

# Wildlife as a Basis for Future Tourism Development

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## **Introduction**

Whilst a good deal of work has been carried out on wildlife, from the tourist industry point of view in the past, much of it is unpublished. For instance, recommendations on a broad front were made by the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation at the end of 1974, yet this information is not available to the public sector. The Conference held in 1971, in Gaborone, on the "Sustained Production from Semi-arid Areas" produced only three papers that made any reference to tourism, and those three did not major in on the subject. Then in 1973, W. von Richter produced a paper entitled "Wildlife Industry Survey Summary for Botswana" (1973), which really put perspective on the values of wildlife utilisation in Botswana. From this survey came the very necessary base from which both progress can be measured and the economic and people-benefits advertised.

Finally, one of the 1971 conference authors, T. Riney touched on the crux of the whole subject in his paper when he wrote: "The problem worrying me most is that a very large proportion of the (Okavango) Swamp water originates outside Botswana in another nation. Since I first mentioned this problem several years ago, I have taken the trouble to learn of changes in land-use in the rivers draining into the Okavango, and have learned that the distribution and intensity of cattle grazing has been increasing in relevant Angola areas for the past ten years at least. This inevitably means a greater silt load in the rivers, with eventual serious consequences for the survival of the Okavango." In other words, unless human population planning is co-ordinated with economic planning, what we set out to develop can be knocked out by poor "next door" planning or itself knock out its own neighbour on the development schedule. And then both and probably all are lost.

## **Profile of the Botswana Wildlife Trust**

For the tourist to Botswana, whether he be an animal trophy hunter or armed with a camera, he is there for the reasons of seeing abundant and spectacular wildlife, visiting and travelling through large tracts of wilderness country where the ravages of his own civilisation have either been kept at bay or are as yet absent; for the natural beauty of the landscape as an extreme contrast to the ugly sophistication of his everyday life and for a holiday break, largely removed from his fellow man, noise and atmospheric pollution. It is a combination of aesthetics, spiritual upliftment, a return to the basic simplicities of life, a retreat from the conflict and competition inevitable in the dense population groupings of the world's developed areas and a place in which man can review his status and regain perspective.

I am of the opinion that that section of man who travels or holidays looking for wilderness and wildlife, would neither want these aesthetic products nor derive any benefit from them if they were not of some selective advantage to him. It should be stressed that as far as I am aware, this hypothesis is totally unmeasured and untasted, though medically speaking, there seems to be little doubt that a holiday is an accepted and regularly recommended aspect of preventive, remedial and recuperative medicine.

