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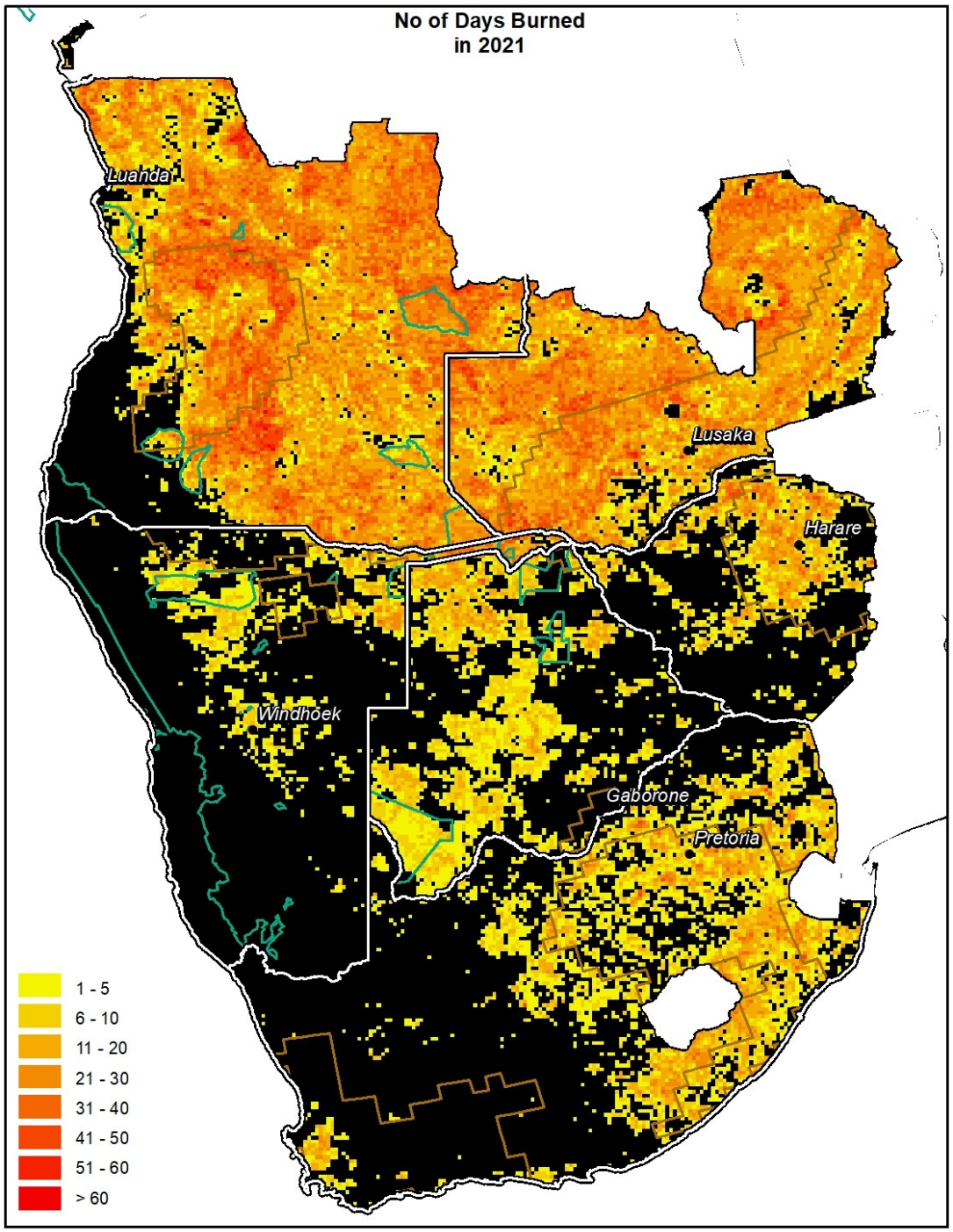
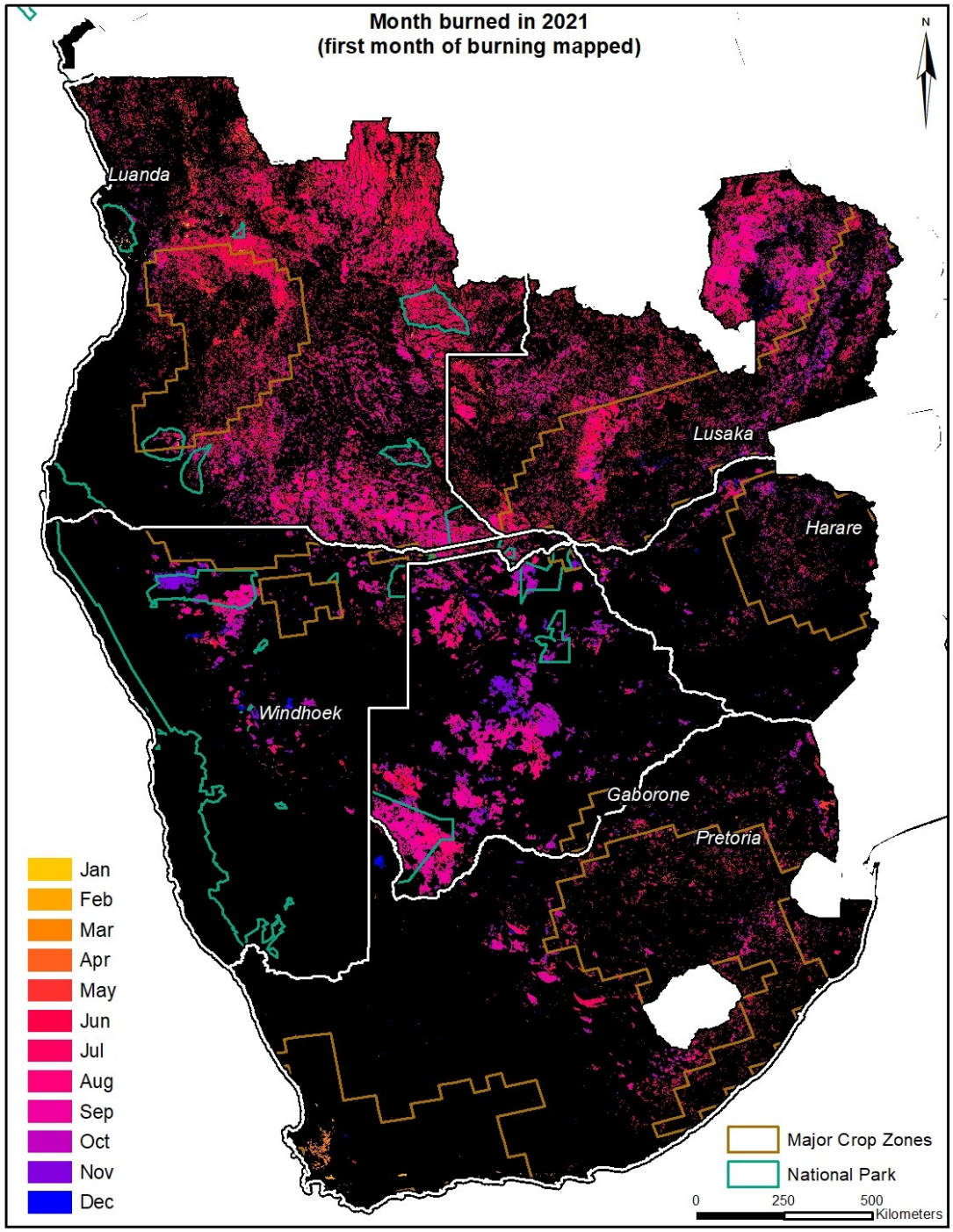
Fire Distribution of 2021 for southern Africa





