

Project Update: August 2016

In this study report, we examined stakeholders' perceptions of otter predation and current awareness system in the Nyando wetland. We demonstrated how a social perspective can be applied to provide insights into local community attitudes towards the overall strategy and effectiveness of otter–fishermen conflict mitigation. We identified serious deficiencies in the communication between fishermen and local authorities, and the knowledge and benefits of otter which hinder the conflict reconciliation. Our results show prevailing gaps in the conservation of *Aonyx capensis* in the Nyando wetland, probably Kenya as a whole and therefore I suggest that lake region wetland areas need efforts of conservation planning, public relations, and environmental awareness campaigns. Both conservationists and fishermen (especially small fish farmers) must be provided with resources and detailed information about preventive measures to effectively avert otter damages. In addition, a constructive dialogue between both groups of stakeholders needs to be initiated, in order to increase mutual trust and information exchange. Understanding stakeholders' perceptions of human–wildlife issues and involvement of stakeholders in the conservation process is essential to future development and improvement of reconciliation policies focused on conflicts between human activities and protected species. Sightings of otters have become difficult in these areas and we can attribute it to anthropogenic activities.



Lone Otter footprints in the Nyando river banks. The prints are leading out of the river probably to forage for food in the dryland in Ogenya.

Ogenya (0°16'S and 34°51'E) and Singida (0°16'S and 34°53'E), about 3 km east of Ogenya, are ideal project sites to witness both otter-human conflicts and destruction of the habitat by the locals either to cultivate for agricultural production or to over-harvest the wetland resource.

During our field survey we did also confirm that the some elders within the locals still practice the tradition hunting of otters either for their meat or to use in medicinal purposes. The individuals interviewed are much aware of the otter presence in their area as compared to the rest of locals other project. This phenomenon did provide us with a better head start in trying to determine *Aonyx capensis* management factors and benefits of the same.

More species of birds and animals were witnessed in Ogenya at the shores of Lake Victoria thus influence a direct wind which relate positive water balances (seiche effect) that inundate the littoral zone. Thus species of birds such African fish eagle (*Haliaeetus vocifer*), African marsh harrier (*Circus ranivorus*) flycatchers, papyrus warblers amongst others. Reptiles like the crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*) were not sighted - monitor lizard prefer these locations due to their immense food availability. Plants found here include *Amaranthus spinosa*, *Cleome gynandra*, *Corchorus tridens*, *Ipomea aquatic* and *Solanum nigrum*. *Cyperus papyrus* provides art and craft making materials.



Monitor Lizard (*Varanus indicus*) rest at vantage point that provide it with better view of its prey.



Two African fish eagle perch on dry branches of trees with a vantage point advantage over there prey.

To analyse collected data, we will applied primarily quantitative methods because they are more suitable to reduce the complexity of results, allow hypothesis testing and statistical

comparisons, and are easier to communicate to natural scientists and conservation managers (Marshall et al. 2007). The qualitative data collected via open-ended questions in the questionnaire or during discussions with interviewees were used exclusively to interpret our quantitative findings and elucidate the reasons behind results. We used statistical analyses coupled with basic GIS analyses to investigate factors affecting stakeholders' perceptions of the conflict.

Points to note.

- i) Awareness creation has penetrated the vast Nyando wetland and local communities and neighbouring areas are much conversant with our activities, benefits of otters, and change of attitude on the same.
- ii) Only three areas of the project sites remaining for field surveys and awareness creations.
- iii) Younger generation have shown much awareness to the presence and are supporting for the existence of otters.