

Kruger National Park Information

History

The area that the park currently encompasses was occupied by nomadic hunter-gatherers for thousands of years. People from Europe arrived in the early eighteenth century.

Jakob Louis van Wyk introduced in the Volksraad of the old South African Republic, a motion to create the game reserve which would become the Kruger National Park. That motion, introduced together with another Volksraad member by the name of R. K. Loveday, and accepted for discussion in September 1895 by a majority of one vote, resulted in the proclamation by Paul Kruger president of the Transvaal Republic, on March 26, 1898, of a "Government Wildlife Park." This park would later be known as the Sabie Game Reserve and was expanded into the Kruger National Park in 1926. The park was initially created to control hunting and protect the diminished number of animals in the park.

James Stevenson Hamilton became the first warden of the reserve in 1902. The reserve was located in the southern one-third of the modern park. Shingwedzi Reserve, now in northern Kruger National Park, was proclaimed in 1903. In 1926, Sabie Game Reserve, the adjacent Shingwedzi Game Reserve, and farms were combined to create Kruger National Park.

During 1923, the first large groups of tourists started visiting the Sabie Game Reserve, but only as part of the South African Railways' popular "Round in Nine" tours. The tourist trains used the Selati railway line between Komatipoort on the Mozambican border and Tzaneen in Limpopo Province. The tour included an overnight stop at Sabie Bridge (now Skukuza) and a short walk, escorted by armed rangers, into the bush. It soon became a highlight of the tour and it gave valuable support for the campaign to proclaim the Sabie Game Reserve as a national park. After the proclamation of the Kruger National Park in 1926, the first three tourist cars entered the park in 1927, jumping to 180 cars in 1928 and 850 cars in 1929.

Warden James Stevenson-Hamilton retired on the 30th April 1946, after 44 years as warden of the Kruger Park and its predecessor, the Sabie Game Reserve. He was replaced by Colonel J.A.B. Sandenburg of the South African Air Force. During 1959, work commenced to completely fence the park boundaries. Work started on the southern boundary along the Crocodile River and in 1960 the western and northern boundaries were fenced, followed by the eastern boundary with Mozambique. The purpose of the fence was to curb the spread of diseases, facilitate border patrolling and inhibit the movement of poachers.

The Makuleke area in the northern part of the park was forcibly taken from the Makuleke people by the Apartheid South Africa government in 1969 and about 1500 of them were relocated to land to the South so that their original tribal areas could be integrated into the greater Kruger National Park. In 1996 the Makuleke tribe submitted a land claim for 19,842 hectares (198.42 km²) in the northern part of the Kruger National Park. The land was given back to the Makuleke people; however, they chose not to resettle on the land but to engage with the private sector to invest in tourism, thus resulting in the building of several game lodges.

In 2002, Kruger National Park, Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe, and Limpopo National Park in Mozambique were incorporated into the a peace park, the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

On 15 September 2010, Park authorities conducted a controlled weather-related fire experiment to test the effectiveness of very fast and intense fire in controlling brush. This experiment was done near Afsaal picnic spot in the south of the park. The firestorm burnt several rhino badly and killed at least one. Pictures taken by horrified visitors of one badly burnt rhino made the front page of at least one major South African newspaper.

Geography

The park lies in the east of South Africa, in the eastern parts of Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. Phalaborwa, Limpopo is the only town in South Africa that borders the Kruger National Park. It is one of the largest national parks in the world, with an area of almost 20,000 square kilometres (7,700 sq mi). The park is approximately 360 kilometres (220 mi) long, and has an average width of 65 kilometres (40 mi) at its widest point, the park is 90 kilometres (56 mi) wide from east to west. Several rivers run through the park from west to east, including the Sabie River.

Climate

The climate of the Kruger National Park and Lowveld is subtropical. Summer days are humid and hot with temperatures often soaring to above 38 °C (100 °F). The rainy season is from September until May. The dry winter season is the ideal time to visit this region for various reasons. There is less chance of contracting malaria and the days are milder. Viewing wildlife is more rewarding as the vegetation is sparser and animals are drawn to the waterholes to drink every morning and evening.

Flora and fauna

Plants: The Kruger National Park is divided into six eco-systems: Baobab sandveld, Mopani scrub, Lebombo knobthorn-marula bushveld, mixed acacia thicket, Combretum-silver clusterleaf woodland on granite and riverine forest. Altogether it has roughly 1,982 species of plants.

Birds: Out of the 517 species of birds found at Kruger, 253 are residents, 117 non-breeding migrants, and 147 nomads.

Mammals: All the Big Five game animals are found at Kruger National Park, which has more species of mammals than any other African Game Reserve (at 147 species). There are webcams set up to observe the wildlife. The park stopped culling elephants in 1989 and tried translocation, but by 2004 the population had increased to 11,670 elephants, by 2006 to approximately 13,500 and by 2009 to 11,672. The park's habitats can only sustain about 8,000 elephants. The park started using annual contraception in 1995, but has stopped that due to problems with delivering the contraceptives and upsetting the herds.

Kruger supports packs of the endangered African Wild Dog, of which there are thought to be only about 400 in the whole of South Africa.

Kruger National Park holds over 48 tons of ivory in storage. According to Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), it is allowed to sell 30 tons. Following approval by CITES, 47 metric tons of stockpiled ivory from Kruger were auctioned on November 6, 2008. The sale fetched approximately US\$6.7 million which will be used towards increasing anti-poaching activity. The average price for the 63 lots on auction was US\$142/kg.

Reptiles: Kruger houses 114 species of reptile, including 3000 crocodiles.

Accommodation

The Kruger National Park has 21 rest camps, as well as 2 private lodge concessions, and 15 designated private safari lodges. The concessions are parcels of land operated by private companies in partnership with communities, who outsource the operation of private lodges.