

## **Human Pressure Threaten Swayne's Hartebeest to Point of Local Extinction from the Savannah Plains of Nech Sar National Park, South Rift Valley, Ethiopia**

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**Abstract :** We investigated the population size of the endemic and endangered Swayne's Hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus swaynei*) in Nech Sar National Park from 2012 to 2014 and document the major threats why the species is on the verge of local extinction. The park was once known for its abundant density of Swayne's Hartebeest. We used direct total count methods for a census. We administered semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires with senior scouts who are the member of the local communities. Historical records were obtained to evaluate the population trends of the animals since 1974. The density of the animal decreased from 65 in 1974 to 1 individual per 100 km<sup>2</sup> in 2014 with a decline of 98.5% in the past 40 years. The respondents agreed that the conservation status of the park was in its worst condition ever now with only 2 Swayne's Hartebeest left, with a rapid decline from 4 individuals in 2012 and 12 individuals in 2009. Mainly hunting and habitat loss, but also the unsuitable season of reproduction and shortage of forage as minor factors were identified as threats for a local extinction of the Swayne's Hartebeests. On the other hand, predation, fire, disease, and ticks were not considered a cause for the declining trend. Hunting happens mostly out of some kind of revenge since the local community thought that they were pushed out from the land because of the presence of Swayne's Hartebeest in the area. Respondents agreed that the revenge action of the local communities was in response to their unwillingness to be displaced from the park in 1982/3. This conflict situation is resulting from the exclusionary wildlife management policy of the country. We conclude that the human interventions in general and illegal hunting, in particular, pushed the Swayne's Hartebeest to a point of local extinction. Therefore, we recommend inclusive wildlife management approach for continuing existence of the park together with its natural resources so that sustainable use of the resources is in place.

**Keywords :** hunting, habitat destruction, local extinction, Nech Sar National Park, Swayne's Hartebeest

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