



Dissertation

Management von wiederkäuenden Schalenwildarten in Österreich: Herausforderungen und Lösungswege

verfasst von

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Wien, 01.08.2024

Paul GRIESBERGER (eigenhändig)

The real problem of wildlife management is not how we shall handle the animals... the real problem is one of human management.

Aldo Leopold, 1943

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Vorwort

Diese Dissertation ist nicht das Ergebnis eines einzelnen in sich geschlossenen Forschungsprojekts. Vielmehr ist sie das Resultat gewonnener wissenschaftlicher Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse, welche aus mehreren Projekten zusammengetragen und aufbereitet wurden. Inhaltlich widmet sich diese Dissertation dem Management von wildlebenden Huftieren (Schalenwild) in Österreich und zeigt in diesem Zusammenhang sowohl Herausforderungen als auch Lösungswege auf. Nachdem die Bearbeitung aller in Österreich vorkommenden Schalenwildarten den Rahmen dieser Arbeit gesprengt hätte, wurde der Fokus auf drei wiederkehrende Arten (Reh, Rothirsch, Gämse) gelegt. Nachfolgende Seiten sollen einerseits den wissenschaftlichen Diskurs hinsichtlich der Bewirtschaftung dieser Arten unterstützen und andererseits praktische Managementmöglichkeiten aufzeigen. Darauf aufbauend verfolgt diese Dissertation das Ziel, zur Entschärfung von Konflikten zwischen Interessensgruppen beizutragen, die in den Kulturlandschaften Mitteleuropas durch Schalenwildarten entstehen. Von einer Vermeidung derartiger Konfliktsituationen, sollen schlussendlich sowohl Mensch als auch Wildtier profitieren.

Die in dieser Dissertation präsentierte Forschung wurde im Rahmen der geförderten Projekte „Abschussplanung in waldarmen Gebieten“, „Integrales Wildtiermanagement nach Sturmschäden im Wald“ und „Jagdliche Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern in Niederösterreich: Entwicklung eines zukunftsorientierten Entscheidungsmodells“ durchgeführt. Nachdem die Realisierung dieser Projekte ohne der Mitwirkung von Projektpartnerinnen und Projektpartnern sowie Geldgeberinnen und Geldgebern nicht möglich gewesen wäre, sei dem Land Oberösterreich, dem OÖ Landesjagdverband, der Landwirtschaftskammer Oberösterreich, der Österreichischen Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft (FFG), der Gletscherbahnen Kaprun AG, der Gutsverwaltung Fischhorn GmbH & Co. KG, der Veterinärmedizinischen Universität Wien, der Landesforstdirektion NÖ, dem NÖ Jagdverband sowie den Land&Forst Betrieben NÖ gedankt. Ebenso gilt mein Dank der Universität für Bodenkultur Wien, sowie dem Institut für Wildbiologie und Jagdwirtschaft, welche es mir ermöglicht haben, die Ergebnisse meiner Forschung im Rahmen dieser Dissertation in Form von open access kostenfrei zur Verfügung zu stellen.

Nachdem es sich bei vorliegender Arbeit um eine kumulative (publikationsbasierte) Dissertation handelt, unterteilt sich diese in zwei Hauptteile. Der erste Abschnitt, die sogenannte Rahmenschrift, führt in das Thema dieser Dissertation ein und präsentiert die zentrale Forschungsfrage sowie Forschungsziele. Darauf aufbauend wird auf den Stand des Wissens eingegangen und aufgezeigt in welcher Art und Weise diese Arbeit zur Erweiterung dieses Wissens beigetragen hat. Der zweite Abschnitt der Dissertation umfasst drei Publikationen, die in wissenschaftlichen Journals veröffentlicht wurden und als Basis dieser Doktorarbeit zu verstehen sind. Die Verknüpfung dieser Publikationen über eine zentrale Fragestellung wird in der Rahmenschrift erläutert. Die beiden Abschnitte dieser Dissertation sind folglich als zusammenhängend zu betrachten und sollten deshalb in einem gemeinsamen Kontext gelesen werden.

Danksagung

Mit den nachfolgenden Zeilen möchte ich jenen Personen danken, die mich auf dem anspruchsvollen, aber auch lehrreichen Weg zur Erstellung dieser Dissertation unterstützt haben.

Zunächst möchte ich meinem Betreuer meinen aufrichtigen Dank aussprechen. Seine fachliche Kompetenz, geduldige Unterstützung und kontinuierliche Ermutigung haben maßgeblich zum Gelingen dieser Arbeit beigetragen. Seine wertvollen Ratschläge und kritischen Anmerkungen waren stets eine große Hilfe und haben meine wissenschaftliche Entwicklung erheblich gefördert.

Ebenfalls bedanke ich mich bei meinem Beratungsteam, meinen Co-Autoren sowie meinen Kolleginnen und Kollegen. Ihre Hilfsbereitschaft und Unterstützung in vielerlei Hinsicht, sei es durch fachlichen Austausch, Unterstützung bei Freilandarbeiten oder freundschaftliche Gespräche, waren von unschätzbarem Wert.

Weiterer Dank gilt den Gutachter*innen dieser Dissertation, welche sich nicht nur die Zeit genommen, sondern auch die Mühe gemacht haben, nachfolgende Texte zu lesen und zu beurteilen.

Meinen herzlichen Dank möchte ich auch an meine Familie und Freunde richten, welche besonders in den intensiven Phasen meines Doktorats stets Verständnis gezeigt haben. Besonders meine Eltern haben mich immer bedingungslos unterstützt und mir die Freiräume geschaffen, die ich für diese Arbeit benötigt habe. Ihr Glaube an mich und ihre Ermutigung haben mich stets motiviert und bestärkt.

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Liste der Publikationen

Die unterhalb gelisteten Publikationen stellen die Basis dieser Doktorarbeit dar. Diese wurden vom Verfasser der vorliegenden Arbeit als Erstautor in den Jahren 2022 bis 2024 in drei wissenschaftlichen Journalen (peer-reviewed scientific journals) veröffentlicht. Der Eigenbetrag des Verfassers an der jeweiligen Publikation ist unterhalb angeführt (Deklaration zur Autorenschaft).

Publikationen

Publikation 1

Griesberger, P., Kunz, F., Reimoser, F., Hackländer, K., & Obermair, L. (2023). Spatial distribution of hunting and its potential effect on browsing impact of roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) on forest vegetation. *Diversity*, 15(5), 613. doi: [10.3390/d15050613](https://doi.org/10.3390/d15050613) (veröffentlicht)

Deklaration zur Autorenschaft:

Paul Griesberger: Konzept (geteilter Beitrag), Methodik (geteilter Beitrag), Untersuchung (Hauptverantwortung), Ressourcen (geteilter Beitrag), Datenpflege (Hauptverantwortung), Visualisierung (Hauptverantwortung), Manuskripterstellung (Hauptverantwortung), Manuskriptüberarbeitung (Hauptverantwortung). **Florian Kunz:** Untersuchung (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Manuskripterstellung (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Manuskriptüberarbeitung (unterstützende Mitwirkung). **Friedrich Reimoser:** Konzept (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Projekteinwerbung (unterstützende Mitwirkung). **Klaus Hackländer:** Konzept (geteilter Beitrag), Projekteinwerbung (geteilter Beitrag), Projektverwaltung (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Betreuung (Hauptverantwortung). **Leopold Obermair:** Konzept (geteilter Beitrag), Projekteinwerbung (geteilter Beitrag), Methodik (geteilter Beitrag), Untersuchung (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Ressourcen (geteilter Beitrag), Datenpflege (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Projektverwaltung (Hauptverantwortung), Betreuung (unterstützende Mitwirkung).

Publikation 2

Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., Zandl, J., Stalder, G., Arnold, W., & Hackländer, K. (2022). Hunting suitability model: a new tool for managing wild ungulates. *Wildlife Biology*, May 2022(3), 1–11. doi: [10.1002/wlb3.01021](https://doi.org/10.1002/wlb3.01021) (veröffentlicht)

Deklaration zur Autorenschaft:

Paul Griesberger: Konzept (geteilter Beitrag), Methodik (geteilter Beitrag), Untersuchung (Hauptverantwortung), Ressourcen (geteilter Beitrag), Datenpflege (Hauptverantwortung), Analyse (Hauptverantwortung), Validierung (Hauptverantwortung), Visualisierung (Hauptverantwortung), Projektverwaltung (geteilter Beitrag), Manuskripterstellung (Hauptverantwortung), Manuskriptüberarbeitung (Hauptverantwortung). **Leopold Obermair:** Konzept (geteilter Beitrag), Projekteinwerbung (Hauptverantwortung), Methodik (geteilter Beitrag), Untersuchung (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Ressourcen (geteilter Beitrag), Analyse (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Validierung (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Visualisierung (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Projektverwaltung (geteilter Beitrag), Betreuung (unterstützende Mitwirkung), Manuskriptüberarbeitung (unterstützende Mitwirkung). **Josef**

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Publikation 3

Griesberger, P., Kunz, F., Hackländer, K., & Mattsson, B. (2024). Building a decision-support tool to inform sustainability approaches under complexity: Case study on managing wild ruminants. *Ambio*. doi: [10.1007/s13280-024-02020-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-024-02020-9) (veröffentlicht)

Deklaration zur Autorenschaft:

Paul Griesberger: Konzept (*geteilter Beitrag*), Methodik (*geteilter Beitrag*), Untersuchung (*geteilter Beitrag*), Ressourcen (*geteilter Beitrag*), Datenpflege (*Hauptverantwortung*), Validierung (*geteilter Beitrag*), Visualisierung (*geteilter Beitrag*), Projektverwaltung (*Hauptverantwortung*), Manuskripterstellung (*Hauptverantwortung*), Manuskriptüberarbeitung (*Hauptverantwortung*). **Florian Kunz:** Konzept (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*), Untersuchung (*geteilter Beitrag*), Ressourcen (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*), Manuskripterstellung (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*), Manuskriptüberarbeitung (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*). **Klaus Hackländer:** Konzept (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*), Projekteinwerbung (*Hauptverantwortung*), Betreuung (*Hauptverantwortung*). **Brady Mattsson:** Konzept (*geteilter Beitrag*), Projekteinwerbung (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*), Methodik (*geteilter Beitrag*), Validierung (*geteilter Beitrag*), Analyse, Untersuchung (*geteilter Beitrag*), Ressourcen (*geteilter Beitrag*), Datenpflege (*geteilter Beitrag*), Visualisierung (*geteilter Beitrag*), Projektverwaltung (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*), Manuskripterstellung (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*), Manuskriptüberarbeitung (*unterstützende Mitwirkung*).

Kurzfassung

Steigende Bestandszahlen wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten (wildlebende Huftiere) können in den Kulturlandschaften Österreichs und darüber hinaus zu Konflikten zwischen Landnutzergruppen führen. Ein Verbiss der Waldvegetation durch Rothirsch oder Reh, herausfordernde Bejagungssituationen, welche die Umsetzung von Regulationsmaßnahmen erschweren, sowie Beunruhigungen von Schalenwild durch Freizeitaktivitäten sind Reibungspunkte zwischen Interessensgruppen. Diese Konflikte, welche in einer Mehrfachnutzung der Landschaft und unterschiedlichen Zielen einzelner Landnutzer begründet sind, stellen das Schalenwildmanagement vor zahlreiche Herausforderungen. Um dieser Situation entgegenzuwirken, bedarf es wissenschaftlich fundierter Lösungsstrategien, welche im Fokus vorliegender Dissertation stehen. Konkret wurden in dieser Arbeit neuartige Managementansätze sowie praxistaugliche Planungsinstrumente für eine zukunftsorientierte Bewirtschaftung wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten entwickelt. Hierbei konnte die Effektivität einer gezielten räumlichen Verteilung von Bejagungsaktivitäten zur Wildschadensvermeidung empirisch belegt werden (Publikation I). Um die Umsetzung derartiger Managementmaßnahmen zu unterstützen, stellt diese Dissertation Modelle zur objektiven Beurteilung der Bejagbarkeitseignung verschiedener Flächen (Publikation II) sowie zur Entscheidungsfindung (Publikation III) zur Verfügung. Diese Modellierungsansätze ermöglichen unter anderem Vorhersagen des Raum-Zeit-Verhaltens von Schalenwild, zielorientierte Umsetzungen von Managemententscheidungen sowie eine Reduktion von Konflikten zwischen Landnutzergruppen über die Berücksichtigung verschiedener Interessensziele. Die Ergebnisse dieser Dissertation sind als Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis zu verstehen und sollen dazu beitragen das Management wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten in Österreich an bestehende sowie zukünftige Herausforderungen anzupassen.

Abstract

Increasing populations of wild ruminants can lead to wildlife-based conflicts between stakeholder groups in cultural landscapes within Austria and beyond. These conflicts, which are caused due to the multiple use of the landscape by humans, and differing objectives among land users, lead to numerous challenges regarding the management of these species. Browsing impact of red deer or roe deer on forest vegetation, challenging hunting situations, or disturbance of wild ruminants due to recreational activities can be mentioned as such challenges. To mitigate these situations, scientifically validated solutions are required, which are the focus of this thesis. To identify approaches of achieving more peaceful coexistence between stakeholders and wild ruminants, this thesis concentrates on diverse wildlife management measures and tools to inform sustainable management of these species. In this context, the findings for instance indicate that a careful consideration of hunting locations can contribute to the reduction of browsing impact on forest vegetation if sufficient planning takes place in advance (Publication I). To inform such planning, this thesis provides two new products for the sustainable management of wild ruminants, including a hunting suitability model (Publication II) and designed decision-support tool (Publication III). Collectively modelling approaches enable predictions of the spatio-temporal behaviour of wild ruminants, target-oriented implementation of management decisions, and a reduction of conflicts between stakeholder groups. The outcomes of this dissertation therefore enhance a bridge between science and practice and are helpful to improve wildlife management to mitigate existing and future challenges.

1. Rahmenschrift

1.1. Einleitung

Steigende Bestandszahlen mehrerer wiederkehrender Schalenwildarten (wildebende Huftiere) in vielen Regionen Europas und damit verbundene Herausforderungen verdeutlichen seit Jahren die Notwendigkeit eines effektiven Wildtiermanagements (Apollonio et al., 2010; Putman et al., 2011; Reimoser, 2003). Trotz dieser Notwendigkeit ist die Umsetzung gezielter Managementmaßnahmen aufgrund entgegengesetzter menschlicher Nutzungsinteressen häufig mit Schwierigkeiten verbunden (Reimoser, 2015). Diese divergierenden Interessen können zu Konflikten und Spannungen zwischen Landnutzergruppen führen, welche wiederum kontraproduktiv auf das Management wiederkehrender Schalenwildarten wirken (Griesberger et al., 2024). Unerwünschte Situationen, wie zunehmende Wildschäden¹ an der Waldvegetation durch das Abbeißen von Pflanzentrieben und Pflanzenknospen (Verbiss) oder das Abziehen ganzer Rindenstreifen von Bäumen (Schäle) sind die Folge. Um derartigen Situationen entgegenzuwirken, wird häufig die Reduktion der Schalenwildbestände über den jagdlichen Abschuss als primärer Lösungsansatz herangezogen (Apollonio et al., 2010). Dieser Ansatz greift jedoch zu kurz, als die Bestände dieser Wildtiere durch ein multifaktorielles Wirkungsgefüge beeinflusst und von mehreren Landnutzergruppen direkt oder indirekt gesteuert werden (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020). Sektorale Lösungsansätze², wie reine jagdliche Regulationsmaßnahmen reichen somit vielerorts nicht aus, um Konflikte zu entschärfen. Problematisch wird diese Situation, wenn angesprochene Herausforderungen zunehmen, Wildschäden an der Waldvegetation spezifische Waldfunktionen gefährden (Gerhardt et al., 2013) oder jagdliche Abschusspläne³ aufgrund mangelnder Bejagbarkeiten⁴ nicht mehr erfüllt werden können. Um diesen Situationen entgegenzuwirken, benötigt es ganzheitlicher sowie wissenschaftlich fundierter Lösungsstrategien, welche im Fokus vorliegender Dissertation stehen. Zur Entwicklung derartiger Lösungswege wurden in dieser Arbeit am Beispiel Österreichs bestehende Herausforderungen im Bereich des Managements wiederkehrender Schalenwildarten untersucht sowie Möglichkeiten zur Verbesserung herausgearbeitet. Nachfolgende Seiten geben einen Einblick in diese Themenbereiche und heben die Bedeutung eines Brückenschlags zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis im Bereich des Wildtiermanagements hervor.

1.1.1. Die Situation in Österreich

Analog zum europäischen Trend lassen sich auch in Österreich steigende Bestandszahlen gewisser Schalenwildarten beobachten. Die Jagdstrecken, innerhalb derer die jährlichen Abschusszahlen der

¹ Unter Wildschäden versteht man im allgemeinen Sprachgebrauch Schäden, die durch Wild (wildebende Tiere, die dem Jagdrecht unterliegen) an Grund und Boden, den noch nicht eingebrachten Erzeugnissen sowie an Kulturen verursacht werden (Schartner, 2016). Allerdings finden sich in den österreichischen Jagdgesetzen Differenzierungen je nach Bundesland. Diese Unterschiede können im Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes (RIS) nachgelesen werden.

² Unter sektoralen Lösungsansätzen sind Herangehensweisen zu verstehen, die nur aus Sicht einer Interessensgruppe betrachtet werden (Griesberger et al., 2021).

³ In Abschussplänen wird festgelegt, wie viel Wild nach Art, Alter und Geschlecht in einem Jagdrevier zu erlegen ist. Details zum österreichischen Jagdsystem können in der Publikation von Trouwborst & Hackländer (2018) nachgelesen werden.

⁴ Die Bejagbarkeit ist in vorliegender Arbeit als die potenzielle Möglichkeit zu verstehen, Wildtiere jagdlich nutzen zu können. In Publikation II wird sie konkret als die Eignung einer Fläche für die Ausübung der Jagd definiert.

jeweiligen Wildart gelistet sind, können hierbei als Indikator für diese Bestandszunahmen herangezogen werden. Obwohl Jagdstrecken Bestandsdichten nicht direkt widerspiegeln, können diese einen Einblick in den Bestandstrend und die Entwicklung von Wildbeständen⁵ geben (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020a). Betrachtet man beispielsweise die jährlichen Abschusszahlen von Rehen (*Capreolus capreolus*), ist eine Zunahme dieser Schalenwildart in Österreich als wahrscheinlich anzusehen. Konkret hat sich die Anzahl an erlegten Rehen, innerhalb der letzten 60 Jahre in Österreich fast verdreifacht (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2023). Dieser Anstieg, welcher sich teilweise aus wellenförmigen Bewegungen zusammensetzt, erreichte im Jahr 2022 mit 291.289 erlegten Rehen einen neuen Höchstwert (Abbildung 1a, Statistik Austria, 2024). Damit zählt das Reh, nachfolgend auch Rehwild genannt, in Österreich zur häufigsten Schalenwildart nach Jagdstrecke. Die höchsten Abschussdichten werden in diesem Zusammenhang im Bundesland Oberösterreich mit durchschnittlich 8,3 Rehen pro 100 ha Bezirksfläche erreicht (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2023). Parallel zum Rehwild, lässt sich auch beim Rothirsch (*Cervus elaphus*) eine Zunahme der Jagdstrecke in Österreich von 35.000 Individuen im Jahr 1983 auf knapp unter 60.000 Individuen im Jahr 2022 dokumentieren (Abbildung 1b, Statistik Austria, 2024). Vor allem seit 1997 kann dieser zunehmende Abschussstrend beim Rothirsch, im Folgenden auch Rotwild genannt, als kontinuierlich beschrieben werden. Aufbauend auf diesen Zahlen ist, ebenso wie beim Rehwild, von einer Zunahme der Rotwildbestände in Österreich auszugehen. Dank dieser Bestandszunahmen besiedelt das Rotwild heute rund die Hälfte der österreichischen Landesfläche. Dies ist umso bemerkenswerter, als diese Schalenwildart Mitte des 19 Jahrhunderts in Österreich aufgrund direkter Verfolgung nahezu ausgerottet war (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020).

Die Gründe für die Zunahme der Reh- und Rotwildbestände in Österreich sind vielfältig und reichen von kaum mehr realisierbaren Bestandsregulierungen aufgrund fehlender Bejagungsmöglichkeiten (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020c) bis zur sukzessiven Ausbreitung und Anpassungsfähigkeit dieser Wildarten (Heurich, 2013; S. Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020b). In diesem Zusammenhang kann das Rehwild als anpassungsfähiger Kulturfolger beschrieben werden, welcher von menschlich geprägten Landschaften profitiert. Vor allem reich strukturierte Hügellandschaften mit vielen Randlinien zwischen Wäldern und landwirtschaftlichen Nutzflächen stellen für Rehwild ideale Lebensräume dar (Jasińska et al., 2021; Lovari & San José, 1997; S. Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020b). Zudem ist diese Schalenwildart in der Lage, menschlichen Störungen und damit auch der jagdlichen Nutzung gezielt auszuweichen (Bonnot et al., 2013). Die dadurch reduzierte Bejagbarkeit dieser Wildart führt zu ausbleibenden oder unzureichenden Bestandsregulierungen und in weiterer Folge zu steigenden Bestandszahlen (Lovari et al., 2016). Analog dazu kann auch das Rotwild als intelligente und störungssensible Wildart beschrieben werden, die sich sowohl räumlich als auch zeitlich der Beobachtung und Bejagbarkeit durch den Menschen entzieht (Tourani et al., 2023). Mehrere Studien konnten in diesem Zusammenhang aufzeigen, dass es bei Zunahme menschlicher Aktivitäten in den Kulturlandschaften⁶ Österreichs und darüber hinaus, zu einem Rückzug des Rotwilds in Lebensräume mit geringer menschlicher Präsenz oder zu vermehrter Nachaktivität dieser Schalenwildart kommt (Coppes et al., 2017; Griesberger et al., 2021). Diese Verhaltensanpassung kann ungünstige Wildverteilungen und lokale Konzentrationseffekte (höhere Rotwiddichten) in den Rückzugsgebieten hervorrufen, wodurch die Gefahr von Wildschäden ansteigt. Besonders

⁵ Um den Bestandstrend aus Jagdstrecken ableiten zu können, müssen Abschusszahlen für mehrere Jahre vorliegen und potentielle Fehlerquellen über die Zeit weitgehend konstant bleiben (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020a).

