IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2014 **(archived)**
Finalised on 27 October 2014

Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Selous Game Reserve. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Selous Game Reserve

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Tanzania (United Republic of)
Inscribed in: 1982
Criteria:
(ix) (x)

Site description:
Large numbers of elephants, black rhinoceroses, cheetahs, giraffes, hippopotamuses and crocodiles live in this immense sanctuary, which measures 50,000 km2and is relatively undisturbed by human impact. The park has a variety of vegetation zones, ranging from dense thickets to open wooded grasslands. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2014 Conservation Outlook

Critical

The outlook for conservation of Selous Game Reserve has deteriorated significantly in recent years due to diminished management capacity resulting from budget cuts associated with the abolition of the property's revenue retention scheme. Poaching of elephant, rhino and other species has escalated, leading to dramatic declines in populations, with unknown 'knock-on' ecological consequences. Protective legislation has been relaxed to allow mineral resource exploration and exploitation, and significant concessions have been awarded. The boundary of the property was modified in 2012 to excise an area for uranium mining. A major hydro-electric power scheme to dam the Rufiji River at Stiegler's Gorge is proposed, with major potential impacts on the downstream ecology of this unique seasonally-flooded 'sand river'.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Critical
Trend: Deteriorating

Although the extent of this vast wilderness area remains unchanged, the values of Selous Game Reserve are being eroded through poaching of keystone wildlife species, and mounting pressures for exploitation of water and mineral resources. The limited animal census data available suggest a >80% decline in elephant populations with only 13,000 elephants left and 95-98% loss of black rhino since World Heritage listing. Recent changes in legislation allow for possible future mineral exploitation within Selous Game Reserve.

Overall THREATS

Very High Threat

Selous Game Reserve is under increasing threat due to a dramatic recent reduction in funding for management, and a simultaneous relaxation of

legislation, allowing oil and mineral exploitation. Poaching has surged, with 81% of the elephant population lost between 2006 and 2013, while management has reduced capacity to manage sport hunting, tourism and other essential activities. A revision of the Wildlife Act in 2009 relaxed the legislative framework for protection of the property, clearing the way for oil and mineral exploitation. Most of the SGR has been earmarked for oil exploration, with concessions awarded to two foreign companies in 2005 and 2006 (although exploration activities have not yet been authorized by the wildlife authorities). The recent excision of 412km2 of the property to make way for uranium mining sets an unfortunate precedent with unknown long-term consequences. A major hydro-power project is planned for the Rufiji River at Stiegler’s Gorge, which, if implemented would have major repercussions for the riverine ecology. A second dam is proposed outside the north-eastern boundary, which threatens to inundate a portion of the property.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Serious Concern

Management is severely constrained by limited funding and capacity, allowing a surge in poaching and other infringements in recent years. Following the abolition of the revenue retention scheme in 2004 management has lacked the resources necessary. The revenue retention scheme has not yet been fully re-instated and management is severely weakened as a result of the low levels of funding. Furthermore, a revision of legislation in 2009 has weakened the legal provisions by allowing oil and mineral exploration and exploitation in the property. An area of 412 km2 has been excised to make way for a uranium mine, and there are plans for a major hydro-electric power project at Stiegler’s gorge, which is driven by the local (rather than national) authorities . As for the threats originating from outside the site, management has been unable to counter the threat of poaching emanating from outside the property and the limited interactions between SGR staff and neighbouring communities are characterized by conflicts over access to resources, poaching and human-wildlife conflicts.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

▶ **Large undisturbed wilderness area**
Criterion:(ix)

The Selous Game Reserve (SGR) is one of the largest undisturbed wilderness areas in Africa, occupying approximately 50,000 km2 of southern Tanzania that is free of human settlement, grazing or cultivation (SoOUV, 2010). It is located within a wider ecosystem of adjoining protected areas and community Wildlife Management Areas allowing free movement of elephants and other large herbivores over an area of some 90,000 km2, with further connectivity to the Niassa Game Reserve (42,000 km2) in northern Mozambique. The size and complexity of this extensive protected area complex ensures the functioning of on-going ecological and biological processes.

