

Communities' Attitudes and Perceptions of Protected Areas in South Africa: Insights from the Somkhanda Game Reserve

Authors : Sakhile Nsukwini, Urmilla Bob

Abstract : Meaningful community participation is essential to the long-term success of protected areas. Hence, it is important to understand what drives neighbouring communities' attitudes and perceptions towards protected areas. This study sought to determine local community attitudes towards conservation and protected areas, as well as their perceptions of benefits and participation at Somkhanda Game Reserve. Semi-structured interviews were held with experienced park officials, while a structured household survey and focus group discussions were conducted across two surrounding villages. The results highlighted a number of interesting findings, including support for biodiversity conservation and protected areas balanced by considerable negativity towards the Somkhanda Game Reserve itself. It was also determined that despite stated co-management policies, community residents perceived there was little meaningful participation, and benefits were poorly communicated and unfairly distributed. Practical suggestions were made for cooperatively developing more effective participation with the communities, despite limited available resources.

Keywords : communities, protected areas, perceptions, co-management, land restitution

Conference Title : ICWBC 2022 : International Conference on Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation

Conference Location : Bali, Indonesia

Conference Dates : October 20-21, 2022