

Project Update: May 2015

This month, I have been in Mozambique scoping out sites for my study on the effects of human activity on wildlife behaviour and distribution. My field assistant and I took a multi-day excursion around the entirety of the buffer zone of Gorongosa National Park, accompanied by the park's Director of Community Relations, Jantar Piano. On this trip, we visited local communities and made ecological observations. We assessed the various issues involving humans and wildlife around the park, which vary greatly based on wildlife distribution, habitat, and human livelihoods. These issues include human-elephant conflict, agricultural expansion, bushmeat hunting, and dense settlement.

We have also driven along all of the roads in the core park network, and familiarised ourselves with the wildlife ecology, as well as the major habitat types and key vegetation species. Based on this scoping, I have decided to expand my project beyond my proposed three target species (zebra, wildebeest, and buffalo) due to their relatively low abundance in the park. Instead, I will focus on all 17 native terrestrial ungulate species in the park. This expanded focus will also allow me to ask questions about how species with different ecological traits respond differently to hunting and other human pressures, taking a community-based focus.



We camped at the ranger outpost in the community of Muaredzi while touring the buffer zone.