▶ **Globally significant populations of large mammals**
Criterion:(x)

The SGR supports some of the largest remaining populations of Africa’s iconic mega-fauna, including (at the time of world heritage inscription) more than 100,000 elephants, 200,000 buffalo, 2,000 black rhino, 18,000 hippopotamus and a healthy population of wild dog (SoOUV, 2010). Approximately 750,000 large mammals of 57 species were recorded in 1986 (SoOUV, 2010).

► Rare and endangered species

Criterion:(x)

There are important viable populations of several rare and endangered mammals and birds (and probably other taxa, not yet evaluated). These include elephants, black rhino, wild dog, lion, cheetah, hippopotamus, Sanje crested mangabey and Udzungwa red colobus monkey. Amongst the birds, globally threatened species include the wattled crane (Grus carunculatus), lesser kestrel (Falco naumanni), the endemic Udzungwa forest partridge (Xenoperdix udzungwensis) and rufous-winged sunbird (Nectarinia rufipennis) (UNEP-WCMC, 2012)

► Diversity of vegetation types

Criterion:(ix)

The diversity of vegetation types reflects variations in altitude (80-1,300 metres), soils, rainfall, seasonal flooding patterns and other abiotic factors. The vegetation is predominantly deciduous miombo woodland, punctuated with seasonally flooded sand rivers, interspersed with rocky Acacia-clad hills, forests and swamps. The northern 17% of the reserve is more open wooded grassland with floodplain swamps and tracts of borassus (Borassus aethiopium) and doum palms (Hyphaene thebaica) (SoOUV, 2010).

► Sand rivers and associated floodplains

Criterion:(ix)

The network of seasonally dry rivers that exist as dry sandy river beds for most of the year and become raging torrents during the seasonal rains, often flooding their banks, are a special feature of the Selous landscape (SoOUV, 2010). They represent an outstanding example of this ever-changing ecological process.

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Very High Threat

There are serious current threats to the ecological integrity of the property, as indicated by a recent surge in elephant poaching, with 44% of the elephant population (around 31, 500 elephants) lost between 2006 and 2009. There have also been long-standing concerns over the management of the commercial hunting. The surge in poaching, and related management deficiencies can be attributed to a dramatic reduction in funding, associated with a policy change that saw the abolition of a revenue retention scheme that had provided US$ 2.8 million for management during its final year of operation in 2003. Low levels of funding are impacting negatively on all aspects of management, including the management of sport hunting and tourism, as well as aspects such as the control of invasive alien plants.

► Commercial hunting

Very High Threat
Inside site

In the decade following the site’s inscription there was a major surge in commercial poaching for ivory and rhino horn, which resulted in a reduction of elephant numbers from around 109,000 in 1980 to 31,000 in 1989, and a catastrophic decline in black rhino populations (from around 3,000 in 1981 to 1-400 some years later; SoOUV, 2010). There was some recovery in elephant numbers in subsequent years, but a new surge in poaching has been experienced since about 2005 (SOC, 2006), resulting in an estimated 81% decline in the property’s elephant between 2006 and 2013 (World Heritage Centre / IUCN mission report, 2014)

► Invasive Non-Native/ Alien Species

Data Deficient
Inside site
Outside site

The spread of alien plants is reported to be accelerating, including Mimosa pigra, Lantana camara and the floating aquatic plant, Pistia stratiotes (SOC, 2011)

► Roads/ Railroads

Low Threat
Inside site

The main TAZARA railway line, linking Dar es Salaam with Lusaka, passes through the northern part of SGR.

► Tourism/ Recreation Areas

High Threat
Inside site

The majority of the Selous Game Reserve, south of the Rufiji River is managed for commercial sport hunting, which generates essential revenue for management, as well as contributing to resource protection in more direct ways (SOC, 2009). There have however been long-standing concerns over the management of this activity, and a joint WHC/IUCN mission visited the property in November 2008 to assess the state of conservation of this part of the property (SOC 2009). The mission noted a number of improvements necessary for the management of hunting, including the need for more information in setting quotas and for greater transparency in allocating hunting blocks (SOC, 2009).