⁶ Unter einer Kulturlandschaft ist eine Landschaft zu verstehen, die intensiv durch den Menschen geprägt wurde und in der die Raumnutzung der Wildtiere durch menschliche Aktivitäten beeinflusst wird (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020).

problematisch wird diese Situation, wenn hierbei schwer zugängliche und damit kaum bejagbare Schutzwälder (z.B. Objektschutzwälder im Alpenraum) betroffen sind (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2020c).

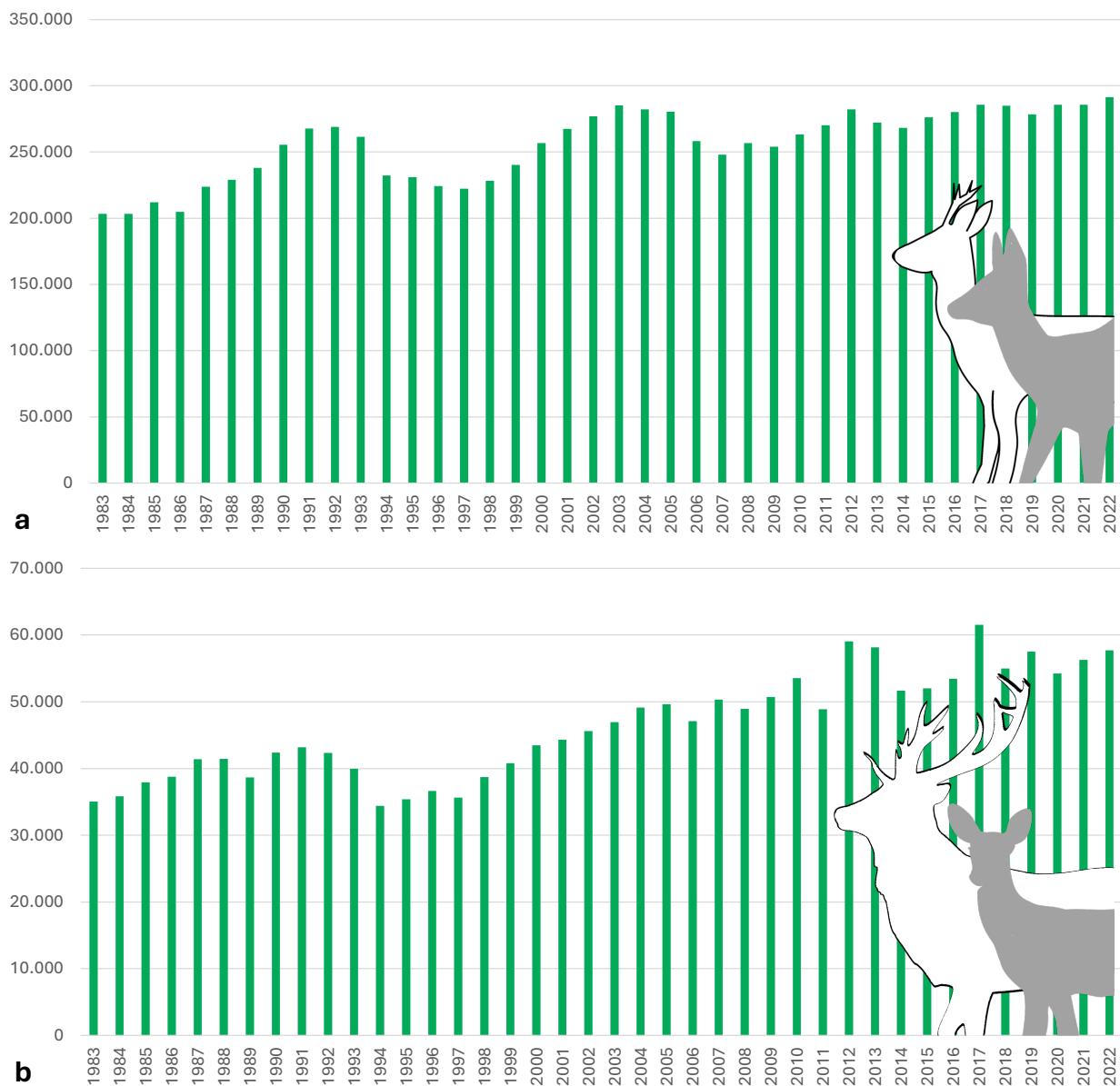


Abbildung 1: Jährliche Abschusszahlen an Rehwild (a) und Rotwild (b) in Österreich von 1983 bis 2022. Die Altersklassen und Geschlechter wurden in dieser Abbildung zusammengefasst. (Quelle: Statistik Austria)

Die Relevanz beziehungsweise Problematik der Wildschadens-Situationen in Österreich wird bei Betrachtung des bundesweiten Wildeinflussmonitorings (WEM) sichtbar, welches einen hohen Wildeinfluss⁷ in den österreichischen Wäldern innerhalb der letzten Jahre aufzeigt. Gerade verbissbeliebte Pflanzen wie die Eiche oder Tanne sind hierbei besonders betroffen. Beim Vergleich der letzten vollständigen Erhebungsperiode (2019-2021) mit der Vorperiode (2016-2018) konnte nur bei 40 % der Bezirke eine Verbesserung der Wildeinfluss-Situation dokumentiert werden (Schodterer

⁷ Im Bereich der Forstwirtschaft versteht man unter Wildeinfluss das Ausmaß der Einwirkungen des Wildes auf Bäume (z.B. durch Verbiss oder Schäle). Im Vergleich zum Wildschaden, ist der Wildeinfluss wertneutral. Erst wenn die Auswirkungen des Wildes das Erreichen eines definierten Soll-Zustandes (z.B. Verjüngungsziel) verhindern, spricht man von einem Wildschaden oder unerwünschten beziehungsweise nicht tolerierbaren Wildeinfluss (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2017).

& Kainz, 2022). Und selbst diese Verbesserung ist fraglich, da positive Veränderungen erst dann nachhaltig wirken, wenn der Wildeinfluss über mehrere Perioden deutlich sinkt, anstatt hin und her zu schwanken. Um die Problematik eines erhöhten Wildfeinflusses bei der Bewirtschaftung von wiederkäuenden Schalenwild berücksichtigen zu können, werden die Ergebnisse des WEM jährlich im Wildschadensbericht des Bundesministeriums für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Regionen und Wasserwirtschaft veröffentlicht (z.B. Hangler, 2022). Trotz dieses Berichts bleibt die Frage der tatsächlichen Schadenshöhe, vor allem in der Forstwirtschaft aufgrund langer Umtriebszeiten⁸, offen. Diese Unsicherheiten führen dazu, dass sich in Österreich die Schätzungen der monetären Verluste durch im Wald verursachte Wildschäden zwischen 136 und 220 Millionen Euro pro Jahr bewegen (Reimoser, 2017). Unabhängig der tatsächlichen Höhe dieser monetären Schäden, kann unerwünschter Wildeinfluss in einer Kulturlandschaft, wie in Kapitel 1.1 beschrieben, zu Konflikten zwischen Landnutzergruppen führen (z.B. Forst-Jagd Konflikte⁹). Diese Konflikte umspannen ökonomische, ökologische und soziokulturelle Bereiche und sind in unterschiedlichen Ansichten und Zielen einzelner Landnutzergruppen begründet (Griesberger et al., 2024). Im ungünstigsten Fall kommt es zu einer Verhärtung der Situation, welche häufig dazu führt, dass gegensätzliche Interessengruppen sich weigern, miteinander zu kommunizieren. Die gemeinsame Konfliktlösung wird dadurch erschwert (Redpath et al., 2013). In weiterer Folge manifestieren sich diese Spannungen zu komplexen Problemen, wodurch eine Entschärfung von Konflikten kaum realisierbar ist (Griesberger et al., 2024).

Erschwerend kommt hinzu, dass derartige Interessenskonflikte zwischen Landnutzergruppen nicht ausschließlich in steigenden Bestandszahlen oder zunehmenden Wildschäden begründet sind. Auch divergierende Nutzungsansprüche in einer Kulturlandschaft (z.B. Etablierung von Wildruhezonen vs. Ausbau von Tourismusgebieten) stellen Herausforderungen im Bereich des Managements gewisser Schalenwildarten dar. Gerade die Gämse (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), eine Leitart der alpinen und montanen Regionen Europas, steht heute vor der Problematik, dass geeignete Habitate aus Sicht dieser Wildart sukzessive verschwinden. Vor allem die starke Zunahme an Freizeitaktivitäten in den Hochlagen und damit fortschreitende Lebensraumverluste sind hierbei kritisch zu sehen (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2019). Betrachtet man die Jagdstrecke der Gämse in Österreich, zeigen die Abschusszahlen in den letzten Jahrzehnten, im Gegensatz zum Reh- und Rotwild, keine Zunahme (Abbildung 2, Statistik Austria, 2024). Derzeit werden in Österreich rund 20.000 Gämse, nachfolgend auch Gamswild genannt, erlegt. Obwohl diese Abschusshöhe seit mehreren Jahren konstant zu sein scheint, ist sie dennoch um 5.000 Individuen geringer als noch vor 20 Jahren, und um 10.000 Individuen geringer als vor 30 Jahren (Statistik Austria, 2024). Diese derzeit gleichbleibenden Abschusszahlen spiegeln sich wieder in den Bestandszahlen auf europäischer Ebene, welche ebenfalls über weite Bereiche stagnieren (Anderwald et al., 2021). Geht man weiter ins Detail, lassen sich auf regionaler Ebene unterschiedliche Bestandsentwicklungen im Alpenraum und so auch in Österreich beobachten (Tasser et al., 2021). Vor allem in alpinen Lebensräumen ist in den letzten Jahrzehnten ein Rückgang der Gamswildbestände (basierend auf Zählungen) zu verzeichnen. Im Vergleich dazu, lassen sich in tieferen Lagen teilweise Zunahmen der Bestände feststellen (Tasser et al., 2021). Diese regional entgegengesetzten Bestandsentwicklungen der Gämse werden in Österreich auf eine Reihe unterschiedlicher Faktoren zurückgeführt. Die bereits erwähnten Lebensraumverluste durch anthropogene Störungen können in diesem Zusammenhang

⁸ Die Umtriebszeit wird definiert als der zu erwartende Zeitraum zwischen Bestandsbegründung (beziehungsweise Verjüngung des Baumbestands) und Endnutzung durch Holzeinschlag.

⁹ Siehe Reimoser (2016) für weiterführende Informationen zum Forst-Jagd-Konflikt.

als Beispiel angeführt werden (Reimoser & Reimoser, 2019). Um derartigen Entwicklungen entgegenzuwirken, bedarf es zielgerichteter Lösungswege, die aufgrund von Meinungsverschiedenheiten einzelner Landnutzergruppen teilweise schwierig umzusetzen sind.

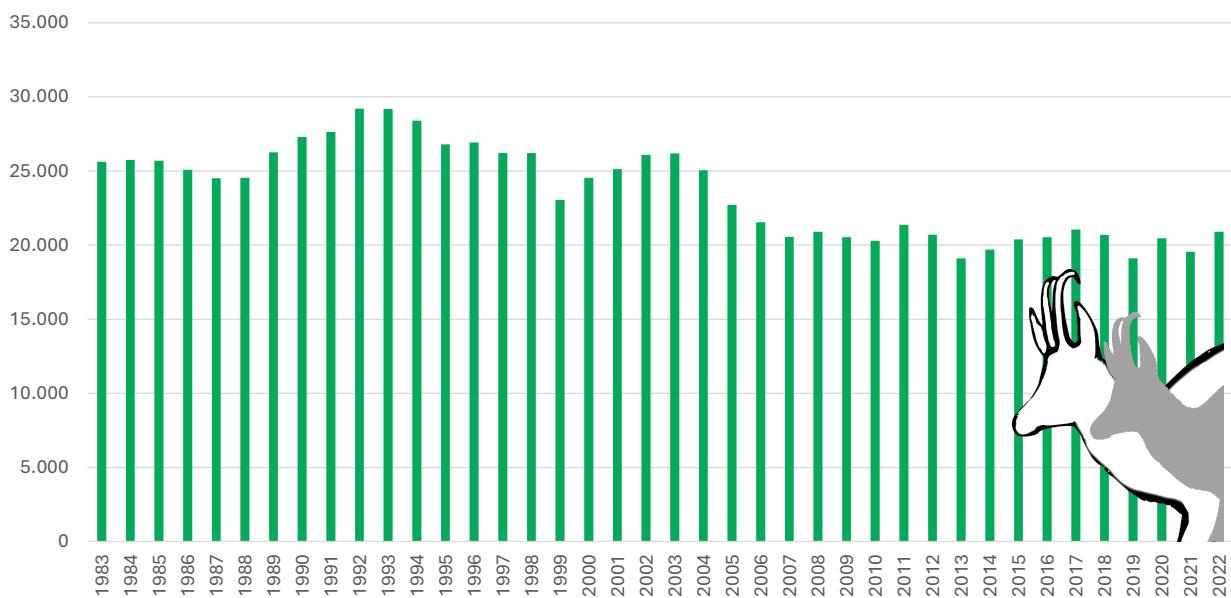


Abbildung 2: Jährliche Abschusszahlen an Gamswild in Österreich von 1983 bis 2022. Die Altersklassen und Geschlechter wurden in dieser Abbildung zusammengefasst. (Quelle: Statistik Austria)

Zusammenfassend kann festgehalten werden, dass die Ursachen für Spannungen zwischen Landnutzergruppen, ausgelöst durch Schalenwildarten, divers sind. Die Vielfältigkeit begründet sich hierbei in einer Mehrfachnutzung der Landschaft, verschiedenen beteiligten Interessensgruppen sowie unterschiedlichen Herausforderungen bei der Bewirtschaftung einzelner Schalenwildarten.

1.1.2. Herausforderungen im Management wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten

Wie im vorherigen Kapitel beschrieben, existieren bei der Planung und Umsetzung eines nachhaltigen Schalenwildmanagements gewisse Hindernisse, die es zu bewältigen gilt. Nachfolgend werden einige dieser Herausforderungen am Beispiel Österreichs näher beleuchtet. An erster Stelle soll nochmals auf die steigenden Bestandszahlen gewisser Schalenwildarten verwiesen werden. Problematisch werden diese hohen Wildbestandszahlen, sobald negative Konsequenzen für den Menschen damit einhergehen und Nutzungsinteressen sowie Zielerreichungen gefährdet sind (Gren et al., 2018). Vermehrter Wildeinfluss an der Waldvegetation (Apollonio et al., 2010) oder eine Zunahme an Straßenfallwild¹⁰ (Steiner et al., 2014) können als Beispiele derartiger Konsequenzen angeführt werden. Wenn parallel zu diesen negativen Auswirkungen die Bejagbarkeit der zu regulierenden Schalenwildbestände abnimmt, kommt es zu einer weiteren Verschärfung der Situation. Um diese reduzierte Bejagbarkeit besser zu verstehen, kann das Konzept der „Landschaft der Furcht“ herangezogen werden (Laundre et al., 2010). Dieses Konzept besagt, dass sich Wildtiere in einem Mosaik aus Gebieten unterschiedlicher Gefährlichkeit bewegen und ihr Raum-Zeit-Verhalten anpassen, um einer Bedrohung (durch den Menschen) zu entgehen. Darauf aufbauend

¹⁰ Straßenfallwild bezeichnet Wild, welches durch den Straßenverkehr getötet oder schwer verletzt wurde.

kann es beispielsweise zu einer vermehrten Nachtaktivität beziehungsweise reduzierten Sichtbarkeit einzelner Wildtiere kommen (Griesberger et al., 2021). Die daraus resultierenden Bejagbarkeitsprobleme erschweren die Umsetzung von Regulationsmaßnahmen, wodurch notwendige Bestandsreduktionen ausbleiben. Um diesen und weiteren Problemen entgegenzuwirken, bedarf es neben konkreter Lösungsstrategien, auch einer großräumigen Planung dieser. Diesbezüglich kann eine Wildökologische Raumplanung (WÖRP) zum Einsatz kommen, welche eine großräumige Betrachtung der jeweiligen Problemsituation sowie eine darauf aufbauende kleinräumige Umsetzung von Managementmaßnahmen ermöglicht (Reimoser & Hackländer, 2016; Schulze & Reimoser, 2000). Eine derartige Vorgehensweise ist vor allem bei mobilen Arten wie dem Rothirsch relevant, die keine administrativen Strukturen kennen und sich über Jagdreviergrenzen hinausbewegen (Griesberger et al., 2021). Maßnahmen, die an der Reviergrenze enden, werden in solchen Situationen nicht in der Lage sein einen Wildbestand als Ganzes zu managen. Die Erreichung angestrebter Ziele wird dadurch erschwert. Obwohl zielführend, muss die Umsetzung einer WÖRP in Österreich aufgrund der intensiv genutzten und kleinstrukturierten Kulturlandschaft, der zahlreichen Reviere sowie der involvierten Personen als weitere Herausforderung betrachtet werden. Nachdem die Komplexität einer WÖRP ein eigenes Dissertationsthema darstellen und somit den Rahmen der vorliegenden Arbeit sprengen würde, wurde diese nicht explizit untersucht. Dennoch sei an dieser Stelle darauf hingewiesen, dass die im Rahmen dieser Dissertation erarbeiteten Lösungsansätze stets in Hinblick auf eine großräumige Planung zu verstehen sind.

Als weitere Herausforderung im Bereich des Schalenwildmanagements sind einseitige Betrachtungen von Problemstellungen zu nennen, welche sich ausschließlich auf die Perspektive einer Interessensgruppe fokussieren. Dieses sektorale Denken, welches in Kapitel 1.1 bereits beschrieben wurde, führt dazu, dass eingesetzte Managementmaßnahmen häufig im Vorfeld bereits zum Scheitern verurteilt sind. Versucht man beispielsweise Wildschadensproblematiken ausschließlich über eine Erhöhung der Abschusspläne zu entschärfen, wird man keine Erfolge erzielen, wenn ungünstige Wildverteilungen im Raum durch vermehrte Freizeitaktivitäten für die Schäden verantwortlich sind. Gleiches gilt für Wildschäden, die in einer ungünstigen waldbaulichen Betriebsform oder veränderten waldbaulichen Zielsetzungen begründet sind. Versucht man diese Schäden zu verringern, ohne forstwirtschaftliche Aspekte zu berücksichtigen, wird man abermals scheitern (siehe Reimoser & Reimoser, 2017 für weitere Details). Es bedarf folglich integraler Lösungswege, im Rahmen derer die Probleme aus mehreren Perspektiven betrachtet und die Anforderungen sowie Wirkungen aller beteiligten Landnutzergruppen berücksichtigt werden (Griesberger et al., 2021). Hierfür benötigt es wiederum eine entsprechende Kommunikation zwischen den handelnden Menschen, sowie gegenseitiges Vertrauen und aufeinander abgestimmte Managementmaßnahmen (Griesberger et al., 2021). Die Etablierung dieser integralen Denkweisen gestaltet sich allerdings schwierig, da unterschiedliche Zielsetzungen einzelner Interessensgruppen im Bereich des Wildtiermanagements häufig zu Konflikten zwischen Menschen führen (Nyhus, 2016; Pooley et al., 2017). Festgefahrenen Situationen sowie fehlende Bereitschaften zu gemeinsamen Problemlösungen sind das Ergebnis.

1.1.3. Der Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis

Um integrale Lösungswege im Bereich des Managements wiederkehrender Schalenwildarten zu realisieren, kann der Wissenschaft eine zentrale Rolle zukommen. Konkret kann diese eine

vermittelnde Position einnehmen, um integrale Denkweisen zwischen interessensgruppen zu fördern. Die Entschärfung von Konflikten sowie gemeinsame Lösungsfindungen sollten hierbei, zum Wohl von Mensch und Tier, im Mittelpunkt stehen. Diese Aufgabe ist aufgrund der bestehenden Spannungen zwischen Landnutzergruppen definitiv eine Herausforderung, aber kein Ding der Unmöglichkeit, wie im Rahmen dieser Dissertation aufgezeigt werden soll.

Zusätzlich kann die Wissenschaft auf fundierte Lösungsstrategien sowie zielgerichtete Maßnahmen für ein nachhaltiges Management wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten hinweisen. Um dies zu ermöglichen, bedarf es einer Verknüpfung von wissenschaftlicher Forschung mit praktischen Anwendungssituationen. In diesem Zusammenhang kommt dem Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis eine wichtige Funktion zu. Konkret kann dieser Brückenschlag dazu beitragen, zu bestehenden praktischen Erfahrungen Entscheidungshilfen auf wissenschaftlicher Basis zu erarbeiten. Zusätzlich können Wechselwirkungen sowie Mensch und Tier mit Daten belegt und dadurch besser verstanden werden (Griesberger et al., 2021).

