



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

MSc thesis opportunity / Examensarbete

White rhino and termites – a merry relationship?

Background

White rhino are currently severely threatened by an ongoing poaching crisis and their conservation is currently a hot topic. The aim of the project is to utilise a large database to help predict factors that influence rhino movements. Over the course of the last 4 years the Southern African Wildlife College has conducted aerial surveys of rhino, recording their exact locations on an almost daily basis, covering much of the local area every 3-4 days. Currently this data has only been used by rangers for anti-poaching efforts. We would like to utilize this data for a study to look at longer term patterns of rhino movement. Some of our previous work has suggested that termite mounds are a particularly important feature in the landscape determining rhino movement. This thesis will therefore particularly focus on this aspect. This work will inform conservation managers of rhino movement patterns and hopefully allow them to focus their resources for rhino protection in areas where they are most needed.

Methods

This thesis consists of analysing existing data and collecting additional data on termite mound distribution in the field in South Africa. There is also an option to limit the thesis to a desktop study in Sweden, only focusing on analyzing existing data, if the student desires. Rhino locations will be linked to existing GIS layers for landscape features such as water courses, soil/geology types and or vegetation types, and elevation. In addition, selection for landscape features will be compared among months and years with varying weather conditions, particularly rainfall.

Requirements

Experience with GIS software (preferably ArcGIS or QGIS) and basic stats is an advantage, including some basic understanding of R.

Location

This thesis will be done in collaboration with Dr. 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 field work the student will be housed at the college's field station.

Extent

60 or 30 credits.

Contact

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