

What's in a name? An analysis of the home towns of Kruger rangers

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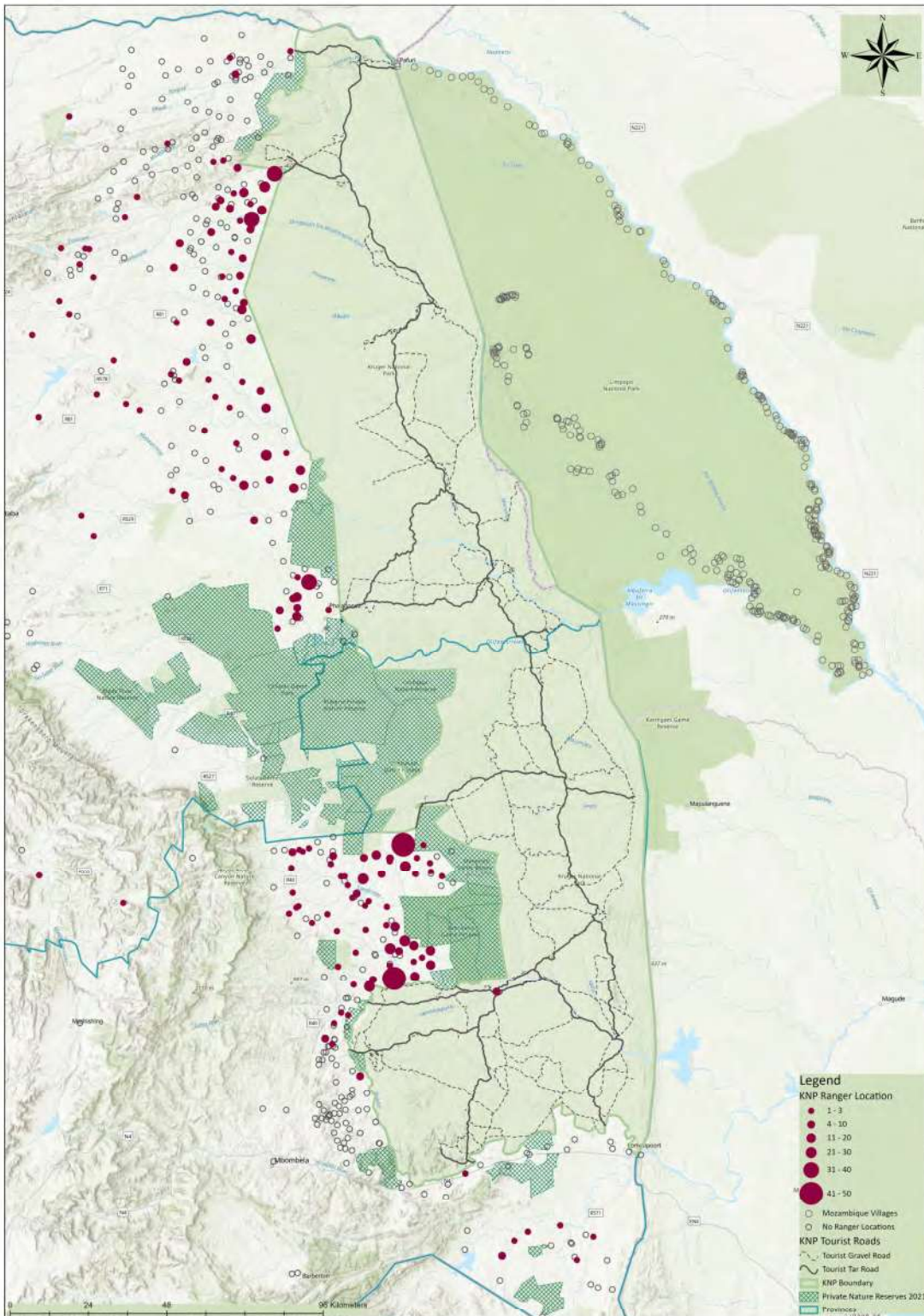


Figure 1. Geographical representation of the Kruger National Park ranger home towns and villages, based on numbers of staff representation per village/town. Towns and villages falling beyond the immediate vicinity are not indicated on the map (Ref. Swemmer, L.K. 2021 internal report 31/2021).

OUR STUDY HIGHLIGHTED AREAS AROUND KRUGER NATIONAL PARK WHERE THERE ARE VERY FEW (AS WELL AS MANY) RANGER STAFF EMPLOYED, AND WE SUGGEST THAT THIS SHOULD BE A CONSIDERATION WHEN RECRUITING IN THE FUTURE IN ORDER TO ENSURE FAIR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITIES AROUND THE PARK.



Almost 90% of ranger staff employed in the Kruger National Park lives in the seven community forum areas adjoining the park.

One of the first questions people ask one another during the getting-to-know-you phase of a relationship is, “Where are you from?”. Most people give either the place they were born or, if it’s a different place, the one where they grew up. They say that home is where the heart is, and for many people, whether

eliciting positive or negative memories, their home towns played an important role in shaping the person they are today.

Understanding and acknowledging home towns is important for multiple reasons, including exploring perceptions that (1) staff are employed from areas considered to be from “outside” (i.e. far from the park) and (2) that certain towns and villages are over represented. Both of these concerns can cause animosity internally and externally, and reduce trust. The 619 ranger staff (over 30% of the staff employed in the park) based in the Kruger National Park (KNP) at the time of our analysis (November 2021), hail from a total of 180 different villages and towns, spanning Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, KZN as well as the Eastern and Western Cape provinces.

The vast majority (97%) are from the two provinces in which KNP is situated: Mpumalanga and Limpopo. We were also able to show that 87% of staff are from villages falling within the seven KNP community forum areas, proximal to the park (Fig. 1). The south central and northern areas are the best represented (the area between Kruger and Punda Maria Gates) with the far northern (Makuya) and far southern areas (from Kruger gate southwards) having the least number of ranger staff. The number of ranger staff from each village ranges between 1 and 47. A further analysis that relates these numbers to the total village/town population will be useful to place these numbers into perspective. It is hoped that this analysis can be expanded to include all staff in the park, to further unpack and understand perceptions of representation and where possible and appropriate to influence practice with regards to employment opportunities in the park.