1.2. Forschungsfragen und Ziele

Das primäre Ziel dieser Dissertation besteht darin, Lösungsstrategien für Herausforderungen im Bereich des Managements wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten in Österreich aufzuzeigen. Die Erreichung dieses Ziels wird über den angesprochenen Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis sowie die Förderung integraler Denkweisen angestrebt. Anhand von Beispielen (Publikation I – III) wird demonstriert, wie sich ein derartiges Vorhaben zum Vorteil aller Beteiligten realisieren lässt. Die zentrale Fragestellung beschäftigt sich mit Möglichkeiten des Transfers wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse in praktische Anwendungssituationen. Hierbei sollen einerseits der wissenschaftliche Diskurs zum Thema „Management wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten in Österreich“ gefördert und andererseits Managemententscheidungen für die Praxis abgeleitet werden. Um die Komplexität des Schalenwildmanagements im Rahmen dieser Dissertation möglichst umfassend bearbeiten zu können, wurden mehrere Untersuchungsansätze gewählt sowie aufeinander aufbauende Forschungsfragen formuliert. Details hierzu finden sich in den nachfolgenden Kapiteln.

1.2.1. Publikation I

Nachdem jagdliche Bestandsregulierungen in Österreich häufig nicht ausreichen um unerwünschten Wildschadenssituationen (Hangler, 2022) entgegenzuwirken, benötigt es zusätzlicher Herangehensweisen. Um diesbezüglich Möglichkeiten aufzuzeigen, setzte sich diese Publikation das Ziel, die Eignung ergänzender Managementmaßnahmen wissenschaftlich zu untersuchen. Neben der numerischen Reduktion der Reh- und Rotwildbestände über jagdliche Entnahmen könnte eine gezielte räumliche Verteilung des Jagddrucks¹¹ zur Lenkung des Wildes großes Potenzial zur Reduktion von Wildschäden aufweisen. Mehrere Studien weisen darauf hin, dass Arten wie das Reh seine Raumnutzung anpassen, um Jagddruck und somit einer potenziellen Gefahr durch den Menschen auszuweichen (Büttner, 1983; Padié et al., 2015). Darauf aufbauend konnten Mols et al.

¹¹ Unter Jagddruck versteht man die jagdliche Beunruhigung des nicht erlegten Wildes bei der Durchführung eines bestimmten Abschusses (Völk, 2012). Der Fokus liegt folglich nicht auf jenen Individuen die erlegt werden, sondern auf jenen, die in der Natur verbleiben (Griesberger et al., 2021).

(2022) und Van Beeck Calkoen et al. (2022) aufzeigen, dass dieses Ausweichverhalten zu Kaskadeneffekten führen kann, die auf das Pflanzenwachstum wirken. Detailliertes Wissen hinsichtlich dieser Effekte, vor allem in menschlich geprägten Kulturlandschaften, ist jedoch begrenzt. Es bedarf folglich weiterer Untersuchungen, um potenzielle Zusammenhänge zwischen Jagddruck, Wildlenkung und Wildeinfluss verstehen zu können. Um diese Wissenslücke zu schließen, wurden anhand des Rehwilds in Oberösterreich (Bundesland mit den höchsten Rehwildabschüssen, siehe Kapitel 1.1.1) Zusammenhänge zwischen der räumlichen Verteilung der Jagd und diverser Verbiss-Situationen in Wäldern untersucht. Die konkrete Forschungsfrage war, ob der Wildeinfluss an der Waldvegetation von der räumlichen Verteilung der Rehwildabschüsse, als messbare Größe für den Jagddruck, beeinflusst wird. Es wurde die Hypothese aufgestellt, dass eine intensive Bejagung innerhalb des Waldes, zu einer Entlastung der Verbiss-Situation führt. Bei Bestätigung dieser Hypothese könnte die gezielte räumliche Verteilung von Bejagungsaktivitäten als zusätzliches Managementwerkzeug verstanden werden, um einer Wildschadensproblematik entgegenzuwirken.

1.2.2. Publikation II

Um räumliche Bejagungsaktivitäten (siehe [Publikation I](#)) sowie Bestandsregulierungen optimal planen und umsetzen zu können, setzte sich Publikation II das Ziel, ein neuartiges Planungsinstrument für die Praxis zu entwickeln. Konkret wurde die Erstellung eines objektiven und nachvollziehbaren Bejagbarkeitsmodells angestrebt, um wiederkehrende Schalenwildarten wieder sichtbar, bejagbar und damit lenkbar zu machen. Dieses Modell kann als Bewertungsmethode verstanden werden, die es ermöglicht die Eignung verschiedener Flächen für die Ausübung der Jagd zu beurteilen (Obermair et al., 2017). Diese Bewertung kann als Planungsgrundlage für Bejagungskonzepte herangezogen werden sowie die Wirkungsabschätzung jagdlicher Maßnahmen unterstützen. Ebenfalls kann das Modell als Argumentationsbasis dienen, sollten bei der Erfüllung von Abschussplänen Probleme auftreten. In diesem Zusammenhang kann dieses Planungsinstrument objektiv belegen, wie herausfordernd sich die Bejagung von Schalenwild in manchen Revieren oder zu bestimmten Jahreszeiten gestalten kann (Obermair et al., 2017). Um diese und weitere Anwendungsmöglichkeiten sowie einen Einsatz in verschiedenen Regionen Österreichs und darüber hinaus zu gewährleisten, wurde ein Modellierungsansatz gewählt, der Adaptionen ermöglicht. Basierend auf dieser Herangehensweise ist die Einbindung zusätzlicher Variablen jederzeit realisierbar. Eine Anpassung des Modells an das Management jener Schalenwildarten, die in der jeweiligen Region von Interesse sind, wird dadurch ermöglicht. Nachdem bisher kein Planungsinstrument zur Verfügung stand, um Bejagbarkeiten objektiv zu beurteilen, kann die angestrebte Modellentwicklung als wertvolle Wissenserweiterung für Wissenschaft und Praxis verstanden werden.

Um zusätzlich das Raum-Zeit-Verhalten von Schalenwild in Bezug zu Flächen unterschiedlicher Gefährlichkeit (Bejagbarkeit) untersuchen zu können, wurde das Bejagbarkeitsmodell mit telemetrischen Daten besenderten Rotwilds verschnitten. Hierbei wurde auf Studien aufgebaut (z.B. (Apollonio et al., 2010; Gehr et al., 2018; Tourani et al., 2023), die einen Hinweis darauf geben, dass sich Arten wie das Reh- oder Rotwild der jagdlichen Nutzung entziehen, indem nicht oder nur schwer bejagbare Bereiche als Rückzugsorte aufgesucht werden. Derartige Untersuchungen sind in Hinblick auf das Schalenwildmanagement in Österreich von hoher Relevanz, da nicht sichtbares Wild mit einem nicht bejagbaren Wild gleichzusetzen ist. Konkret wurde die Forschungsfrage untersucht, ob

Schalenwildarten (Rotwild diente als Referenzart) in der Lage sind, zwischen Gebiete unterschiedlicher Gefährlichkeit (Bejagbarkeit) zu differenzieren. Darauf aufbauend wurde die Hypothese aufgestellt, dass Rotwild sein Raum-Zeit-Verhalten entsprechend anpasst, um das Risiko, erlegt zu werden, zu verringern. Basierend auf dem Konzept der „Landschaft der Furcht“ sollte diese Schalenwildart gut bejagbare und somit potenziell gefährliche Bereiche während der Schusszeit¹² unter Tags meiden, um dem Menschen auszuweichen. In der Nacht wurde aufgrund der Anpassungsfähigkeit dieser Schalenwildart und fehlender menschlicher Aktivitäten keine Meidung dieser Bereiche erwartet. Die Ergebnisse dieses Untersuchungsansatzes sollen unter anderem genutzt werden, um Rückschlüsse auf die Effektivität räumlicher Bejagungsaktivitäten zur Wildschadensvermeidung zu ziehen. Eine inhaltliche Verknüpfung von Publikation I und II wird hierbei angestrebt.

1.2.3. Publikation III

Aufgrund der vielen Einflussfaktoren und Interessensgruppen, die auf das Schalenwildmanagement in Österreich wirken, kann sich die Findung und Umsetzung passender Maßnahmen zur Konfliktvermeidung schwierig gestalten. Das oberhalb angesprochene Bejagbarkeitsmodell kann beispielsweise als jagdliches Planungsinstrument Einsatz finden, wird jedoch Konflikte zwischen Landnutzergruppen kaum lösen, wenn die Wünsche und Vorstellungen dieser verschiedenen Parteien bei der Umsetzung von Managemententscheidungen nicht berücksichtigt werden. Um die Komplexität dieses Systems über integrale Denkweisen verständlicher zu machen und Entscheidungsfindungen zur Erreichung angestrebter Ziele zu erleichtern, bedarf es weiterer Planungsinstrumente. Um diese Lücke zu schließen, verfolgte Publikation III das Ziel, ein Entscheidungswerkzeug für das Management von Wildwiederkäuern¹³ zu entwickeln. Dieses Werkzeug soll es ermöglichen, Entscheidungsoptionen (z.B. Wohin investiere ich meine Ressourcen) sowie deren Auswirkungen in der Praxis (z.B. Zufriedenheit diverser Interessensgruppen) abzuschätzen. Um dies zu realisieren wurden die Perspektiven verschiedener Landnutzergruppen in die Entwicklung dieses Planungsinstruments inkludiert. Konkret wurde die Forschungsfrage bearbeitet, wie Entscheidungsträgerinnen und Entscheidungsträger¹⁴ die nachhaltige Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern unter Berücksichtigung diverser Interessensgruppen maximieren können. Analog zum entwickelten Bejagbarkeitsmodell (Publikation II) wurde hierbei ein Modellierungsansatz gewählt, der spezifische Anpassungen, wie die Einbindung zusätzlicher Parameter, ermöglicht.

1.3. Methodik und Studiendesign

Analog zu den vielfältigen Aspekten und Einflussfaktoren, die das Management wiederkäuenden Schalenwilds in Österreich prägen und steuern, kamen im Rahmen dieser Dissertation verschiedene Untersuchungsmethoden zum Einsatz. Diese Methodenvielfalt ermöglichte die Betrachtung und Untersuchung dieses Managementsystems inklusive der bereits angesprochenen

¹² Unter Schusszeiten, auch Jagdzeiten genannt, versteht man jene Zeiten im Jahr, in denen einzelne Wildarten bejagt werden dürfen.

¹³ wiederkehrende Schalenwildarten

¹⁴ Entscheidungsträgerinnen und Entscheidungsträger wurden im Rahmen dieser Studie als Personen definiert, die in der Lage sind Entscheidungen im Bereich der Wildwiederkäuer-Bewirtschaftung zu treffen (Griesberger et al., 2024).

Herausforderungen aus verschiedenen, sich ergänzenden Perspektiven. Nachfolgend wird ein Einblick in die einzelnen Methoden und Analysen gegeben, die im Rahmen der jeweiligen Publikation beziehungsweise Untersuchung Anwendung fanden. Weiters wird auf die Verwendung und Erstellung von Datensätzen eingegangen sowie deren inhaltliche Verknüpfung erläutert. Weiterführende Informationen zur jeweiligen Methodik können anschließend in den Kapiteln 2, 3 und 4 dieser Dissertation nachgelesen werden.

Ein bedeutender Einflussfaktor, der das Management wiederkäuenden Schalenwilds prägt, ist die vielfältige Struktur der österreichischen Kulturlandschaft. Von flachen sowie kleinstrukturierten Jagdrevieren in Ober- oder Niederösterreich bis in die Hochgebirgsregionen im Westen des Landes, finden sich in Österreich verschiedenste Landschaftstypen und Regionen. Diese unterschiedlichen Ausgangslagen führen zu diversen Problemstellungen im Umgang mit Arten wie dem Reh, dem Rothirsch oder der Gämse. Um die Variabilität der österreichischen Landschaft sowie die damit verknüpfte Vielfalt an Herausforderungen bestmöglich in dieser Dissertation zu berücksichtigen, wurden die Datenerhebungen und Analysen auf drei Bundesländer verteilt ([Abbildung 3](#)). Mit dieser Vorgehensweise wurde eine möglichst ganzheitliche Betrachtung des Dissertationsthemas angestrebt.

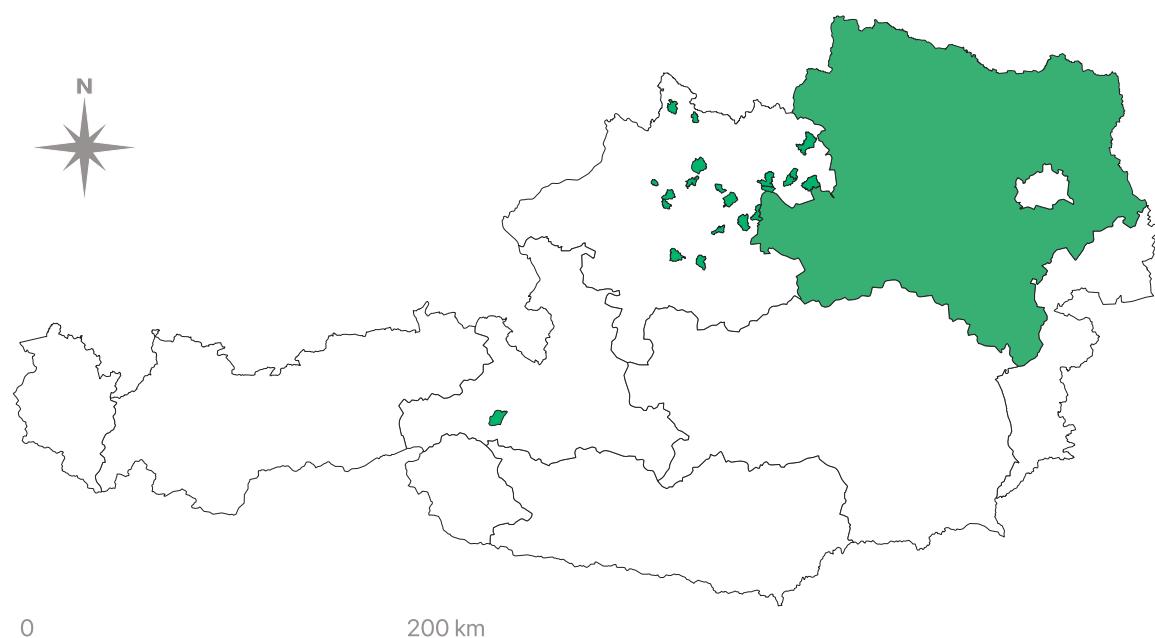


Abbildung 3: Studiengebiete (grün) in Niederösterreich (gesamtes Bundesland), Oberösterreich (20 ausgewählte Gemeinden) und Salzburg (Eigenjagdrevier) zur Untersuchung des Managements wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten in Österreich.

1.3.1. Publikation I

Um einen möglichen Zusammenhang zwischen der räumlichen Verteilung von Bejagungsaktivitäten und den Wildeinfluss an der Waldvegetation untersuchen zu können, wurden 20 Gemeinden im

Bundesland Oberösterreich nach vorgegebenen Kriterien ausgewählt. Diese Kriterien umfassten das Bewaldungsprozent¹⁵, die Intensität des Wildeinflusses sowie die Kooperationsbereitschaft der Jägerinnen und Jäger in der jeweiligen Gemeinde. Nachdem in Oberösterreich vor allem Gebiete mit geringen Bewaldungsprozenten von unerwünschtem Wildeinfluss an der Waldvegetation betroffen sind, wurden ausschließlich Gemeinden mit einem Waldanteil < 50 % in die Studie inkludiert. Zusätzlich wurden bewusst Gemeinden ausgewählt, in denen Rehwild die Hauptschalengwildart darstellte. Über diese Herangehensweise wurde es möglich die Bejagung und den Wildeinfluss bezogen auf eine Schalenwildart miteinander zu verknüpfen. Nach einer Vorselektion konnten zwölf Gemeinden mit einem Waldanteil < 20 % (Gruppe A) sowie acht Gemeinden mit einem Waldanteil zwischen 30 und 50 % (Gruppe B) in die Studie aufgenommen werden. Der Waldanteil wurde hierbei mittels Fernerkundung (Luftbilder und flugzeuggestützte Laserscandaten) berechnet. Zusätzlich erfolgte, ebenfalls mittels Fernerkundung, eine Unterteilung jeder Gemeinde in drei Landschaftskategorien (Wald, Waldrand als Zone von 50 m um Waldbestände, landwirtschaftliche Fläche). Flächen ohne Bejagungsaktivitäten (z.B. Siedlungsgebiete), wurden in der Studie nicht berücksichtigt. Für sämtliche Fernerkundungsanalysen kam im Rahmen dieser Untersuchung das Geografische Informationssystem QGIS 3.10.12-A Coruña zum Einsatz (QGIS Development Team, 2019).

Um potenzielle Effekte räumlicher Bejagungsaktivitäten auf die Waldvegetation messbar zu machen, wurde auf die exakte Verortung von Rehwildabschüssen zurückgegriffen. Diesbezüglich konnten mehrere Studien aufzeigen, dass der Büchsenschuss beim Rehwild in Kombination mit dem Tod eines Artgenossen eine starke Reaktion im Hinblick auf das Raum-Zeit-Verhalten auslösen kann (Reimoser, 2012). Aus diesem Grund wurde die räumliche Verteilung der Abschussorte innerhalb der einzelnen Gemeinden als messbare Größe für den Jagddruck herangezogen. Zu Studienbeginn wurde ein gemeinsamer Workshop mit repräsentativen Vertretern jeder Gemeinde abgehalten, um eine standardisierte Aufnahme der Daten gewährleisten zu können. In weiterer Folge wurden über eine Kooperation mit lokalen Jägerinnen und Jägern alle Rehwildabschüsse für das Jagd Jahr 2014/15 in Revierkarten verortet sowie den drei genannten Landschaftskategorien zugeordnet und anschließend digitalisiert. Über diesen Schritt konnte der Jagddruck in den einzelnen Landschaftskategorien näherungsweise bestimmt werden.

Anschließend wurde die Verteilung der Abschüsse (bezogen auf die Landschaftskategorien) mit dem bundeslandweiten Wildeinflussmonitoring verschnitten. Über diese Vorgehensweise wurde es möglich, Effekte des Jagddrucks auf die Verbiss-Situation in den einzelnen Gemeinden abzubilden. Detaillierte Informationen zur Durchführung dieses Wildeinflussmonitorings (Verbiss der Waldvegetation) finden sich in Kapitel 2. Basierend auf diesem Monitoring und Kriterien des Bundeslandes Oberösterreich wurden die 20 ausgewählten Gemeinden in die Kategorien „tolerierbarer Wildeinfluss“ und „nicht tolerierbarer Wildeinfluss“ unterteilt. Diesbezüglich konnten die Gemeinden in Gruppe A und B je zur Hälfte der Kategorie „tolerierbarer Wildeinfluss“ zugeordnet werden, während die andere Hälfte der Gemeinden einen nicht tolerierbaren Wildeinfluss aufwies.

Nach Aufbereitung der Daten wurden die Auswirkungen der räumlichen Abschussverteilung auf die Verbiss-Situation mittels Manly-Präferenztests (Manly et al., 2002) untersucht. Konkret wurden unterschiedliche Bejagungsintensitäten in einzelnen Landschaftskategorien über Selektionswerte für die Gemeinden in Gruppe A und B, unterteilt nach Wildeinfluss-Kategorie, berechnet.

¹⁵ Das Bewaldungsprozent ist ein Maß, welches den Anteil der mit Wald bedeckten Fläche an der Gesamtfläche eines bestimmten Gebiets angibt.

Abschließend wurden diese Bejagungsintensitäten mittels zweifaktorieller Varianzanalyse (inkl. Post-hoc-Test) zwischen Gemeinden mit tolerierbaren Wildeinfluss und jenen mit nicht tolerierbaren Wildeinfluss verglichen. Sämtliche statistische Analysen wurden mit R 3.6.1 (R Core Team, 2021) sowie den R-Paketen adehabitatHS (Version 0.3.14, Calenge, 2006) und car (Version 3.0-12 Fox & Weisberg, 2019) durchgeführt. Details zu den verwendeten statistischen Analysen können in Kapitel 2 nachgelesen werden.

1.3.2. Publikation II

Aufbauend auf den Erkenntnissen aus Publikation I wurde im Rahmen der zweiten Publikation ein Bejagbarkeitsmodell als Planungsinstrument für das Management wildlebender Huftiere¹⁶ entwickelt. Die Bejagbarkeit, definiert als die Eignung einer Fläche zur Ausübung Jagd (unabhängig davon, in welchem Ausmaß die Fläche vom Wild gerade genutzt wird), wurde hierbei mit einer Genauigkeit von 10 m, basierend auf Felderhebungen, Fernerkundungsdaten und Expertenwissen berechnet. Zur Entwicklung und Evaluierung des Bejagbarkeitsmodells wurden Teile eines Eigenjagdreviers (3.367 ha) im Salzburger Pinzgau als Studiengebiet herangezogen. Dieses Revier ist Teil der Zentralalpenregion Hohe Tauern, liegt auf einer Seehöhe zwischen 880 und 3.000 m und weist einen ausgesprochenen Hochgebirgscharakter auf.

Zur Bestimmung von Faktoren, welche die Bejagbarkeit von Schalenwild beeinflussen, wurden zu Beginn der Studie eine Literaturrecherche sowie mehrere Expertenbefragungen durchgeführt. Aufbauend auf diesen ersten Analysen wurden drei Hauptfaktoren für die Berechnung der Bejagbarkeitseignung definiert: 1) Die Zugänglichkeit eines Gebietes aus Sicht der Jägerin / des Jägers, 2) die Sichtverhältnisse vor Ort, 3) die Bringungsmöglichkeit von erlegtem Wild zur nächsten (Forst-)Straße. Um diese Hauptfaktoren greifbar zu machen, wurden diese, aufbauend auf Expertenbefragungen, in messbare Variablen zerlegt. Die Zugänglichkeit wurde hierbei als Faktor definiert, welcher sich aus der Geländeneigung, der Vegetationsdichte (Strauch- und Baumvegetation) sowie der Gehzeit zusammensetzt. Die Sichtverhältnisse, für das Ansprechen von Wild sowie das Anbringen eines sicheren Schusses, werden von der Unebenheit des Geländes sowie der Vegetationsdichte geprägt. Die Bringungsmöglichkeit unterteilt sich in die Geländeneigung sowie die Vegetationsdichte beziehungsweise den Vegetationswiderstand. Zum besseren Verständnis zeigt Abbildung 4 die Zusammenhänge dieser Faktoren und Variablen sowie den schematischen Aufbau des Bejagbarkeitsmodells.

