Local Interest in Visiting Rubondo Island National Park, Tanzania: Implications for Conservation

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- 16 National Parks
- Parastatal
- Resource protection and tourism
- International tourism as revenue source
Diversity of Wildlife...
Low international tourism Insufficient funding for outreach
• Limited local support

• “Negative attitudes toward conservation and proponents of conservation”
Rubondo Island History

Forest Reserve – German colonial rule

Game Reserve – 1965

National Park – 1977 (evictions)
• Domestic tourism to Tanzania’s National Parks consistently low

• Said to be of little interest/representative of competing interests in past

• Interest in promoting local tourism is increasing

• Relationship between potentially changing attitudes toward parks and local interest in tourism
• Important to support for Parks
• Increases environmental knowledge
• People with greater environmental knowledge more supportive of/see more value in protected areas
• Education provided during tourism experiences impacts behavior and behavioral intent
Survey of school children

Previous visitation to Rubondo and interest
• 7 primary schools, each in different communities
• 2008 /2009
• Standards 6 and 7
• Swahili
• Project team members, Rubondo staff, teachers
932 participants
Members of 31-42 different tribes
Occupations of heads of households

- Farmer
- Fisherman
- Businessman
- Livestock Keeper
- Other

Legend:
- Not involved
- One of Several Occupations
- Sole Occupation
Interviews with Adults

- Visitation questions similar to those in children’s survey
- No further specific questions about local tourism
- Additional open-ended questions regarding conservation, tourism, and national parks
Sample Open-ended Interview Questions

Rubondo General
• What do you think about Rubondo Island National Park?

Protection of Wildlife
• Is protecting wildlife and the places they live important to you? Why or why not?
• Does protecting wildlife and the places they live benefit you or harm you?

Wildlife Tourism
• What do you think about wildlife tourism?
• Do you think wildlife tourism is important in Tanzania?
• Do you think wildlife tourism is important in or near your community?
• How does wildlife tourism affect you?

Wildlife Research
• What are some things you think are important for people who are working with wildlife in National Parks in Tanzania to understand about you or how wildlife affects you?

General Invitations for Additional Comment
• Is there anything else you would like to share with me about anything I talked about?
• What about more general things like wildlife, the environment, or what it is like to live near a National Park like Rubondo?
- Swahili
- Nkome and Muganza
- Bridget Amulike
- Sampling
Tribes of Participating Adults

- Zinza
- Sukuma
- Other
- Nyamwezi
- Jita
- Haya
- Ha
Barriers to Visitation

Information

“Procedures should be put openly, by the Park, so that the citizens understand how to get there. People are very old and don't even know how to get there.”

“Local people do not understand how to get [to Rubondo] as local tourists but fear they may be shot dead.”

“People at Nkome would love to visit the Park but they don't know how the procedures ...”
Barriers to Visitation

Cost (lesser extent)

“TANAPA should minimize the cost of entry fees so that we local people can visit the Park.”

“Yes, [I would like to visit the Park] but we have no money to get there.”
Visitation and support for the Park, conservation, and tourism

“We haven't seen any importance [of wildlife tourism in Tanzania]; we haven't had a chance to see the Parks and how important they are.”

“I personally don't know about how [wildlife tourism] benefits me, as I've never visited the Parks.”

“Wildlife tourism has affected me negatively because I've never seen the wildlife at Rubondo National Park.”

“Yes [wildlife tourism is important in or near this community], because our open areas do not have wildlife and it will be great if our children will have the Parks to see different wildlife.”

“…has benefits, have seen animals—wildlife at Rubondo National Park, the beautiful environment. I've seen the animals I never knew.”
Visitation and Learning

“We learn a lot when we visit the Park and we learn about the benefits... The prices of entering the Park are high for the community ... so they don't learn about wildlife.”

“I always want to visit the Park so that I see the animals and answer the questions I always ask myself.”
• Sampling, priming
• Inflation
• Different habitat/species, curiosity
• Information provision = most immediate barrier

• Cost may or may not be true barrier – did participants know the cost?

• Transportation costs
Recommendations for Increasing Local Visitation

• Information provision
  • Continuous and explicit
  • Multiple avenues, formal and informal
  • Specific allowances for local people (e.g., multiple entry points, free entry with letter)
  • Provide information, revisit other barriers

• Transportation and lodging

• Building trust

• Free visit day

• School visits
Thank you

Village Governments of Butwa, Ikuza, Izumacheli, Katemwa, Maisome, Muganza, and Nkome

The Staff of Rubondo Island National Park

Participants

Wilson H. Elkins Professorship