

CAN THE LION SLEEP TONIGHT?

The impact of safari tourism on the behaviour of lions (*Panthera leo*) and leopards (*Panthera Pardus*) in Queen Elizabeth NP, Uganda

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BACKGROUND

Leopards and lions in Queen Elizabeth National Park are essential both for the functioning of the ecosystem as top predators, and for the Ugandan economy as a popular tourist attraction. However, human presence has been shown to cause stress and behavioural changes in various animals.

The aim of this study was to identify behavioural changes connected to tourism in free-ranging lions and leopards.

METHODS

Behavioural observations on 18 lions and 5 leopards for at least 10-minutes

Ethogram

- 32 behaviours in 4 categories
- 3 visitor parameters
 - Proximity of cars
 - Number of cars
 - Noise level

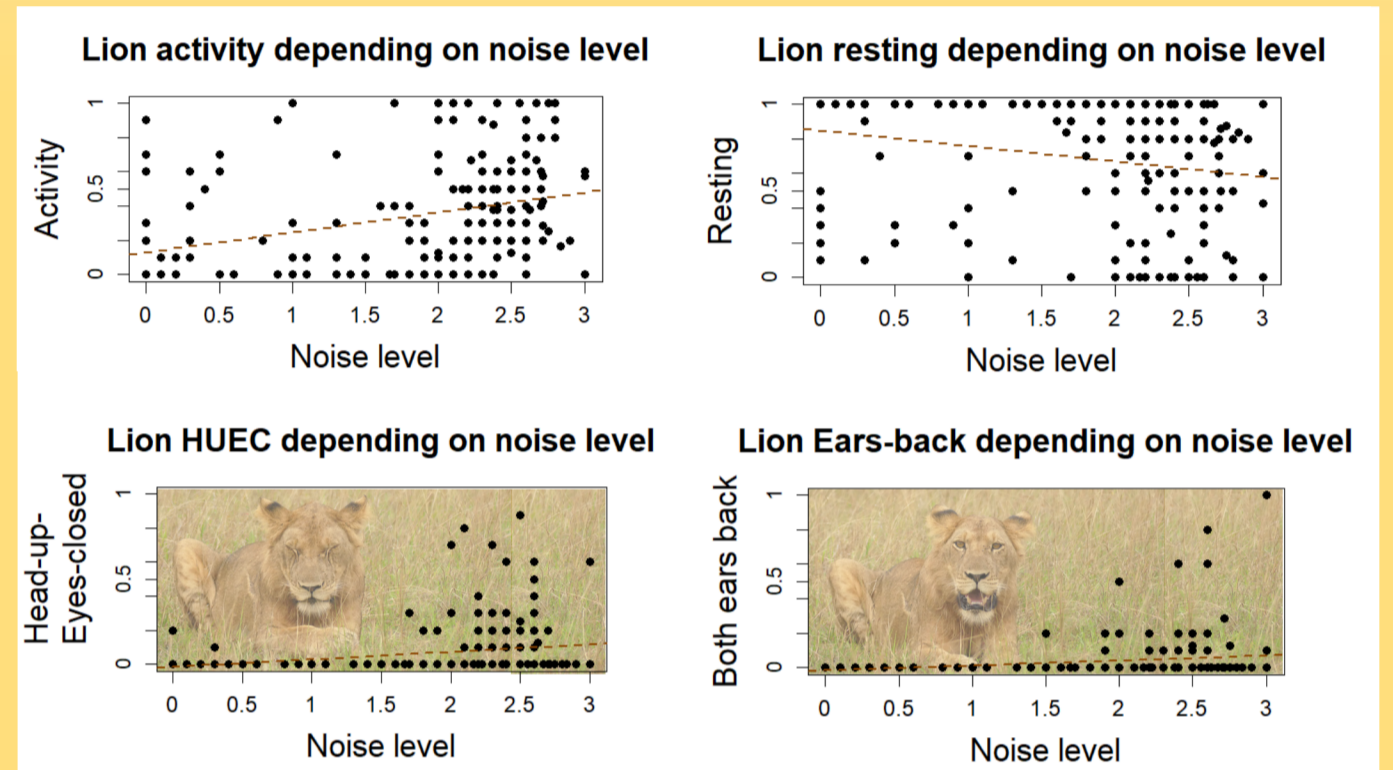


Additionally, an online survey with 108 participants was conducted to determine expectations for and/or experience with African safaris.

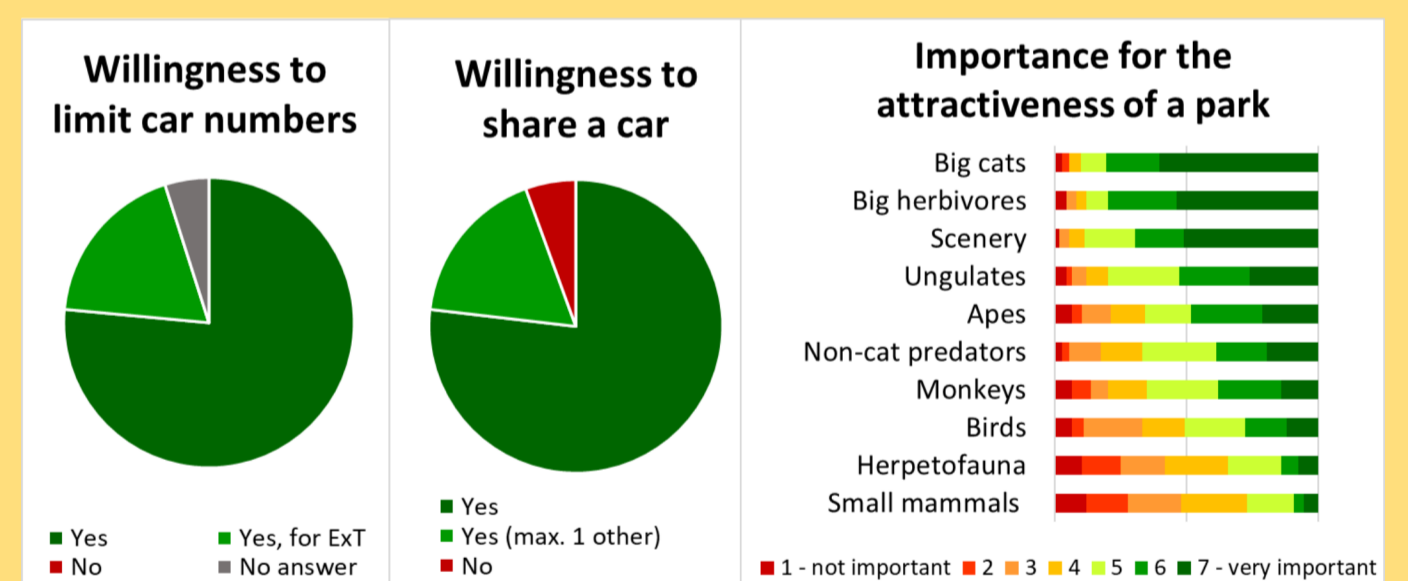
CONCLUSION

Tourism significantly affects lion behaviour and might therefore be an additional stressor on big cats. However, a vast majority of tourists are willing to take steps to reduce their impact.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION



- Lions: all tested behaviours were significantly impacted by at least one visitor parameter
 - Noise level had the biggest influence
- Leopards: No significant results
 - Possibly due to much less data collected



Visitors place a high value on the presence of big cats in national parks, and are in favor of implementing measures that would reduce the impact of tourism.



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