

Diversity of Large Mammals in Awash National Park and its Ecosystem Role and Biodiversity Conservation, Ethiopia

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Abstract : An ecological and biodiversity conservation study on species composition, population status and habitat association of large mammals and the impact of human interference on their distribution was carried out in Awash National Park, Ethiopia during October, 2012 to July, 2013. A total of 25 species of large mammals were recorded from the study area. Representative sample sites were taken from each habitat type and surveyed using random line transect method. For medium and large mammal survey, indirect methods (foot print and dung) and direct observations were used. Twenty three species of medium to large-sized mammals were identified and recorded from ANP. A total of 25 species of median and large size mammals were recorded from the study area. Out of this, 20 species were rodents of three families and five species were insectivores of two families. Beisa Oryx (*Oryx beisa beisa*), Soemmerring's gazelle (*Gazella soemmerringi*), Defassa waterbuck (*Kobus defassa*), Lesser Kudu (*Strepsiceros imberbis*), Greater Kudu (*Strepsiceros strepsiceros*), Warthog (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus*), Baboon (*Papio anubis* baboon) and Salt's dikdik (*Madoqua saltiana*) were the most common seen median and large mammals in the study area. Beisa Oryx (*Oryx beisa beisa*) and Soemmerring Gazelles (*Gazella soemmerringi*) are commonly found in the open areas, where as Greater Kudus (*Strepsiceros strepsiceros*) and Lesser Kudus (*Strepsiceros imberbis*) was seen in the bushed areas. Defassa waterbuck (*Kobus defassa*) was observed in the bushy river area in Northern part of the Park. Anubis baboon (*Papio anubis* baboon) was seen near to the river side. Hamadryas baboon founded in semi-desert areas of Awash National Park, particularly in Filwoha area. The area is one of a key biodiversity conservation and provide pure water, air, food, grazing land and storage of carbon.

Keywords : awash national park, biodiversity, ecosystem value, habitat association, large mammals, population status, species composition

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