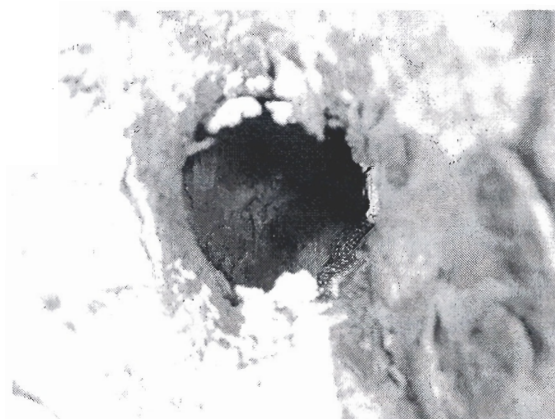# National University of Science and Technology

Faculty of Applied Sciences

Department of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management

AVAILABILITY OF HOLLOW BEARING TREES AND
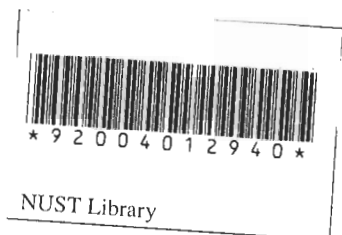
THEIR UTILISATION BY SMALL ANIMALS

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Abstract

Hollow bearing trees also known as cavity trees are live and dead trees with hollows or other structures big enough to shelter animals. This project looks at the role of both none commercial and commercial tree species as valuable habitat trees, aiming to encourage the use of alternative sources of fuel by showing importance of trees as habitats.

Four different species were taken to represent vegetation classes at Cawston ranch and four belt transects of approximately 0.5 ha, were taken in each vegetation class. Trees in the belt transects were thoroughly inspected for hollows and hollow bearing trees had their dimensions measured and they were examined for signs of utilization. The results showed a significant difference both in the rate of hollow formation and in the utilisation of hollows in different tree species. Big to very big hollows were not common while as the small hollows were abundant. All hollow sizes were however evenly utilised.

Trees with a big dbh had their hollows utilised most of the time. Stem or crown location of a hollow did not seem to influence its utilisation by animals. Rate of hollow formation was seen to be higher in stags than in live trees although the hollows were evenly utilised. Stags at a later stage of decomposition had much more utilisation than trees that were just starting to degenerate.

It was noted that hollow formation is species dependent. The presence of a wood land does not necessarily reflect available habitat trees. There is sufficient evidence in the results for us to conclude that stags are more important in providing hollows than live trees.