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The potential for interspecific competition among African carnivores

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Abstract

The general importance of interspecific competition as an ecological factor for carnivores is unknown and its conservation significance may have been inflated by intensive research conducted on a few vulnerable species. We therefore examined the potential for interspecific competition across carnivores on one continent, Africa, by calculating, for each of 70 carnivore species, the number of other carnivore species that overlapped it in geographic range, habitat, and diet, and that could potentially kill the species in question. The average carnivore in Africa shares some of its geographic range and habitat with 26 other species suggesting competition could be pervasive. More specifically, carnivores may have to share food resources with 22 other carnivore species, on average, although the potential for food stealing is far lower. The average African carnivore may be vulnerable to predation by 15 other species although it is unlikely to be eaten by other carnivores. These analyses indicate that exploitative competition and

interspecific killing are of potential widespread importance for a large number of carnivores in Africa, rather than being restricted to a few selected carnivores highlighted in the current literature.



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Keywords

Africa; Carnivores; Competition; Diet; Range

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