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Endogenous conservation of wildlife as determined factors for species survival : case of crocodiles in Bénin

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Abstract

These studies have been done in the agro-pastoral zones of Bénin. Data collected were related to crocodiles numbers, determined factors of their abundance and distribution, socio-cultural and socio-economic practices that affect crocodiles.

The crocodiles have socio-cultural and socio-économique roles. About 72 % of counted crocodiles were observed in the water reserves where they are venerated. The small size of crocodiles' herds was recorded in area closed to Nigeria and Niger, which are large poles of marketing of crocodile's products. Consequently, the degree of conservation of these animals grows as man moves away from the poaching zones to reach a maximum in reserves where the crocodiles are venerated.

In ethno-zoological domain the crocodiles play several functions in Bénin: food economic, cultural, tourist, medicinal, ecological and spiritual. This last function is determining their invading in dams and water ponds. The factors like local protection, poaching, intensive use of manure and pesticides, proximity of the fields, permanence, volume, depth of reserves take also part in the invading of the reserves, crocodiles abundance and their distribution. Lastly, ethnic group, religious role of crocodiles, traditional methods of conservation are basic factors to take in account in the management of crocodiles populating dams and water ponds in Bénin.

Key words: crocodile, poaching, ecological and spiritual role, conservation