¹⁶ Nachdem das Bejagbarkeitsmodell für das Management verschiedener wildlebender Huftiere entwickelt wurde, wird sowohl auf wiederkehrendes Schalenwild als auch allgemein auf Schalenwild in Bezug auf das Modell verwiesen.

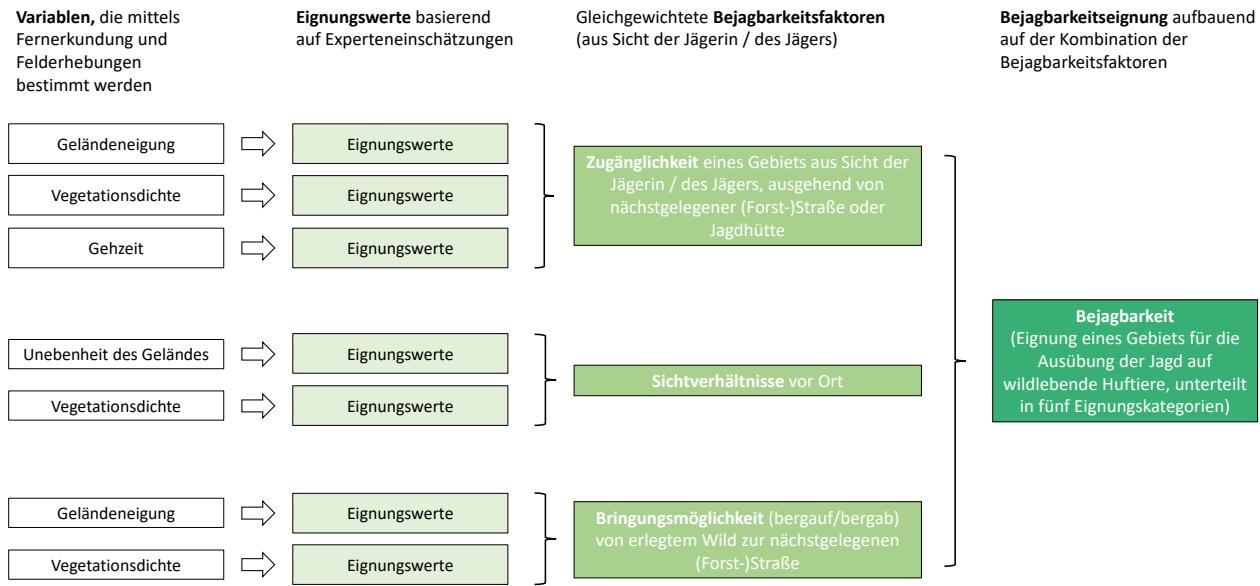


Abbildung 4: Schematischer Aufbau des Bejagbarkeitsmodells.

Nach Festlegung der messbaren Variablen wurden diese in einem nächsten Schritt mittels Fernerkundung sowie Felderhebungen für das gesamte Studiengebiet mit bestmöglicher räumlicher Auflösung bestimmt. Vegetationsdichten wurden hierbei separat für den Sommer, wenn die Vegetation voll entwickelt ist, und den Herbst, nach Blattfall, berechnet. Berechnungsmethoden sowie Herangehensweisen, welche hierbei zum Einsatz kamen, können im Detail in Kapitel 3 nachgelesen werden. Nach Bestimmung beziehungsweise Berechnung der Variablen für das gesamte Studiengebiet, wurden Eignungswerte, basierend auf Experteneinschätzungen, für verschiedene Variablen-Ausprägungen definiert. Diese Vorgehensweise war notwendig, um von messbaren Variablen auf Bejagbarkeitseignungen schließen zu können. Konkret wurden Referenzflächen im Studiengebiet mittels 360-Grad-Aufnahmen digitalisiert und Berufsjägern mit mehrjähriger Erfahrung im Bereich des Schalenwildmanagements präsentiert. Basierend auf diesen Aufnahmen und zusätzlichen Befragungen konnten die Berufsjäger (als Experten) unterschiedliche Geländeneigungen, Vegetationsdichten, Unebenheiten und Gehzeiten hinsichtlich deren Eignung für die Bejagung von Schalenwild beurteilen. Um diese Experteneinschätzungen auf das gesamte Studiengebiet umzulegen, wurde dieses über ein Geografisches Informationssystem in 10 x 10 m Rasterquadrate unterteilt. Sämtliche Fernerkundungsanalysen im Rahmen dieser Studie wurden mit dem Geografischen Informationssystem ArcGIS 10.2.2 durchgeführt (ESRI, 2014). Basierend auf den Angaben der Berufsjäger und Informationen zur Geländeneigung, Unebenheit und Vegetationsdichte erhielt jedes Rasterquadrat einen Eignungswert bezüglich der drei Hauptfaktoren der Bejagbarkeit (Zugänglichkeit, Sichtverhältnisse, Bringungsmöglichkeit). Zudem wurde für jedes Quadrat die Dauer einer Fußdurchquerung berechnet. Über diese Vorgehensweise konnten die „Kosten“ (Zeit, körperliche Anstrengung) die bei der Durchquerung von Gebieten entstehen, in die Modellerstellung inkludiert werden. Nachdem diese Kosten mit zunehmender Entfernung von Ausgangspunkten (Jagdhütte oder Straße) und steilerem sowie unzugänglicherem Gelände ansteigen, konnte hierbei berücksichtigt werden, dass eine körperliche Erschöpfung in schwierigem Gelände schneller eintritt als in einfachem Gelände. Dasselbe gilt für die Durchquerung von Gebieten mit geringer

Vegetationsdichte (geringe Fortbewegungskosten), im Vergleich zu Gebieten mit starkem Vegetationsaufkommen (hohe Fortbewegungskosten).

Aufbauend auf den Eignungswerten jedes Rasterquadrats konnten die drei Hauptfaktoren der Bejagbarkeit und damit auch die Bejagbarkeitseignung für jeden Bereich des Studiengebiets bestimmt werden. Weiterführende Informationen zu den verwendeten Berechnungswerkzeugen sowie zur Funktionsweise des Modells sind in Kapitel 3 nachzulesen. Abschließend wurde die Bejagbarkeitseignung in fünf Eignungskategorien (von „sehr gut geeignet“ bis „nicht geeignet“) unterteilt und kartografisch für Sommer und Herbst (unterschiedliche Vegetationsdichten nach Blattfall) dargestellt. Zwecks Überprüfung der Wirklichkeitsnähe des Modells, wurde dieses nach Fertigstellung anhand von 30 zufällig gewählten Beispielflächen im Studiengebiet durch Experten evaluiert.

Um räumliche Bejagungseffekte, die im Fokus von Publikation I standen, aus einer weiteren Perspektive wissenschaftlich zu beleuchten, wurde das Bejagbarkeitsmodell mit telemetrischen Daten besiedelten Rotwilds verschnitten. Über diese Vorgehensweise konnte anhand objektiv gemessener Daten untersucht werden, ob das Rotwild in der Lage ist, zwischen Bereichen unterschiedlicher Gefährlichkeit zu differenzieren. Für diese Untersuchung wurden 20 Rotwild-Individuen (zehn Weibchen, zehn Männchen) von 2015 bis 2018 mit GPS-Halsbandsystemen (GPS PLUS Collars, Vectronic Aerospace, Berlin, Germany) ausgestattet. Details zum Fang- und Besenderungsvorgang sowie Informationen zur Einstellung und Rückgewinnung der GPS-Halsbandsysteme können in Kapitel 3 nachgelesen werden. Basierend auf den GPS-Peilungen wurden für jedes Individuum Streifgebiete (genutzte Lebensraumbereiche) für die jagdlich relevanten Zeiträume Juli bis Oktober (Sommer) und November bis Dezember (Herbst) berechnet. Die Berechnungen wurden hierbei mit R 3.6.1 (R Core Team, 2021) sowie dem R-Paket tlocoh (Version 1.40.07, Lyons et al., 2013) durchgeführt. Genannte Zeiträume wurden gewählt, um jene Monate abzudecken in denen Rotwild im Studiengebiet hauptsächlich bejagt wird und um zu berücksichtigen, dass sich die Bejagbarkeit nach Laubfall verändert (bessere Sichtverhältnisse). Anschließend wurde innerhalb jedes Streifgebiets die Bejagbarkeitseignung (Gefährlichkeit aus Sicht des Wildes) aller Flächen mithilfe des Bejagbarkeitsmodells ermittelt. Diese theoretisch vom Rotwild nutzbaren Bereiche wurden mit der tatsächlichen Nutzung der Flächen (genaue Position der GPS-Peilungen) verglichen. Dieser Vergleich wurde separat für Tag und Nacht sowie Sommer und Herbst durchgeführt. Als jagdlich nutzbare Tageszeit (Tag) wurde hierbei der Zeitraum zwischen einer Stunde vor Sonnenaufgang bis eine Stunde nach Sonnenuntergang definiert. Mit Hilfe einer Selektionsanalyse konnte anschließend untersucht werden, welche Flächen von Rotwild zu welcher Tageszeit aktiv aufgesucht oder gemieden werden. Diese Analysen wurden abermals über Manly-Präferenztests (Manly et al., 2002) sowie das R-Paket adehabitatHS (Version 0.3.14, Calenge, 2006) durchgeführt. Weiterführende Informationen zu dem verwendeten statistischen Verfahren finden sich in Kapitel 3.

1.3.3. Publikation III

Auf Grundlage der Erfahrungen aus den ersten beiden Publikationen wurde im Rahmen der dritten Publikation ein weiteres Planungsinstrument für das Management wiederkehrender Schalenwildarten in Österreich entwickelt. Konkret wurde ein Entscheidungswerkzeug für eine nachhaltige Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern erstellt und das Bundesland Niederösterreich als Modellregion gewählt. Die Wahl fiel deshalb auf Niederösterreich, da dieses Bundesland

vielfältige Landschaftsstrukturen aufweist (vgl. Kapitel 1.3) und zahlreiche Herausforderungen hinsichtlich der Bewirtschaftung von Reh-, Rot-, und Gamswild bestehen. Für die Entwicklung des Werkzeugs wurden die Prinzipien einer kollaborativen Entscheidungsanalyse (CDA, collaborative decision analysis, Mattsson et al., 2019) und strukturierten Entscheidungsfindung herangezogen. Darauf aufbauend wurden Workshops mit verschiedenen Interessensgruppen abgehalten sowie Umfragen und Interviews durchgeführt. Im Rahmen dieser Prozesse wurden Herausforderungen hinsichtlich der Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern definiert (z.B. steigende Schalenwildbestände) und anzustrebende Ziele identifiziert (z.B. Reduktion von Wildschäden). Außerdem wurden Maßnahmen zur Erreichung dieser Ziele besprochen (z.B. Wildlenkungsmaßnahmen) sowie mögliche Ressourceninvestitionen zur Umsetzung dieser Maßnahmen diskutiert. Um eine nachhaltige Bewirtschaftung der Wildwiederkäuer durch den Einsatz dieses Werkzeugs zu unterstützen, wurden die erwähnten Ziele den drei Bereichen der Nachhaltigkeit (Ökologie, Ökonomie, Soziokultur) zugeordnet. Weiters wurden Interessensgruppen identifiziert, die in der Lage sind, Entscheidungen im Rahmen der Wildwiederkäuer-Bewirtschaftung zu treffen (Entscheidungsträgerinnen und Entscheidungsträger) oder von diesen Entscheidungen beeinflusst werden. Anschließend wurden externe Faktoren definiert, die einen Einfluss auf die Zielerreichung ausüben. Diese externen Faktoren liegen zumindest teilweise außerhalb der Kontrolle der Entscheidungsträgerinnen und Entscheidungsträger. Aufbauend auf den beschriebenen Parametern (Ziele, Maßnahmen, externe Faktoren, etc.) konnten mit Hilfe eines Bayes'schen Entscheidungsnetzwerks (BDN, Mattsson et al., 2019) Modellierungen etabliert werden, die eine Abwägung verschiedener Entscheidungsoptionen und daraus folgender Konsequenzen ermöglichen. Kurz zusammengefasst ist das Werkzeug in der Lage, basierend auf gewählten Zielen und Maßnahmen sowie potenzieller externer Faktoren und involvierter Interessensgruppen, einzelne Entscheidungsoptionen miteinander zu vergleichen. Um die Flexibilität des Entscheidungswerkzeugs in der praktischen Anwendung zu gewährleisten, wurde eine Struktur gewählt, die eine freie Auswahl vordefinierter oder selbstgewählter Parameter ermöglicht. Durch diesen Aufbau und den im Hintergrund ablaufenden Kalkulationen, kann dieses Planungsinstrument an spezifische Anforderungen und Wünsche angepasst zu werden. Zum besseren Verständnis zeigt Abbildung 5 den schematischen Aufbau des entwickelten Entscheidungswerkzeugs.

Um die notwendigen Informationen zur Entwicklung dieses neuartigen Planungsinstruments zu extrahieren, wurden mehrere Methoden zur Wissenssynthese eingesetzt. Diese Methoden umfassten eine Literaturrecherche, Gruppendiskussionen innerhalb des involvierten Forscherteams sowie die Organisation und Abhaltung von sechs Workshops mit Interessensvertretern. Zusätzlich wurden Interviews mit Personen mit Bezug zur Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern in Niederösterreich durchgeführt sowie Fragebögen an Vertreter verschiedener Landnutzergruppen verschickt. Die primären Literaturquellen umfassten einen Kriterienkatalog für eine nachhaltige Jagd in Österreich (Forstner et al., 2006) sowie eine Erweiterung dieses Katalogs (Daim et al., 2017). Darauf aufbauend und basierend auf dem Feedback der in dieser Studie involvierten Personen wurde eine Liste mit vordefinierten Parametern (Ziele, Maßnahmen, externe Faktoren, etc.) erstellt. Diese Vorgehensweise stellte sicher, dass die im Entscheidungswerkzeug auswählbaren Parameter für reale Entscheidungen relevant sind. Um die Verständlichkeit dieser Parameter zu gewährleisten sowie Redundanzen zu verhindern, wurde jedem Ziel, jeder Maßnahme sowie jedem externen Faktor eine Definition hinzugefügt. Die vollständige Liste dieser Modellparameter sowie weitere Details finden sich in den Zusatzinformationen von Publikation III (Kapitel 4).

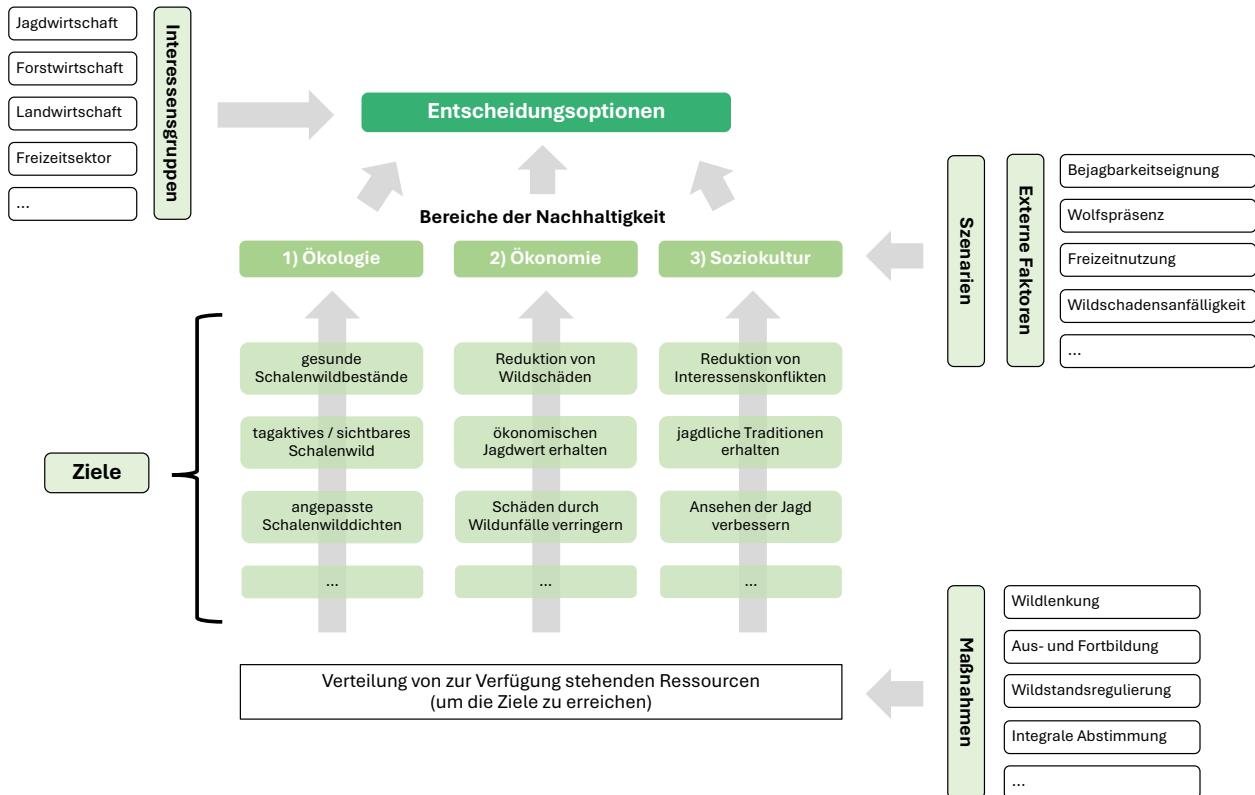


Abbildung 5: Schematischer Aufbau des Entscheidungswerkzeugs.

Um die Praxistauglichkeit des Modells zu gewährleisten, wurde ein iterativer Ansatz gewählt, im Rahmen dessen mehrere Prototypen des Entscheidungswerkzeugs entwickelt wurden. Diese Prototypen wurden schrittweise an die Vorstellungen und Wünsche der involvierten Interessensvertreter sowie potenzieller zukünftiger Entscheidungsträgerinnen und Entscheidungsträger angepasst. Das finale Entscheidungsmodell wurde mittels Microsoft Excel 2016 und dem assoziierten Visual Basic Editor implementiert. Die Gründe für die Verwendung von Microsoft Excel, detaillierte Informationen zur angesprochenen Wissenssynthese sowie zur Erstellung und Funktionsweise des Entscheidungsmodells lassen sich in Kapitel 4 nachlesen.

1.4. Ergebnisse und Erkenntnisse

Die im Kapitel 1.3 präsentierten Untersuchungsmethoden, von empirischen Datenerhebungen, über verschiedene Modellierungsansätze bis hin zur direkten Kommunikation mit diversen Interessensgruppen, zeigen die Vielfalt an Möglichkeiten eines wissenschaftlichen Beitrags zu Problemlösungen im Bereich des Managements wiederkehrender Schalenwildarten. Konkret konnte veranschaulicht werden, wie ein Transfer wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse in praktische Anwendungssituationen realisiert werden kann. Hierbei konnten der Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis gestärkt sowie Lösungsstrategien für diverse Herausforderungen aufgezeigt werden. Das primäre Ziel dieser Dissertation wurde somit erreicht. Zusätzlich konnten die Ergebnisse der vorliegenden Arbeit Wissenslücken schließen, wodurch ein aktiver Beitrag zur Optimierung des Managements wiederkehrender Schalenwildarten in Österreich geleistet werden konnte. In welcher

Art und Weise die einzelnen Publikationen zum aktuellen Wissensstand beigetragen haben, wird in den nachfolgenden Kapiteln erläutert.

1.4.1. Publikation I

Die Ergebnisse aus Publikation I zeigen auf, dass neben der klassischen Bestandsregulierung auch die räumliche Verteilung von Bejagungsaktivitäten relevant sein kann, um Wildschäden vorzubeugen. Konkret konnte in den 20 untersuchten oberösterreichischen Gemeinden bestätigt werden, dass Rehwildabschüsse nicht zufällig in der Landschaft verteilt sind, sondern einem gewissen Muster folgen. In unmittelbarer Nähe zum Waldrand wurden in allen Gemeinden die meisten Abschüsse getötigt. Dieses Ergebnis war zu erwarten, da Rehwild, Strukturen wie Randlinien bevorzugt aufsucht (Jasińska et al., 2021). Zusätzlich gestaltet sich die Bejagung dieser Schalenwildart entlang von Waldrändern, aufgrund guter Sichtverhältnisse, vergleichsweise einfach. Landwirtschaftliche Flächen wurden in allen Gemeinden negativ für die Jagd auf Rehwild selektiert. Dies kann abermals über die Bejagbarkeit erklärt werden, welche sich gerade in den Sommermonaten im Bereich landwirtschaftlicher Kulturen aufgrund der beschränkten Einsehbarkeit schwierig gestaltet. Abseits dieser vorhersehbaren Ergebnisse konnte für Regionen mit einem geringen Bewaldungsprozent (< 20 %) ein Zusammenhang zwischen dem Wildeinfluss und der räumlichen Verteilung der Jagd aufgezeigt werden. Hierbei konnte statistisch nachgewiesen werden, dass Jägerinnen und Jäger in Gemeinden mit geringem Verbiss („tolerierbarer Wildeinfluss“) den Wald deutlich intensiver für die Bejagung von Rehwild nutzten. Zusätzlich zur lokalen Bestandsregulierung ist davon auszugehen, dass in diesen Gemeinden Wildlenkungseffekte initiiert wurden und reduzierte Rehwilddichten in Wäldern die Folge waren. Darauf aufbauend kam es zu einer Entlastung des Waldes hinsichtlich Verbiss, wodurch der Wildeinfluss als tolerierbar eingestuft wurde. Diese Interpretation wird unterstützt von einer signifikant ($p < 0,05$) geringeren jagdlichen Nutzung des Waldes in Gemeinden mit einem „nicht tolerierbaren Wildeinfluss“ an der Waldvegetation. In letzteren Gemeinden ist davon auszugehen, dass eine Entschärfung der Verbiss-Situation durch eine fehlende Wildlenkung ausblieb. Die in Kapitel 1.2.1 formulierte Hypothese konnte somit (teilweise) bestätigt werden. In Gemeinden mit einem Waldanteil von 30-50 % (Gruppe B) konnten die soeben beschriebenen Zusammenhänge nicht nachgewiesen werden. Nachdem die Stichprobengröße dieser Gemeinden überschaubar war, sind zusätzliche Studien notwendig, um für Gemeinden mit einem höheren Waldanteil endgültige Aussagen zu treffen. Weitere Details hierzu sowie zu den Ergebnissen der verwendeten statistischen Analysen sind in Kapitel 2 nachzulesen.

