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MOCAMBIQUE SAFARILANDIA, LDA.,
THE ZINAVE ECOLOGICAL
RESEARCH CENTRE,
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Zinave National Park,

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REPORT ON ELEPHANT DISTRIBUTION
IN SAVE RIVER REGION, SOUTHERN MOCAMBIQUE

1. Localization of the area.

See enclosed map.

2. Vegetation

Basically, the area is a savanna-thicket mozaic country, with woodland or thickets of Brachystegia glaucescens; Colophospermum mopane woodland or savanna-woodland; Combretum-Terminalia-Acacia tree-savanna or savanna-woodland; Androstachys "forest"; short Hyparrhenia savanna and patches of open tree savanna or grassland.

3. Water

The only true permanent superficial water in Zinave National Park is the Save River. Meanwhile, in some years there are few small pools that have water during the peak of the dry season.

In the North Bank - Hunting Concession - the situation is the same, except in the coastal belt (approximately between 34°45' and the Ocean) where there are several permanent small lakes.

4. Elephant distribution and numbers

Last week ground survey - after I sent the telegram - showed that Zinave National Park elephant population is at the moment between 400 and 500 animals, concentrated around Zinave and also a few in other areas, mainly Panzila (1) and Setache (2).

According to the white hunters working in the hunting concession, the elephant population of that area is about 700. Apparently, the numbers increased gradually during the last two months.

Unfortunately I have no accurate distribution of the elephants on the North Bank, but according to the same informers the elephants move around all the marked area.

See enclosed maps.

5. Movements

During a flight at the end of March of 1970, over North and South Bank of Save River (Safarilandia Concession) I found a minimum of 368 elephant in the area that is now Zinave National Park, and also a minimum of 385 in the hunting area. I did not find any signs of movement to the south, but found a few trails to the east and many to the west. This flight was not a true census, but only a reconnaissance. I flew in very broad lines, varying between 2 and 12 km broad.

Last week of November, 1970, after the first rains, in the region that is now Zinave National Park we had a heavy emigration "from one day to another".

A ground survey showed 20 animals and flight at the same time did not show any movement to south or to east.

Unfortunately, a defect in the airplane impeded further survey.

Meanwhile, I guess that this emigration took the direction west (I would like to know if was noted at same time any immigration into Gonarezhou, from east).

In November, 1972, I found a herd of c. 50, few km east of Massemane. I believe that these animals had come from the Zinave area.

During ground survey last April, we counted in Zinave National Park, at least 575 elephants.

Unfortunately it was not yet possible to make a true census, using an airplane.

From the meagre data that is available looks like the Zinave elephant populations are not subject to heavy emigration or immigration.

Meanwhile, I do believe that until 1971 the elephants of Zinave area had heavy movements between Gonarezhou and Zinave.

I am quite sure that the movement of the elephants of Save region (Safarilandia hunting area and Zinave National Park) was not influenced - at least during the last decade - by hunting pressure. The clients only took a few males and I do not believe that this small disturbance had any influence on the movements.

As is suggested by the recent Rhodesia Wildlife Department over Massangena region, the elephants do not move in recent times in considerable numbers between Zinave area and the regions situated more to the west.

That is not a surprise for me because Massangena region has been tremendously worked by M.C.T.

Until the end of 1971 they did a lot of game elimination. After that, they had opened roads all over the place, and have been using chemical poisons to control the tsetse fly. As far as I know the spraying has been done from the ground and every single tree has been sprayed with the poison. Probably this causes the unpalatability of most of the elephant food in the region. In the current year, the region has been surveyed by helicopter and several Departments have been working in the area with the motive of preparing the region for human occupation. Besides that, many tribesmen's cattle have been moved from the south to the Massangena region.

All that disturbance has impeded the recolonization of the area by elephant and probably will form a barrier to future elephant movement between Zinave and Gonarezhou or vice versa.

Meanwhile, we can expect movements in future, taking a route south of M.C.T. area. If this movement will occur, will be, I guess, between December and May.

Zinave elephant have some movement to the east, normally during the marula fruit season. Such movements do not involve many animals and the ones that move, come again to Zinave National Park after a short time.

Due to the projected occupation of the region east of Zinave National Park such movement will stop or decrease in future.

The actual movements from Zinave to the south, or vice versa, are of no significant value, and I do believe that they only occur very, very seldom.

I expect due to several reasons, including the existence of prime habitat for elephants, a population explosion of elephants in the coming years in Zinave National Park.

I do not know of any movement of elephant to the west of the Hunting Area. The only movements I know of are north-south and vice versa.

Movements across the Save River are quite frequent and, as far as I know, the animals coming from the north do not stay for long in the south.

During caju (cashew) and Sclerocarya fruit seasons, the elephant also move north, into Machaze and Espungabera regions.

However, two months ago, I heard that a herd of elephant was in the Pembi and Hondo regions.

6. Actual distribution of superficial water

Zinave National Park:

Save River, and pools Malongodje, Nhawkwere (around (2) and Panzila.

Hunting Area:

Save River, a few pools at Repombe River, several small lakes around Gupata and some water in Gorongose and Moreia River, also around Gupata.

7. Hunting camps

See enclosed map.

Obviously there are no hunting camps at Zinave National Park.

The last hunting client at Zinave section was during 1971; Panzila had two clients during 1972.

8. Numbers of elephants shot by clients

The numbers were variable with the number of clients.

Previous 1972, in the area that is now National Park, an average of 15 bulls were shot; last year, two.

In the north, previous, 1972, an average of 25 bulls were shot; after, about 15.

The poaching is not very heavy on the elephants. Last year we lost 8 in the south and 10 in the north.

Jose Luis P. Lobao Tello