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NEWSLETTER 6 (Mar. 1990)

ANIMALS VERSUS PEOPLE: THE TEMBE ELEPHANT PARK

The Tembe Elephant Park is situated in northern KwaZulu, along the Mozambique border, in the district of Ingwavuma. It was the first game reserve to be established by the KwaZulu government, in 1983, and provides some insight into the problems of conservation in Africa.

There were a number of African families living in the area, who had lived there for generations and who had adapted their lifestyle to the dry environment. The people of Ingwavuma are extremely poor; they practise a subsistence agriculture and harvest local resources, but are dependent on migrant labour earnings for their survival.

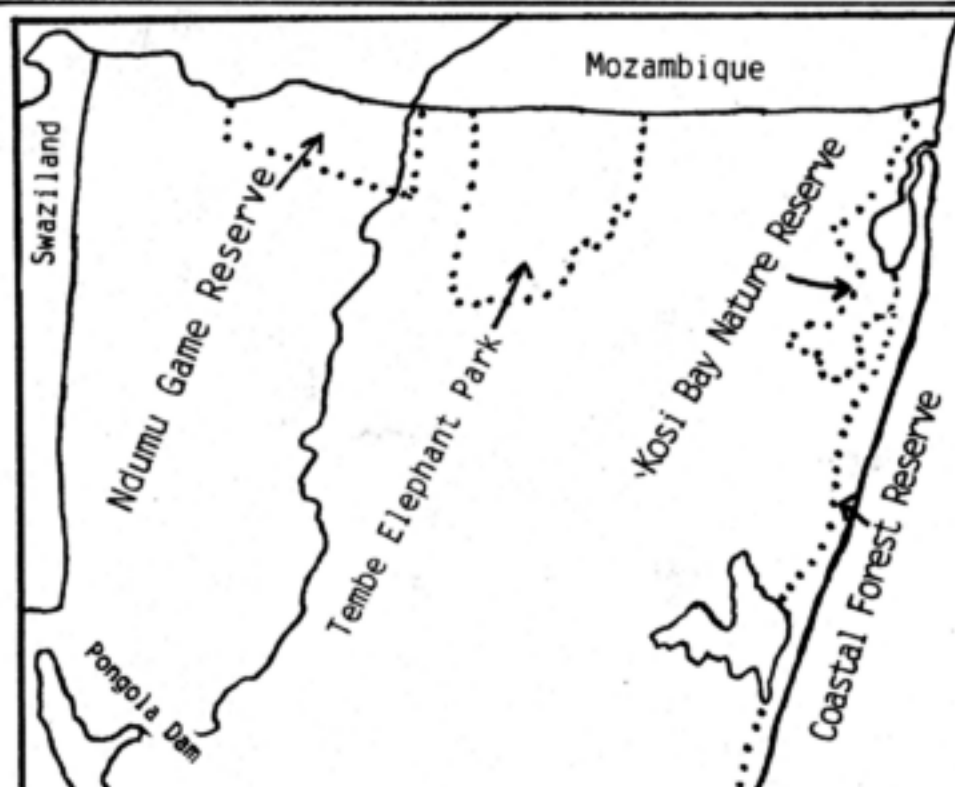
The creation of the Tembe Elephant Park was followed by the forced removal of 32 homesteads (KwaZulu's figure) by the newly established Bureau of Natural Resources (the Bureau). Some of the people who were moved maintain that there was no consultation about the move. They were relocated outside the boundaries of the Park, where there was no water supply. By 1989 some people were still complaining of inadequate compensation for the loss of homesteads, harvests and cattle.

Similar forced removals and social dislocation have accompanied the

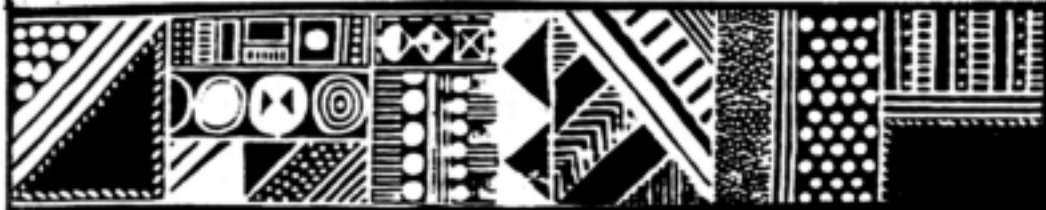
establishment of game and nature reserves elsewhere in Africa since colonial times.

The legacy of these practices is a deep-seated hostility amongst many people in Ingwavuma towards the Bureau's conservation plans, such as the creation of the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve in 1988. (See Newsletters 4 and 5).

Conservation in the long-term will not succeed unless it can survive political change, and this can only be guaranteed if it has the support of the local people. Gaining this support is not easy, for there will always be conflict between long-term versus short-term goals. But means must be found if South Africa's natural and human heritage are to be equally protected.