On a review of the occupations, as given by the 637 tourists who have visited Botswana on the Lindblad Photographic Safari over the period 1971-1975 inclusive, it is interesting to note that not one of those tourists made his/her living as a manual labourer — all were managerial or professionally employed. Whilst this is probably primarily an economic factor, it is, nevertheless, indicative of a situation that does exist in wildlife tourism, namely that the manual labourer generally does not look for wildlife and wilderness as his holiday venue. This tends to support the hypothesis that wilderness holidays offer, and are used for, the aesthetic, and occasionally physical, contrasts dealt with in an earlier paragraph. Two additional facts further support the theory, namely that only 7 of those 637 tourists (ie, 1%) lived out of built-up urban or city environments (where human-to-human contact is at its highest levels), whilst no visitor came from an under-developed nation. The rural area (ie, farming) constituent of the Lindblad tourists is interesting, for only 2% of the American population lives on farms, 98% being in cities or built-up areas. Hence, we see here a bias to the city-dweller in the Lindblad figures. A review of other photographic safari companies that send tourists to Botswana, reveals that much the same pattern applies to them as well, though this is on a personal comment basis unsupported by statistics. It is also worth mentioning that Lindblad Travel's clients come from America, Europe, South America and Japan, whilst for most other companies clients are drawn largely from South Africa. Price of a safari plays a significant role here, for the overseas visitor has first to foot the cost of the air transport in getting to Botswana, then the cost of the actual safari. Hence, an overseas visitor will face a minimum cost of P1 000 for the land arrangement part of a 14-day holiday in Botswana, in Lindblad's case it is P2 500 as a minimum, whilst a client living in Southern Africa will probably pay P500 or less for the same period. This price differential seems to result in the overseas visitor being older (for Lindblad, 67% were over 50 years of age), whilst visitors from Southern Africa are almost all under 50 years of age, a lower income bracket than the American and they prefer more roughing it, which is cheaper than using permanent lodges of the degree of comfort and facility as provided, for instance, by Khwai River Lodge. The trophy hunter will, on average, be younger than the Lindblad tourist (because of the physical side of his safari) and probably of an even higher income bracket. But he too will fit into the developed nation, city-dweller type. The point of this preamble is simple and important. The touring visitor to Botswana goes there because of the wilderness and the wildlife (which, of course, are inextricably connected); he is largely a city-dweller from a developed nation and he is relatively of higher income bracket. More important is the fact that Botswana has only one attraction for the tourist: her wildlife. There are no alternative attractions, such as sea coasts, mountain chains or colourful and historic civilisations, nor are there developed sports facilities, chains of hotels, casinos or shops, etc, which are the mainstay of tourist attraction in countries such as Spain or France or the Far East in Hong Kong or Japan. Thus, without her wildlife and these great wilderness areas, Botswana has nothing to attract the touring visitor. There are not only *no* alternatives, but it is doubtful also if Botswana could create them.

Finally, there are two sub-groups of tourists to Botswana which should be mentioned. The first is classes of school-age children who are taken in large parties, accompanied either by their teacher or a specialist wildlife conservationist, to some of the reserves (here we see long-term investment in wildlife through education), although there is but little immediate financial gain to the nation. There are, of course, long-term benefits which will accrue in her wilderness account. The nation will be the poorer, and lack of a degree of self-insurance, if it has no internal population with any degree of interest or value for conserved areas; and probably has no right to deprive its future generations of this asset. Especially so when thinking of

tribal hunting and its recreational and protein values.

The second of these two minor groups is the private tourist, who travels to the wilderness areas of Botswana in his own vehicle and with his own rations and equipment. On this "do-it-yourself" basis, this is, of course, the cheapest form of travel which attracts two types of visitor. The one is the man who values his wildlife, his conservation and the preservation of the freedom of movement that he is offered over most of northern Botswana. This tourist is to be encouraged and made welcome, for he destroys nothing, appreciates greatly and does a fine job of not only recommending the area to others of his kind, but also financially supports conservation bodies.

#### The historical background to the development of the wildlife industry in Botswana

Tourism started in Botswana with safari hunting in 1962. Obviously this date is rather arbitrary, and is based on my own observations, but it is useful as a base line. In the case of sport trophy hunting, I have given 1961 as the date from which fully-professional, paying and integrated hunting safaris became available for the foreign market. Mr H. Selby arrived in Botswana in 1961 from Kenya, with the company Ker Downey and Selby behind him. The Henderson brothers from Rhodesia began operating in the north of Botswana and Kasane itself became quite a centre for hunting safari companies. The advent of these companies meant that the name Botswana, as an area of abundant wildlife and wilderness countryside became known to the American market (the largest for sport trophy hunters) by way of advertising, personal recommendation, etc. It should be noted that this was the first of a trend, in that private individuals and private companies were responsible for putting Botswana on the international tourist map. This trend continues to this day, both for the advertising part and the development part. More will be said about this point at a later stage.

Since 1962 the hunting safari business has grown enormously as a result of the hunting companies finding ways and means of getting to all corners of the country, a worldwide increase in the number of tourists wishing to hunt, hunters whose recreation used to be in other areas of Africa, coming to Botswana because of either political considerations (i.e. Mozambique, Angola, Rhodesia), or because of over-utilisation of game and wilderness area (i.e. in Kenya), and because of better advertising in potential market areas. Then, too, Botswana has built up an enviable reputation amongst the hunting tourist market for its abundance of game and, thus, potential for successful hunting. This last factor contributes to higher turnover for the company providing the tourist with his hunting facility, for they can cut the time spent in the field per hunter, and thus put through more hunters in any one season.

