

**THE EFFECT OF ELEPHANT UTILISATION ON THE *STERCULIA*
ROGERSII AND *ADANSONIA DIGITATA* POPULATIONS OF THE
KRUGER NATIONAL PARK**

by

Henry Lyle Patrick Kelly

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER SCIENTIAE (WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT)

Centre for Wildlife Management
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
University of Pretoria
Pretoria

Supervisor : Prof. W. van Hoven

September 2000

ABSTRACT

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This study assesses elephant induced damage and mortality of baobab and common star-chestnut trees in the northern Kruger National Park. Comparisons are made between the populations north and south of the Luvuvhu River. The density, population size and age structure are estimated.

The population structure of neither species has been shaped by elephant utilisation. While the baobab population has a healthy age distribution, that of the star-chestnut population shows that recruitment has declined in recent decades.

Utilisation has been found to be higher in the south as a result of higher elephant densities, although recently damage has been greater in the north. Damage increases with tree size. The mortality of baobabs is lower than in other areas where elephants and baobabs co-exist. Elephants are not playing a significant role in mortality of either tree species and management of factors other than elephant is required to improve regeneration rates of these species.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the assistance and support of a number of persons and instances. The author wishes to express his sincere gratitude to the following:

My parents for their support and interest in the study.

South African National Parks for allowing me to do the study in the Kruger National Park.

Ian and Merle Whyte for assisting with logistical arrangements and for their generous hospitality over the last few years.

Charl Steyn and TEBA who made one of their cottages at Pafuri available to me.

The staff and rangers in the Kruger National Park, especially Kobus Wentzel, Jacques Brits and Wilbert van't Foort for their input and assistance during the course of the study.

The staff of Messina Nature Reserve for accommodating me and allowing me to carry out fieldwork there, especially Leon de Jager for his keen interest in the study.

Ben Orban for his valuable advice.

A number of institutions provided financial assistance for this project for which I am extremely grateful. They are:

Ovland

Sappi limited

F.H. Chamberlain

Board Of Executors

Sinovich Group

NBS Pretoria

The study was also supported by a number of bursaries. I would like to express my gratitude to the trustees responsible for contributions from:

The University of Pretoria

Wiplinger Bursary

Bob Blundell Memorial Scholarship