

Ron Thomson's reply on the statement of Mr McDonald

There will always be those who are 'for' controversial wildlife issues and others who are 'against' them. There is simply too much 'emotion' involved and people find excuses to NOT cull elephants.

There is a lot of truth in what McDonald says; but there are a lot of holes in his argument, too - indicating his lack of 'practical experience' (he hasn't 'seen' what I have seen happen over the last 50 years); and his predilection for 'experimenting' with our biological diversity is typical of the 'modern scientific way' of thinking about national park management. Many such scientific people admire the 'castles' that they have build in the clouds which ignore some basic facts on the ground. As one American professor of wildlife management recently said of this kind of attitude (even although 'some' of it I agree with): **Southern African academics are documenting the destruction of southern African ecosystems!** Whilst all this is going on in Kruger - to enable these scientists to 'prove' their case' - our 'conservation priorities' are being ignored: we are losing soil; we are losing plants; we are losing animals. There are HUGE 'holes' in McDonald's argument that you could drive a tank through..... but I am not prepared, AGAIN, to pull his argument to pieces. I am getting too old to bash my head against such adamant academic walls. The proof of the pudding will be seen when the Kruger ecosystem collapses and species ARE lost as a result of NO timely MANAGEMENT action. By then, however, it will be too late to return Kruger to any semblance of what it used to be,

Modern science is constantly searching for 'a new way of doing things' so that 'new' academic individuals can make a name for themselves proving themselves 'right' and others 'wrong'. They have disregarded the fact that "wildlife management" is "the action that man takes to achieve man-desired objectives". This means we can 'create' desirable fluctuations in ecosystems on demand! We know what we want to achieve in Kruger and we should take action (manage) to create what we want (within designated parameters' as Mac Donald points out). But allowing the elephants to 'do their own thing' without constraint is NOT the way to go. And by allowing them to regulate their own numbers through lack of nutrition - as their numbers build up - WILL create the desert of Kruger that I have predicted. If elephants that can - and are eventually forced to - walk up to 25 kms a day to find food (which implies they HAVE to do this because there is NO FOOD - browse or grazing - left inside that 25 kms habitat zone from dry season water) - what is happening to the 'other species' of animals - that ALSO eat grass and browse in the game reserve - but which cannot walk those 25 kms every day?

When an elephant population reaches the stage that the nutrition they get from the food they have available to eat (within 25 kms of water during the dry season), you can rest assured that, within that 25 kms zone, there is NO edible food left during the dry season. No browse. No grazing. All edible trees will have been killed and all palatable grasses will have been eaten out. If that were NOT the case WHY would it be necessary for the elephants to walk those pridigious distances every day to

find food? We MUST then ask the question: What are the other animals species going to eat? What will happen to them? They will die out. That is what they will do..... as is happening in Botswana as I write these words! The attitude that McDonald projects is the reason why Kruger National Park is busy dying.....

But thank you for sending this dissertation to me. Regretfully, it vindicates, to me, that my predictions about Kruger will one day come true..... As my predictions about Botswana ARE, today, coming true.

Ron Thomson

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