► Tourism/ Recreation Areas

Low Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Six camps/lodges were operational in the northern sector of the SGR at the time of the 2007 Mission, with another 12 planned or under development. This was despite the lack of an overall plan for tourism development in the

area, and the absence of adequate infrastructure to support such developments (Mission Report, 2007)

Potential Threats

High Threat

A revision of the Wildlife Act in 2009 relaxed the legislative framework for protection of the property, clearing the way for oil and mineral exploitation. Most of the SGR has been earmarked for oil exploration, with concessions awarded to two foreign companies in 2005 and 2006 (although exploration activities have not yet been authorized by the wildlife authorities). The recent excision of 400km2 of the property to make way for uranium mining sets an unfortunate precedent with unknown long-term consequences. A major hydro-power project is planned for the Rufiji River at Stiegler's Gorge, which, if implemented would have major repercussions for the riverine ecology. A second dam is proposed outside the north-eastern boundary, which threatens to inundate a portion of the property.

► Oil/ Gas exploration/development

High Threat
Inside site

Transects cut through the area as part of a Shell oil exploration programme (1981-85) provided access to three quarters of the reserve and were subsequently used by poachers, mining prospectors and cultivators (UNEP-WCMC, 2012). In 2005 and 2006, two other oil companies (Dominion Oil & Gas, and Heritage Oil) were awarded concession blocks covering most of the property (SOC, 2009), although they have not yet received permission from the wildlife authorities to commence prospecting activities. Prospecting licenses have also been granted to explore for precious stones inside the property (SOC, 2006)

► Mining/ Quarrying

High Threat
Inside site
Outside site

A proposed uranium mine near the southern boundary of the property resulted in the submission of a request by the SP for a minor modification of

the boundary so as to exclude the area affected (about 412 km2, or 0.8% of the total area) from the property (IUCN, 2012). This was approved by the WHC at its 36th session (June 2012), although the consequences of the proposed mining activity are not yet fully known (Decision 36COM 8B.43).

► Dams/ Water Management or Use

High Threat
Outside site

Two dam projects may affect the property. Kidunda dam would be constructed outside the north-eastern boundary, but may lead to inundation of some areas (2-5 km2) within the property, and affect important wetland areas on its boundary (SOC, 2011). A new design for the Kidunda has been made in order to protect the property from flooding but possible flooding could not be avoided in key wildlife areas bordering the property which could have severe impacts on the wildlife populations of the northern sector of the property (SOC, 2012). A draft Environmental and Social Impact Assessment has been prepared for this development and is currently under review (SP Report, 2012). A more significant long-standing proposal, with much more severe potential impacts on the property is the construction of a dam on the Rufiji River at Stiegler’s Gorge. This project is still at the planning stage (SP Report, 2012), but seems to be gaining strong political support (Haonga, 2012). It would flood a large part of the property, alter the seasonal flooding regime (affecting the natural ecological processes of the downstream sandbanks and floodplains), and require major infrastructure developments inside the property.

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Relationships with local people

Serious Concern

Relations between the Wildlife Division and local people are said to be limited and ‘characterised by conflicts over access to resources, poaching and human-wildlife conflict incidents’ (Niskanen, 2012). This is in contrast to the

situation prevailing from 1988 to 2003 during the tenure of the Selous Conservation Programme (SCP) which had supported the establishment of Wildlife Management Areas in the buffer zones around the reserve through which 51 village communities were awarded sustainable hunting quotas and benefited from various rural development projects associated with the reserve.