Seit längerem ist bekannt, dass Schalenwildarten wie das Reh sein Raum-Zeit-Verhalten anpassen, um einem erhöhten Jagddruck sowie einer potenziellen Gefahr durch den Menschen auszuweichen (Büttner, 1983; Padié et al., 2015). Effekte dieses Ausweichverhaltens auf weitere Faktoren, wie beispielsweise den Wildeinfluss an der Waldvegetation, waren bisher jedoch kaum oder nur unzureichend untersucht. Mit Hilfe der vorliegenden Publikation konnte diesbezüglich zu einer Wissenserweiterung beigetragen werden, indem räumliche Effekte der Bejagung mit Verbiss-Situationen in Wäldern verknüpft wurden. Trotz kleinerer Unsicherheiten, die im Kapitel 1.5 beleuchtet werden, legen die Erkenntnisse dieser Studie nahe, dass eine verstärkte Bejagung innerhalb von Wäldern ein zusätzliches Managementwerkzeug sein kann, um unerwünschten Wildeinfluss an der Waldvegetation entgegenzuwirken.

1.4.2. Publikation II

Um die Umsetzung von jagdlichen Maßnahmen im Hinblick auf das Management wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten zu erleichtern, setzte sich Publikation II das Ziel, ein objektives und nachvollziehbares Bejagbarkeitsmodell zu entwickeln. Über eine Kombination von empirischen Datenerhebungen, ferner kundlichen Analysen und Expertenwissen konnte dieses Ziel erreicht werden. Das Ergebnis ist ein praxistaugliches Planungsinstrument, welches die Eignung verschiedener Flächen für die Ausübung der Jagd auf Schalenwild realitätsnah ermitteln und kartografisch darstellen kann. Nachdem es für die objektive Bewertung der Bejagbarkeit bisher keine geeignete, beziehungsweise nachvollziehbare Methode gab, konnte hiermit eine Wissenslücke geschlossen werden. Zusätzlich wurde mit dieser Publikation der Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis gestärkt, wodurch ein Ziel dieser Dissertation erreicht werden konnte. Die angesprochene Realitätsnähe, welche eine Grundvoraussetzung für die praktische Anwendung des Modells darstellt, konnte mit Hilfe einer Expertenevaluierung bestätigt werden. Ein hierbei verwendeter Spearman Rang-Korrelationstest zeigte einen höchst signifikanten Zusammenhang ($p < 0,001$) und eine gute positive Beziehung ($\rho = 0,76$) zwischen den Ergebnissen des Modells und der Einschätzung der Experten. Details zu dieser Evaluierung sind in Kapitel 3 nachzulesen.

Weitere Erkenntnisse dieser Studie unterstreichen die Realisierbarkeit von Wildlenkungsmaßnahmen (siehe Publikation I) zur konfliktarmen Integration von wiederkäuendem Schalenwild in die österreichische Kulturlandschaft. Basierend auf der Verschneidung des Bejagbarkeitsmodells mit telemetrischen Daten besiedelter Rotwilds konnte belegt werden, dass diese Wildart ihr Raum-Zeit-Verhalten basierend auf einer „Landschaft der Furcht“ anpasst. Konkret entzieht sich Rotwild dem menschlichen Auge und der jagdlichen Nutzung, indem gut bejagbare Bereiche während der Schusszeit kaum oder nur nachts aktiv aufgesucht. In Kombination dazu, werden schwer zugängliche Lagen (aus menschlicher Sicht) sowie Bereiche mit hoher Vegetationsdichte, in denen eine Bejagung nur in geringem Maße möglich ist, tagsüber als Rückzugsorte genutzt. Die Hypothesen dieser Publikation konnten somit bestätigt werden (weitere Details hierzu finden sind in Kapitel 3). Über die kartografische Darstellung der Bejagbarkeit sind folglich objektiv nachvollziehbare Voraussagen möglich, in welche Bereiche sich Schalenwild zurückziehen wird, sollten der Jagddruck oder sonstige menschliche Störungen ansteigen. Im Umkehrschluss kann diese nachgewiesene Anpassungsfähigkeit von Arten wie dem Rotwild als Chance verstanden werden, um Wild wieder sichtbar und damit regulierbar zu machen. Durch den gezielten Einsatz von Planungsinstrumenten wie dem hier entwickelten Modell, kann die „Landschaft der Furcht“ über eine Jagddruckanpassung verändert werden, um Schalenwild gezielt in gewisse Gebiete zu lenken. Hierbei kann nicht nur die jagdliche Regulierbarkeit verbessert (z.B. Wild nutzt gut bejagbare Flächen auch tagsüber), sondern auch Wildschäden am Wald vorgebeugt werden (z.B. Lenkung des Wildes auf Freiflächen außerhalb des Waldes). Letzteres kann erreicht werden, indem räumliche Bejagungsaktivitäten (siehe Publikation I) mit Hilfe des Modells geplant und umgesetzt werden. Weitere Einsatzbereiche können in den Kapiteln 1.2.2 und 3 nachgelesen werden.

1.4.3. Publikation III

Publikation I und II konnten über eine Verknüpfung wissenschaftlicher Forschung und praktischer Herangehensweisen neue sowie ergänzende Perspektiven zur Etablierung eines lösungsorientierten Managements wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten aufzeigen. Vergleichbar mit klassischen

Maßnahmen (z.B. Bestandsreduktion) kann jedoch auch die Umsetzung dieser neuen Erkenntnisse, trotz einer fundierten Grundlage, mit Herausforderungen verbunden sein. Diesbezüglich können vor allem entgegengesetzte Zielorientierungen einzelner Interessensgruppen (Griesberger et al., 2021), die im Planungsprozess häufig zu wenig Beachtung finden, zum Scheitern einzelner Managementmaßnahmen führen. Zusätzlich erschweren unterschiedliche Ausgangssituationen aufgrund diverser Landschaftsstrukturen und Problemstellungen (Reimoser et al., 2006) die Festlegung passender Herangehensweisen zur Erreichung definierter Ziele (z.B. Reduktion von Wildschäden). Um diese Entscheidungsfindung in der Praxis zu vereinfachen, wurde in Publikation III ein realitätsnahe Entscheidungswerkzeug für das nachhaltige Management von Wildwiederkäuern entwickelt. Im Vergleich zu Untersuchungen, die Managementmaßnahmen aus der Sicht einer einzelnen Landnutzergruppe (z.B. Jägerinnen und Jäger) betrachten, wurden in dieser Publikation die Perspektiven diverser Interessensgruppen berücksichtigt. Um dies zu gewährleisten, wurden Vertreter der Jagdwirtschaft, Forstwirtschaft, Landwirtschaft sowie der Grundeigentümer und des Naturschutzes in den Entwicklungsprozess des Modells inkludiert. Die Ansichten und Wünsche weiterer Landnutzergruppen (z.B. Freizeit- und Erholungssektor) wurden über eine Literaturrecherche sowie Befragungen in das Modell aufgenommen. Dank dieser Herangehensweise konnte die Forschungsfrage, wie Entscheidungsträgerinnen und Entscheidungsträger die nachhaltige Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern unter Berücksichtigung diverser Interessensgruppen maximieren können, umfassend bearbeitet werden. Als Ergebnis präsentiert diese Publikation ein Planungsinstrument, welches in der Lage ist, Entscheidungsalternativen (z.B. Wohin investiere ich meine Ressourcen) und deren Auswirkungen (z.B. Zufriedenheit einzelner Interessensgruppen) miteinander zu vergleichen, um jeweils die beste Option zu finden. Dank der Flexibilität des Entscheidungswerkzeugs (freie Wahl verschiedener Parameter) ist eine Anwendung bei unterschiedlichen Problemstellungen sowie auf verschiedenen Managementebenen (Revier- bis Landesebene) realisierbar. Konkret kann das Werkzeug im Rahmen von Mediationsprozessen eingesetzt werden, wenn Konflikte zwischen Landnutzergruppen vorhanden oder im Entstehen sind. In diesem Zusammenhang können vergleichende Analysen unterschiedlicher Ressourcenverteilungen, inklusive deren Auswirkungen dazu beitragen, Spannungen entgegenzuwirken. Ebenfalls kann das Entscheidungswerkzeug als Argumentationsbasis oder zur Bewusstseinsbildung herangezogen werden, um komplexe Zusammenhänge bei der Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern nachvollziehbar darzustellen. Um diese und weitere Anwendungsmöglichkeiten in der Praxis zu gewährleisten, wurde die Benutzeroberfläche, trotz komplexer Berechnungsprozesse im Hintergrund, vergleichbar einfach gestaltet. Die Verwendung des Werkzeugs ist somit ohne wissenschaftlicher Vorerfahrung oder Kenntnisse zu den Kalkulationen im Rahmen des Bayes'schen Entscheidungsnetzwerks (Mattsson et al., 2019) möglich. Aufgrund der Neuheit dieses Planungsinstruments sind Evaluierungen der Funktionsweise in der Praxis derzeit noch ausstehend. Erste Testläufe im Rahmen des Projekts waren allerdings vielversprechend. Unabhängig dieser noch ausstehenden Evaluierungen konnte im Rahmen dieser Publikation der Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis erneut gestärkt werden. Mit Hilfe des hierbei entstandenen Planungsinstruments ist es nun erstmals möglich, Entscheidungsoptionen bei der Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern, unter gleichzeitiger Berücksichtigung der Wünsche und Anforderungen diverser Interessensgruppen, nachvollziehbar miteinander zu vergleichen. Das Modell stellt somit eine Wissenserweiterung dar.

1.5. Zusammenfassung und Schlussfolgerungen

Steigende Bestandszahlen mehrerer Schalenwildarten (Statistik Austria, 2024), ungünstige Wildschadenssituationen (Schodterer & Kainz, 2022), die Mehrfachnutzung einer Kulturlandschaft durch diverse Landnutzergruppen (Griesberger et al., 2021) sowie weitere Faktoren stellen das Management von wiederkäuenden Schalenwildarten in Österreich vor zahlreiche Herausforderungen. Unzureichende Herangehensweise oder Managementmaßnahmen, die ihr Ziel verfehlten, können diese Situation weiter verschärfen und Konflikte zwischen Interessensgruppen auslösen oder verstärken. Hinzu kommen sektorale Lösungsansätze, die unzureichend sind, um multifaktoriellen Problemen entgegenzuwirken. Es bedarf folglich einer Wissenserweiterung, die aufzeigt, dass vielschichtige Herausforderungen nur integral, das heißt unter gleichzeitiger Berücksichtigung der Anforderungen und Wirkungen aller beteiligten Landnutzergruppen (Griesberger et al., 2021), gelöst werden können. Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten wie diese Dissertation können dazu beitragen, integrale Denkweisen zu fördern, wodurch Konflikte zwischen Interessensgruppen entschärft werden.

Um diese Konfliktentschärfung mitzugestalten, präsentiert die vorliegende Arbeit neuartige Ansätze (Publikation I) sowie praxistaugliche Planungsinstrumente (Publikation II und III) für das Management wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten in Österreich. Das primäre Ziel bestand darin, forschende Tätigkeiten mit praktischen Anwendungsmöglichkeiten, zum Vorteil aller Beteiligten, zu verschneiden. Konkret konnten wissenschaftlich fundierte Lösungsstrategien, neue Herangehensweisen sowie multifaktorielle Betrachtungsmöglichkeiten aufgezeigt werden. Um hierbei die Diversität der österreichischen Kulturlandschaft bestmöglich berücksichtigen zu können, kamen diverse Untersuchungsansätze in verschiedenen Bundesländern zum Einsatz. Über diese Vorgehensweise konnte das Management wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten aus mehreren, sich ergänzenden Perspektiven betrachtet und analysiert werden. Die wesentlichsten Ergebnisse und Erkenntnisse dieser Dissertation sind in den nachfolgenden Zeilen zusammengefasst.

Publikation I dieser Dissertation (siehe Kapitel 2) konnte aufzeigen, dass eine gezielte räumliche Verteilung von Bejagungsaktivitäten das Potenzial hat, Wildschäden im Wald entgegenzuwirken. Diese Erkenntnis kann genutzt werden, um zusätzliche Managementansätze (neben der klassischen Bestandsregulierung) zur Reduktion unerwünschten Wildeinflusses abzuleiten. Konkret konnte für Gemeinden mit einem geringen Bewaldungsprozent (< 20 %) statistisch nachgewiesen werden, dass eine intensivere Bejagung von Rehwild innerhalb des Waldes zu einer Entschärfung der Verbiss-Situation führt. Aufbauend auf diesem Ergebnis, kann die Interpretation folgen, dass die Bejagung innerhalb der Wälder den Jagddruck auf Rehwild erhöhte und dieses aus dem Wald gelenkt wurde. Geringere Rehwilddichten im Wald waren die Folge, wodurch es zu einer Reduktion des Wildeinflusses kam. Obwohl die Interpretation einer Wildlenkung nahe liegt, konnte diese aufgrund fehlender Daten zum Raum-Zeit-Verhalten des Rehwilds im Rahmen dieser Studie nicht näher analysiert werden. Zusätzliche Untersuchungen sind in diesem Zusammenhang notwendig. Um diese Wissenslücke teilweise zu schließen, wurde im Rahmen der zweiten Publikation dieser Dissertation das Raum-Zeit-Verhalten einer Schalenwildart in Bezug zu Flächen unterschiedlicher Gefährlichkeit untersucht (siehe unterhalb). Trotz kleinerer Unsicherheiten legen die Ergebnisse von Publikation I den Schluss nahe, dass eine verstärkte Bejagung innerhalb von Wäldern zielführend eingesetzt werden kann, um unerwünschten Wildeinfluss an der Waldvegetation entgegenzuwirken. Dies gilt zumindest für Regionen mit einem geringen Bewaldungsprozent. Diese Publikation kann

somit als Wissenserweiterung bestehender Literatur (z.B. Mols et al., 2022; Padié et al., 2015; Van Beeck Calkoen et al., 2022) betrachtet werden.

Trotz dieser Wissenserweiterung kann sich die praktische Umsetzung der Erkenntnisse aus Publikation I, analog zu klassischen Bestandsregulierungen, herausfordernd gestalten. In diesem Zusammenhang sind vor allem fehlende Bejagungsmöglichkeiten ausschlaggebend, dass jagdliche Maßnahmen häufig nur schwer zu realisieren sind. Nachdem in Kulturlandschaften vor allem menschliche Aktivitäten dafür verantwortlich sind, dass sich diverse Schalenwildarten kontinuierlich in schwer bejagbare Bereiche zurückziehen (Bonnot et al., 2013; Coppes et al., 2017; Griesberger et al., 2021), liegt es an den Menschen, diese Situation umzukehren. Hierfür benötigt es spezielle Planungsinstrumente, die Bejagungssituationen wirklichkeitsnah darzustellen können. Nachdem bisher keine geeignete Methode hierfür vorhanden war, wurde in Publikation II dieser Dissertation (siehe Kapitel 3) ein objektives und nachvollziehbares Bejagbarkeitsmodell als ein neuartiges Planungsinstrument für die Praxis entwickelt. Mit Hilfe dieses Modells steht nun erstmals ein Werkzeug zur Verfügung, welches die Eignung verschiedener Flächen für die Ausübung der Jagd realitätsnah ermitteln kann. Neben verschiedenen Anwendungsmöglichkeiten (siehe Kapitel 3), kann dieses Modell als Wissenserweiterung des Konzepts einer „Landschaft der Furcht“ verstanden werden. In diesem Zusammenhang ist das Modell in der Lage, die „Landschaft der Furcht“ bezogen auf menschliche Störungen zu visualisieren (gut bejagbare Bereiche = potenziell gefährliche Bereiche), sowie dem Konzept eine menschliche Betrachtungsweise (Bejagbarkeit) hinzuzufügen.

Die Verschneidung des Modells mit telemetrischen Daten besiedelten Rotwilds konnte aufzeigen, dass Schalenwild in der Lage ist, Gebiete unterschiedlicher Gefährlichkeit voneinander räumlich abzugrenzen und diese Fähigkeit nutzt, um menschlichen Störungen auszuweichen. Dieses Ergebnis ist repräsentativ für fehlende Bejagungsmöglichkeiten und veranschaulicht die herausfordernden Situationen in vielen Teilen Österreichs (Griesberger, 2024; Reimoser & Reimoser, 2019). Im Umkehrschluss kann die nachgewiesene Fähigkeit einer Schalenwildart potenzielle Gefahren räumlich verorten zu können, als Chance verstanden werden. Durch den Einsatz von Planungsinstrumenten wie dem hier entwickelten Modell, können gezielte Jagddruckanpassungen geplant und umgesetzt werden, um Arten wie Rotwild in Bereiche zu lenken, in denen es wieder sichtbar und damit regulierbar wird. Zusätzlich kann eine Verschneidung mit den Ergebnissen aus Publikation I erfolgen, um jagdliche Lenkungsmaßnahmen zur Wildschadensreduktion optimal planen und umsetzen zu können.

Trotz der vielfältigen Einsatzmöglichkeiten des Bejagbarkeitsmodells wird dieses nicht in der Lage sein, Konflikten zwischen Interessensgruppen entgegenzuwirken, sofern die Wünsche und Vorstellungen dieser verschiedenen Parteien bei der Anwendung des Modells nicht berücksichtigt werden. Ebenso wenig werden Managementmaßnahmen, wie jene, die in Publikation I untersucht wurden, zur Konfliktvermeidung beitragen, wenn diese nicht integral mit anderen Landnutzern abgestimmt werden. Die Etablierung einer Wildruhezone als Teil eines Wildlenkungskonzepts wird beispielsweise nicht zielführend umgesetzt werden können, wenn dieselbe Fläche vom Tourismusverband als Erholungsgebiet ausgewiesen wird. Bei der Findung und Umsetzung geeigneter Maßnahmen ist deshalb die Betrachtung des jeweiligen Problems aus den Perspektiven diverser Interessensgruppen Grundvoraussetzung. Dass eine derartige integrale Abstimmung gerade hinsichtlich des Managements wiederkehrender Schalenwildarten möglich ist, konnte anhand von Modellregionen in Österreich bereits aufgezeigt werden (siehe Griesberger et al., 2021). Davon unabhängig ist die Findung von Maßnahmen zur Erreichung eines definierten Ziels (z.B. Reduktion von Wildschäden) unter gleichzeitiger Berücksichtigung aller relevanten Landnutzergruppen, für

viele Praktikerinnen und Praktiker nach wie vor eine große Herausforderung. Um dieser Situation entgegenzuwirken und abermals einen Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis zu etablieren, wurde in der dritten Publikation dieser Dissertation (siehe Kapitel 4) ein Entscheidungswerkzeug für das Management von Wildwiederkäuern entwickelt. Dieses Werkzeug kann als neuartiges Planungsinstrument verstanden werden, welches in der Praxis als Entscheidungshilfe zur Findung passender Managementmaßnahmen eingesetzt werden kann. Konkret ist das Werkzeug in der Lage, Entscheidungsalternativen und deren Auswirkungen auf diverse Landnutzergruppen miteinander zu vergleichen, um jeweils die beste Option zu finden. Um hierbei Konflikten entgegenzuwirken, können bei der Verwendung dieses Planungsinstruments, die Anforderungen und Wünsche diverser Interessensgruppen berücksichtigt werden. Konkrete Anwendungsbereiche reichen von einer einfachen Wissenserweiterung über eine Bewusstseinsbildung bis hin zu einer gezielten Konfliktvermeidung bei Managemententscheidungen. Zusammengefasst kann festgehalten werden, dass die konfliktarme Integration von wiederkäuendem Schalenwild in eine durch den Menschen geprägte Kulturlandschaft eine Herausforderung, aber kein Ding der Unmöglichkeit darstellt. Um eine friedliche Koexistenz zwischen Mensch und Tier zu ermöglichen, bedarf es konstruktiver Lösungsansätze mit einer fundierten wissenschaftlichen Grundlage sowie ganzheitlicher Betrachtungsweisen komplexer Problemstellungen. Über eine Verknüpfung von wissenschaftlicher Forschung mit praktischen Anwendungssituationen, konnte vorliegende Dissertation Möglichkeiten zur Entwicklung derartiger Lösungsansätze aufzeigen. Der hierbei forcierte Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis kann in Kombination mit den Erfahrungen und Erkenntnissen dieser Arbeit genutzt werden, um das Management wiederkäuender Schalenwildarten in Österreich an bestehende sowie zukünftige Herausforderungen anzupassen. Dass dieses (gesellschaftliche) Ziel nur erreicht werden kann, wenn alle betroffenen Landnutzergruppen an einem Strang in dieselbe Richtung ziehen und es zu einer integralen Maßnahmenabstimmung kommt, wurde im Rahmen dieser Arbeit mehrmals hervorgehoben. Wichtig ist hierbei, dass eine entsprechende Kommunikation zwischen den handelnden Menschen, ein gegenseitiges Vertrauen sowie aufeinander abgestimmte Lösungswege angestrebt werden (Griesberger et al., 2021). Denn schlussendlich bestehen die Herausforderungen eines Wildtiermanagements nicht darin, wie wir mit den Tieren umgehen sollen, sondern wie die Menschen agieren, die diese Tiere managen ... (Aldo Leopold, 1943)

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2. Publikation I

Spatial distribution of hunting and its potential effect on browsing impact of roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) on forest vegetation

Griesberger, P., Kunz, F., Reimoser, F., Hackländer, K., & Obermair, L. (2023). Spatial distribution of hunting and its potential effect on browsing impact of roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) on forest vegetation. *Diversity*, 15(5), 613. doi: [10.3390/d15050613](https://doi.org/10.3390/d15050613)

Article

Spatial Distribution of Hunting and Its Potential Effect on Browsing Impact of Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) on Forest Vegetation

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Abstract: Increasing numbers of wild ungulates in human-dominated landscapes in Europe could lead to negative effects, such as damages to forests through browsing. To prevent those effects and, thus, mitigate wildlife-based conflicts while ensuring viable ungulate populations, sustainable management is required. Roe deer, as the most abundant cervid species in Europe, is primarily managed via hunting to decrease population densities through harvesting. Besides direct mortality, non-lethal effects of hunting activities further affect the spatial habitat selection for this species. Accordingly, the spatial distribution of hunting locations might influence game impact on forest vegetation. To examine these relationships in more detail, we linked the spatial distribution of hunting locations for roe deer with forest damage through browsing in 20 regions in Upper Austria. Consistent with our hypothesis, an avoidance of forests by hunters was found in regions with <20% forest cover and intolerable browsing impact. When hunters in certain regions, however, used forests according to their availability, game impact on forest vegetation was tolerable. Although forest damage by ungulates depends on numerous factors, we conclude that careful consideration of hunting locations might be an additional approach to reduce browsing intensity by roe deer, at least in regions with low forest cover.

