



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

MSc thesis opportunity / Examensarbete

Effects of trophy hunting on demography and trophy size of African buffalo

Background

When managed well trophy hunting can be an important part of conservation efforts. African buffalo are one of the more desirable trophies for hunters, particularly bulls with the largest spread of horns. Traditionally hunters have selected younger trophy bulls, with fewer scars, and sharper horn tips. This means these bulls have reduced opportunity to pass on the genes for a wide horn spread. Therefore, in the study area, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find bulls with this size spread. However, this result has not been empirically tested. This decrease has been recognised by some in the hunting industry who have initiated a new hunting protocol in the area. The new protocol says that you may only hunt trophy bulls if they are over the age of 12. This means they are well passed breeding prime and have had a full reproductive life, during which they can pass on their large horn genes. However, there is no data on how many buffalo bulls survive to the age of 12. We would like to investigate the demographics of buffalo bulls to determine the number surviving to old age. We would also like to compare horn spread in a hunting versus a non hunting area.

Methods

The student will use aerial photographs of buffalo in Timbavati and Klaserie (hunting areas) and northern Kruger (non-hunting area). These aerial surveys will be conducted in September when the vegetation allows for best possible views. The student will quantify buffalo demographics and horn spread from these photos using existing standardized protocols. The student will also be able to spend time in the field to interact with local researchers and managers.

Requirements

Experience with basic stats is an advantage, including some basic understanding of R.

Location

This thesis will be done in collaboration with Dr.'s Kevin Robertson and Cleo Graf of the Southern African Wildlife College (www.wildlifecollege.org.za), which is based within a protected savanna reserve with open connection to Kruger National Park, South Africa. During the time in South Africa the student will be housed at the college's field station.

Extent

60 or 30 credits.

Contact

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