Linking the hunting part of Botswana's wildlife tourism with the photographic operations that exist today, is Ker Downey and Selby, for in 1969/1970 Mr Selby built the Khwai River Lodge on the northern edge of the Moremi Wildlife Reserve. To my mind, this move crystallised the future for the photographic safari operator, and photo tourism for Botswana. The advent of the Khwai River Lodge meant that here at last was a place providing all the facilities for the tourist who came from outside Africa, for prior to this, the only photo tourists were those from southern Africa, who had the transport and equipment to "do-it-themselves." Of course, Crocodile Camp did exist in Maun and Kasane had the Chobe River Hotel, but they did not provide the fully-integrated facilities for the overseas tourist, and so were used more as a base for the "do-it-themselves" brigade than for the overseas visitor. Clearly a tourist from outside Africa wishing to tour Botswana can hardly provide his own personal infrastructure in order to do so, hence the advent of the Khwai River Lodge meant the availability of all the facilities this tourist needed, and had the money to

hire in the form of accommodation, food, transport, etc. Of further importance was the fact that Selby went for the more expensive form of tourism, which consequently attracts less people, but is based on the sound principle of high-cost, low-volume trade. Sound because low volumes mean better controls, less disturbance to the environment and greater economic viability. Further, they have the advantage of being labour-intensive, a most important factor to a developing nation.

The other significant moment in the photo tourist development of Botswana was the arrival of Mr Lars-Eric Lindblad, of the company Lindblad Travel Inc., of New York, in late 1970. As with Ker Downey and Selby, Lindblad has been operating for a long time in Kenya, the one in hunting and lodges, the latter as a marketing organisation which built and sold photo safaris around the facilities available for the photo tourist, in Kenya. Lindblad was aware of the crowding in Kenya's wildlife areas, as was Selby, and hence their respective moves to Botswana.

Lindblad and Selby came together, the former to market worldwide a regular weekly departure for a photo safari to Botswana which would use the facilities provided by the latter. Thus was born the first fully-integrated photo safari to, and through, the wilderness areas of northern Botswana. It is worth adding that this safari series encouraged Botswana Game Industries in Francistown to develop a facility in Shakawe, Selby to put up a tented camp at Savuti, and, in due course, one at Ougana Lagoon as well. Once again, private enterprise initiated all the developments.

Today there are many other companies offering photo safaris for groups of tourists wishing to spend a week, or longer, in Botswana, and there is a considerable diversity in what these tourists are being offered in the way of different facilities, destinations, durations and geographic areas. There is now a delightful houseboat which takes six passengers on a week-long cruise down the upper part of the Delta; at Linyanti a superbly-equipped tented facility with a raised platform barge from which guests can view game over a standing aquatic vegetation; two sophisticated and luxuriously-appointed lodges, a 100-bed hotel, camping safaris, wilderness trails, several permanent tented camps and several companies offering hunting safaris.

In 1973 the whole wildlife industry in Botswana was worth just under \$10 million, and ranked as her fifth most important economic sector after agriculture, mining, manufacture and construction. Most of this was achieved in a few short years. In terms of wildlife tourism, ie, sport trophy hunting and photo camping safaris, 1974 showed these two parts of the industry bring in P1,1 million. About a third of this went to wages and salaries for the local population, whilst over 5 000 tourists came to the wildlife areas of Botswana in 1964. It is possible that these figures for this year now exceed P2 million and 7 500. In short, high-cost, low-volume tourism is firmly in place.

Finally, where development of the industry to its present position is concerned, I would like to record a few less well-known facts about the wildlife photo tourist industry as a result of a survey carried out by the voluntary Botswana Association of Photographic Safari Operators. This association had, in 1975, 16 members, all of whom operated or controlled photo safaris to or in Botswana. Not all operators of photo safaris are members of this Association, so the figures quoted are, thus, conservative.