► Legal framework and enforcement

Serious Concern

The Wildlife Act was revised in 2009 to allow mineral and oil exploration and exploitation within game reserves countrywide, thereby weakening the legal provisions that had applied at the time of the property's inscription on the World Heritage list (SOC, 2011). The current legal protection is therefore insufficient for a World Heritage property. Furthermore, management capacity and enforcement have been considerably weakened since 2004 when the reserve's revenue retention scheme was discontinued (WCMC-UNEP, 2012), and lack of funding is now a serious constraint on management (SP Report, 2012)

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Mostly Effective

SGR is managed alongside other game reserves by the government's Wildlife Division, and according to a common national Wildlife Policy. It was designated a National Project in 1980, giving it enhanced status as a Special Protection Area (WCMC-UNEP, 2012). The establishment of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in the buffer zone outside the property ensures devolution of management authority to local people in these designated areas (SP Report, 2012)

► Management system

Mostly Effective

SGR first came under planned management in 1995, and the current management plan covers the period 2005-15. It details the objectives, strategies and activities envisaged in respect of law enforcement, boundary maintenance, fire management, ecological monitoring, local community involvement, management of hunting concessions and game-viewing zones.

This vast reserve (50,000 km2) is divided into 8 administrative sectors, with 45 management blocks, of which 42 are managed as hunting concessions and 3 are used for tourist viewing. There is a 15 km wide ‘buffer zone’ around the reserve where sustainable management of wildlife by communities is encouraged (UNEP-WCMC, 2012).

► Management effectiveness

Serious Concern

Few of the provisions in the current Management Plan are being implemented (Niskanen, 2012) due to budget and resource constraints. There are only 340 staff for an area of 50,000 km2; equipment and vehicles are poorly maintained; and management tasks seem to be carried out on an ad hoc basis, without any work plans (Niskanen, 2012). The recent surge in elephant poaching indicates a need for much stronger protection measures, and government has responded by undertaking two major multi-agency anti-poaching operations in 2011; recruiting 39 new rangers; providing 3 new vehicles and planning for the deployment of a helicopter for aerial surveillance (SP Report, 2012).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Serious Concern

Implementation of committee decisions has been slow and incomplete. The revenue retention scheme has not yet been re-instated and management is severely weakened as a result of the low levels of funding (SOC 2011, SP Report 2012, Niskanen, 2012). Uranium mining is proceeding through excision of a part of the property (WHC Decision, 2012) and construction of the Steigler’s Gorge Dam (hydroelectric scheme) is reported to be imminent (Niskanen, 2012). Although the SP is aware that oil exploration ‘may be incompatible with World Heritage status’ (SP Report, 2012), there is no indication that it is willing to abandon such activities or enact specific legislation to prohibit prospecting and mining within the property (SP Report, 2012)

► Boundaries

Serious Concern

The boundary follows natural features such as rivers and lines of hills for

much of its length, but other areas have been demarcated since 1991 with concrete/stone cairns at 1 km intervals and a 15m-wide cut-line (also used as a management road; GMP, 2005). There is a 15 km-wide (un-demarcated) buffer zone outside the reserve, where communities are encouraged to establish Wildlife Management Areas for the sustainable use of wildlife (including tourist hunting). The vast size of the reserve helps ensure protection of its Ooutstanding Universal Value, and this is being further enhanced through the (German-government supported) Selous-Niassa Wildlife Protection Corridor Project which is working to ensure landscape connectivity and elephant migration routes to the south, linking Selous and the Niassa Reserve in northern Mozambique (Niskanen, 2012). Controversially, the World Heritage Committee recently approved a boundary modification to allow excision of 412 km2 of the property (equivalent to 0.8% of its total area) to make way for a uranium mining project in the south of the reserve (WHC Decision, 2012).

► Sustainable finance

Data Deficient

Sustainable financing of the reserve through retention of a portion of revenues generated principally from ‘tourist’ hunting fees had been achieved by the end of the period of the Selous Conservation Programme, with an equivalent of US$ 2.8 million retained in 2003 (WCMC-UNEP, 2012). However the revenue retention scheme (which had underpinned management) was withdrawn in 2004 and funding has been grossly inadequate in subsequent years, with only about 20% of budget requirements now met from government (Niskanen, 2012). The recent weakening of management is directly attributed to a lack of funding (SP Report, 2012).

