

An Evolutionary Game Theoretic Model of Rhino Horn Devaluation

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Abstract

Rhino populations are at a critical level due to rhino poaching. Wild life managers attempt
3 to secure rhinos with approaches such as devaluing the horn. The most common strategy of
devaluation is dehorning. Game theory has been used before to examine the interaction of
poachers and managers. A manager can either 'dehorn' their rhinos or leave the horn attached.
6 Poachers may chose to behave 'selectively' or 'indiscriminately'. The approach described in this
paper builds on this previous work and investigates the interactions between poachers. Using
evolutionary game theory, we determine which strategy is preferred by a poacher in various
9 different populations of poachers. The purpose of this work is to discover whether conditions
which encourage poachers to behave selectively exist, that is, they only kill full horned rhinos.
The analytical results prove that poachers will never adopt a selective strategy as long as there is
12 gain from a partial horn. Additionally, poachers behaving indiscriminately is robust. The model
is adapted further to include a disincentive factor, which may represent factors such as harsher
punishment, or lower demand for horn. With a disincentive, poachers can be encouraged to
15 behave selectively, but only when there are few devalued rhinos. This paper aims to contribute
to the necessary research needed for informed discussion about the lively debate on legalising
rhino horn trade.

18 Introduction

The demand for rhino horn continues to pose a serious threat to rhinoceros populations world-wide (Amin et al., 2006). The illegal trade in rhino horn supports aggressive poaching syndicates
21 and a black market (Nowell et al., 1992; Warchol et al., 2003). This lucrative market entices people to invest their time and energy to gain a ‘windfall’ in the form of a rhino horn, through the poaching of rhinos. In recent years poaching has escalated to an unprecedented level resulting in
24 concerns over their future existence (Biggs et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2013). In response, rhino conservation has seen increased militarisation with ‘boots on the ground’ and ‘eyes in the sky’ (Duffy et al., 2015). An alternative method is to devalue the horn itself, one of the main methods being
27 the removal so that only a stub is left. The first attempt at large-scale rhino dehorning as an anti-poaching measure was in Damaraland, Namibia, in 1989 (Milner-Gulland and Leader-Williams, 1992). Other methods of devaluing the horn that have been suggested include the insertion of
30 poisons, dyes or GPS trackers (Gill, 2010; Smith et al., 2013). However, like dehorning, they cannot remove all the potential gain from an intact horn (poison and dyes fade or GPS trackers can be removed and have been found to affect only a small proportion of the horn). Moreover, several
33 methods include addressing the problem by reducing the demand in the market. In (Biggs et al., 2013) the authors suggest meeting the demand for rhino horn through a legal market by farming the rhino horn from live rhinos. This controversial proposal is an active conversation, with the
36 actual quantity of horn that could be farmed being estimated recently by (Taylor et al., 2017). Moreover, the debate is not limited to rhinos - (Harvey et al., 2017) considered ivory and stated that by enforcing a domestic ivory trade ban we can reduce the market’s demand. This paper
39 builds on the work of (Lee and Roberts, 2016) and considers the general strategy of devaluing horns, which includes dehorning.

Rhino populations now persist largely in protected areas or on private land, and require
42 intensive protection (Ferreira et al., 2014). For wildlife managers law enforcement is often one of the main methods of deterring poaching, however rhino managers can remove the poaching

incentive by devaluing their rhinos (Milner-Gulland and Leader-Williams, 1992). In (Milner-
45 Gulland and Leader-Williams, 1992) they found the optimum proportion to dehorn using mean
horn length as a measure of the proportion of rhinos dehorned. They showed, with realistic
parameter values, that the optimal strategy is to dehorn as many rhinos as possible. A manager
48 does not need to choose between law enforcement or devaluing, but perhaps adopt a combination
of the two; especially given that devaluing rhinos comes at a cost to the manager, and the process
comes with a risk to the rhinos.

51 A recent paper modelled the interaction between a rhino manager and poachers using game
theory (Lee and Roberts, 2016). The authors consider a working year of a single rhino manager.
A manager is assumed to have standard yearly resources which can be allocated on devaluing a
54 proportion of their rhinos or spent on security. It is assumed that all rhinos initially have intact
horns. Poachers may either only kill rhinos with full horns, ‘selective poachers’, or kill all rhinos
they encounter, ‘indiscriminate poachers’. This strategy may be preferred to avoid tracking a
57 devalued rhino again, and/or to gain the value from the partial horn. If all rhinos are left by
the rhino manager with their intact horns, it does not pay poachers to be selective so they will
chose to be indiscriminate since being selective incurs an additional cost to discern the status of
60 the rhino. Conversely, if all poachers are selective, it pays rhino managers to invest in devaluing
their rhinos. This dynamic is represented in Fig. 1. Assuming poachers and managers will
always behave so as to maximise their payoff, there are two equilibriums: either all rhinos are
63 devalued and all poachers are selective; or all horns are intact and all poachers are indiscriminate.
Essentially, either the managers win, the top left quadrant of Fig. 1, or the poachers win, the
bottom right quadrant of Fig. 1. The paper (Lee and Roberts, 2016) concludes that poachers will
66 always choose to behave indiscriminately, and thus the game settles to the bottom right quadrant,
i.e., the poachers win.