Keywords: anthropogenic predation risk; Central European landscapes; game impact; hunting locations; habitat use; landscape of fear (LOF); ungulate management



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1. Introduction

In most parts of Europe, abundances of wild ungulates are increasing [1]. This is especially true for roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) populations [2]. Due to its adaptiveness, e.g., niche breadth concerning habitat use [3] or diet [4], roe deer became the most abundant cervid species on this continent [5,6]. Game impact on vegetation through foraging by roe deer might rise simultaneously, based on this species' high population densities [7]. In this context, roe deer are especially known for their browsing impact on forest restoration [8], where the animals bite off shoots and young branches of trees, leading to reduced or aberrant growth or even the deaths of trees. Consequently, forests can degrade regarding their functional economic, ecological, or socio-cultural roles [9]. As a result, contrasting perspectives about wildlife management generate conflicts between stakeholders (e.g.,

landowners, hunters, and recreational users), which we refer to henceforth as wildlife-based conflicts. Coordinated management of wild ungulates and their habitats is, therefore, a necessity in human-dominated landscapes across Europe to effectively prevent such conflicts [7,10,11]. Regarding this management, hunting is used to regulate population numbers through harvesting [1], and influence habitat selection of wild ungulates [12–14].

When choosing suitable habitats, animals have to consider multiple aspects, such as resource quality and availability, shelter, and potential threats [15]. Regarding the latter, predator-prey interactions consist of direct predation along with modification of prey's behavioural response to the anticipation or risk of possible attacks [5,16]. As hunters have replaced large carnivores as apex predators in many regions all over the world [17,18], herbivores are sensitive to hunting activities [5]. Thus, hunting plays an important role in ungulate management, species' habitat selection, and the prevention of wildlife-based conflicts. In this context, effects of hunting can act directly as well as indirectly on ungulate species. Direct effects of hunting are achieved through reducing population numbers through harvesting [1,19]. Indirect effects are often associated with adjustments of behavioural patterns of prey species [20]. Several studies concerning large mammals [21], such as white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) in Oklahoma, USA [14,18], wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) in Sweden [12], mouflon (*Ovis gmelini*) in France [22], or red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) in Austria [23], have highlighted that ungulates respond to those indirect effects and adapt their spatio-temporal behaviour to avoid potential contact with humans. Accordingly, Büttner [24] found that regions in Germany with intensive hunting were avoided by roe deer. Moreover, Padié et al. [13] recently verified that habitat selection of roe deer is driven by hunting pressure in France. In hunted roe deer populations, anthropogenic predation risk should, therefore, lead to adjustments in habitat selection. What remains to be investigated, however, is the connection between those adjustments and game impact on forest vegetation. Mols et al. [25] have highlighted that human activities (e.g., hunting) create behaviourally mediated cascading effects that can influence vegetation growth within nature reserves in the Netherlands. Detailed knowledge regarding these effects in partially forested areas, which are typical of Central European landscapes, is, however, still limited, and further investigations are needed. Thus, we conducted a case study in Upper Austria, an Austrian province located in Central Europe, to examine correlations between spatial distribution of hunting and browsing impact on forest vegetation.

Upper Austria has seen an increase in roe deer abundance consistent with the European trend [7]. As such, harvest data indicate an increase in abundance by more than 100% over the past 40 years. While in 1983, 36,602 roe deer were harvested in Upper Austria, that number increased to 79,132 in 2020 [26]. Although harvest data do not necessarily represent roe deer abundance, they serve as a proxy to infer population trends. According to the positive population trend in Upper Austria, game impact on forest vegetation is currently high [27]. Additionally, with a human population density of 124 residents per km² in 2022 [26], Upper Austria can be described as a human-dominated landscape in Central Europe. At the same time, the spatial distribution of land use is structured in small mosaics. About half of the province's area is used for agricultural purposes, while 42% is forested. The remaining 8% contains settlements, industrial areas, and other land uses. In 2016, the average size of an agricultural farm was 33 ha [28]. By having such a small-structured mosaic-like landscape, Upper Austria provides a wide range of suitable habitats for roe deer, as this species mainly utilises forest-edge habitats [29] between forests and agricultural land [30]. Hunting in Upper Austria represents the main management tool to mitigate wildlife-based conflicts regarding roe deer through reducing the density of this species (see [31] for details). However, current hunting practices often fail in this context, as impact of browsing on forests is still a major problem [27].

Hunters can select locations for hunting based on the available habitats for roe deer or avoid certain habitat types beyond their availability. This selection is assumed to affect habitat use by roe deer and, hence, the impact of this species on forest vegetation. Thus, the spatial distribution of hunting activities might also influence the success in

preventing damages to forests. Considering the human-dominated landscape, the mosaic-like distribution of roe deer habitats, and hunting practices, Upper Austria serves as an ideal case study for examining effects of hunting distribution on the game impact on forest vegetation in a Central European context. As browsing impact by roe deer is a major problem in forests [32] but not in agricultural fields of Austria, we concentrate exclusively on forests within this study. To examine effects of hunting distribution on game impact, we focus on two dependent research questions. Firstly, are hunting locations concerning roe deer randomly distributed within selected regions of Upper Austria? In this study, a hunting location is defined as the precise location where a hunter harvested roe deer. Secondly, if hunting locations are not randomly distributed, is the distribution of these locations affecting game impact on forest vegetation? To answer these questions, we link georeferenced hunting locations with game impact and land use, using information gathered from hunters, remote sensing, and the Upper Austrian Government. Regarding our research questions, we hypothesise that (i) hunting is not evenly spread within the study regions, as roe deer mainly prefer forest edges as suitable habitats. Furthermore, we anticipate that a concentration of hunting activities in forests will lead to reduced roe deer abundance in forests, as density is directly reduced and individuals are assumed to avoid areas with high predation risks. Thus, we also hypothesise that (ii) regions with more intensive forest-based hunting will have a lower game impact on forest vegetation. Ultimately, the aim of this case study is to reveal whether the selection of hunting locations can be a valuable component of a sustainable roe deer management strategy to mitigate wildlife-based conflicts in Central European landscapes.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Regions

We chose 20 study regions, each representing a hunting ground, located in the Austrian province of Upper Austria (Figure 1) at elevations between 270 m and 769 m above sea level. Consisting of small forest patches and agricultural land, the mosaic landscapes of all regions can be described as suitable habitats for roe deer [33]. Accordingly, roe deer is the most abundant wild ungulate species in all regions. Based on estimations and annual counts conducted by hunters, there are, on average, 15 living individuals per 100 ha in spring within each region (survey conducted by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna in 2014, unpubl. data). Roe deer is mainly regulated by recreational hunters, based on harvest quota given by local authorities. According to hunting protocols, these quota are annually achieved through hide hunting (70%), stalking (20%), and drive hunting (10%). Hunting season for roe deer starts on 1 May and lasts until 31 December, differentiated into sex and age classes (fawns and females older than one year: 16 August–31 December; one-year old-females: 1 May–31 December; one-year-old males: 1 May–30 September; males between two and five years: 1 June–30 September; five-year-old males and older (antler weight < 300 g): 1 June–30 September; five-year-old males and older (antler weight > 300 g): 1 August–30 September). Thus, there is one long hunting season, which does not consist of distinct short seasons. Further information regarding hunting management in Austria can be found in Trouwborst and Hackländer [34].

Study regions were chosen based on a set of criteria including forest percentage, game impact, and willingness of hunters to cooperate. At the beginning of this study, representatives of each study region were invited to a joint workshop to discuss the details of the project (e.g., data acquisition). Throughout the study, there was a regular exchange between practitioners and scientists to ensure standardised data collection. All hunters active in the study regions participated voluntarily. All study regions had a size of more than 1000 ha, except one with about 700 ha. Regions were specifically targeted to differ in browsing impact on forest vegetation and percentage of forest cover. Based on remote sensing, forest cover was included in the selection to consider the potential effects of landscape characteristics. Twelve regions had <20% forest cover (group A), whereas the other eight had 30–50% forest cover (group B). Half of the regions within each group had

a tolerable game impact on forest vegetation, and the other half had an intolerable game impact (the methodology of game impact is described in the next paragraph).

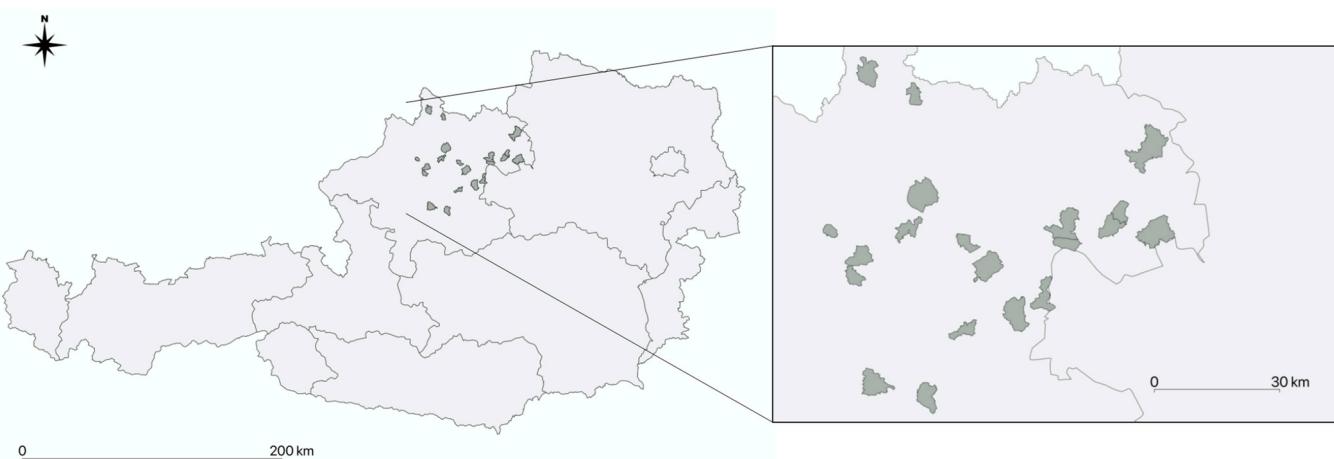


Figure 1. Study regions (dark-grey areas, $n = 20$), located in Central Europe in Austrian province of Upper Austria. Lines represent borders between provinces.

2.2. Game Impact

Game impact was determined via surveys of the governmental evaluation of ungulate impact on forests via browsing over several years (1995–2015). Specifically, forested areas in each region are assessed annually by hunters, landowners, and local authorities. Depending on natural forest community and forest function, the forest authority sets concrete targets for forest regeneration (e.g., tree species composition, minimum density of trees per species). If the target was not achievable due to the impact of roe deer (browsing, fraying), the impact was described as intolerable. According to legal requirements in Upper Austria, ungulate exclosures and unfenced control plots (Figure 2) are used for measuring the impact of roe deer on forest regeneration (see [35] for a comparable approach). At least one exclosure per 100 ha forest must be established within each hunting ground. The total number of exclosures per hunting ground must be at least three and at most 20. In regions where roe deer is the most abundant wild ungulate species, exclosures are constructed with a fence that is at least 1.5 m tall and encloses an area of 6×6 m. Due to the structure of the fences, smaller mammals such as mice and lagomorphs were able to enter the exclosures. For each exclosure, an unfenced control plot (reference area) existed in close proximity (5–25 m) with comparable site and stand conditions. Plant data was recorded inside a central 5×5 m square within each exlosure (to exclude areas that might be browsed through the fence) and compared to the corresponding control plot. In particular, the composition of regenerating tree species and the total number and height per species were surveyed for each exclosure/control pair. Application of bait or the removal of young trees was prohibited next to exclosures and control plots to prevent biases in these surveys.

In addition to exclosure/control pairs, longitudinal transects are used in Upper Austria to measure game impact on forest vegetation. Those transects were unfenced and variable in length and included approximately 80 to 100 individual trees with heights between 30 to 150 cm. Once the majority of the trees reached a height of 150 cm, a new transect was established. Per hunting ground, there were at least three transects, each containing at least 50 trees of the respective target tree species (e.g., silver fir (*Abies alba*), Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), or deciduous trees, such as oak species (*Quercus sp.*), European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), or maple species (*Acer sp.*)). For each target species, the browsing intensity on the transect was surveyed through counting the number of trees (with a height between 30 to 150 cm) of which the leading shoot was browsed the previous year. Browsing impact of the respective year in which the survey is conducted was not considered as not all transects can be monitored at the same time. Transects surveyed earlier in the year were exposed to

browsing for a shorter time than transects surveyed later in the year. To counteract this bias, only the previous year was considered. The final classification (tolerable vs. intolerable) was made separately for each transect and depended on the targets defined by the forest authority. Guideline values regarding game impact on longitudinal transects are available in the Appendix A.

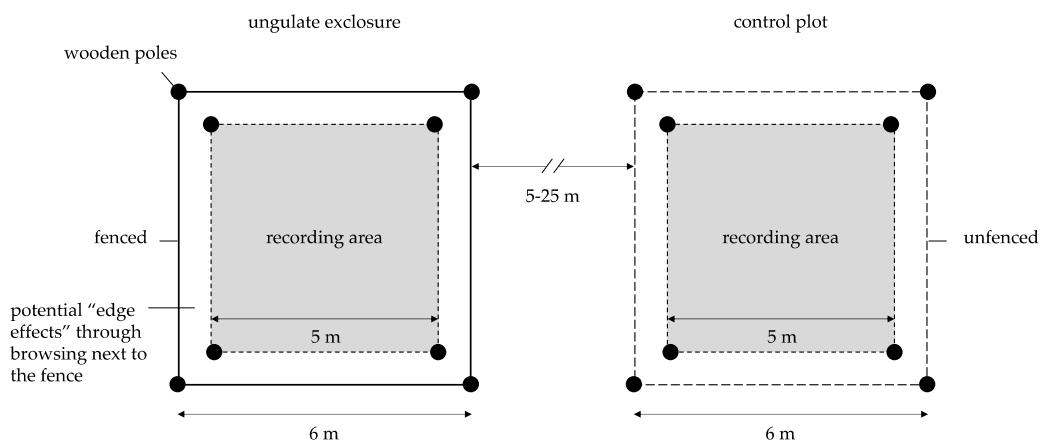


Figure 2. Ungulate exclosure and unfenced control plot for measuring browsing impact on forest regeneration in Upper Austria.

To produce an overall evaluation per hunting ground, assessments of individual exclosure/control pairs and transects were combined. If the majority of the surveys within one hunting ground indicated a tolerable game impact, the overall evaluation was also considered tolerable. If the majority of the surveys displayed an intolerable game impact, the overall assessment was intolerable.

When selecting new exclosure/control pairs or transects, areas as representative as possible were chosen for the respective hunting grounds. Forest areas smaller than 3 ha were not suitable. Regarding our study, the overall classification (tolerable vs. intolerable) was consistent throughout the years 2010 to 2015 within each of the 20 regions. Data regarding game impact were provided by the Upper Austrian government.

2.3. Data Processing

For each study region, land use was classified into four categories: forest, forest-edge habitat, agricultural land (arable land, meadows, pastures, set-asides), and areas not suitable for hunting. This classification was performed via remote sensing and based on digital orthophotos and airborne laser-scanning data provided by the geographical information system of Upper Austria. The area of each category was measured in m^2 using QGis 3.10.12-A Coruña [36]. Forest edges, defined as areas with a buffer width of 50 m around forests, were included in the land use category to consider habitats favoured by roe deer [30]. Cities, roads, and water bodies were summarised into areas not suitable for hunting. As no hunting takes place in this specific land use category, it was excluded from further statistical analyses.

To answer our second hypothesis, we generated a high-resolution proxy variable for hunting pressure. In this study, we defined hunting pressure as the actual effect of hunting activities on game, triggering physiological (e.g., increase in heart rate) and behavioural (e.g., spatio-temporal) responses. This concept differs from hunting effort, which we defined as the sum of all human investment in hunting activities (mostly measured within a temporal context, e.g., time invested by hunters to harvest game). As not all hunting activities exert effects on game, while also taking habituation of game to hunting activities into account, variables measuring hunting pressure must be carefully chosen. We chose hunting locations as measurable and verifiable variables, as gunshots trigger stronger responses in roe deer compared to other stimuli [37], and surviving individuals are assumed

to adapt their behaviour the most if they witnessed the death of a conspecific individual. To specify hunting pressure in each classified land use category, individual hunting location during the hunting season 2014/15 were added virtually as point data to each study region. These data were based on georeferenced hunting protocols and provided by local hunting communities. If several roe deer were harvested at a single hunting locations on different dates, this specific location was counted multiple times, based on the number of harvested deer. The number of hunting locations ranged between 39 and 421 per region. On average, 186 roe deer individuals were harvested per region per year. Based on hunter estimations, the distribution of hunting locations within each region in 2014/15 corresponded to previous years. Finally, we assigned the respective land use category to each hunting location and used ‘number of locations = number of gunshots’ as a variable for hunting pressure within each category.

2.4. Statistical Analyses

For testing both hypotheses, we analysed the distribution of hunting locations separated by groups of forest cover (group A, group B) and game impact (tolerable, intolerable). For all statistical analyses, we used R version 3.6.1 [38] and the packages adehabitatHS version 0.3.14 [39] and car version 3.0-12 [40]. To test for hunting location preferences by hunters regarding different land use categories, we calculated Manly selection values [41] and analysed selection (positive or negative) of forests, forest-edge habitats, and agricultural land, respectively. Based on Manly et al. [41], we linked available and used areas for hunting within each study region (selection ratio = used/available areas). Available areas were expressed as the size of each land use category in m^2 . The number of hunting locations within each category represented the intensity of use (used areas). Thus, the selection of forests, forest-edge habitats, and agricultural land by hunters was based on the number of hunting locations within those land use categories in relation to their availability.

By measuring available and used land use categories for each study region separately, we considered that the proportions of each category and the use of it by hunters varied between each region. Hence, we treated hunting locations between regions as independent events, and calculated selection ratios for each region using a type III log-likelihood test statistic (Khi2L) approach. Next, we combined regions based on forest cover and game impact and again computed selection values. Chi-square tests were used to examine the selection of hunting locations by hunters. To test for statistical significance, p -values were calculated and compared with a Bonferroni-corrected alpha-level of 0.01667. Subsequently, selection values were plotted to compare regions of tolerable and intolerable game impact within each group of forest cover.

To test whether regions with tolerable impact and regions with intolerable impact differ in hunting location selection by hunters, we performed two-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs). We defined Manly’s selection values as dependent variables. As values larger than 1 represent positive selection and values smaller than 1 represent negative selection [41], we converted the measurement into a continuously increasing index of selection through calculating the differences (absolute value) between Manly’s selection values and 1. This method resulted in an index of absolute selection strength regarding hunting locations. In this context, low indices indicated no or weak selection and high values indicated strong selection (positive or negative). Absolute selection strength values, therefore, did not equal Manly’s selection values. Within all of our 20 regions, we computed three selection strength indices corresponding with the land use categories (forest, forest-edge habitat, and agricultural land). Two-way ANOVAs were then performed separately for each land use category using the respective selection strength index as a dependent variable and the classification of the regions based on game impact and forest cover as independent variables. In doing so, we were able to test whether the selection of hunting locations was significantly different in respect to forest cover (group A, group B) and game impact (tolerable, intolerable). Additionally, we included an interaction term in every ANOVA. Hereby, we accounted for the possibility that effects of hunting location

distribution on game impact might also be influenced by forest cover. Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) tests were used for post hoc analyses. The selection strength index for the land use category "forest-edge habitat" was reciprocally transformed to meet the assumptions of normality and homogeneity.