► Staff training and development

Data Deficient

None reported. A community-based training institution has been established outside the property to support training of village scouts in the Wildlife Management Areas of the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor (SP Report, 2012)

► Education and interpretation programs

Data Deficient

No information available

► Tourism and interpretation

Some Concern

A relatively small part of the SGR is managed for tourism (about 2,500 km2, or 5% of the total area). There is no detailed Tourism Plan for this part of the reserve, and there are concerns over the number of tourist lodges/camps and the development of supporting infrastructure (such as roads, staff housing, airstrips etc) (Mission Report, 2007). Ten lodges/camps were operational by 2010, with another ten under construction (SOC 2010), many more than the number envisaged in the management plan (GMP 2005)

► Monitoring

Serious Concern

A complete systematic aerial census of the entire area has been conducted on 7 occasions between 1976 and 2002, providing a basis for understanding population trends for the major mammals (GMP, 2005). Additional ecological monitoring and research activities were carried out from the Miombo Research Centre (Kingupira) from the 1960s, but this centre has not been functional for many years (GMP, 2005), and there is a general lack of ecological monitoring capacity.

► Research

Serious Concern

There is no current research programme aimed at addressing management needs (Niskanen,. 2012).

► Sustainable use

Serious Concern

SGR management is based on a model of sustainable use, with 42 of 45 ‘blocks’ allocated as hunting concessions, and the remaining 3 blocks (north of the Rufiji River) dedicated to photographic tourism and game viewing (GMP, 2005). Trophy hunting provides the primary source of income and this model of sustainable use proved highly successful during the tenure of the

Selous Conservation Programme, when a revenue retention scheme ensured adequate funding of management (with US$ 2.8 million retained in 2003, of which US$ 2.6 million was from hunting; WCMC-UNEP, 2012). However, following the abolition of the revenue retention scheme in 2004 management has lacked the resources necessary for management. The revenue retention scheme is already reinstated (SOC, 2012) as part of an institutional re-organisation programme involving establishment of a new Tanzania Wildlife Authority (SP Report, 2012)

Overall assessment of protection and management

Serious Concern

Management is severely constrained by limited funding and capacity, allowing a surge in poaching and other infringements in recent years. Following the abolition of the revenue retention scheme in 2004 management has lacked the resources necessary. The revenue retention scheme has not yet been fully re-instated and management is severely weakened as a result of the low levels of funding. Furthermore, a revision of legislation in 2009 has weakened the legal provisions by allowing oil and mineral exploration and exploitation in the property. An area of 412 km2 has been excised to make way for a uranium mine, and there are plans for a major hydro-electric power project at Stiegler’s gorge, which is driven by the local (rather than national) authorities . As for the threats originating from outside the site, management has been unable to counter the threat of poaching emanating from outside the property and the limited interactions between SGR staff and neighbouring communities are characterized by conflicts over access to resources, poaching and human-wildlife conflicts.

► Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site

Serious Concern

Management has been unable to counter the threat of poaching emanating from outside the property and the limited interactions between SGR staff and neighbouring communities are characterized by conflicts over access to resources, poaching and human-wildlife conflicts.

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ **Large undisturbed wilderness area**

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

The boundaries of the property have remained unaltered since inscription, but a (relatively minor) excision to exclude a uranium mine (412 km2 at Mukuju River, on the southern boundary of the SGR) has recently been accepted (WHC Decision, 2012) and an additional area (4-5 km2) that might be flooded as a result of construction of the Kidunda Dam to the north-east (SOC, 2010; SP Report, 2012) may affect the boundary. A more significant threat to the long-term wilderness values of the property is the revision of the Wildlife Act (No 5 of 2009) allowing exploration and extraction of uranium, oil and gas inside game reserves (including SGR; SOC, 2010). The property benefits from an unofficial ‘buffer zone’ extending for 15 km from its boundary, but this remains to be formally recognised

▶ **Globally significant populations of large mammals**

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

There have been irregular aerial censuses of large mammals since 1976, focused particularly on monitoring of elephant populations. However, there appears to be no single compilation of available data to show population trend for more than a few species, notably elephants and rhino (see comments below, V4), which have declined dramatically since inscription in 1982. A comparison of figures quoted in the site description on the UNESCO WHC website between the time of inscription (1982) and a 1994 aerial survey by TWCM suggests significant declines in most species (e.g. buffalo, 204,015 at inscription to 138,000 in 1994; hartebeest 52,150 to 20,000; wildebeest, 80,815 to 46,500; sable, 7,000 to 1,600)(UNESCO, 2012)