The work of (Lee and Roberts, 2016) did not take in to account the population dynamic effect
69 of these strategies. In a population full of indiscriminate poachers would there be a benefit to a
single poacher becoming selective or vice versa? This notion is explored here using evolutionary





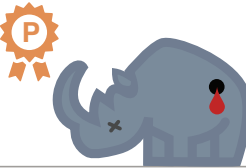
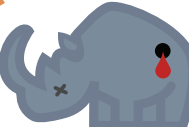
		Manager strategies	
		Horn devalued	Horn intact
Poacher strategies	Selective	 	
	Indiscriminate		 

Figure 1: The game between rhino manager and rhino poachers. The system settles to one of two equilibriums, either devaluing is effective or not.

game theory (Smith and Price, 1973). The game is not that of two players anymore (manager and poacher) but now the players are an infinite population of poachers. This allows for the interaction between poachers over multiple plays of the game to be explored with the rhino manager being the one that creates the conditions of the population.

In evolutionary game theory, we assume infinite populations and in our model this will be represented by $\chi = (x_1, x_2)$ with x_1 proportion of the population using a strategy of the first type and x_2 of the second. We assume there is a utility function u_1 and u_2 that maps the population to a fitness for each strategy,

$$u_1(\chi) \quad u_2(\chi).$$

In evolutionary game theory these utilities are used to dictate the evolution of the population over time, according to the following differential equations,

$$\begin{cases} \frac{dx_1}{dt} = x_1(u_1(\chi) - \phi), \\ \frac{dx_2}{dt} = x_2(u_2(\chi) - \phi), \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

81 where ϕ is the average fitness of the whole population. Here, the overall population is assumed to remain stable thus, $x_1 + x_2 = 1$ and

$$\frac{dx_1}{dt} + \frac{dx_2}{dt} = 0 \Rightarrow x_1(u_1(\chi) - \phi) + x_2(u_2(\chi) - \phi) = 0. \quad (2)$$

Thus the average fitness can be written as,

$$\phi = x_1 u_1(\chi) + x_2 u_2(\chi). \quad (3)$$

84 By substituting (3) and $x_2 = 1 - x_1$ in (1),

$$\frac{dx_1}{dt} = x_1(1 - x_1)(u_1(\chi) - u_2(\chi)). \quad (4)$$

The equilibria of the differential equation (4) are given by, $x_1 = 0$, $x_1 = 1$, and $0 < x_1 < 1$ for $u_1(\chi) = u_2(\chi)$. These equilibria correspond to stability of the population: the differential
87 equation (4) no longer changes.

The notion of evolutionary stability can be checked only for these stable strategies. For a stable strategy to be an Evolutionary Stable Strategy (ESS) it must remain the best response even
90 in a mutated population χ_ϵ . A mutated population is the post entry population where a small proportion ϵ starts deviating and adopts a different strategy. Fig. 2 illustrates two potential strategies: without outside stimulation neither marble would move. In Fig. 2b however the

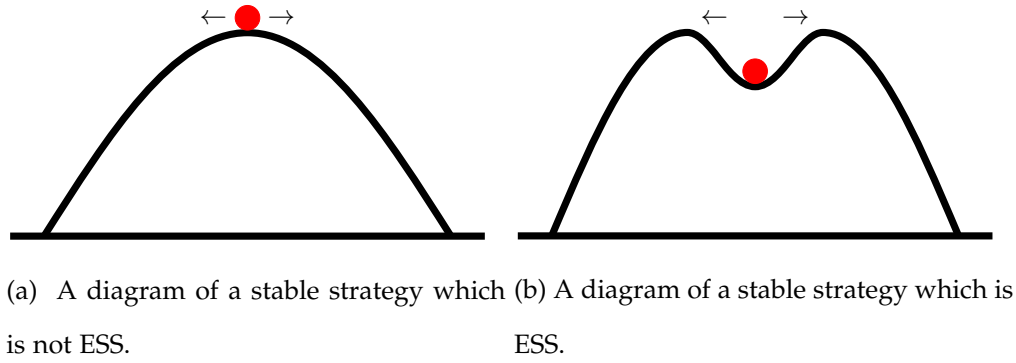


Figure 2: Diagrams of stable strategies.

