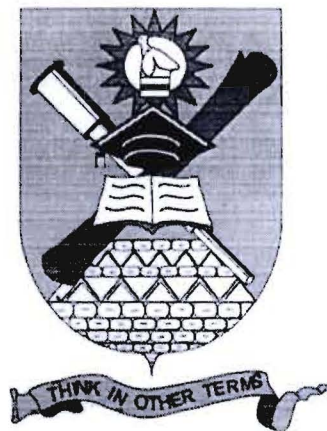


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Investigating tusklessness in elephants, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Amongst African elephants, individuals of both sexes almost often possess tusks. Tuskless elephants are rare in most African elephant populations, except for the Addo National Park elephant population where up to 98% of the females are tuskless, while most of the males have tusks. Tuskless elephants are common among the Asian elephants, where all females are tuskless or have reduced tusks (tushes), and males often lack tusks with varying proportions among populations. Despite significant effort dedicated to research on elephants throughout the African continent, limited work has focused on the incidence and social consequences of being tuskless among elephant populations. Visual observations of elephants from a vehicle, Hwange area. Census was carried out on elephants group composition and also recording presence and absence of tusks and unilateral conditions. Secondary data were acquired from Wildlife Environment Zimbabwe (WEZ), 24 hour counts, and literature references for comparisons. SPSS package was used to analyse the data. A total of 1.118% proportion of tuskless elephants was found in the Hwange population cluster in 2018 and more males were found to be unilateral as compared to females and the right side was usually missing. Using a one-way ANOVA, there is a significant relationship between selective harvesting and the incidence of tusklessness. More conservation efforts need to be put into elephant populations to reduce the incidence of tusklessness.