

Co-operative hunting
in
the black-backed jackal *Canis mesomelas*
Schreber

MCKENZIE A A

by

CO-OPERATIVE HUNTING IN THE BLACK-BACKED
JACKAL *CANIS MESOMELAS*

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

PhD

UP

1990

Philosophiae Doctor

in the
Faculty of Science
University of Pretoria
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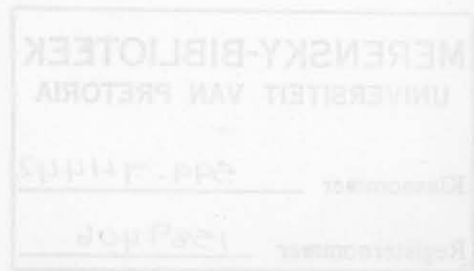
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"Premeditated control of animals is a prerogative that only man can exercise.... If man takes this responsibility lightly, he may alter the natural order and indirectly threaten his own place in the unnatural world thus created."

(McCabe & Koziicky 1972: 393, 394)

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by

A. A. McKenzie

Supervisor: Professor J. D. Skinner

Mammal Research Institute

Department of Zoology

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

Dedicated to all those who gave

so generously of themselves

Ph.D. (Zoology).

Abstract

Black-backed jackals *Canis mesomelas* prey regularly on adult leopards *Acinonyx jubatus* in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, N.E. Tuli Block, Botswana. This predation was found to be highly selective - eight of eleven leopards killed were old and in extremely poor condition, one other had a fractured leg; opportunistic - a high percentage of old leopards was present in the population where the predation was recorded; co-operative - groups of six to twelve jackals temporarily co-operated in killing and consuming leopards; and seasonal - frequency of hunting of leopards was highest under dry conditions, and was non-existent following good rainfall when jackals subsisted almost entirely on insects.

Co-operative hunting

Testing of impala by the black-backed jackal *Canis mesomelas* Schreber in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, N.E. Tuli Block, Botswana. Selected potential prey were cornered in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, N.E. Tuli Block, Botswana. A single throat bite was administered by one of the jackals - no laceration, severing of major vessels by crushing of the trachea was recorded. The prey was dispatched by other jackals - entered the abdomen cranial to the hind leg and severed the major abdominal blood vessels.

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Abstract

Black-backed jackals *Canis mesomelas* prey regularly on adult impala *Aepyceros melampus* in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, N.E. Tuli Block, Botswana. This predation was found to be highly selective - eight of eleven impala killed were old and in extremely poor condition, one other had a fractured leg; opportunistic - a high percentage of old impala was present in the population where the predation was recorded; co-operative - groups of six to twelve jackals temporarily co-operated in killing and consuming impala; and seasonal - frequency of hunting of impala was highest under dry conditions, and was non-existent following good rainfall when jackals subsisted almost entirely on insects.

Testing of impala by putting resting herds to flight was recorded; this was undertaken by one or two jackals only. Selected potential prey were cornered in thick bush and harassed by an increasingly larger group of jackals. A single throat bite was administered by one of the jackals - no laceration, severing of major vessels or crushing of the trachea was recorded. The prey was dispatched by other jackals which entered the abdomen cranial to the hind leg and severed the major abdominal blood vessels.

Minimum seasonal home ranges of mature jackals were approximately 1 km^{-2} , 10% of total home ranges. Male jackal home ranges increased during winter; this was accompanied by an increase in trotting behaviour and an increase in excursions into adjacent areas. Jackal population density was between four and seven km^{-2} . Signs of a predator trap with respect to several less common prey species was evident.

Extensive use of anterior teeth by impala and other ruminants during grooming was discovered. The teeth are arranged in a comb-like array, and in old animals exhibit wear patterns which are due to the grooming function. Older impala without functional front teeth carried significantly more ectoparasites than other impala. Repeated grooming attempts by these old animals removed the hair resulting in partial baldness named "autogenous alopecia".