93 stability can be described as “stronger”: with a small nudge the marble would return to its stable position. In Fig. 2a any non zero nudge would move the marble out of its equilibria.

In Section “The Utility Model”, we determine expressions for u_1, u_2 that correspond to a pop-
 96 ulation of wild rhino poachers and we explore the stability of the equilibria identified in (Lee and Roberts, 2016). The results contained in this paper are proven analytically, and more specifically it is shown that:

- 99 • all poachers behaving selectively is trivially unstable,
- a mixed population where selective and indiscriminate poachers learn to co exist can not hold,
- 102 • all poachers adopting an indiscriminate strategy is an evolutionary stable strategy.

This implies that under almost all conditions, no matter what current proportion of of poach-
 105 ers are acting selectively, the population will eventually turn in to a population of only indis-
 criminate poachers.

The Utility Model

As discussed briefly in Section “Introduction”, a rhino poacher can adopt two strategies, to either
108 behave selectively or indiscriminately. To calculate the utility for each strategy, the gain and cost
that poachers are exposed to must be taken into account. The poacher incurs a loss from seeking
a rhino, and the risk involved. The gain depends upon the value of horn, the proportion of horn
111 remaining after the manager has devalued the rhino horn and the number of rhinos (devalued
and not).

Let us first consider the gain to the poacher, where θ is the amount of horn taken. We assume
114 rhino horn value is determined by weight only, a reasonable assumption as rhino horn is sold
in a grounded form (Sav, 2017). Referring to Fig. 1, clearly if the horn is intact, the amount of
horn gained is $\theta = 1$ for both the selective and the indiscriminate poacher. If the rhino horn has
117 been devalued, and the poacher is selective, the amount of horn gained is $\theta = 0$ as the poacher
does not kill. However, if the poacher is behaving indiscriminately, the amount of horn gained is
 $\theta = \theta_r$ (for some $0 < \theta_r < 1$). Therefore, the amount of horn gained in the general case is

$$\theta(r, x) = x(1 - r) + (1 - x)((\theta_r - 1)r + 1), \quad (5)$$

120 where r is the proportion of rhinos that have been devalued, and x is the proportion of selective
poachers and $1 - x$ is the proportion of indiscriminate poachers. Note that since $\theta_r, r, x \in [0, 1]$,
then $\theta(r, x) > 0$, that is, some horn will be taken. Standard supply and demand arguments imply
123 that the value of rhino horn decreases as the quantity of horn available increases (Mankiw, 2010).
Thus at any given time the expected gain is

$$H\theta(r, x)^{-\alpha}, \quad (6)$$

where H is a scaling factor associated with the value of a full horn, and $\alpha \geq 0$ is a constant that
126 determines the precise relationship between the quantity and value of the horn. Fig. 3, verifies

that the gain curve corresponds to a demand curve.

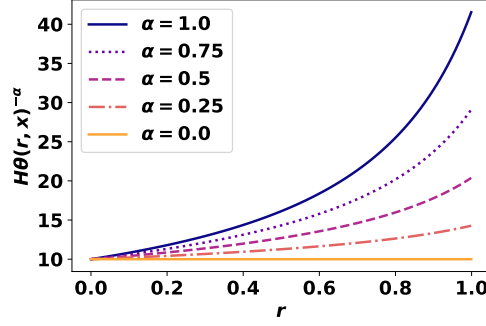


Figure 3: $H\theta(r, x)^{-\alpha}$ for values $H = 10, \theta_r = 0.3$ and $x = 0.2$.

An individual interacts with the population, denoted as $\chi = (x, 1 - x)$. For simplicity, from
 129 herein the population χ is referred to in terms of the proportion of selective poachers only, x .
 Therefore, the gain for a poacher in the population x is either

$$\begin{cases} \theta(r, 1)H\theta(r, x)^{-\alpha} & \text{selective poacher} \\ \theta(r, 0)H\theta(r, x)^{-\alpha} & \text{indiscriminate poacher} \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

depending on the chosen strategy of the individual, see Fig. 1.

132 Secondly we consider the costs incurred by the poacher. Let us denote the number of rhinos
 that will be considered at risk given r and x as $\psi(r, x)$. The rhinos **not** at risk are the devalued
 ones that cross the paths of selective poachers. Thus the cost to seek a rhino depends on r and x
 135 by,

$$\psi(r, x) = 1 - rx. \quad (8)$$

Additionally, the poachers are also exposed to a risk. The risk to the poacher is directly
 related to the proportion of rhinos not devalued, $1 - r$, since the rhino manager can spend more
 138 on security if the cost of devaluing is low. In real life this is not always the case. The cost of
 security can be extremely high thus it can not be guaranteed that much security will be added

