

ANNUAL REPORT ON CROCODILE RANCHING IN MALAWI (For 2006 and 2007)

Introduction

This is a report on the *Crocodylus niloticus* (Nile crocodile) in Malawi covering the period January 2006 to December 2007. Due to technical problems, we were not able to submit our 2006 annual report. We therefore seek your pardon.

Status of wild population of crocodile in Malawi

In the two years under review we have not conducted national crocodile surveys due to financial shortfalls. We have planned to do national crocodile counts in the first quarter of 2008. However, from previous counts and a sample count that was conducted in 2005, it is estimated that Malawi has about 15,000 crocodiles in the wild.

Number of specimens taken annually from the wild.

In 2006, only Nyika Crocodile Farm collected a total of 600 eggs.

In 2007 Nyika Farm collected up to 2000 eggs and Hendersons' Crocodile Farm (new farm) collected 1000 eggs. The Nyika Farm is expanding with more new crocodile pens for higher production. And The Hendersons' Farm, which just started during the year, had their first young crocodiles from wild eggs late in the year.

Nyika Crocodile Farm was permitted to capture eight (8) live adult crocodiles from the wild. They may have to capture more after the crocodile counts to be done soon. The move is aimed at increasing the breeding stock for the farm so that there is a reduction in number of eggs collected from the wild.

Production in ranches versus wild population

We estimate the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for ranching operations, to be around 2% in 2006, and 4.5% in 2007.

Survival rates from released animals

Malawi does not have a follow up programme to note survival rates of released crocodiles.

A point worth noting: When releasing the 12.5% crocodile hatchlings back into the wild, local communities in crocodile areas, especially in the Lower Shire of

Malawi, feel it is increasing the number of crocodile man eaters in their areas. So Government is planning to carry out other crocodile conservation programmes instead in those areas.

Mortality in captivity

In 2006, mortality in captivity was about 2%. Deaths were mostly due to weakness from birth.

In 2007, the mortality was at 12%. The rate was so high because one of the farms, Koma Croc experienced a breakdown in their water reticulation system for one week so that 140 hatchlings died from lack of water.

Production, sales and exports of products

By December 2006 Nyika Crocodile Farm had a total of 13,406 crocodiles. These included 3,806 hatchlings for that year. They exported 1000 crocodile skins to Europe. None was sold locally.

Koma Croc Farm had a total of 569 crocodiles including 320 hatchlings. In that year they exported 132 crocodile skins to Europe

By December 2007, Nyika Farm has more that 16,000 crocodiles including about 4000 that were hatched at the end of the year. They exported 1000 skins to European countries during the year. They intend to export 6,000 crocodile skins in 2008.

Koma Croc has more than 750 crocodiles, and they did not export any in the year 2007.

Hendersons' Crocodile Farm, which opened within the year 2007, hatched 98% of the 1000 eggs that they collected from the wild.

Conservation programmes and scientific experiments

Presently there are no prominent experiments being carried out in the wild, except ex-closures that are being constructed by local communities in Lower Shire areas to stop crocodiles from attacking people in washing, bathing and water drawing sites. Government will undertake crocodile counts in the whole country early this year and in the third quarter of the year. It is planned that this programme will be done each year.

In the crocodile farms, various methods of hatching eggs to minimise losses are being practised. Nyika Farm has locally made incubators as well as conventional

ones. Koma Croc uses heaps of wet sand in small rooms with electricity temperature raising bulbs.

Nyika Farm is in the process of expanding the farm with more and bigger pens to stock with adult breeding crocs. They would like to increase the breeding stock to almost 400 so that they do not rely on wild egg collection any more for production.

Conclusion

Once again we send our apologies for not submitting our annual report for 2006.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife is teaming up with crocodile hunters and farmers to embark on regular crocodile surveys starting this year. Reports on results of the surveys will be submitted in due course.