1. Expenditure by those 16 companies, for the year 1975, on advertising Botswana, amounted to P272 000.
2. These 16 companies and their clients spent P447 000 in Botswana.
3. 30 770 bed nights were used in Botswana.
4. One of these 16 companies, namely Lindblad Travel, has spent P200 000 on advertising its Botswana Safari Programme between 1971 and 1976. The

advertising produced from this expenditure was estimated to have been seen by 70 million people all over the world, largely as a result of an award-winning television programme that it commissioned in 1973.

5. Gratuities alone paid out by Lindblad Travel to the employees of Botswana companies involved with wildlife tourism, amounted to P10 000 for the years 1973, 1974 and 1975.
6. Lindblad Travel, as a single consumer, spends P30 000 per annum on air charter facilities within Botswana.

Clearly, the industry is today a major economic factor to Botswana, and, in particular, to northern Botswana, where the majority of the wildlife is situated, to the extent that tourism contributed, in 1974/75, P3,2 million. In times of depressed economics in Southern Africa, such as we have at present, the more widespread Botswana's economic base is, the better, for three of her major industries, agriculture, construction and manufacturing, are susceptible to fall-offs in times of adverse economic conditions. This is particularly so of Botswana's agriculture, for it is primarily one of red-meat production, which is currently going through a particularly bad time. Her tourist industry is far less susceptible for the reasons that (a) a good many of her highest-value tourists come from the wealthy, developed nations of America, Europe, etc, where economic conditions have improved considerably; (b) a reduction in the wilderness character of other parts of Africa and political upheaval in other African states. Both of these points mean that Botswana attracts this trade, which used to go to other countries, on an increasing scale; (c) on the basis of private enterprise taking on most of the tourist development expenditure whilst Government concerns itself with roads, power and game park administration, Botswana has a low-cost, high-return economic sector which fits perfectly into acknowledged anti-inflationary practice, and (e) tourism is labour-intensive. An example of this being the tented facility at Linyanti, which has beds for 12 tourists and employs 10 full-time members on its staff. This sort of ratio applies in several other camps and lodges.

#### The essentials of future development for wildlife tourism

As a way of dealing with the future in terms of what can and should be done, let's look at what we have in the way of assets and problems, for wildlife tourism and in the politico-economic field:

##### 1. Assets

- 1.1 Large areas of wilderness country.
- 1.2 Very small human populations per square mile.
- 1.3 Large areas of conserved country, either by way of game reserve, national park or concession area.
- 1.4 Considerable wilderness diversity running from desert to permanent aquatic conditions.
- 1.5 Large populations of spectacular wild animals. Great diversity of vertebrate and invertebrate fauna. Considerable vegetative speciation.
- 1.6 Relative to other parts of Africa, considerable areas of the country which are largely ecologically sound, or at least close enough to that state to be either restored or where further deterioration could be prevented.
- 1.7 The presence of certain archaeologically or historically-important places. This last point is made with the thought in mind that if you don't know where you are, go back to where you started!

## 2. Problems

2.1 Apparent lack of one central, ecologically-based plan for the development of all aspects of Botswana's economic structure, which accords fully-integrated planning in proportionately equal parts to human population growth, agriculture, mining, manufacture, construction and wildlife tourism. The point being that none of these six, least of all wildlife tourism, will survive in balance with the others unless this is done.

Here it is worth digressing for a moment to give an example of a potential catastrophe unless human ecologies are considered along with wildlife ecologies. There is, at present, a programme to either reduce or eliminate the tsetse fly, depending upon the area selected for control measures. Yet there is apparently no plan which clearly states where cattle may or may not invade areas at present under the fly's control, nor thought for the human population growth that will also follow, when the fly is gone. We would be deluding ourselves if we were to assume that, in the long-term, present boundaries around a wilderness area will necessarily survive cattle invasion just because there are boundaries.