Preponderance of old impala, the resultant high jackal population, and autogenous alopecia were ascribed to ecosystem stress induced by the absence of large selective predators.

Acknowledgements

The successful completion of this study is a tribute to the selfless contributions of many individuals and several organizations. As a token of my appreciation, I gratefully acknowledge:

The unwavering support and encouragement received from my project supervisor, Professor John Skinner, throughout the many ups and downs of the study;

The generous financial support received from Mashatu Game Reserve, the Foundation for Research Development (CSIR), The Mammal Research Institute, Professor J.D. Skinner and the University of Pretoria;

The permission to conduct the research project in Botswana, granted by The Office of His Excellency The President of Botswana;

The permission to conduct the study and the logistic support provided by Mashatu Game Reserve and its various holding companies - Rennie's Consolidated Holdings, Safren, Mala Mala and the Botswana Development Corporation;

Mr M.L.P. Rattray for permission to complete the study and to conduct the September 1988 field trip;

The permission to traverse and utilize the properties belonging to the Brian Gilfillan Trust, and the support received from Mr Andrew Gilfillan;

Ted and Margie Steyn for their commitment to the conservation of Tuli, and for introducing me to that very special place. Also Ted Steyn for his efforts at enabling me to start and continue this study;

The sound advice of the late Pete Lind, who convinced me that my chosen career path would one-day be of benefit to the place he loved - the Tuli;

The enthusiasm and support of Glen Devine, former manager of Mashatu Game Reserve, who provided the motivation for the study;

The assistance with the processing of rabies samples provided by Dr Howard Darkin, former RVO from Selebi Phikwe;

The enthusiastic field assistance provided by Mark Anderson, Bruce Petty, Thapelo Ramonwana, Johannes Semeo, Nellie Senyatso, William Tukishi, Andre van Rooyen and Daan Vink;

The friendship, shared experiences and personal observations so freely given by Glen Devine, Geoff Dyer, Richard Goss, Barry James, Jeff Hoal, Hugh Jenkins, Fish Maila, John Modeme, Johannes Nare, Gareth Patterson, Bruce Petty, Roger Petty, Buti Sekoba, Solomon Talana, Nick Tredger, Mark Valentine and Kim Wolhuter;

The observations, and advice on radio transmitter construction provided by Pete le Roux;

Fred Harrison for photographs of an impala killed by jackals;

The recording of hyaena vocalization frequency by Bruce Petty and Margaret Sekoba;

The support and assistance received from the personnel of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, in particular Messrs M.L. Nchunga and R. Gabobolae;

The assistance, friendship and support received from members of the Northern Tuli Game Reserve Association, the Fika Futi Syndicate and the Gilfillan Syndicate, the Pontdrift Border Post officials, Wouter and Bettie Faurie and the Petty family;

The specific assistance received with respect to jackal capture from Messrs Brian Bevan, Dirk Brand, Ron Cherry, Gregory McKenzie and Raymond Steyn;

The special equipment provided by Mr Hennie de Beer of Omega Communications (Pty) Ltd. and Tim Davidson and Grant Davidge-Pitts of the Fika Futi Syndicate;

The bubbling enthusiasm of the Cherry family - Ron, Mary-Anne, Catherine and John - which provided a spark of motivation at a time when jackals seemed to be uncatchable and morale was at rock bottom;

The specific advice given by Professors J. Boomker, I. Horak and I.B. van Rensburg, and Drs N. Fairall, P. Novellie and C.A. Spinage;

Dr Marthan Bester for translating the summary into Afrikaans;

My friends and colleagues at the Mammal Research Institute for their tolerance, understanding, and readiness to commit me to a sanatorium at short notice; and

My parents, for making this all possible.

Finally I thank my wife Tanya and my son Tegan for their unconditional support, and for enduring the hardships, loneliness and long separations without which this study would never have been completed. The part they played was every bit as important as mine, and I hope that they find satisfaction in the contribution they have thereby made to the conservation of their second home - Tuli.

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