

REFLECTING MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES IN RESEARCH DATA



Communicating Wildlife Research in Northern Botswana

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Findings

Of the symposium’s 86 presentations, **59 %** were based on collection of original data, and **21%** on open data from international and national sources. **12%** were reports of management interventions or policy recommendations. Less than **1%** represented work that discussed shared data repositories.

Research presented at the symposium indicated an increasing emphasis on human-wildlife interactions: **27%** of presentations. The previous study found that fewer than **1%** of research projects between 2000 and 2005 were focused on this issue.

The new plan calls for more interdisciplinary work. **17%** of the presentations were based on collaboration among social scientists and ecologists.

Priority Study Areas for 1996 and 2004 DWNP Research Strategies	Priority Study Areas for 2014 Draft DWNP Research Strategy	Studies Presented at 2015 Symposium
Monitoring of population distribution and habitat	Conduct baseline species and habitat inventories by ecoregion (Theme 1)	17
	Establish appropriate monitoring (Theme 2)	
Studies of the impact of offtake, including illegal hunting	Conduct risk analyses on vulnerable species and identify key drivers of change (Theme 2)	4
Studies of problem animals and human-wildlife conflict	Identify areas of land use conflict, integrated research on HWC (Theme 4)	23
Ecology of species and communities	Risk analyses for endangered, endemic or keystone species (Theme 2)	36
Studies of wildlife use		5
Studies of the impact of artificial water supply		0
Studies of specific, named ecosystems	Resilience analyses and co-management options for protected areas (Theme 3)	22
Studies of amphibians and reptiles		0

Reflection of management priorities in the content of symposium presentations

Introduction

Are research results finding their way into the policy and practice of wildlife management in northern Botswana?

Communicating the results of wildlife research carried out in northern Botswana could contribute to adaptive management of an important natural resource that appears to be under threat.

A study conducted in 2014 concluded that northern Botswana’s wildlife stakeholders make up an identifiable community of practice, characterized by mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Communication, within this community of practice, and to outside actors, however, should be strengthened, to both inform debate and to allow findings to be put to more use in continuously improving management of wildlife resources.

The 2014 work looked at whether research carried out under Government of Botswana research permits was aligned to the stated objectives of the country’s principal wildlife steward, the Dept. of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP). Findings revealed that about 50 per cent of studies carried out were highly relevant to the government's objectives.

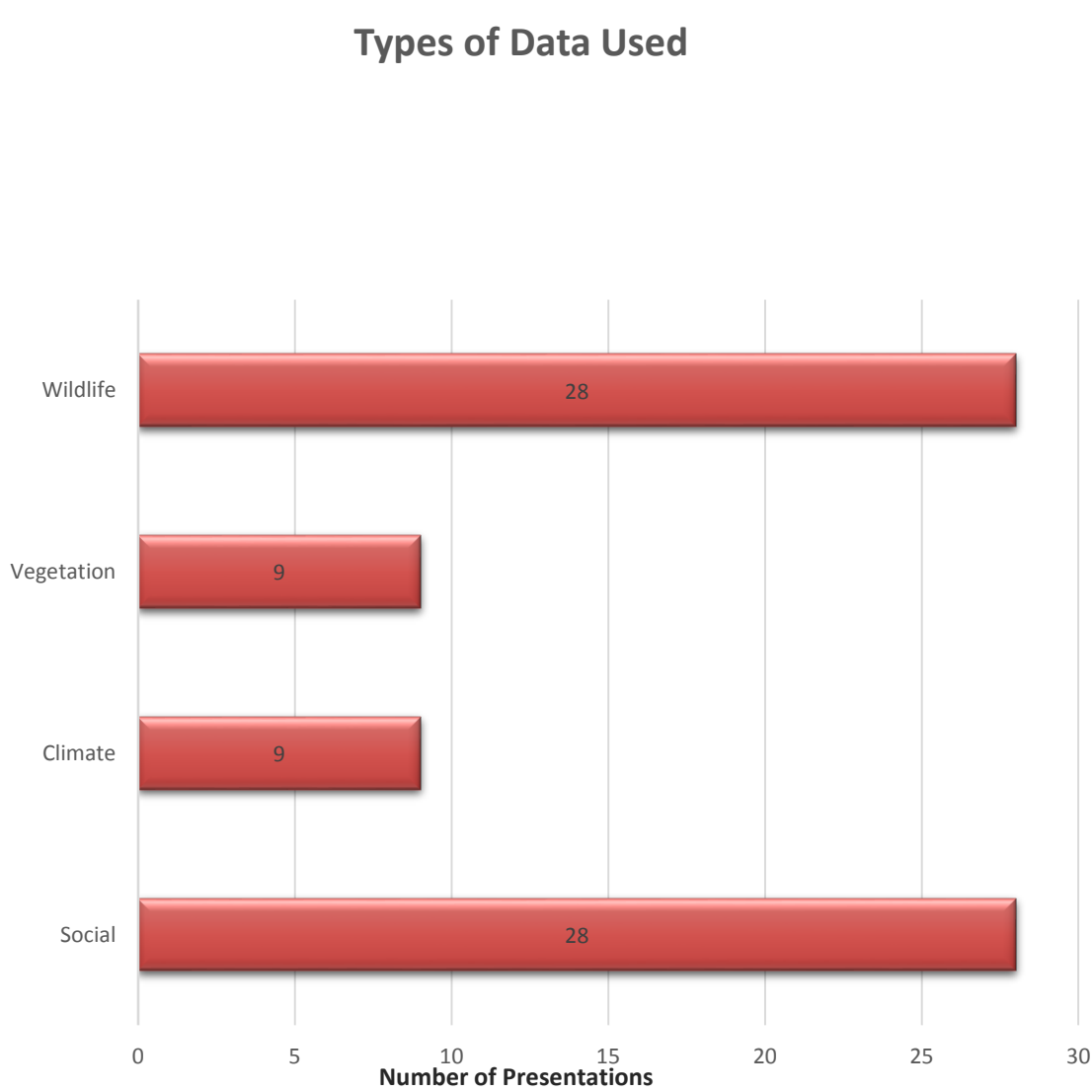
Aim

As an extension to the previous study, this investigation looked at whether the most recent wildlife research in the region reflects changing management priorities, allowing for effective communication of insights and findings among wildlife stakeholders.

Methodology

A draft research strategic plan produced by the DWNP in late 2014 acknowledged the need for more emphasis on management approaches that incorporate consultation and interaction with human communities, and increased use of data at a larger scales, incorporating spatial, scenario and model-based analyses.

The March 2015 Botswana Symposium on Wetlands and Wildlife, co-sponsored by the DWNP and University of Botswana’s Okavango Research Institute, provided an opportunity to examine the nature of data being collected and used in the region’s wildlife research, and to compare current research with priorities identified in the draft plan.



Symposium Book of Abstracts used for content analysis

I used content analysis of the contents of the symposium *Book of Abstracts* to categorise the presentations made at the symposium by research priorities identified in the DWNP’s 1996, 2004 and 2014 research strategies. The abstracts were analysed to identify the source and type of data used in the research, methods, and the topical focus of the studies.

Conclusions

Data collected and used in current wildlife research in northern Botswana appears to increasingly reflect the priorities of the country’s principal wildlife steward, the DWNP. While available open data is well used, development of local repositories needed to facilitate the broader scale analysis identified as a need by the DWNP’s new strategic plan is limited, supported mainly by short-term project funding. This needs to be remedied to ensure the applicability of research findings to effective wildlife management.