

Gonarezhou recovering from wounds of banditry

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THERE are encouraging signs that Zimbabwe's off-limits Gonarezhou Game Park, a hidden jewel along the Mozambique border, is recovering from the wounds of almost 15 years of strife.

The Zimbabwe liberation war, which officially ended a decade ago, and the current activities of the South African sponsored MNR bandits spilling over into eastern Zimbabwe, have left Gonarezhou almost forgotten.

Gonarezhou — the horn of the elephant — was given national parks status in 1975 when the Rhodesian war was gathering the momentum that was to lead to independence for Zimbabwe in 1980.

The potential of Gonarezhou was never realised and it became an effective no-go area for the public.

It was revived by the Zimbabwe Government in the early 1980s when a photographic camp and trails were opened but the MNR incursions forced its official closure in September 1987.

At the turn of the century there were probably about 1 000 elephants in the area and by the early part of this decade the number had risen to more than 6 000. Now, Gonarezhou may still have an elephant population of well-over 3 000, most of which are said to be in the southern part of the park.

Mr Clive Stockil, a Chi-

redzi farmer and chairman of the Lowveld natural history branch of the Wildlife Society of Zimbabwe, said he was unable to comment on the security situation in the park.

He said he believed the authorities were considering opening areas of the park to Zimbabwean citizens only as an initial stage of rehabilitation. — Ziana.