



CITES & LIVELIHOODS CASE STUDY 2022

Nile Crocodile Harvest and Trade in Zimbabwe

SPECIES, USE AND TRADE

Nile crocodiles (*Crocodylus niloticus*) are sustainably utilized and traded in Zimbabwe primarily for the production of skins and for sport hunting. Crocodile ranching involves the regulated harvest of eggs from the wild to supply crocodile farms and then the hatching and raising of juvenile crocodiles on the farms. Crocodiles are ranched for the production of skins but meat and other by-products are also utilised. In 2020, Zimbabwe exported 70,000 crocodile skins worth USD\$28 million. Crocodile sport hunting is controlled through annual quotas in agreement with CITES. Fewer than 100 trophies are exported annually and many of these are problem animals responsible for human crocodile conflict. Management of crocodile use is overseen by the

Zimbabwean National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and the Crocodile Farmers' Association of Zimbabwe. Regular aerial and nest surveys are carried out to monitor the status of the wild population. The national population is well represented in protected areas and the species remains common including in some human dominated habitats. Zimbabwe has been subjected to decades of socio-economic and environmental challenges, and poverty rates are high. The sustainable use of crocodiles in Zimbabwe is recognized as a nationally important contributor to foreign currency earnings, as a resilient engine for rural development in remote areas, and as a means of mitigating against human wildlife conflict.



ZIMBABWE



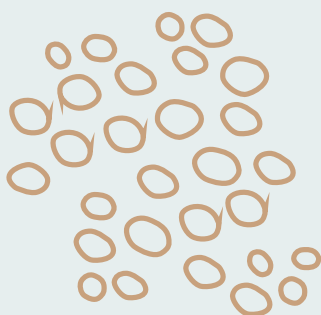
NILE CROCODILE
Crocodylus niloticus



APPENDIX II (IN ZIMBABWE)



LEAST CONCERN



LIVELIHOOD BENEFITS

Extreme poverty affects nearly 50% of the Zimbabwean population. Crocodile utilisation provides direct employment for approximately 1500 people, often in remote and inhospitable parts of the country where alternative livelihoods are scarce. The estimated collective annual wage bill is over USD\$ 10 million. In addition to direct employment, the crocodile industry supports the construction and development of important rural infrastructure such as roads, schools, and clinics. The industry has proved to be resilient to socio-economic and environmental shocks (e.g., political turmoil and severe drought). Without the trade in crocodiles, growth points in marginal regions would lose a key industry and the economy would lose a significant source of revenue.

CONSERVATION IMPACTS

The sustainable use and trade in Nile crocodiles has provided direct incentives for rural communities to tolerate large populations of a dangerous predator. The income generated is also thought to dampen the incentives for local people to engage in illegal wildlife trade including of threatened and charismatic species such as elephants and rhinos. The persistence of crocodiles has also helped to preserve ecosystem services and biodiversity in scarce and vulnerable freshwater habitats.

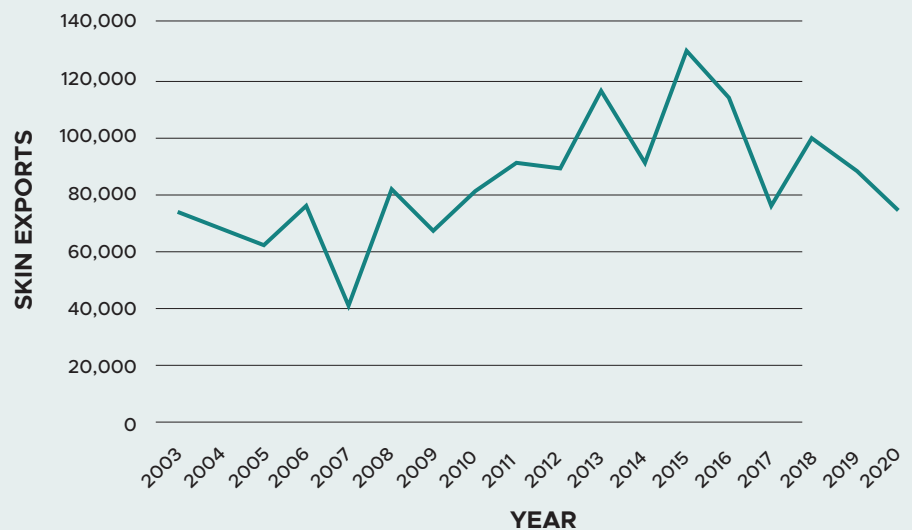


Fig. 2. Exports of *C. niloticus* whole skins from Zimbabwe from 2002 to 2020 (Source: CFAZ).

LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The sustainable use of Nile crocodiles in Zimbabwe through ranching and trophy hunting has established a large and resilient industry which generates significant benefits for rural communities while also helping to mitigate high levels of human-wildlife conflict. The programme has been a success due to strong institutional support and private public partnerships in addition to rigorous management and compliance with CITES regulations. Retaining tangible linkages between wildlife conservation and rural development will require long term commitments to wild eggs harvesting (rather than captive breeding which de-links ranching from sustainable management of the wild population). Captive breeding may, however, be more economically efficient. Redressing this to retain the incentive for wild harvests could be achieved by streamlining the CITES permitting process and improving the egg quota setting and collection protocols. More effective communication of the diverse sustainability benefits of the industry may also help to strengthen public perceptions, consumer demand, and overall impact.



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IN COLLABORATION WITH:



Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group

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