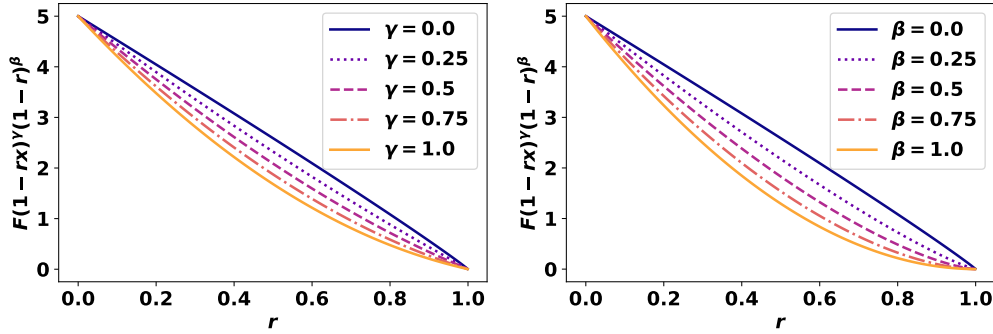
from the saved money. However, our model assumes that there is a proportional and negative
 141 relationship between the measures.

$$(1 - r)^\beta, \quad (9)$$

where $\beta \geq 0$ is a constant that determines the precise relationship between the proportion of
 rhinos not devalued and the security on the grounds. Therefore, at any given time the expected
 144 cost for a poacher is,

$$F\psi(r, x)^\gamma(1 - r)^\beta = F(1 - rx)^\gamma(1 - r)^\beta \quad (10)$$

where F and $\gamma \geq 0$ are constants that determine the precise relationship between the proportion
 of vulnerable rhinos and the probability of finding a rhino, such that γ close to zero indicates
 147 very sparse rhinos. Fig. 4, verifies the decreasing relationship between r and the cost.



(a) For values, $x = 0.7, F = 5$ and $\beta = 0.95$. (b) For values, $x = 1, F = 5$ and $\gamma = 0.95$.

Figure 4: $F(1 - rx)^\gamma(1 - r)^\beta$.

Note that a selective poacher needs more time to secure an 'available' rhino, if they exist at
 all. Hence, there is an additional cost that tends to infinity as $r \rightarrow 1$,

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \frac{1}{\psi(r,1)} = \frac{1}{1-r} & \text{selective poacher} \\ \frac{1}{\psi(r,0)} = 1 & \text{indiscriminate poacher} \end{array} \right. \quad (11)$$

150 To summarise, the cost incurred by a given individual poacher when interacting with the population x is given by

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \frac{1}{1-r} F\psi(r, x)^\gamma (1-r)^\beta & \text{selective poacher} \\ F\psi(r, x)^\gamma (1-r)^\beta & \text{indiscriminate poacher} \end{array} \right. \quad (12)$$

Combining (7) and (12) gives the utility functions for selective poachers, $u_1(x)$, and indis-
 153 criminate poachers, $u_2(x)$,

$$u_1(x) = \theta(r, 1) H\theta(r, x)^{-\alpha} - \frac{1}{1-r} F\psi(r, x)^\gamma (1-r)^\beta, \quad (13)$$

$$u_2(x) = \theta(r, 0) H\theta(r, x)^{-\alpha} - F\psi(r, x)^\gamma (1-r)^\beta. \quad (14)$$

Let $\sigma = (s, 1-s)$ denote an individual where $\sigma = (1, 0)$ represents a selective poacher, and $\sigma = (0, 1)$ represents an indiscriminate poacher. For simplicity, from herein the individual σ is
 156 referred to in terms of the probability of behaving selectively, $\sigma = s$. Thus the general utility function for an individual poacher in the population with a proportion of $0 \leq x \leq 1$ selective poachers is

$$u(s, x) = su_1(x) + (1-s)u_2(x). \quad (15)$$

159 Substituting (13) and (14) into (15) gives,

$$u(s, x) = H(\theta_r r(1-s) - r + 1) \theta(r, x)^{-\alpha} - F \left(1 - s + \frac{s}{1-r} \right) (1-rx)^\gamma (1-r)^\beta. \quad (16)$$

In Section “Evolutionary Stability”, the notions of stability and evolutionary stability of these two strategies as well as a potential mixed strategy will be investigated.

162 Evolutionary Stability

By definition, for a strategy to be an ESS it must first be a best response to an environment where the entire population is playing the same strategy. In our model there are three possible stable
165 distributions based on the equilibria of equation (4):

- all poachers are selective;
- all poachers are indiscriminate;
- 168 • mixed population of selective and indiscriminate poachers.

Each of the equilibria will be examined in the following subsections.