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Fire Distribution of 2021 for southern Africa

Fire plays a determining role in the creation of the southern African landscape. The duration of the annual dry season and the availability of fuel contribute to the spatial variation and extent of burning.

The burnt area data for the past 20 years suggest that the areas burned for Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe in 2021 are below average, while the areas burned for Botswana and South Africa are above average for 2021. Due to the prolonged drought that culminated in 2019, less fuel loads were available for burning, resulting in smaller total areas burned in the past years.

During 2021, the total areas burned in Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe were well below average (from 2001 to 2020), while for Botswana and South Africa, burning was well above average, with the total area burned in Botswana being double the normal area burned. Namibia's burning in 2021 was average.

Angola and Zambia show the highest frequency of burning, with some areas having burned more than 50 days in 2021., and also show the largest areas burned in 2021, with 341,768 km^2 and 202,965 km^2 burned respectively in 2021. Historically, the largest areas are on average burned in Angola with around 366,000 km^2 annually.

With the exception of South Africa's Cape, most burning in southern Africa occurs in the drier winter months from May to September. In the Western Cape, most burning was observed between January and March 2021.

Data Source: MODIS MCD64 Monthly Burned Area Data (2001 to 2021)

References:

1. Archibald et al. 2008. What limits fire? An examination of drivers of burnt area in Southern Africa.
2. Giglio et al. 2020. Collection 6 MODIS Burned Area Product User's Guide Version 1.3.

Annual Area Burnt (km^2)