2.2 A short tourist season. Most photographic safari operators only operate between May and November, and much the same applies to the hunters, though for a different reason. In the photo trade it's a question of summer rainfall, which renders present roads into the wilderness areas impassable. The hunters find the same problem, but their off-season is otherwise a matter of breeding conditions amongst the animals they hunt.

2.3 Seasonal variations in game concentrations. It is this point that, to a certain extent, militates against touring the Kalahari Desert when north-eastern Botswana is closed during the summer rains. Good game-viewing conditions may prevail in a particular area in the Kalahari, but the chances of these conditions lasting for the full period of the off-season in the other game areas of Botswana is minimal.

2.4 Large tracts of land potentially attractive to the tourist are virtually closed to him, on the one hand, whilst other areas which have already been designated "wilderness areas" are overcrowded and in danger of becoming over-utilised. Here one thinks of the hunting concession areas being used, in some cases, for less than 100 tourists per year, whilst the Savuti is in danger of looking like the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen. I am of the opinion that hunting concession areas can be used by the hunter and the small tour group without getting in each other's way.

2.5 Apparent overlap between tribal hunting and tourist safari hunting over the same areas.

2.6 Appearance of bilharzia in the Maun area and presence of sleeping sickness in other areas.

2.7 Lack of a centralised control/booking facility in the Department of Wildlife, National Parks and Tourism, so that tourist numbers within the parks can be efficiently regulated, bookings for camp sites, beds and facilities centralised and made efficient, and the issue of permits to enter the different parks co-ordinated. One of the reasons why this essential service does not exist is because the private sector has done most of the tourist development within the parks. It is of little use to edict that only so many people may be in the Savuti Public Camp site (for instance) if the touring public has to drive 1 000 miles before it can find out whether or not there is room for the short period it wishes to be there. Further, there is very little available in the way of alternative venues if his first choice of destination is, indeed, full-up.

2.8 Several cordon fences, originally erected to control the spread of foot-and-mouth disease, need relocating, as much for reasons of destruction to wildlife as to be more ecologically based for greater efficacy as controllers of this disease's spread.

## Politico-economic position

### 3. Assets

3.1 Political stability and peace in Botswana.

3.2 Proportionate to the amount of labour available, particularly in northern Botswana, tourism provides a real and growing source of employment. In 1973 the wildlife industry employed 1 115 persons. The population of Ngamiland, where the majority of those jobs are, was 42 399 in 1964. Allowing the outside (Rhodesian) figure of 85% of the rural population being under the age of 50, and one can immediately see the significance of wildlife as an employer.

3.3 Central Government has a relatively minor commitment to fund wildlife and tourism, and some time ago decided not directly to fund the tourist area. Hence, private enterprise must do its own financing which, therefore, makes its capital commitment load the heavier, and loan or borrowing rates higher. From Government's point of view, however, this is a load off its shoulders in favour of wildlife.

3.4 Botswana's political stability, potential in a number of development fields and its low population, have made it something of considerable acceptability in terms of aid from developed nations, World Bank, etc. Through the infrastructure this helps wildlife. In particular, Botswana attracts expertise in the form of assistance.

3.5 Hunter/gatherer forms of food collection apply considerably in Ngamiland. This form of food collection is less likely to erupt into blatant and aggressive wildlife culling than if the people were entirely dependent upon cultivation of grain crops which can, with drought, fail altogether.

3.6 A wealthy infrastructure in the form of protein production, hide, skin and trophy processing and the manufacture of tourist artefacts all depend on wildlife.

### 4. Problems

4.1 Lack of venture capital for the entrepreneur in the tourist field for the development and use of other wildlife areas. Hence, stagnant diversification and lack of competition.

4.2 Present investors in wildlife tourism often invest in this sector more for the aesthetics and way of life than for the financial returns, and thus, standards are often allowed to slip.