0.1 All poachers are selective

171 **Theorem 1.** *Using the utility model described in Section “The Utility Model”, a population of selective poachers is unstable.*

Proof. For $s = 1$ to be a best response to itself the utility of behaving selectively in a population
174 of selective poachers must be greater than the utility of a poacher behaving indiscriminately in a population of selective poachers,

$$u(1, 1) > u(0, 1), \tag{17}$$

where

$$u(1, 1) = H(1 - r)^{1-\alpha} - F(1 - r)^{\beta+\gamma-1} \tag{18}$$

177 and

$$u(0, 1) = H(\theta_r r + 1 - r)(1 - r)^{-\alpha} - F(1 - r)^{\beta + \gamma}. \quad (19)$$

Setting (18) to be greater than (19) gives the condition,

$$H\theta_r < -F(1 - r)^{\gamma + \beta + \alpha - 1} \quad (20)$$

The right-hand side will always be negative for any r , on the other hand the left-hand side is
 180 always positive. Thus, (20) can never hold. \square

This implies that whilst (Lee and Roberts, 2016) identified the individual poachers acting
 selectively as an equilibrium it is an extremely weak equilibrium from the point of view of
 183 population stability: a slight change and the population will change.

0.2 All poachers are indiscriminate

Theorem 2. *Using the utility model described in Section “The Utility Model”, a population of indiscriminate poachers is evolutionarily stable.*
 186

Proof. In order for $s = 0$ to be an ESS it must remain the best response in a mutated population
 χ_ϵ , where $\chi_\epsilon = (x_\epsilon, 1 - x_\epsilon)$. Following the same notation, the mutated population will be denoted
 189 as x_ϵ from herein. Thus,

$$u(0, x_\epsilon) > u(x_\epsilon, x_\epsilon), \quad (21)$$

must hold. From (16),

$$(22)$$

$$u(0, x_\epsilon) = H(\theta_r r - r + 1)\theta(r, x_\epsilon)^{-\alpha} - F(1 - rx_\epsilon)^\gamma(1 - r)^\beta, \quad (23)$$

$$u(x_\epsilon, x_\epsilon) = H(\theta_r r(1 - x_\epsilon) - r + 1)\theta(r, x_\epsilon)^{-\alpha} - F(1 - rx_\epsilon)^\gamma(1 - r)^\beta \left(1 - x_\epsilon + \frac{x_\epsilon}{1 - r}\right). \quad (24)$$

Let the difference of (22) and (24) be denoted as,

$$\delta = u(0, x_\epsilon) - u(x_\epsilon, x_\epsilon), \quad (25)$$

$$= H\theta(r, x_\epsilon)^{-\alpha}\theta_r r x_\epsilon - F(1 - r x_\epsilon)^\gamma (1 - r)^\beta x_\epsilon \left(\frac{-r}{1 - r} \right) \quad (26)$$

all indiscriminate will be an ESS only if $\delta > 0$ for any small value of ϵ . Thus only if,

$$H\theta(r, x_\epsilon)^{-\alpha}\theta_r r x_\epsilon > F(1 - r x_\epsilon)^\gamma (1 - r)^\beta x_\epsilon \left(\frac{-r}{1 - r} \right) \quad (27)$$

The right-hand of inequality (27) is always negative since $(\frac{-r}{1-r}) < 0$ for all r . On the contrary, the left-hand side is always positive for all r , thus the inequality always holds. Therefore, it is proven that all indiscriminate poachers is an evolutionary stable strategy. \square

This shows that a population of indiscriminate poachers not only corresponds to the equilibrium of the individual based game identified in (Lee and Roberts, 2016) but also is a very robust and an attractive equilibrium at the population level.

0.3 Mixed population of selective and indiscriminate poachers

Theorem 3. *Using the utility model described in Section “The Utility Model”, a mixed stable strategy ($s = s^*$) never exists for $0 < r < 1$.*

Proof. A mixed strategy $s = s^*$ is said to be stable for a given s^* only if,

$$u(1, s^*) = u(0, s^*). \quad (28)$$

The left-hand side is,

$$u(1, s^*) = H(1 - r)\theta(r, s^*)^{-\alpha} - F\frac{1}{(1 - r)}(1 - r s^*)^\gamma (1 - r)^\beta$$

204 The right-hand side is

$$u(0, s^*) = H(\theta_r r + 1 - r)\theta(r, s^*)^{-\alpha} - F(1 - rs^*)^\gamma(1 - r)^\beta.$$

Substituting these into (28) gives

$$-(H\theta_r r \theta(r, s^*)^{-\alpha} + Fr(1 - rs^*)^\gamma(1 - r)^{\beta-1}) = 0. \quad (29)$$

Condition (29) can never hold for $0 < r < 1$. Thus a mixed stable equilibrium is never stable. \square

207 In this section we have studied analytically the stability of all the possible equilibria. We have
proven the instability of any population with selective poachers and the evolutionary stability
of the indiscriminate behaviour. All of these theoretic results have been verified empirically, the
210 data for this has been archived at (Gly, 2017).

