

The Transfrontier Transect

An opportunity to learn about the effects of different wildlife management regimes across Africa's prime wildlife area

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With the creation of the Limpopo Trans-Frontier Park exciting research opportunities have emerged to look at the effects of wildlife management over time and at different intensities. The protected areas of the eastern and central Lowveld and escarpment and the Mozambique transfrontier zone form this transfrontier ecosystem. This region supports one of the most diverse large mammal populations found in any subregion in the world, and covers an area of about 4 million ha. The largest part of this area is covered by the Kruger National Park (KNP) of 2 million ha and the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique of 1 million ha. This area is variously managed as national park, provincial nature reserve, private reserve, wilderness, resource area and state land. These management regimes vary from "hands off" in most of the Limpopo Park to very intensive management of wildlife in the private game reserves, with the Kruger National Park in between.

Fences separating different land uses have changed animal migration patterns while the proliferation of artificial water points has altered the mammal and plant species composition and distribution. However, it is very difficult to determine what the ideal state could be and depends largely on the objectives for the area. For

example, due to the low impact of man in the area, the newly created Limpopo National Park in Mozambique is the closest to being in a 'pristine' state when compared to the intensively managed areas to the west of the KNP. The study area thus provides a unique opportunity to measure the long-term effect of the different management regimes utilized in the Kruger National Park, adjacent private reserves and resource areas.

To make use of this research opportunity we hope to launch a combined project with Limpopo National Park and the private reserves to improve the understanding and knowledge about the effect of management (fire, fencing, water provision etc.) on the ecosystem and on sustainable resource utilization

Study area

We hope to include the following areas in the study:

- The Wildlife sanctuary in the Limpopo National Park
- The Limpopo National Park
- The Kruger National Park
- The Adjacent Private Protected Areas (APPA) to the west of the KNP
- Mariyeta Resource area between Thohoyandou Punda Maria road and the

Letaba river

The project goals are:

- Scientifically based recommendations for long-term wildlife management in the Lowveld at different scales and management intensities
- An improved understanding of the system resilience to management procedures and resource utilization
- A baseline that could be used

to detect long term change in biodiversity and system function

We welcome anyone that is interested in joining in on this project that we hope will be of benefit to all the parties involved in the research.

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Acacia name change

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DNA analyses has shown that the genus *Acacia* could be divided into five separate groups each of which could stand as a genus. The African species are found in three of these genera. All the Australian fell in a single genus.

Nomenclature is published in the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN) which provides a rule-bound process for allocating names to plants. Among these rules is the one establishing the right for the original type, in this case *Acacia nilotica*, to retain the generic name. However, there are also provisions for a new type to be allocated to a generic name. There is a rule around nomenclatural stability which argues that the genus which retains the most species when a genus is split gets the original generic name. So, although there is speculation that the Australians won the case for retaining "*Acacia*" for their species through public pressure, the rules of the ICBN allow this on legitimate grounds. Australia has about a 1000 species in *Acacia* whilst the rest of the world shares only a few hundred. This splitting of the rest of the world's species into several genera make it difficult, in my opinion, to argue for the use of *Acacia* for African

species.

The new nomenclatural proposals for *Acacia* have been published in *Taxon*. Then the spermatophyte committee of the ICBN recommended the changes to the General Committee who have also agreed to them. The Nomenclature Section of the International Botanical Congress presented this name change as a resolution to the Congress which passed the name changes, so this is now incorporated in the ICBN. The final word is that according to the ICBN the genus *Acacia* has been split and the name given to the Australian species and a few other species from Asia and Africa.

There is a loophole for those of us who do not like this change. Classification, as opposed to nomenclature, is not regulated by these rules. People are free to follow the classification scheme they choose. Synonyms are not necessarily illegitimate names. So you can continue to call *Acacia karroo* this legitimately, or its new name *Vachellia karroo*. If you refer to the genus you can use *Acacia sensu lato* to refer to the old genus in its broad sense, or *Acacia sensu stricto* to refer to the new ICBN delimitation of the genus.