4.3 Political instability and/or physical danger to the tourist in countries adjoining Botswana, which has the effect of "rubbing off" on Botswana; especially with the overseas market, where exact geographic locations of "hot spots" are simply not known or understood.

4.4 Lack of speedy and reliable all-weather communications which results in higher basic operating costs to the entrepreneur. Running tourist facilities under these conditions means that petroleum products, spares for machinery and staple foods which are not produced in Ngamiland cost more than they should.

4.5 There is a lack of training facilities for local personnel wishing to enter one or other of the existing arms of wildlife tourism, be it as a member of the Department of Wildlife, National Parks and Tourism, or as a safari guide to the photo tourist or hunter. At the moment, it is all "on the job" instruction, which is unlikely to keep pace with the industry.

4.6 Difficulties exist in obtaining long leases on land suitable for tourist development, on the one hand, and fear of expropriation on the other.

4.7 Lack of job pride and identification with the aims and objectives of the employer amongst some of the field employees of the Department of Wildlife and Tourism. This leads to a lack of mutual respect between its employees and tourists, so controls

break down. Authority is challenged and inefficiencies in the handling of tourists result.

4.8 Whilst much of the expatriate expertise available to Botswana is sound, efficient and practically viable, a good deal is not simply because the expatriates are non-African, of continental origin and have no concept of Africa's speciality. Not only are these people poorly equipped to begin to understand the considerations that are African, but they do not spend long enough on contract to arrive at a position where some understanding would result from their practical involvement. The sources exist, the interest in giving the assistance is substantial and the advice and planning given would be more practical and practicable.

4.9 Finally, the paucity of real Government expenditure on advertising Botswana internationally, of producing integrated literature for the visitor, films, etc, and just being professional about attracting people to the country.

Having listed all these pros and cons, most of what is needed for wildlife to be a basis for future development becomes more obvious. Especially so when one notes that, in a certain sense, wildlife is there, but tourism really is not! This leads me to the full circle of re-emphasising the most basic of all these facts: namely that wildlife is tourism in Botswana, or tourism is only touring for wildlife. To develop tourism further, and within the agreed bounds of low volumes and retention of the essential wilderness character of Botswana, we must look at the industry within the human development context, population control, correct land utilisation, etc. We must have people in mind when we think of elephant, giraffe and lion, and sitting around campfires.

Though I do not have the answer to what the very best form of human utilisation for the present wilderness areas of Botswana is, and human utilisation is the order of the pressure upon these areas, my instinct tells me that wildlife will almost certainly be that answer in some form or another.

#### Conclusion and summary

In concluding this review, I must note that wildlife is the basis for tourism in Botswana. I must also note that the Wildlife industry has grown to its present position of being the 5th most important sector of Botswana's economy with virtually no direct Government expenditure other than on communications and that there is ample reason to expect the industry to continue to grow. Particularly will it grow in the tourist arena, due to the abundance of wilderness area and the fact that politics, personal security and over-utilisation in other areas of Africa, coupled with a worldwide increase in tourist interest in Africa, are all encouraging more visitors. Wildlife is also an increasingly important user of labour.

But all of this will mean nothing in the medium to long-term unless human population planning and an integrated approach to all developments within Botswana are adopted and based on soundly-researched information on the assets available to all, for all. Until this happens, wildlife tourism in Botswana will continue to be a Cinderella without a home to run to when its midnight comes. From many authors of many papers, particularly those delivered at the conference in 1971 in Gaborone, one is left with little doubt that wildlife, with its various forms of utilisation and by different peoples, is the best use of a high proportion of Botswana's land.

To sum up this point, I'd like to quote Dr Raymond Dassmann, who said at the Kinshasa conference: "What we need is conservation as though people mattered and development as if nature mattered." The ecological values of wildlife to Botswana are

as important as the economic ones, thus tourism must be seen as being as important as all the other factors which go to make up this fabulous land, but no more so. Planning to integrate them is desperately needed for the tourist market and its development, and that means wildlife.