

# Increased movement in wildlife areas reduces poaching activities



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The Director of Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) Dr. Kabelo Senyatso has said contrary to some beliefs, increased movement within Chobe National Park (CNP) will not necessarily work in favor of wildlife poachers.

Speaking to The Telegraph following public outrage at the government's invitation for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the development of a dozen Lodges inside the Park, Senyatso said movement within protected wildlife areas helps to deter poaching activities.

"Where there are more people within a protected wildlife area there is actually less poaching activity," Dr. Senyatso has said. The impression has been that poachers will seize the opportunity for increased movement, disguising as tourists only to carry out their illegal activities.

"The absence of tourists in conservation areas enables poachers to act more freely. In normal times, tourists act as additional 'eyes and ears' in conservation areas, and their presence deters poachers from acting, but the decline in tourism activity emboldened poachers," a UK government report on the impact of Covid-19 on poaching has said.

"In Botswana, a spokesperson for the Department of Wildlife and National Parks noted an increase in conflicts due to wild animals (including buffalo, elephants, and lions) straying outside their normal ranges, which was partly attributed to reductions in people's movements and activities during the lockdown period." The research found that in Namibia, a survey of five conservation areas reported that conservancies were experiencing increases in human-wildlife conflict.

Hospitality and Tourism Association of Botswana (HATAB) recently added their voice to the debate against setting up lodges within the Park.

"The Chobe National Park is already experiencing significant environmental pressure and congestion. This has been recognized since the early 1990's with the publication of the 1993 Chobe National Park Management Plan, and more recently the 2000 Chobe National Park Management Plan, both of which were gazetted and stipulated that no new lodges should be developed within Chobe National Park," HATAB has said.

The organization says the addition of eight new lodges not only runs contrary to the gazetted Management Plans but, in addition, will have a very significant impact on the Chobe National Park river-front by inter alia increasing congestion, increasing environmental pollution, restricting animal movement and placing increased pressure on already threatened species such as the Chobe Bushbuck. "This will be especially so during the construction period of the proposed new lodges."