3. Results

The comparison of available and used land types revealed distinct patterns of hunting location preferences by hunters. Manly's selection values displayed highly significant overall selection of hunting locations regarding both groups of forest cover and game impact ($p < 0.001$, Table 1). The tested selection of hunting locations for each region was always highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Regardless of forest cover or game impact, forest-edge habitats were always positively selected and agricultural lands always negatively selected (Figures 3 and 4). Concerning regions covered with <20% forest, differences in selection of forests between regions with tolerable and intolerable game impact were found. Within regions showing an intolerable game impact, hunters negatively selected forests (Figure 3a). In contrast, hunters used forests corresponding to their availability within regions having a tolerable game impact (Figure 3b). In regions covered with 30–50% by forest, hunters always negatively selected forests for hunting. In latter regions, no differences between regions of tolerable and intolerable game impact could be found regarding the selection of hunting locations (Figure 4a,b).

Table 1. Log-likelihood test statistic (Khi2L), degrees of freedom (df) and p -values based on Manly's selection values. Selection of land use categories by hunters for harvesting roe deer in 20 regions of the Austrian province Upper Austria was analysed based on forest cover (<20%, 30–50%) and game impact on forest vegetation through browsing (tolerable, intolerable). Land use categories: forest, forest-edge habitat, and agricultural land (including all types of open land).

	Group A: < 20%			Group B: 30–50%		
	Khi2L	df	p-Value	Khi2L	df	p-Value
Tolerable	284.64	12	<0.001	336.64	8	<0.001
Intolerable	488.11	10	<0.001	178.2	8	<0.001

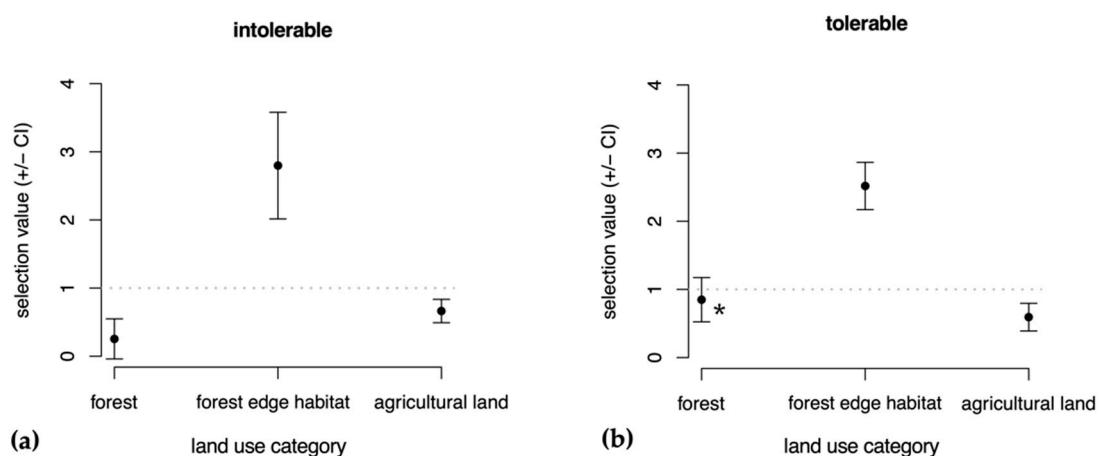


Figure 3. Selection of land use categories by hunters for harvesting roe deer in regions of the Austrian province of Upper Austria. Regions were covered with <20% forest and classified based on game impact (intolerable, tolerable). Points represent mean Manly's selection values. Values larger than 1 represent positive selection, whereas values smaller than 1 represent negative selection. Confidence intervals (99% CI) including 1 (*) indicate non-significant effects, i.e., utilisation of areas conforms with their availability. Number of regions: (a) $n = 6$, (b) $n = 6$.

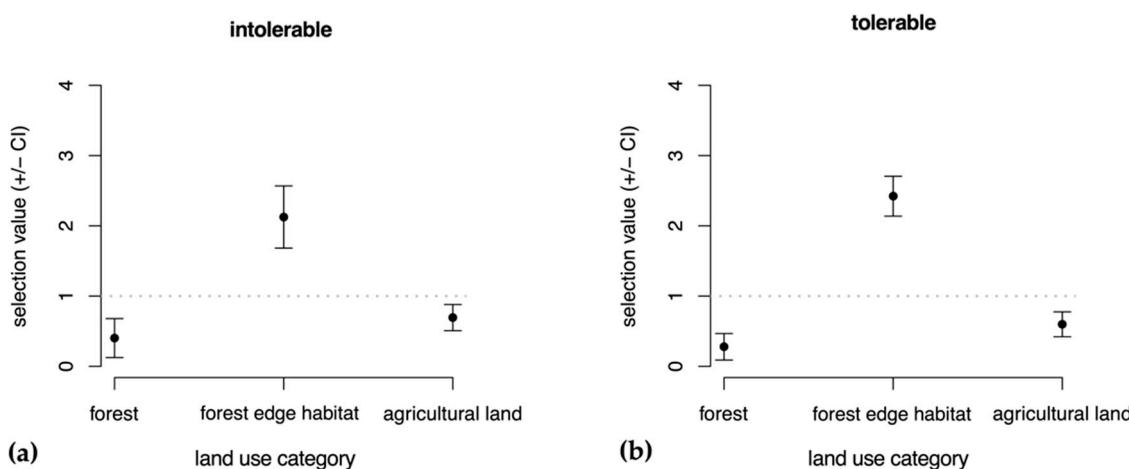


Figure 4. Selection of land use categories by hunters for harvesting roe deer in regions of the Austrian province of Upper Austria. Regions were covered with 30–50% forest and classified based on game impact (intolerable, tolerable). Points represent mean Manly's selection values. Values larger than 1 represent positive selection, whereas values smaller than 1 represent negative selection. Confidence intervals (99% CI) including 1 indicate non-significant effects, i.e., utilisation of areas conforms with their availability. Number of regions: (a) $n = 4$, (b) $n = 4$.

Concerning absolute selection strength, two-way ANOVAs revealed significant differences between groups of forest cover and game impact for the land use category “forest” (Table 2). The interaction term within this land use category was also significant. Concerning the land use category “forest-edge habitat”, significant differences were found between groups of forest cover. Apart from this, no further significant differences were found. Post hoc testing (Figure 5) confirmed that the selection of forests by hunters was significantly different between regions of tolerable and intolerable game impact, but only in regions with <20% forest cover (group A, $p < 0.05$, diff = −0.44). There was no difference in selection strength between tolerable and intolerable game impact in regions with 30–50% forest cover (group B, $p = 0.89$).

Table 2. Two-way ANOVAs describing differences in selection strength regarding hunting location preferences by hunters for harvesting roe deer. Differences were analysed between groups of forest cover (group A: < 20%, group B: 30–50%), game impact (tolerable, intolerable), and interaction of both. ANOVAs were calculated for each land use category (forest, forest-edge habitat, and agricultural land) separately. Sum Sq: Sum of squares, df: degrees of freedom.

	Sum Sq	df	F-Value	p-Value
Forest				
Group of forest cover	0.21078	1	4.8756	<0.05
Game impact	0.24675	1	5.7075	<0.05
Group of forest cover: game impact	0.35661	1	8.2489	<0.05
Forest-edge habitat				
Group of forest cover	0.37299	1	6.1585	<0.05
Game impact	0.05059	1	0.8353	0.37431
Group of forest cover: game impact	0.10311	1	1.7024	0.21043
Agricultural land				
Group of forest cover	0.00253	1	0.1056	0.7494
Game impact	0.01072	1	0.4466	0.5135
Group of forest cover: game impact	0.00712	1	0.2968	0.5934

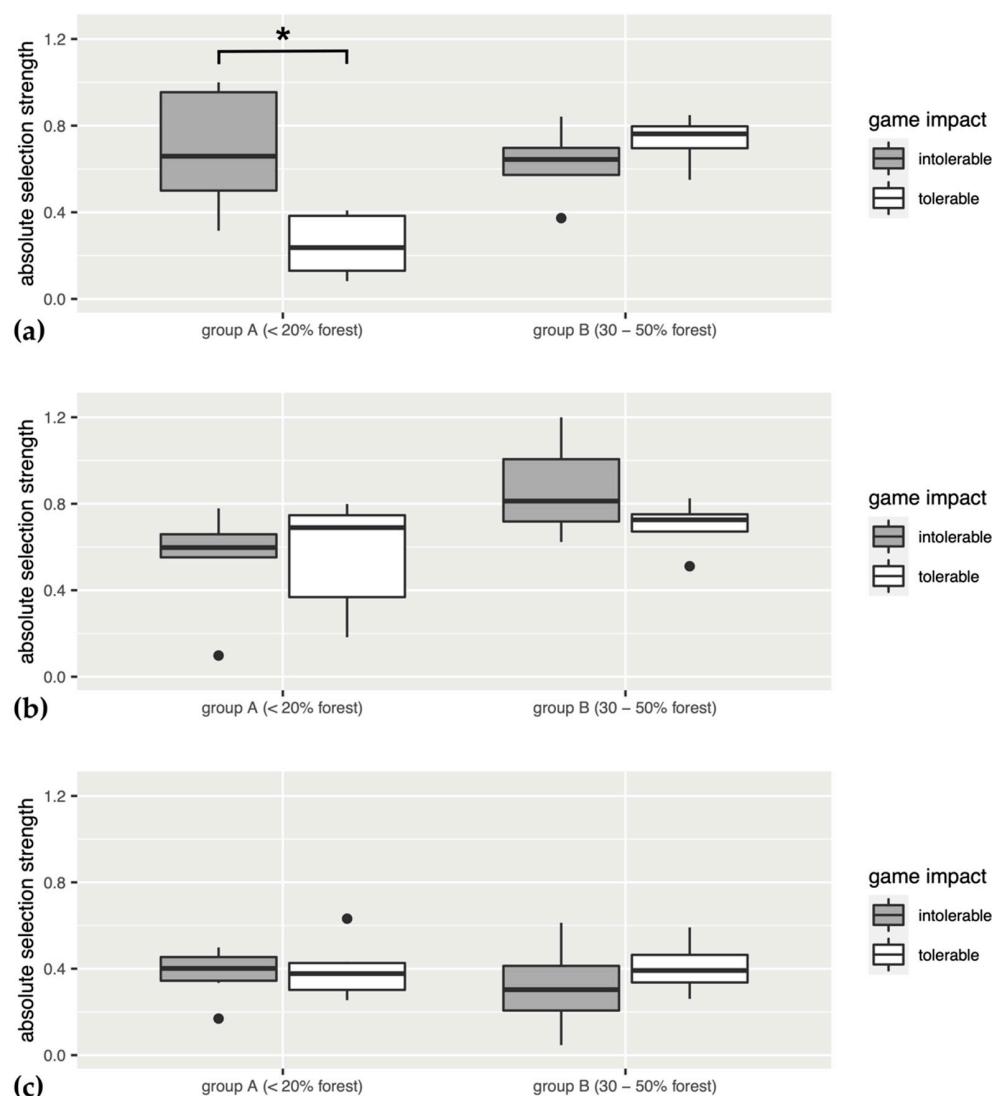


Figure 5. Differences in absolute selection strength regarding hunting location preferences by hunters for harvesting roe deer in three different land use categories—((a) forest, (b) forest-edge habitat, and (c) agricultural land)—separated by groups of forest cover (group A, group B). Low absolute selection strength values indicate no or weak selection, and high values indicate strong selection (positive or negative). Grey coloured boxplots illustrate regions with intolerable game impact ($n = 10$). White coloured boxplots represent regions with tolerable game impact ($n = 10$). Asterisk (*) indicates a significant difference between regions of tolerable and intolerable game impact based on Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) tests.

4. Discussion

The overall objective of this study was to investigate whether the selection of hunting locations by hunters can be a valuable component in roe deer management to reduce browsing impact on forest vegetation. Our findings support hypothesis (i), which stated that hunting locations concerning roe deer were not randomly distributed across the landscape but driven by specific selection preferences of hunters. By associating hunting location distribution with game impact, we found significantly reduced impact on forest vegetation when hunters used forests in proportion to their availability rather than avoiding them. This effect is consistent with hypothesis (ii). This correlation, however, was only found for regions with <20% forest cover. Regarding study regions with 30–50% forest cover, no difference in selection of hunting locations was detected between regions of tolerable and intolerable game impact. Our results highlight that targeted selection of

hunting locations might be an important component in preventing intolerable browsing impact, at least in regions with low forest cover.

The significant results we found in regions covered with <20% forest might be explained according to the “landscape of fear” (LOF) concept [20]. Based on this concept, landscapes are built up of valleys and peaks illustrating the level of fear a prey animal experiences. Thus, this model of a three-dimensional landscape helps to understand how animals will alter and adjust their behavioural patterns and habitat use to reduce the probability of being killed [5,20]. Hunting can induce a LOF [42] and, therefore, influences the spatial distribution of game species [1] such as roe deer. Based on our results, hunters might have increased anthropogenic predation risk within forests using forests up to their availability. Based on the LOF concept, roe deer probably responded to that risk using avoidance behaviour. In this context, the use of forests by roe deer decreased, and game impact on forest vegetation consequently declined.

The emergence and extent of forest damage by ungulates, however, depends on numerous factors and their ecological context. Thus, there are further explanations that might contribute to the significant correlations we found. Hunting, for instance, not only has the potential to alter the spatial distribution of roe deer [13], but also influences populations directly through reducing their numbers through harvesting [19]. If hunting quotas exceed yearly population growth, this management instrument can reduce roe deer densities, relieving some of its impact on forest vegetation [9]. Consequently, tolerable game impact in certain areas might also be explained based on reduced population sizes of roe deer due to increased harvest. Further important factors influencing the browsing impact on forest vegetation are habitat suitability (e.g., shelter, forage supply) and predisposition of forests to game impact. Both factors interact with each other and influence the probability of damage occurring to forest vegetation [43]. In this context, many studies [8,44–51] have mentioned that good forage supply (i.e., quality, quantity, and distribution of natural forage resources, such as grasses or non-timber tree species) lessens the predisposition of forested areas to deer impact. This phenomenon is explained via the balance between food-independent settling stimuli (e.g., hiding cover for deer) and food supply [9]. More productive forests with unsuitable settling stimuli tend to be less vulnerable to browsing impact as they supply more feeding resources in relation to the abundant number of deer [52]. In short, browsing impact of wild ungulates on forest vegetation is a very complex issue, with many factors interacting with each other. A literature analysis by Gerhardt et al. [9] revealed, in total, 80 distinct factors determining game impact of deer on European forests, and mentioned the spatial distribution of hunting as one of them.

Many studies have verified that hunting activities change habitat use by wild ungulates (e.g., [12–14]). Some studies (e.g., [25]) further analysed the spatial connection between hunting and browsing impact of deer on forest vegetation. Detailed knowledge regarding this connection is, however, still limited. Thus, we focused on correlations between spatial distribution of hunting and browsing impact of roe deer in a Central European context. Based on our findings, we were able to demonstrate that hunting locations concerning roe deer were not randomly distributed across the landscape but driven by selection preferences of hunters. In this context, the positive selection of forest-edge habitats by hunters in all study regions corresponded to the preferred use of forest edges by roe deer [30]. The overall negative selection of agricultural land by hunters is likely related to low hunting suitability during summer, when crops provide optimal shelter for roe deer [53] but block visibility for humans (see [23] for a general approach regarding hunting suitability of deer).

We further highlight potential connections between spatial distribution of hunting and browsing intensity in regions with <20% forest cover. In this context, hunters used forests up to their availability within regions of tolerable game impact compared to regions with intolerable impact, where hunters avoided forests. The selection of forests by hunters (selection strength) differed significantly between those low-forested regions of tolerable and intolerable browsing intensity. Although many of the factors mentioned in the literature analysis by Gerhardt et al. [9] are comparable between our study regions (e.g., the constitution

of roe deer habitats, topography, hunting regime, landscape characteristics, etc.), we cannot exclude the possibility that other factors besides the spatial distribution of hunting influenced browsing intensity. These other factors might also explain why game impact was tolerable in certain study regions covered with 30–50% forest, although hunters did not use forests up to their availability. While considering further factors (e.g., hunter effort as anthropogenic variable of investment, spatio-temporal behaviour of roe deer) would certainly improve knowledge, we excluded such variables as the underlying database was not available or based on oral communication without validation. Furthermore, we did not include hunting activities on other game species in our analyses. While this could be an important additional factor, our study regions are characterised by roe deer being the most abundant ungulate and most important game species, hence hunting activities on other species were neglectable.

Despite uncertainty about other factors shaping browsing intensity, our results highlight the potential connection of spatial distribution of hunting and game impact, at least in mosaic-like landscapes of Central Europe with low forest cover. Regarding management recommendations, such potential effects can be seen as an opportunity. By selectively altering the distribution of hunting locations and, therefore, anthropogenic predation risk, browsing impact on forest vegetation might be influenced. In particular, hunters can potentially reduce game impact on forest vegetation within low-forested regions by increasing hunting pressure within forests. This approach can be used to counteract conflicts (game impact) where they arise. Our results showed hunters' selection of forests up to their availability and we suggested that a positive selection of forests might further reduce browsing impact on forest vegetation. Since other ungulates such as red deer or mouflon also respond to anthropogenic predation risk [1,22,23], the transfer of this hunting strategy to the management of other species is conceivable. A careful selection of hunting locations might, therefore, serve as a cornerstone in the sustainable management of roe deer and other ungulates within human-dominated landscapes in Central Europe.

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Appendix A. Guideline Values Regarding Game Impact on Longitudinal Transects in Upper Austria

Regarding Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), a browsing intensity up to 10% of branches/trees on a single transect is classified as tolerable. A higher intensity is categorised as intolerable. Regarding deciduous trees and silver fir (*Abies alba*), the assessment is carried out differently depending on stock density. On transects with a high stock density (more than 10,000 young trees/ha), a browsing intensity up to 50% of branches/trees is classified as tolerable. On transects with a low stock density (less than 10,000 young trees/ha), a browsing intensity

up to 20% is categorised as tolerable. To produce an overall evaluation per hunting ground, assessments of individual exclosure/control pairs and transects are combined. If the majority of the surveys within one hunting ground indicate a tolerable game impact, the overall evaluation is also tolerable as long as browsing intensity never reached certain values (percentages of browsed branches/trees) on any surveyed transect (Norway spruce: 20%; deciduous trees and silver fir (high stock density): 80%; deciduous trees and silver fir (low stock density): 50%).

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3. Publikation II

Hunting suitability model: a new tool for managing wild ungulates

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Research

Hunting suitability model: a new tool for managing wild ungulates

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Rising numbers of wild ungulates in human-dominated landscapes of Europe can induce negative effects like damages to forests. Therefore, effective wildlife management, including harvesting through hunting is becoming increasingly important. However, current hunting practices often fail to diminish those negative effects, as many ungulate species retreat to areas unsuitable for hunting. This predator–avoidance behaviour makes it difficult to fulfill the demand of reducing population numbers. Thus, there is an urgent need for innovative and effective wildlife management tools to counteract this problem. Here we provide for the first time a hunting suitability model for wild ungulate management in mountainous landscapes to visualise hunting suitability objectively and realistically. Using red deer as a model species, we modelled hunting suitability with high spatial resolution (10 × 10 m), based on remote sensing information, field surveys and expert knowledge of professional hunters. We analysed spatio–temporal habitat selection by radio-collared deer in relation to locations of varying hunting suitability. The suitability of various locations regarding hunting influenced the spatio–temporal habitat selection by this species, consistent with our hypothesis. Red deer avoided areas suitable for hunting during daylight hours in the hunting season, but not during the night. This species seems to perceive a landscape of heterogeneous anthropogenic predation risk, shaped by locations of various hunting suitability, as we modelled it. This confirms the empirical realism of the model. Concerning wild ungulate management, our hunting suitability model provides high-resolution predictions of where species like red deer will retreat when perceived anthropogenic predation risk increases. The model also yields useful insights regarding the hunting suitability of particular locations, which is valuable information especially for non-locals. Furthermore, the model can serve as planning tool to inform decisions about where particular hunting strategies can be performed most efficiently to manage wild ungulates and therefore minimize human–wildlife conflicts.

Keywords: accessibility, GPS telemetry, landscape of fear (LOF), red deer, spatio-temporal habitat use, transportability, ungulate management, visibility



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1

Introduction

In many regions worldwide, effective wildlife management in human-dominated landscapes is important due to increasing numbers of wild ungulates (Apollonio et al. 2010, Putman et al. 2011, Cronsigt et al. 2013). This is especially true in mountain ranges like the European Alps, where damages to forests caused by wild ungulates not only lead to economic losses but also threaten the integrity and functionality of other forest functions (Gerhardt et al. 2013), like the protection against landslides and avalanches. The ungulate species of highest concern in this regard across many parts of Europe is the red deer *Cervus elaphus* (Gerhardt et al. 2013, Copes et al. 2017). To diminish damages like browsing or bark stripping and thus mitigate human–wildlife conflicts while ensuring viable deer populations (Putman et al. 2011), sustainable management is required. Concerning this matter, hunting can play an important role by altering the spatial distribution of red deer in the landscape and reducing their numbers through harvesting (Heurich et al. 2015) to reach a population size with favourable sex and age structure. Current hunting practices often fail in this context, however, as many ungulate species like red deer, roe deer *Capreolus capreolus* (Padié et al. 2015) or white-tailed deer *Odocoileus virginianus* (Little et al. 2016) respond to the presence of humans through an avoidance behaviour to reduce the probability of being harvested (Cronsigt et al. 2013). To counteract this phenomenon, tools to inform sustainable management of these species are urgently needed.

When choosing a habitat animals must consider several factors, such as forage quality and availability, shelter and potential threats (Godvik et al. 2009). Likewise, habitat selection by red deer is strongly determined by the presence of food and cover provided by vegetation or topography (Mysterud and Østbye 1999, Heurich et al. 2015). To optimise a forage versus safety tradeoff, this species employs tactics to modulate habitat selection (Zweifel-Schielly et al. 2009, Fattebert et al. 2019). For instance, it is common for red deer to use open forage habitats during darkness and covered habitats during daylight (Godvik et al. 2009) to counter certain effects like temperature, precipitation, wind and potential lethal risks.