► Rare and endangered species

Critical
Trend:Deteriorating

Elephant populations declined dramatically during the 1980s as a result of ivory poaching, reduced from 109,000 at the beginning of the decade to 31,889 in 1989 (UNEP-WCMC, 2012). There was then a strong recovery with 52,000 recorded in 1994 (UNEP-WCMC, 2012) and 70,406 in 2006 (SOC, 2010). However, there appears to have been another surge in poaching in recent years, bringing the population down to less than half its 2006 level within three years (to 31,431 in 2009) (SOC, 2010), with 63% of 2009 deaths attributed to illegal killing (SOC, 2010). Black rhinos have declined even more dramatically, with 2,135 recorded at inscription, declining to just 45 to 60 by 2010 (UNEP-WCMC, 2012)

► Diversity of vegetation types

Low Concern
Trend:Stable

In the absence of any major developments affecting the reserve, it is expected that the diversity of vegetation types remains unaltered. However, the destruction of riverine forests by uncontrolled fires has been noted (UNEP-WCMC, 2012), and there may be other localized ecological perturbations.

► Sand rivers and associated floodplains

Good
Trend:Data Deficient

The sand river landscapes remain essentially intact, although there may be extra silt deposition as a result of upstream soil erosion associated with the expansion of cultivation in the catchment of some of the major rivers, such as the Rufiji.

Summary of the Values

► Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values

Critical

Trend: Deteriorating

Although the extent of this vast wilderness area remains unchanged, the values of Selous Game Reserve are being eroded through poaching of keystone wildlife species, and mounting pressures for exploitation of water and mineral resources. The limited animal census data available suggest a >80% decline in elephant populations with only 13,000 elephants left and 95-98% loss of black rhino since World Heritage listing. Recent changes in legislation allow for possible future mineral exploitation within Selous Game Reserve.

Additional information

Key conservation issues

▶ **Strengthen anti-poaching efforts**
National

Invest in increasing the number of game scouts from the present 385 to attain the estimated 2,000 scouts required to effectively patrol this 50,000 km2 reserve.

▶ **Restore revenue retention and increase funding for management**
National

Restore the revenue retention scheme under which an adequate level of management was achieved from 2000 to 2005

▶ **Strengthen world heritage site legislation**
National

Introduce new legislation for world heritage properties to ensure that oil and mineral exploitation, in particular, are outlawed

▶ **Improve management of trophy hunting**
Local

Strengthen trophy hunting procedures to ensure sustainable off-take through

regular animal census and improve quota-setting procedures

▶ **Further strengthen landscape connectivity, designate a buffer zone**
National

Continue efforts to provide landscape connectivity with key adjacent wildlife habitats to the south (linking to Niassa Reserve in Mozambique), and north (Mikumi and Udzungwa National Parks)

▶ **Strengthen support for community Wildlife Management Areas in the buffer zone**
Local

Support communities in their efforts to use wildlife on a sustainable basis in designated Wildlife Management Areas adjoining SGR

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	Frankfurt Zoological Society		Selous Project (commencing mid-2012)
2	Selous-Niassa Wildlife Protection Corridor Project		Landscape connectivity and wildlife conservation to the south of SGR

REFERENCES

№	References
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5	Mission Report 2007. Ed Wilson and Elizabeth Wangari. Joint WHC-IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission, 2-9 June 2007
6	Niskanen, L. 2012. Trip Report: Selous Game Reserve World heritage Site Management effectiveness assessment and training Workshop, 16-19 July 2012
7	SOC, 2007
8	SOC, 2009
9	SOC, 2010
10	SOC, 2011
11	SP Report, 2012
12	SoOUV Statement of Outstanding Universal Value. UNESCO website
13	UNEP-WCMC Information sheet, 2012
14	UNESCO-WHC, 2012. Website Selous Game Reserve description
15	WHC Decision, 2012 Decision 36COM 8B.43