Theorems 1, 2, 3 are illustrated in Fig. 5 which shows the numerical solutions to (4) using (13)
and (14) with $x_1 = x$. This is done using numerical integration implemented in (Eric et al., 2001–).

213 As is evident from the scenarios considered, all populations converge to being all indiscriminate.

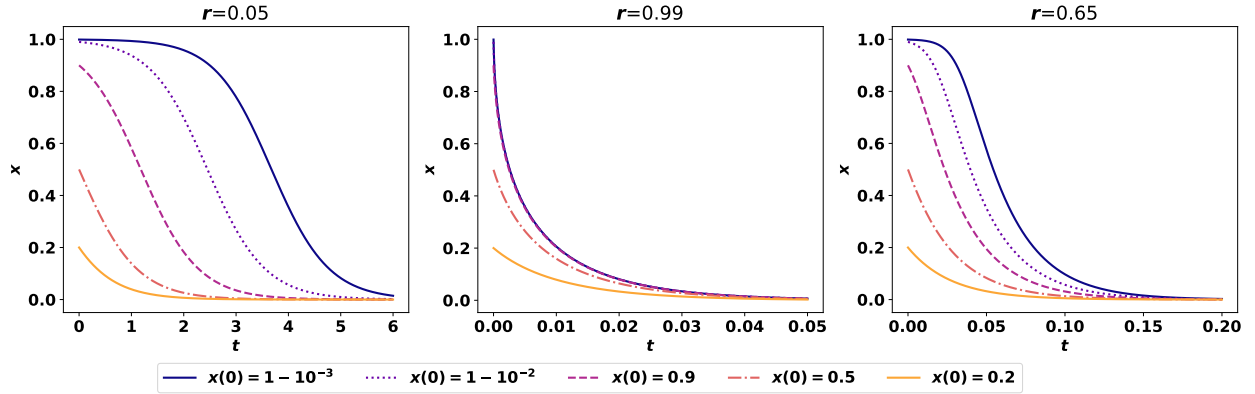


Figure 5: The change of the population over time with different starting populations. For $F = 5, H = 50, \alpha = 2, \beta = 2, \gamma = 1, \theta_r = 0.6$.

Note that these results essentially follow by comparing equations (13) and (14), which show
that $u_1(x) \leq u_2(x)$ for all x . Consider the reverse scenario,

$$u_1(x) > u_2(x) \quad (30)$$

$$F\psi(r, x)^\gamma(1-r)^{\beta-1} < -H\theta(r, x)^{-\alpha}\theta_r \quad (31)$$

216 which gives the required contradiction. This shows that the utility model used implies that given the choice of acting selectively or indiscriminately, in any given environment it will always be a rational deviation to act indiscriminately.

219 In the following section a disincentive to acting indiscriminately will be introduced. This can be interpreted in many ways:

- more severe punishment for indiscriminate killing of rhinos;
- 222 • educational interventions that highlight the negative aspects of indiscriminate killing;
- the possibility of a better alternative being on offered to selective poachers.

1 Disincentive for indiscriminate behaviour

225 Let us consider the following modification of the utility to an indiscriminate poacher:

$$\tilde{u}_2(x) = u_2(x) - \Gamma \quad (32)$$

where $\Gamma > 0$ is some constant representing a disincentive only applied to indiscriminate poachers.

This leads to the following modified form of (15):

$$\tilde{u}(s, x) = u(s, x) - (1-s)\Gamma \quad (33)$$

228 This leads to the following theorem:

Theorem 4. *Using the modified utility model described a population of selective poachers is stable if and only if:*

$$\theta_r H - F(1-r)^{\gamma+\beta+\alpha-1} < \frac{\Gamma(1-r)^\alpha}{r} \quad (34)$$

231 *Proof.* Following a similar structure to that of Theorem 1,

$$\tilde{u}(1,1) > \tilde{u}(0,1), \quad (35)$$

where

$$\tilde{u}(1,1) = H(1-r)^{1-\alpha} - F(1-r)^{\beta+\gamma-1} \quad (36)$$

and

$$\tilde{u}(0,1) = H(\theta_r r + 1 - r)(1-r)^{-\alpha} - F(1-r)^{\beta+\gamma} - \Gamma. \quad (37)$$

234 Setting (36) to be greater than (37) gives the condition,

$$\theta_r H - F(1-r)^{\gamma+\beta+\alpha-1} < \frac{\Gamma(1-r)^\alpha}{r} \quad (38)$$

□

This immediately leads to the following important remark:

237 **Theorem 5.** *Using the modified utility model described, if all rhinos have been dehorned a population of selective poachers is not stable.*

Proof. All rhinos being dehorned implies that $r = 1$. Substituting this into (34) gives,

$$\theta_r H < 0 \quad (39)$$

240 which is not possible. □

Theorem 5 is due to the fact that given two options, if all rhinos have been dehorned then all poachers will need to act indiscriminately to have any source of utility. Theorem 4 states that a mixed population can be stable with a disincentive, as opposed to Theorem 3 which states that a mixed stable strategy does not exist for $0 < r < 1$. This is illustrated in Fig. 6 where the evolutionary dynamics are represented for a number of scenarios.

