

# Chapter 4

## Waste Management in Protected Areas: Benchmarking Recyclable Waste Emanating From Tourism

**Kevin Mearns**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5874-3542>

*University of South Africa, South Africa*

### **ABSTRACT**

*The worldwide demand for wildlife tourism-based experiences has driven a global increase in demand for wildlife tourism experiences within protected areas. Tourism within protected areas has both positive and negative effects. The positive effects relate to the increased financial support for conservation initiatives that provide concrete substantiation for the long-term survival and conservation of protected areas. The negative effects, however, relate to the increased tourism infrastructure and the environmental impacts of accommodating guests and their hospitality staff within the protected areas. Of particular interest in this chapter is the issue of Waste management in protected areas, specifically recyclable waste. A mixed method single case study research design was employed to determine baselines and benchmarks of recyclable waste at a wildlife tourism lodge in the Greater Kruger Park area. Reflections on general waste management were also made regarding proposed principles for responsible waste management in protected areas.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an essential engine for economic activity and growth across the world. Over 50% of the Tourism market is driven by nature tourism and the desire to explore new environments, which is expected to grow year-on-year. The tourism sector is also the most significant contributor to the financing of protected area systems. Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest-growing subsectors of the tourism industry. Nature-based tourism focuses on travel to enjoy natural areas and biodiversity. Nature-based tourism can take many forms, including wildlife watching, birdwatching, ecotourism, walking, cycling, fishing, adventure or sun and beach tourism. Nature-based tourism includes wildlife tourism. Wildlife tourism can be broadly defined as travel to destinations primarily observing wild fauna and their associated flora. Wildlife tourism contributes millions of dollars annually to protected areas, strengthening conservation efforts and supporting sustainable development. In Africa – where nature and national parks are considered some of the most critical tourism assets – wildlife tourism generates around US\$142 million in entrance fees for protected areas. However, wildlife tourism is also associated with a series of impacts in protected areas. Although tourism in protected areas can have social, economic and environmental benefits, several negative consequences may also result, such as changes in water quality, water availability, vegetation and coral reef destruction, damage to archaeological and heritage sites, pollution and damage to sensitive environments and sites as well as increased waste generation and the associated pollution resulting thereof (Eagles et al., 2002). These negative impacts should be a cause for concern and a motivation to address these issues. One of the most significant and challenging impacts associated with wildlife tourism in protected areas is waste management. Human activities within protected areas generate waste that needs to be managed carefully within protected area contexts.

Besides the growth in nature-based tourism, there is also a worldwide growing trend towards sustainable tourism (Dedeke, 2017), with water and waste management forming two crucial aspects of the sustainability of the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism consists of a balance between the environmental, economic and sociocultural aspects. Tourism companies in Africa are motivated to “go green” or become eco-efficient for a sustainable future and as a marketing ploy to keep up with their competition. A recent study by Booking.com found that more than half of global travellers want to travel more sustainably in the future (Donovan, 2021). Similarly, Morrison-Saunders et al. (2019:1) conducted a survey of visitors to the Kruger National Park (KNP), South Africa, and their expectations for responsible tourism, which recorded that “energy, water and waste management were all considered very important by all respondents”. Roos et al. (2022) identified waste management as one of the most significant challenges facing many protected areas

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