

Review of: "Stakeholders' Perception of Socioecological Factors Influencing Forest Elephant Crop Depredation in Gabon, Central Africa"

Gagoitseope Mmopelwa¹

¹ University of Botswana

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Stakeholder's perception of socioecological factors influencing forest elephant crop depredation in Gabon, Central Africa

Summary

The study investigates stakeholder perceptions (villagers and professionals) on factors influencing elephant-crop incidences in Lope National Park in Gabon. The investigation took place in the landscape context of multiple-use forest, protected areas, and village areas. The study recommends an integrated human-elephant coexistence strategy. The paper is well-written. However, the authors should consider the following comments:

Materials and methods

Two villages were selected for the villagers' perception survey. The age of respondents appears to be the main factor considered in selecting respondents for the interviews.

i. The authors should state the number of villages that surround Lope National Park and those that are within the park as readers need to know if the sampling strategy took this information into account. One would have hypothesised that there were more incidences of elephant crop depredation in villages within the national park than outside the national park.

ii. Related to the above question, what criteria were used to select the two villages of Kazamabika and Ramba?

iii. What was the adult population of the villagers who were over 65 years of age and 18-64 years of age? Alternatively, what informed the selection of 40-60 respondents? What criteria were used to determine a sample size of 12 villagers from each village, and how were they selected? Can the authors generalise their results to all the villages within or in the vicinity of parks in Gabon?

iii. According to this study, participants were grouped into two age groups of adults over 65 years old and adults of 18- 64 years old. Were 65-year-old adults excluded from the study, as they do not fall in either category?

vi. While the selection of respondents was based on their age, what would be the influence of the gender of the respondent in such an investigation? Some studies have found that the impacts of human-wildlife conflicts were more

among female-headed households than among male-headed households, due to factors such as differential resource endowment.

Results

Village areas:

- i. What are/were the traditional crop protective methods used, and what are the reasons for their ineffectiveness?
- ii. Who is helping villagers to protect their crops through electric fences? Why are other villages lacking such protection? This is important to state because in some countries, the government takes that responsibility, while in others, this is not the case.
- iii. Explain the meaning of ineffective fencing material, e.g., what materials are these and who supplies them?

Conclusion

Human-wildlife conflict is a widespread problem, especially in Africa, where governments seek to pursue conservation objectives and improve rural livelihoods. Governments are faced with this dilemma. While we understand the objective of this study was to explore stakeholder perceptions, given that human-wildlife conflict is a long-standing issue facing conservation officers, one would have thought that the study would suggest an integrated management strategy in the multiple forest use, village, and protected area landscapes.