SKETCH MAP OF INGWAVUMA SHOWING MAJOR RESERVES



ANIMALS VS PEOPLE: TEMBE ELEPHANT PARK

Lack of consultation in the establishment of the Tembe Elephant Park

The history of conservation in South Africa is riddled with projects that were set up without consulting the indigenous people. Yet it is these people who have been most affected by conservation. Although the policies of the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources (the Bureau) are an advance on 'colonial' conservation policies, its practices are leading to similar results.

According to local informants, no formal meeting was held to discuss the fact that the local people would have to be moved once the Tembe Elephant Park was proclaimed (in 1983). The information that the chief wanted them to move from the area (i.e. on instructions from the tribal authority), came through other people. Although the people affected were opposed to the move, they say there was no meeting or means through which their opposition could be expressed.

Local people say that at some stage a white Bureau official called a meeting to say that the area was going to be made into a game reserve. Apparently there was no induna or tribal authority official present, and nothing was said about forced removals. When later the fence began to be constructed, the people were told by Bureau officials that they must move.

The irony is that in the previous year, senior KwaZulu officials had publicly opposed the threatened removal of Chief Zikhali's people from Sodwana Bay when the latter reserve was excised from KwaZulu and handed over to the Natal Parks Board. Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi of KwaZulu is reported to have criticised certain South African government departments for forced removals in the past, and to have said that this merely proved 'white greed' and the fact that blacks were just 'pawns' in South Africa. [D.News 3.9.81; N.Mercury 5.6.81]

Recently, the Chief Minister has claimed that KwaZulu would not establish game and nature reserves at the expense of local people. But the experience of the people of

the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve - proclaimed in 1988 - throws some doubt on this claim (see Newsletters 4 and 5).

The removal from the Tembe Elephant Park

In late 1988, a woman who is head of a family of 6 children, said:

'We were moved during the ploughing season and left cultivated fields as well as marula and umnwebe trees [which are harvested for wild fruit and food supplements] behind.' [W.Mail 28.10-3.11.88]

Others complained of losing cattle in the move. They were all removed to sites outside the Park fence.

