conservation partners in the landscape which has been key to strengthening anti-poaching in the landscape through improving communication, assist with anti-poaching vehicles, fuels and road maintenance.

In addition, the state party of Zimbabwe also works closely with Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) now the Department of National Park and Wildlife Management through joint anti-poaching operations along the Zambezi River also including intelligence sharing and joint meetings (Joint Commissions and Joint Permanent Commissions of Defense and Security). Furthermore, collaborative work is also being implemented with the States Party of Zambia in the form of joint river patrols and meetings.

Moreover, efforts have been underway to ensure that the adoption of Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tools (SMART) in the Zambezi Valley region came to pass. This has been made possible through the support of our conservation partners; UNDP supporting the Zambezi

Valley through funding from Global Environmental Facility (GEF) 6, CITES MIKE and AWF. A consultant was contracted by UNDP-GEF6 to drive this project. Since then workshops, meetings and trainings have been conducted not only to Parks employees but also extended to other parastatals in the region.

Ongoing community engagements have been extended through the establishment of conservation clubs as well as community rangers popularly known as junior rangers at the Primary and Secondary school level in Chundu and Kazangarare area. The main ideology behind these conservation clubs is to foster an appreciation of nature conservation at a young age so that they can go home and teach their parents. Continuous dialogue has been established by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority through the community liaison officer with neighboring communities to collaborate in the proper management of the property's territory in full respect of all its values and resources. To our understanding, it is this close collaboration and cooperation of the organisation and its stakeholders that has greatly strengthened the property conservation and management initiatives.

Scientific research and education projects are directed towards the proper management of the property. Several studies are underway to monitor the movement patterns of elephants in the Zambezi Valley region through the use of satellite elephant collars. Elephants were collared to monitor and establish their movements in the region. Results have shown that some elephants have crossed the Zambezi River but they only utilised areas close to the River. In addition, they have been some direct observations from clients and operators who have also observed elephants crossing over to Zambia, but they were not collared, which adds to our previous report which was based on the collared elephants only.

5. Reiterates its request to the State Party to:

1. Report on the outcomes of habitat surveys, and provide data on poaching and other available conservation indicators,

The Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority has undertaken several research works within the property. Large Mammals Aerial Surveys, Leopard surveys, hippo surveys and, African Painted Dogs, elephant research have also been conducted. Donor funding from the international community has been sourced (CITES MIKE, Africa Wildlife Foundation, Panthera, WildCRU, Painted Dog Conservation and BushLife Safari) to fund those activities.

A study was conducted to understand factors that influence the habitat use of translocated elephants in the Zambezi valley region. To understand this objective, five predictor variables were used, distance from water, vegetation, NDVI, distance from roads and release site. The five predictor variables were modelled using maxEnt and the results showed that of these five variables, the variable that had the greatest impact was the release site. Therefore, to inform future management our study revealed that there is a need to have more than one release site because the elephant is likely to be concentrated close to the release site than any other area which in turn will also have an impact on the general vegetation within that particular area.

In addition, an aerial survey of elephants and other large herbivores in the Zambezi Valley region was conducted (Dunham and Nyaguse, 2021) . The aerial survey gave the population density of large herbivores in the Zambezi valley region. Aerial surveys have traditionally informed wildlife management policy and strategy in the World Heritage Property. Furthermore, aerial surveys are critical for effective Park management as they provide relatively close to precise estimates of the number of elephants in the surveyed region.

Furthermore, there is an ongoing large carnivore survey in the mid-Zambezi valley being conducted by WildCRU in conjunction with ZPWMA. The study is still underway. We are also pleased to advise the committee that, Zimbabwe and Zambia hosted their first Hippo survey along the Zambezi River from Luangwa to Kariba dam wall which was funded by the African Wildlife Foundation. The report is currently being compiled and it will be shared with the committee upon request.

Apart from fish poaching, there are no serious poaching problems within the property. A study was also conducted on trends in elephant poaching in the Mid-Zambezi Valley, Zimbabwe: Lessons learnt and future outlook (Ngorima et al., 2022). The study used CITES MIKE data which is collected by rangers during their patrols in the field. The results showed that there was a gradual decline in elephant poaching in the Zambezi Valley region and that elephant poaching has decreased by at least 0.055 elephants/year. In addition, the decrease in elephant poaching in our study area was statistically significant (z -value = -1.7146 , $p = 0.086$) which is a positive step and reflection of the anti-poaching efforts of the rangers on the ground.