Note that now the manager has control over the point of convergence by controlling r , as shown in Fig. 7 where a difference in the value from $r = 0.7$ to $r = 0.5$ changes the point of convergence from a mixed to a selective one. Moreover, the manager can also manipulate how fast the population convergences, as shown in the difference from $r = 0.5$ to $r = 0.2$. Fig 8a shows the equilibrium for x for a number of different values of r , and indicates that having a large r pushes poachers to behave indiscriminately. However all selective poachers can save at most, the r proportion of dehorned rhinos, so a low r is not ideal. As demonstrated in Fig 8b, a higher value of H also has a non-ideal effect on the poachers, as one would expect. Thus, high values of H and r lead to more indiscriminate poachers.

The insights gained from the results are discussed in Section “Discussion and Conclusions”.

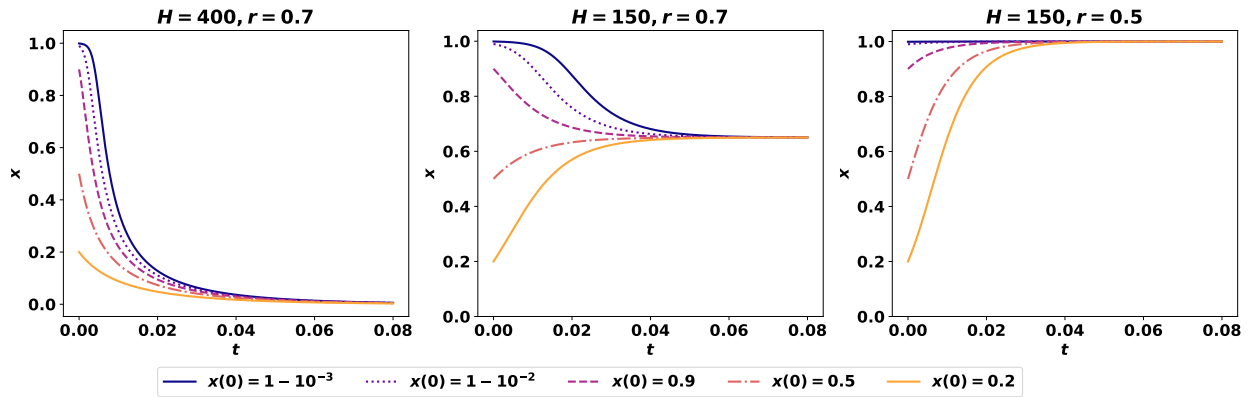


Figure 6: The change of the population over time with different starting populations with a disincentive. For $F = 50, \alpha = 2, \beta = 2, \gamma = 1, \theta_r = 0.5, \Gamma = 300$.