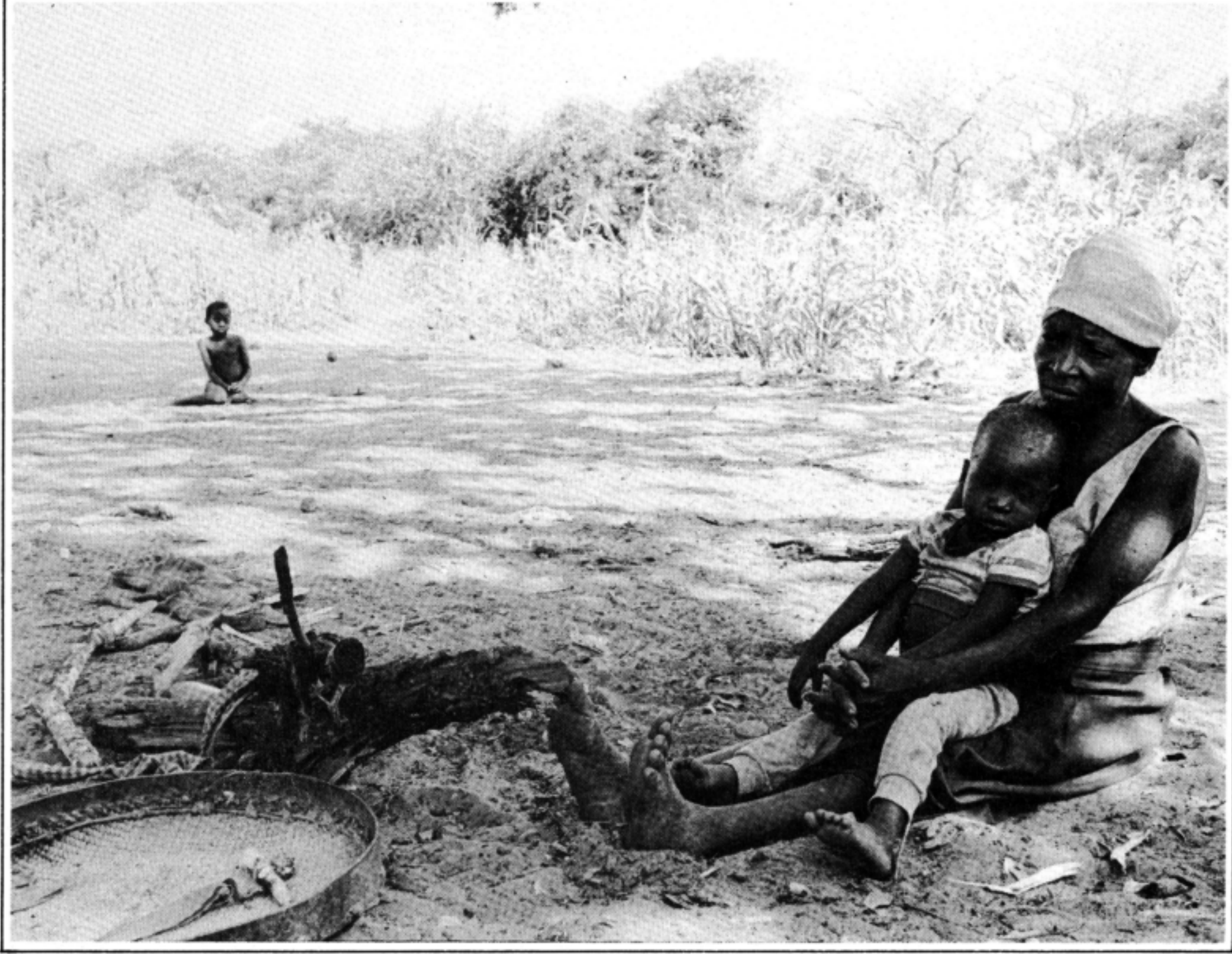
Compensation

The Bureau has claimed that all the people evicted from the Park were fully compensated.

A couple who were resettled told AFRA in 1987 that they were given poles and rafters to rebuild, but that these had been insufficient. They were also given between R60 and R80 by the magistrate at Ingwavuma, but the purpose of this money was never explained to them.

The Chief Induna of the Tembe Tribal Authority, Mr Solomon Tembe, is reported to have said in late 1988 that some of the relocated people had still not been compensated. [N.Witness 10.12.88]

By September 1989, at least 3 people who had been removed from the Park were complaining to AFRA that they had not yet been compensated for loss of homesteads and fields. This was despite being referred from the Tembe Elephant Park to Ingwavuma, and from Ingwavuma to the tribal authority office at Manguzi/ Ngwanase.



This family was resettled as a result of the creation of the Tembe Elephant Park
Photo: Cedric Nunn, Afrapix

It is KwaZulu policy to channel 25% of tourist-related revenue to the tribal authorities for the material benefit of the local people. By late 1988 (6 years after the eviction), the people removed from the Tembe Elephant Park claimed that they had seen no benefits because the Park was still closed to the public. The Bureau confirmed this but said that a tourist camp was being planned, and once this was complete, the local people would benefit materially.

In fact, the revenue will be given to the local tribal authority and there is no guarantee that the people affected by the creation of the Tembe Elephant Park will benefit.

The relocated site

The major complaint about the new sites was the lack of water. A local woman said in 1988:

'We were also promised a water supply but never got this.'
[W.Mail 28.10-3.11.88]

She said that they had to walk long distances daily to collect water from an abandoned quarry. The Chief Induna, Mr Tembe, confirmed the lack of water in December 1988, and added that there was a rumour that the Bureau was at one stage thinking about pumping water into the Park to top up the pans for the elephants.

The Bureau admitted that it was studying the feasibility of providing artificial water in the Park, but said it was willing to allow people outside the fence access to water inside the Park. A Bureau representative said that the water issue was the responsibility of the KwaZulu Department of Water Affairs. He blamed the tribal representative for failing to take up the problem with the local authorities.

The Bureau has also claimed that it permits the local people to harvest natural resources from conservation areas.

But in 1988, women adjacent to the Tembe Elephant Park were complaining that although they were allowed into the Park to collect plants and to cut thatch, their men were forbidden entry, apparently to prevent poaching. The Bureau tacitly admitted this, but said that this had recently been rectified in negotiation with the local tribal leader.

Human hardships

Thus, in the interests of protecting wild animals, a number of people who had lived in the area of the Tembe Elephant Park for generations were forcibly removed, without proper consultation.

They were deposited outside the boundary fence where there was no water supply, and the promised access to the Park for harvesting natural resources was initially curtailed. They waited 5 years before the first sign of financial gain from tourism was given, and by 1989 certain people claim that they have still not been compensated for the loss of homesteads, fields and cattle.

This explains why the people of Ingwavuma are suspicious of the Bureau's conservation policies, and why the creation of the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve in 1988 has evoked hostility. The local people cling to their rural lifestyle and their land. One of the resettled people said:

'We are not happy that our place was given to the elephants. I feel sore that the

elephants are there at the place of our ancestors. There were always elephants when we were staying at the old place, and if they near the home, we would chase them away.' [Afra file 1987]

Future removals?

There is a narrow corridor of land - the Mbangweni corridor - between the Tembe Elephant Park and the Ndumu Game Reserve (established by the Province of Natal in 1924). In 1988 there was a report that the Bureau would like to link the 2 reserves. Various estimates of the number of people who are likely to be affected if these plans proceed range between 1 164 and 3 000 people.

Conservation and Development

The old 'colonial' idea that conservation cannot be practised unless indigenous people are removed is no longer considered acceptable. A large body of traditional conservation practices exists amongst the people of Ingwavuma. This knowledge can form the basis for the development of sound management policies. But the local people must be consulted and directly involved in conservation planning and practices.

Furthermore, conservation must be linked to rural development so that the material and social interests of the indigenous people are protected. If they are offered viable alternatives to practices which are ecologically destructive, for instance, then conservation need not cause hardship to human beings.

Conservation will not gain the approval of the local people if it continues to lead to forced removals and material deprivation.

The danger is that without local support, and in an era of political change, the long-term future of game and nature reserves in KwaZulu could be in jeopardy.
