



Factsheet #13

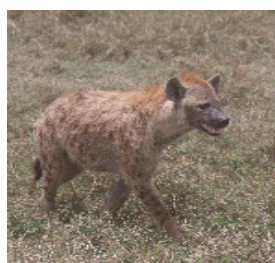
Farmers' perception of wildlife

How do farmers feel about certain wildlife species?

Why this is important

For local actors, nature conservation and its implementation takes place primarily in the daily lives and practices. In order to overcome unsustainable management, adaptations and more fundamental transformations must always be linked to these daily practices and their context. This context includes in particular people's belief and value systems. Environmental management practices are thus also strongly guided by individual feelings and social norms that determine the perception of nature, wildlife, and ecosystem services or disservices. These feelings and norms are deeply rooted, often difficult to change and influenced by many different factors.

Understanding the links between these perceptions and the patterns of action can therefore reveal new insights that can serve as leverage points for change. In the case of Namibian rangeland systems, a closer look at the perceptions of specific wildlife species can clarify complexities of farming decisions. At the same time, they can help to identify further educational needs or advance possible mitigation strategies for human-wildlife conflicts.



Problems with hyenas

- Hyenas cause loss of livestock
- Media, literature and film depict hyenas as ugly and disgusting animals
- Myth describe them as scavengers and thieves and to bring horror
- Negative views prevail in farmers even without any encounters

Characteristics of hyenas

- They live in hierarchical social groups
 - Daughters usually remain in their birth group
 - Hyena mothers are devoted to their cubs
- They are skilled and powerful hunters
- They are the "health police" of their ecosystem
 - They have an outstanding immune system and can also feed on carrion and diseased animals (e.g. anthrax)

Box: Reasons why hyenas are viewed as a major problem (top), and additional facts of valuable special characteristics (bottom).

Key findings

- Farmers distinguish between beneficial vs. conflict-laden wildlife.
- General feelings towards antelopes and giraffes are positive.
- General feelings towards predators and elephants depend on the type of farm management (wildlife-based or livestock-based) and on previous conflicts:
 - Farmers with wildlife-based farm management feel more positive towards elephants and leopards.
 - Farmers with no previous leopard incidences on their farm feel much more positive towards them compared to farmers who experienced problem incidences (e.g., livestock depredation).
 - Most problematic species in terms of conflict severity and number of farmers reporting a problem are hyenas.
- Preference for the development of population size of predators and elephants depends on scale:
 - On the level of their own farm, population size should rather decrease.
 - On a country-wide level (Namibia), population size preference is mixed with less requests of decrease.
- Predators, elephants, and antelopes are recognised to add value to Namibia by a majority of respondents:
 - Added value arises primarily because of their ecosystem service properties of regulating and maintaining ecosystem balance and disease control.
 - However, the importance and value of these species is inferior for the individual farming area.
- Consent to coexist with (dangerous) wildlife correlates with land use rights:
 - Communal farmers largely believe that predators and dangerous animals should only stay in national parks.
 - This attitude is not shared by most freehold farmers who have a more differentiated view on the presence of wildlife outside of national parks.

[Results are based on subjective views of 30 farmer interviews (10 communal and 20 freehold) in the study area of the ORYCS project.]

Stated survey question	Answers by/for	Springbock	Orycs	Giraffe	Elephant	Leopard	Hyena
General feelings of farmers towards...	all surveyed farmers	++			-		
	livestock-based	++	++	++	-	-	--
	wildlife-based	++	++	++	+	++	-
	With reported problems	/	/	++	-	-	--
	Without reported problems	++	++	++	+	++	-
Preference for population size development on...	own farm	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	△▽	▼▼
	in Namibia	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	△▽	▲	△▽
Value and importance of each species on...	own farm	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▼▼	▼	▼▼
	in Namibia	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	△▽

Table 1: Farmers' subjective perception of wildlife species in Namibia. Main source of income of surveyed farmers differed in terms of management type (livestock-based vs. wildlife-based).

Symbols of general feelings indicate: very positive (++), positive (+), negative (-), very negative (--), and not applicable i.e. no problem reported (/).

Symbols of the overall preferences for population size development or value and importance indicate: should greatly increase or greatly increases value/very important (▲▲), should increase or increases value/important (▲), preferences relatively balanced or neither increases nor lowers value (△▽), should decrease or lowers value/unimportant (▼), should greatly decrease or greatly lowers value/very unimportant (▼▼).

Note that population size development is not the actual development based on monitoring data but the subjective preference for future development by farmers. For detailed information see Tausendfreund (2022).

Outlook

The perceptions of wildlife might also apply to other regions and could therefore serve as the basis for targeted strategy interventions. As the value of most wildlife in Namibia is recognized by the majority of the farmers, efforts should aim to mitigate negative effects on livelihoods. Such mitigation strategies can take very different forms. Due to changing social-ecological conditions (e.g., climate, trading conditions), it is important to examine why people tolerate or do not tolerate wildlife. A better understanding of the perception and a targeted approach aligned with the value system of the people will contribute to human-wildlife coexistence and wildlife conservation efforts.

References

Tausendfreund, M. (2022). Assessment of perceived ecosystem services and disservices from wildlife in farmer communities, south-west of Etosha National Park, Kunene region, Namibia. Master's Thesis, University of Kiel, July 2022

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The ORYCS Project

The German-Namibian research project "ORYCS – Options for sustainable land use adaptations in savanna systems" aims to assess the suitability of wildlife management strategies in Namibia as options for adapting land use to climate change in savanna ecosystems.

www.orycs.org

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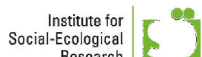
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