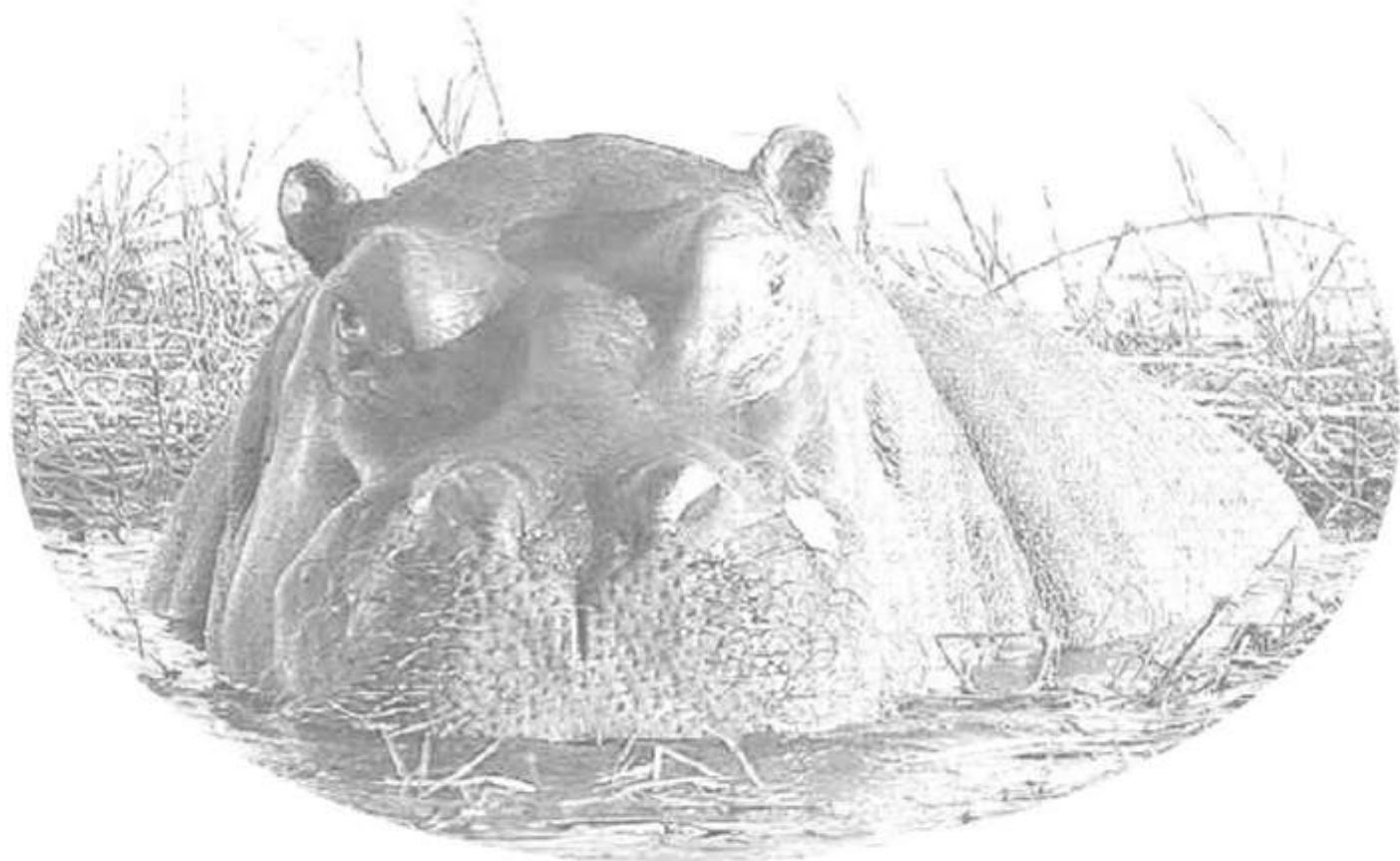


TRANSBOUNDARY SPECIES PROJECT

Background Study

HIPPOPOTAMUS



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The Transboundary Mammal Project

of the

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PREFACE

This fifth background study in the Transboundary Mammal Project series has taken as much time as each of its predecessors despite hopes that it could have been wrapped up within a month. I am grateful that neither the Ministry nor the Namibia Nature Foundation placed any pressure on me to complete the work in a hurry and this has allowed me time to review the literature and to explore the population dynamics of what is a most unusual large mammal.

There is more than one reason why the study has taken so long. In June I developed a population model for hippo using reproductive parameters given by a respected group of scientists in the mid-1960s and carried out a range of tests on the expected population responses to various management treatments. Quite by chance in mid-July I came upon several other papers written in the 1980s which discredited this earlier work and found myself forced to repeat the entire population modelling process. The present working environment in Zimbabwe is not conducive to productivity: in one week I managed less than 24 hours work because of electricity power cuts, fuel queues and a collapsing telephone system. And, lastly, I remain my own worst enemy when it comes to fast and slick consultancy work: if I find an academically challenging avenue for exploration I may end up spending days teasing out the answers to questions which probably have little impact on the final outcome.

I have not given a list of acronyms at the start of this report because I have tried to avoid using them in the text and, where one is used, the meaning is given together with the acronym. This draft has not benefited by having another person review it and is therefore likely to contain numerous typing errors, omissions and spelling mistakes. I seem to be deficient in noticing my own errors but, hopefully, any such mistakes can be corrected in a second draft.

I would like to thank all those people who gave so kindly of their time and valuable experience to this study. In particular, I thank Chris Brown of the Namibia Nature Foundation, who continues to provide me with the space to explore interesting concepts and whose enthusiasm, support, drive and organising ability has resulted in the study coming to fruition. From the Ministry of Environment and Tourism I thank Malan and Pauline Lindeque (both for their professional opinions and personal hospitality), Ben Beytell (who spared time for me when he should have been recuperating from a medical operation), Mike Griffin (who I can always rely on for the historical record and larger conservation context), Peter Erb (who responds instantaneously to requests for information), John Barnes (whose economic studies have been quoted in each of these reports), Joe Tagg (who sees considerable value in hippo as producers of *sjamboks*) and Uatjavi Uanivi (who has always helped with survey data). I am indebted to John Mendelsohn whose outstanding Namibian Atlas data base has been central to all these studies and who always allows me to waste an hour of his time when visiting Windhoek. Mr Schumann (the retired Director of the Namibian Scientific Society) has assisted me on each of these studies with rich historical material despite not yet having seen any one of the finished reports. Without Flip Stander's excellent survey of the Caprivi hippo this study would have been entirely superficial and Simon Mayes at NNF has supplemented the survey data with numerous other valuable items.