2. Complete the review of the General Management Plan, and submit it to the World Heritage Centre once it is available, for review by IUCN,

The general management planning process is still underway but it's now in its final phase. We anticipate to publish the plan on the 31st of December 2022 and subsequent approval by the Secretary and Minister of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry in January 2023. A consultant (Dr Ian Games) was engaged by UNDP-GEF 6 and there is need to acknowledge receipt of co – funding for the process from UNESCO. A review workshop of the draft management plan was conducted in Harare from the 14th to the 19th of November 2022. The workshop involved over 20 all Protected Area upper and middle level Managers for the mid-Zambezi valley region. Thus, the draft will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for further reviews through ZIMNATCOM.

3. Keep the World Heritage Centre informed of its progress in finalizing the Memorandum of Understanding for the Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools National Parks Trans-Frontier Conservation Area, and to request technical advice from the World Heritage Centre and IUCN as needed;

The establishment of the Lower-Zambezi- Mana Pools TFCA is in its final stages. The MoU finalisation process is still underway. The States Parties are committed to conserve the area and joint operations through anti-poaching, intelligence sharing and joint operation meetings are conducted regularly. Issues concerning the TFCAs in the Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools National Parks Trans-Frontier Conservation Area have been discussed and identified as an opportunity to enhance joint operations to protect and manage the World Heritage Property.

6. Also recalling that the State Party had previously reported its decision to suspend commercial sport hunting from not only Sapi Safari Area and the northern part of Chewore Safari Area, but also from the buffer zone to promote the recovery of wildlife species, also reiterates its request to the State Party to clarify the extent of the area referred to as the buffer zone, which has not yet been formally adopted by the Committee;

As reiterated in the State of Conservation report dated 8 January 2021, In the Sapi Safari area and the northern side of the Chewore Safari area, hunting has been suspended since 2016 to allow elephant populations and other key species such as buffalo, lion, leopard to recover from the downward trends. This, coupled with intensified anti-poaching operations is expected to afford a conducive environment for the recovery of the populations. In addition,

101 elephants were also translocated from Save Valley Conservancy to Sapi Safari Area to boost the current population estimates.

- 7. Also takes note of the locations of the tourism concessions and also requests the State Party to ensure that all proposals are subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in line with IUCN World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Assessment, including a specific assessment of impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and the EIA submitted to the World Heritage Centre, for review by IUCN before approval of the projects;**

There has been no pressure to develop within the property, especially along the river banks. The State Party of Zimbabwe has maintained a buffer of 150 metres away from the river banks. There have been no uncontrolled developments from within the property. Developments that have taken place are within the parameters of the Management Plans, Policies and Acts. In addition, the Environmental Acts calls for environmental impact assessment to be conducted before any development. This is a statutory obligation being adhered to in basically all proposed developments in the PAs in Zimbabwe where this WHS is not spared. Over and above the earlier, ecological assessments are conducted by ZPWMA Resident Ecologist taking into account the property's Outstanding Universal Values.

- 8. Reiterates its concern that the proposed Kangaluwi and Chisawa opencast mine in Lower Zambezi National Park could have serious impact on the OUV of the property and urges once again the State Party of Zambia to provide an update to the World Heritage Centre on the status of the mining project and not to go forward with this project, in line with its Decision 38 COM 7B.97;**

Prospecting (which may be followed by mining) is permitted in the Zambian protected areas. There is a strong possibility that an opencast copper mine will be developed in the Chiawa Game Management Area (GMA) and also gold and copper possibilities in the Lower Zambezi National Park. This could be a major threat towards the property's biodiversity conservation programmes. Sometime in May 2021, Zimbabwe was invited to witness a Reactive Monitoring Mission in which IUCN/ UNESCO presided over mining discussions in Zambia. As Zimbabwe we highlighted possible impacts of the mining venture to our shared water resources, wildlife resources and the WHS status. However, to that effect these mining activities are still under public scrutiny and meticulous public consultations. Zambia through ZAMNATCOM would be in a better position to give a more accurate current state of affairs in light of this issue.

- 9. Further reiterates its request to the State Party to continue to uphold its commitment to ensure regular monitoring of the effectiveness of the environmental and monitoring plans of the Vine Camp lodge, and to report to the World Heritage Centre on the monitoring and mitigation activities;**

Regular monitoring is conducted on all the camps in the World Heritage Property. The Tourism Manager together with the resident ecologist always conduct compliancy monitoring on all the camps to ensure that no activity or development will affect the site.

- 10. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2022, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session.**

Noted.