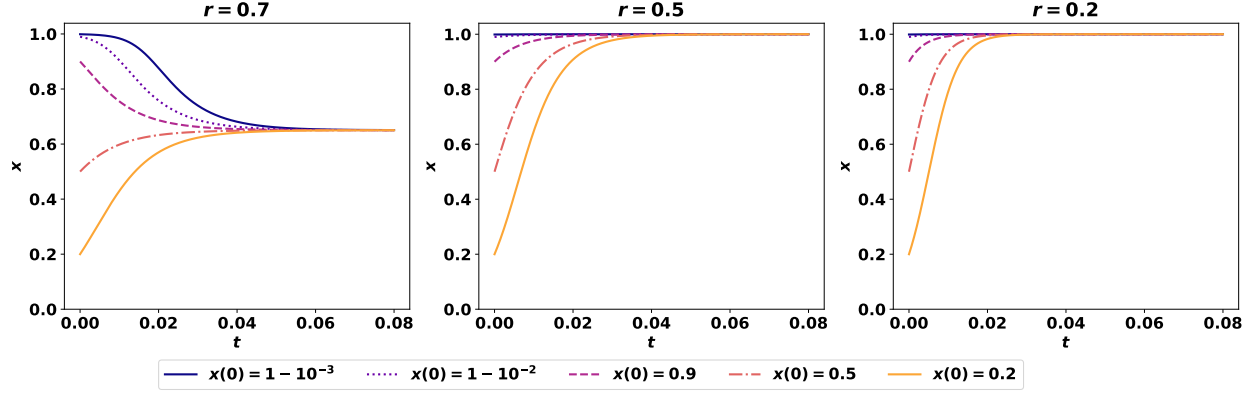
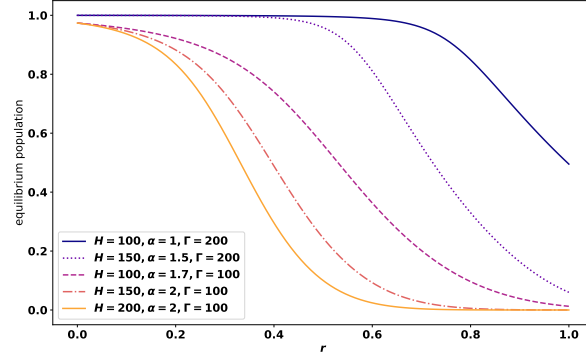
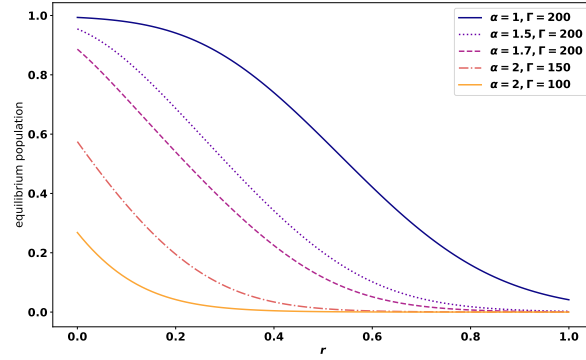


Figure 7: The change of the convergence point with different values of r with different starting populations with a disincentive. For $F = 50, H = 150, \alpha = 2, \beta = 2, \gamma = 1, \theta_r = 0.5, \Gamma = 300$.



(a) Effect of r for $F = 50, \beta = 2, \gamma = 1, \theta_r = 0.6$.



(b) Effect of H for $F = 50, r = 0.6, \beta = 2, \gamma = 1, \theta_r = 0.6$.

Figure 8: Equilibrium behaviour with a disincentive.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this work the dynamics of a selective population were explored. It was proven that being selective is not a best response even in a population where everyone is behaving selectively. More specifically, even a mixed population with a small percentage of the population behaving selectively will not persist. Thus, a poacher would never adopt a selective strategy over an indiscriminate one.

Using a realistic and generic utility model it was found that the only strategy that was proven to be stable is the indiscriminate one. Moreover, it was proven to be evolutionary stable as well. Meaning, that for any given starting population, the poachers would evolve to adopt an indiscriminate behaviour.

Our results indicate however that it is possible for a population of selective poachers to exist, but for this to occur a disincentive must be applied to the utility of indiscriminate poachers. Numerical results indicate that even in this case, the more rhinos which are dehorned, the less probability that a poacher will be selective. Assuming basic supply and demand arguments, the demand of a partial horn will increase by removing horns thus the probability of being selective decreases. Therefore, even in the scenario with a disincentive, the proportion of rhinos which could be saved is limited. As such approaches which aim to reduce demand (as suggested in (Biggs et al., 2013)) would have more potential.

The disincentive factor can have several interpretations. According to (Biggs et al., 2017), engaging the rural communities that neighbour or live with wildlife is the key to fighting the illegal trade of wildlife. Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour can be interpreted as the disincentive factor. Likewise, increasing incentives for wildlife stewardship, decreasing the cost of living with wildlife and supporting livelihood that is not related to poaching can serve as incentives for selective behaviour.

Note that the proportion of dehorned rhinos r is continuous over $[0, 1]$ in the model. However, standard practice of a given park manager in almost all cases is to either dehorn all the animals

in a defined enclosed area, or none at all. This is thought to be because partial dehorning tends to cause havoc in rhino social structures. The theoretic model presented here, whilst allowing for consideration at the park level with park managers playing a mixed strategy, also can be considered at the macroeconomic level. Where r represents the quantity of dehorned rhinos available across multiple parks.

Thus the insights gained, notably that a population of selective poachers is sustainable only if a large disincentive is in place (even if all rhinos have been dehorned) have implication at the long term national policy level.

Following discussions with environmental specialists it is clear that dehorning is empirically thought to be one of the best responses to poaching. This indicates that whilst of theoretic and macroeconomic interest the modelling approach investigated in this work has potential for further work. For example, a detailed study of two neighbouring parks with differing policies could be studied using a game theoretic model. Another interesting study would be to introduce a third strategy available to poachers: this would represent the possibility of not poaching (perhaps finding another source of income) and/or leaving the current environment to poach elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

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