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Department of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management

**Impacts of tourism activities in Matopo National Park, Southwest
Zimbabwe.**

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ABSTRACT

Nature based tourism is on the rise and as with other forms of tourism, it has environmental impacts. This study analyzed how tourism activities impact the environment in Rhodes Matopo National Park in south west Zimbabwe. The aims of the study were to assess how visitation by tourist affects the natural resources. To identify tourism resort areas in the park and compare the number of tourist visiting each resort area within the park .To find out the activities that are mainly done in the park. Using mixed method research design, qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data like questionnaire and observations. The researcher explored the impacts of tourism activities in Rhodes Matopo National Park. The main areas visited were the rock paintings, dams, game drives, rocks and caves. Activities done in the park include hiking, boating, fishing, camping, game drives, and picnicking. The finding suggest that tourism activities cause impacts like trampling, erosion, habitat lost, change of vegetation structures and animal disturbance. All the factors were not significantly different with gender, age, educational level, and sources of income. ($p>0.05$). More male than females visited the site, the use of transport by tourist differed with level of education, age and employment as well as features visited in the park. The impacts of tourism in Matopo National Park are related to the activities and resort that are mainly visited. In conclusion, the study reveals that tourism activities has direct and indirect effect in Rhodes Matopo National Park.