To describe the spatial variation in risk, perception and response of prey, Laundré et al. (2010) developed the ‘landscape of fear’ (LOF) concept. Based on this concept, landscapes consist of peaks and valleys reflecting the level of fear of predation that a prey animal experiences. Predator–prey interactions include direct predation (lethal or consumptive effects) and modifications to prey behaviour in response to the anticipation or risk of possible attacks (Bonnot et al. 2013, Say-Sallaz et al. 2019). The mere presence of predators can be perceived as a threat, eliciting various anti-predation responses (Prokopenko et al. 2017, Say-Sallaz et al. 2019). This is referred to as non-lethal, risk or non-consumptive effects of predators on prey populations (Padié et al. 2015, Gaynor et al. 2019, Say-Sallaz et al. 2019).

Humans have replaced large carnivores as apex predators in numerous landscapes and now represent the

most important source of mortality for wild ungulates (Little et al. 2014, Apollonio et al. 2017). Thus, hunting can create non-consumptive effects and alter spatio–temporal distribution of game (Cronsigt et al. 2013). Consequently, wild ungulates may retreat to areas unsuitable for hunting, including areas with limited visibility or access for humans (Apollonio et al. 2010, Gehr et al. 2018). This phenomenon is common in mountainous regions, where areas of low risk are unsuitable for hunting due to their remoteness, steepness or roughness (Apollonio et al. 2010). In summary, Hunting can induce a LOF (Gaynor et al. 2019), which makes it difficult to fulfil the demand of reducing certain ungulate species.

To better understand animals’ spatio–temporal behaviour, habitat suitability models (HSMs) are used to predict species occurrence through the modelling of environmental variables (Ottaviani et al. 2004). HSMs are usually composed of cells with values range from zero (low suitability) to one (high suitability), indicating how close the local environment is to the species’ optimal habitat (Hirzel et al. 2006). Similar to HSMs, a visualisation of hunting suitability from a human perspective could be essential to understand wild ungulate behavioural responses to hunters and changes in levels of perceived anthropogenic predation risk.

Several studies (Lebel et al. 2012, Lone et al. 2014, Plante et al. 2016) have addressed aspects surrounding the hunting suitability of ungulates. However, to our best knowledge no model exists, that generates spatially explicit predictions and visualisations of hunting suitability in mountainous landscapes. Therefore, we develop for the first time a high-resolution hunting suitability model, focusing on hide hunting and stalking, that enables a precise delimitation of locations according to variability in hunting suitability. This model can serve as new management tool to reduce negative effects of increasing numbers of wild ungulates by providing means to understand how species perceive anthropogenic predation risk. Based on this knowledge, hunting strategies can be adapted to increase harvest efficiency by altering the spatial distribution and behaviour of these species.

To generate such a model, we use red deer as a model species and combine information from remote sensing, field surveys and expert knowledge of professional hunters. To quantify habitat selection by this species we employ GPS telemetry. In this context, spatio–temporal habitat use by red deer is analysed in relation to assumed levels of anthropogenic predation risk based on the hunting suitability model.

Regarding the LOF concept, we hypothesise that red deer adapt its habitat use to minimize predation risk. We then predict that within the hunting season and during daylight hours, when humans are frequently active outdoors, red deer avoid areas suitable for hunting. During the night, we expect no avoidance of these areas, due to the behavioural plasticity of this species. Thus, we anticipate that red deer is able to discriminate areas of different hunting suitability and adapt its spatio–temporal behaviour to reduce the risk of being harvested.

Material and methods

Study site

The study site of 3367 ha was part of a larger hunting ground (10 203 ha) located in the Austrian province Salzburg (Fig. 1). The area belongs to the Central Alps and altitude ranges between 868 and 2392 m a.s.l. It consisted of 2% anthropogenic infrastructure, 36% woodland, 58% meadows and pastures, 3% rocks and 1% waterbodies (calculated via remote sensing).

Concerning game management, the area can be considered as one unit, in which red deer regulation via hunting is mainly performed by professional hunters. On average 60 red deer are hunted annually, based on harvest quota given by local authorities (for details on hunting management in Austria see Trouwborst and Hackländer 2018). Based on hunting protocols, annual harvest quotas are achieved by hide hunting (80%), stalking (10%) and drive hunting (10%). The hunting season starts on 1 May and lasts until 31 December, depending on sex and age. Meadows, coniferous forests, dominated by Norway spruce *Picea abies* as well as mixed forests, consisting of European larch *Larix decidua*, European beech *Fagus sylvatica*, maple species *Acer* sp., silver fir *Abies alba*, Norway spruce and shrubs characterise the study site. Currently, woodlands cover 1208 ha, consisting of 815 ha protective forest and 393 ha managed forest for timber production. Open areas in the valley and between 1700 and 2300 m a.s.l. are used for livestock farming (mainly cattle and sheep).

Overview of the hunting suitability model

To determine hunting suitability regarding red deer in mountainous landscapes we defined three indices (Fig. 2): 1) *accessibility* of an area from a hunters' perspective, 2) *visibility* of red deer and 3) *transportability* of shot red deer. We selected these indices using data from literature (Lebel et al. 2012, Lone et al. 2015, Plante et al. 2016) and knowledge of professional hunters.

Terrain slope and vegetation density constitute the *accessibility* of an area. *Visibility* is determined by the density of vegetation and terrain roughness (Riley et al. 1999). Suitability concerning the transport of harvested game to the nearest road (*transportability*) is affected by slope and vegetation density as well. Hence, slope and vegetation density were considered multiple times because we supposed diverse influences on hunting suitability indices. For financial and topographic reasons, transport within the study site is usually carried out by hunters' own physical strength. Thus, *transportability* refers to the transport of shot deer by hunters themselves. Furthermore, we included hiking times between hunting sites and nearest roads or hunting huts in our calculations. We did not incorporate snow cover in late autumn–winter in the model, as this variable can vary considerably depending on the year and region (e.g. due to spatio–temporal variation in the amount of snow or timing of snowfall). However, and to ensure that the model can be adapted and transferred to other study sites we developed it in a way that additional variables can be included, if necessary.

We built and visualised the model using ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ (ESRI, Redlands, CA, USA), following a structure similar to HSMs (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1981). We digitally transformed our study site into a mesh of 10 m and measured terrain slope, vegetation density, terrain roughness and hiking times via remote sensing and field surveys. Based on the knowledge of professional hunters we transformed characteristics of these variables into suitability values regarding the three indices. We calculated *accessibility*, *visibility* and *transportability* for each square and finally combined these indices to predict overall hunting suitability (Fig. 2).

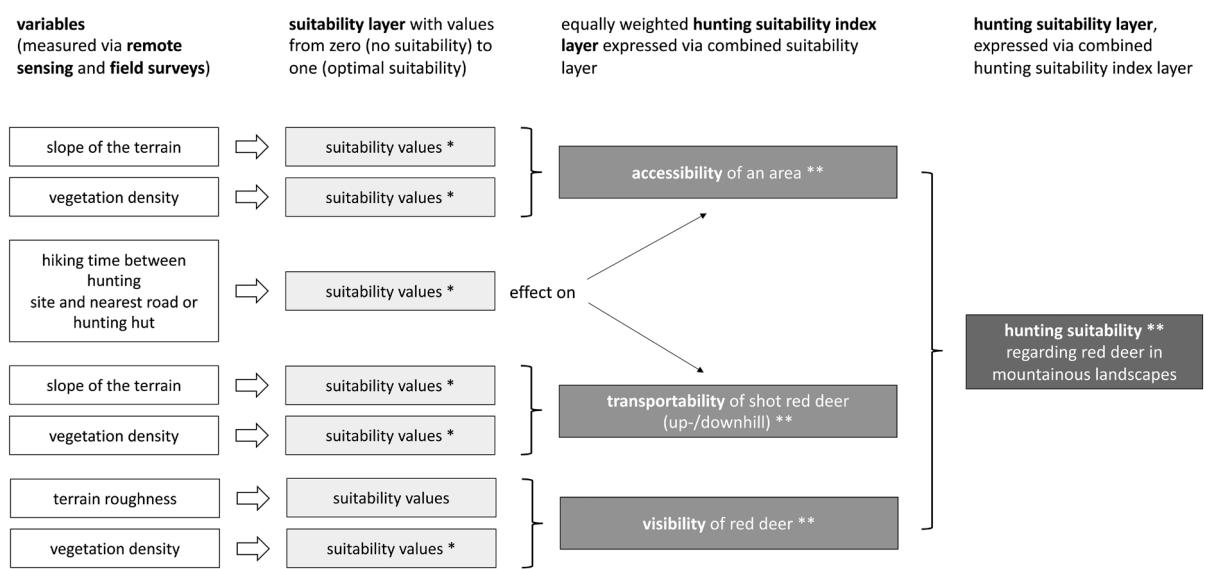
We implemented the model for the whole hunting season, divided into two periods (May–October and November–December).

Remote sensing

We determined slope, roughness and vegetation types in the study site with a resolution of 1 m by airborne laser-scanning data and digital orthophotos, provided by the geographical



Figure 1. Study site (left: black area, right: black line) of 3367 ha located in the Central Alps in the Austrian province Salzburg (left: grey area). Grey lines in the right picture symbolise 25 m contour lines.



* with exception of terrain roughness, varying variable values were judged by professional hunters regarding their corresponding suitability with respect to accessibility, transportability and visibility

** accessibility, transportability, visibility and overall hunting suitability refer to a hunters' perspective

Figure 2. Conceptual diagram of the hunting suitability model.

information system of the province Salzburg. We further digitised roads, trails, hunting huts and meadows.

Based on a digital terrain model (DTM) we calculated slope using the tool Slope in the Surface toolset within the ArcGIS Spatial Analyst toolbox. The computation of roughness was performed according to Riley et al. (1999) to display terrain ruggedness indices (TRIs). TRIs were transformed into five categories with equal intervals (Supporting information).

To classify vegetation within the study site into several types (Table 1) we used Orthophotos with a near infrared channel to discriminate deciduous, coniferous and mixed forests. Differences in altitude between the DTM and a digital surface model (DSM) were used to differentiate vegetation

heights. Vegetation densities were estimated by the DSM. If there were uncertainties during the classification process (e.g. vegetation type assignments were not possible), particular locations were visited on foot and categorised directly in the field. In total 31 locations were inspected and seven of these were reclassified.

Field surveys to determine vegetation density

For all vegetation types listed in Table 1, we determined vegetation density standardised in the field. For each type, up to seven representative plots within the study site were selected. In total 95 plots were visited on foot. To link vegetation types with corresponding densities, we used a 100 × 50 cm panel

Table 1. Characterisation of vegetation types within the study site. Pole and tree forests were additionally subdivided into deciduous, mixed and coniferous forests.

Vegetation type	Description
No vegetation	0% ground cover, without any trees
Low vegetation	Ground cover less than 30%, without any trees
Meadow	More than 30% ground cover, without any trees, farmed
Unused grassland	More than 30% ground cover, without any trees
Young stands	Young trees up to heights of 70 cm
Between young stands and thicket	Young trees with heights from 70 to 130 cm on up to half of the area
Thicket	Very dense stand of young trees with heights from 130 cm to 5 m covering more than half of the area
Pole forest 1 – low density	Tree heights from 5 to 10 m and ground vegetation on more than 50% of the area
Pole forest 1 – high density	Tree heights from 5 to 10 m and ground vegetation on less than 50% of the area
Pole forest 2 – low density	Tree heights from 10 to 20 m and ground vegetation on more than 50% of the area
Pole forest 2 – high density	Tree heights from 10 to 20 m and ground vegetation on less than 50% of the area
Tree forest – low density	Trees higher than 20 m and ground vegetation on more than 50% of the area
Tree forest – high density	Trees higher than 20 m and ground vegetation on less than 50% of the area

Vegetation types were classified according to Reimoser et al. (2006).

(comparable in height and length to the body of a female red deer), equally divided into 32 squares (Supporting information). At each plot we took photographs of the panel from distances of 10, 20 and 30 m, respectively. The direction towards the panel was chosen randomly. We measured distances using a Haglöf Vertex Ultrasonic Rangefinder.

Based on these photographs, we calculated the average number of visible squares per vegetation type for all three distances. According to Griffith and Youtie (1988), one square counted as visible, if less than 50% of it was covered by vegetation. Next, we determined the distance up to which at least 50% of the panel was visible and used this metric as reference for vegetation density. Far distances referred to low densities and therefore high visibilities and conversely. We set areas where a visibility of 50% was not reached at any distance to zero and summarised them into the category 'maximal density' (visibility completely blocked). Areas with 50% visibility at distances up to 300 m, as well as roads and trails were categorised as 'minimal density'. Based on knowledge of professional hunters, 300 m referred to the average maximum shooting distance.

Furthermore, we used these photographs to predict altered vegetation densities at the end of the year, by virtually excluding leaves and ground vegetation like raspberry *Rubus idaeus*, nettle *Urtica dioica* and ferns. These species can be found mostly in montane regions (Lauber et al. 2012), at altitudes between 868 and 1200 m a.s.l. within our study site. Therefore, we considered areas higher than montane regions and meadows used for livestock farming free from these species.

Hunter judgements

To link varying terrain slopes and vegetation densities with suitability values regarding *accessibility*, *visibility* and *transportability*, we again selected representative plots within the study site via remote sensing. At the centre of each plot, we took a 360° photograph using a Ricoh Theta S camera. In total 14 photographs that represented the range of slope (3–140%, divided into intervals of approximately 10%) and 11 that represented vegetation densities from minimum to maximum (based on vegetation types listed in Table 1) were taken (Supporting information). We then presented these 25 photographs to 20 selectively chosen male professional hunters. The hunter's age ranged from 23 to 62 years with a mean age of 42 years. We selected them based on their experience (several years at least) regarding the management of red deer in mountainous landscapes. Eight of them hunted in the study site before. We presented all 360° photographs to each hunter in a random order via an Ipad mini 4 using the Ricoh Theta S App. This provided them the possibility to rotate, pan and zoom within each photograph. With this approach we simulated the experience of standing on the ground where the photograph was taken.

Based on the 360° photographs, the hunters separately evaluated *accessibility* and *transportability* (up- and downhill),

by linking varying slopes and vegetation densities with suitability values. Regarding these values a continuous scale with two decimal points from zero (no suitability) to one (optimal suitability) was used. *Visibility* based on vegetation densities was evaluated in the same way. Apart from the photographs, hunters received no additional information regarding the plots.

To incorporate the influence of distance between hunting site and nearest road or hunting hut on hunting suitability, we asked questions about hunters' preferred hiking time (optimal condition), average hiking time based on their experience (normal condition), and maximum hiking time they would invest (worst condition) to reach a hunting spot. We advised the participating hunters to consider that they theoretically must transport harvested game back to the nearest road. Thus, hiking time is not only shaped by the path chosen for approaching the hunting spot, but also by the way back, including the transport of red deer.

Model building

Initially, we generated a 10 × 10 m grid cell layer covering the whole study site. We deleted cells intersecting waterbodies or buildings. We used remote sensing to determine slope and vegetation density (based on vegetation types listed in Table 1) for each cell. Based on hunter judgements we created scatter plots with polynomial regression lines via Microsoft Excel, ver. 15.36 illustrating how *accessibility*, *visibility* and *transportability* were shaped by slope and vegetation density (Supporting information). Using formulas of these polynomial regression lines, we converted slope and vegetation density values within each grid cell into suitability values from zero (no suitability) to one (optimal suitability) regarding each hunting suitability index. As a result, five out of seven suitability layers were generated, accounting for the effects of slope on *accessibility* and *transportability* and vegetation density on *accessibility*, *transportability* and *visibility* (Fig. 2).

Further, we estimated the average time needed for crossing each grid cell by foot with a formula of Alpine Associations in Austria (VAVÖ, Vienna, Austria) to calculate hiking times in mountainous landscapes:

$$T = \text{greater time value}(t_1 \text{ or } t_2) + \frac{1}{2} \times \text{smaller time value}(t_1 \text{ or } t_2)$$

T ... total hiking time to cross a given grid cell

t_1 ... hiking time based on width of grid cell (width [m] × 0.015)

t_2 ... hiking time based on difference in altitude per grid cell (calculated via the DTM) (uphill: difference [m] × 0.2; downhill: difference [m] × 0.12). We designated each grid cell as 'up'- or 'downhill' with respect to the nearest road or hunting hut.

Based on these calculations, we determined hiking times between each cell and the nearest road or hunting hut. Next, we determine via remote sensing which grid cells can be reached under optimal, normal and worst conditions (see hunter judgements). We transformed the outcome into a sixth suitability layer with values from zero to 0.75 (zero = not reachable, 0.25 = reachable under worst conditions, 0.5 = reachable under normal conditions, 0.75 = reachable under optimal conditions). This layer accounted for the effect of hiking time on *accessibility* and *transportability*.

As indicated in Fig. 2, corresponding suitability layers (slope, vegetation density and hiking time) were combined by summation to model *accessibility* and *transportability*. Recognising that costs like physical effort increase with distance walking we included cost- and path-distance computations in our calculations by using the tools Cost Distance and Path Distance in the Distance toolset within the ArcGIS Spatial Analyst toolbox. For these calculations, roads and hunting huts were used as starting points. Regarding the transport of shot deer, roads serve as end points. We did not consider hunting huts as suitable end points, since the lack of refrigeration preventing meeting hygiene standards for storing game (Paulsen et al. 2011).

To model *visibility*, we connected the corresponding vegetation density suitability layer with calculated ruggedness indices (seventh suitability layer). Particular we used the tool Viewshed in the Surface toolset within the ArcGIS Spatial Analyst toolbox to calculate the influence of each TRI category on visibility.

To visualize hunting suitability for the part of the hunting season with growing vegetation (May–October), we merged the modelled hunting suitability index layers (*accessibility*, *transportability* and *visibility*) by summation. Based on input from the professional hunters, we assumed equal weights of importance among these layers. To predict hunting suitability outside of the vegetation period from November to December, we used calculated vegetation densities at the end of the year within the described calculations. In the study site, red deer regulation usually takes place at the end of the year. We therefore used the second period (November–December) as basis for determining hunting suitability classes. Based on quantiles of the final hunting suitability layer values (high values = high suitability, low values = low suitability), we generated five suitability classes (very suitable, suitable, moderate, poor, not suitable).

To account for how much variation in hunting suitability is due to *accessibility*, *visibility* and *transportability* we performed commonality analyses (CA) similar to Ray-Mukherjee et al. (2014). We used CA to investigate unique and common effects of these three indices on hunting suitability during May to October and November to December by decomposing R^2 from multiple regressions. Unique effects display the amount of variance independently shaped by *accessibility*, *visibility* or *transportability*. Common effects reveal how much variance is common to a set of these indices. The total variance explained is calculated by a summation of unique and common effects.

Red deer telemetry

To analyse spatio-temporal behaviour of red deer in relation to assumed levels of anthropogenic predation risk as indicated by the hunting suitability model, we equipped 20 adult deer (10 females, 10 males) with GPS collars (GPS PLUS collar, Vectronic Aerospace, Berlin, Germany) from 2015 to 2018 (Supporting information). We either captured deer in wooden box-traps (length 3.3 m, width 1.3 m, height 2 m) or freely darted them at feeding sites. We anaesthetized the captured or free-ranging animals by remote injection using a filled dart (3 ml air pressurised dart DAN-INJECT Smith) containing a combination of 2.5 mg kg⁻¹ ketamine and 3 mg kg⁻¹ xylazine per estimated body mass. The dart was projected into the muscles of the pelvic girdle via a carbon dioxide powered rifle (Dan-Inject Smith; Model JM) or carbon dioxide powered pistol (PL4 anaesthesia pistol, Telinject GmbH, Dudenhofen/Pfalz, Germany). To reverse the xylazine-component of the anaesthesia combination the animals were antagonised by intramuscular injection of atipamezole. All animals were observed until recovery.

To retrieve collars, deer were harvested (8 individuals), or an integrated drop-off unit was used (12 individuals). The tracking period of individual deer ranged between 6 and 29 months. Position recordings were taken in general every 2 h and 15 min, saved on the collar and transmitted to a ground station once a day per SMS.

Quantifying landscape of fear effects

For testing our hypothesis, we analysed spatio-temporal behaviour of red deer within the hunting season using R ver. 3.6.1 (<www.r-project.org>) and RStudio ver. 1.2.5019 (<www.r-project.org>). See the Supporting information regarding all packages used.

In this assessment, we only included validated GPS points (five or more satellites were used to calculate positions) with a dilution of precision value smaller than 10. We calculated home ranges for each individual using enhanced local convex hulls (T-LoCoHs, Lyons et al. 2013). With this approach we balanced the temporal autocorrelation of GPS data by incorporating the time stamp of each location. Previous to analyses, we checked our data for possible gaps (missing positions) and bursts of locations that are closely spaced in time due to changes in sampling frequency (recording interval) during data collection. By plotting the cumulative percentage across sampling frequencies, we detected bursts of points in our data. We thinned out those bursts to avoid bias by using the package tlocoh ver. 1.40.07 (Lyons et al. 2019). Through this process and regarding a sampling frequency of 2 h and 15 min, we had a good temporal consistency in our data and an average fix rate success of 93%. Based on Godvik et al. (2009) we considered this rate as sufficient for our analyses. Finally, approximately 4500 GPS positions per individual were used for home range and selection indices calculations.

By using the hunting suitability model, each home range was divided into areas of different suitability classes for July to October and November to December, respectively. These areas represented the available habitat for each collared deer during these periods, measured in m². We did not include the months January to June in the analyses, as hunting of red deer in the study site usually starts with July.

To each GPS point collected during either period, we assigned the corresponding hunting suitability class. Based on Manly et al. (2002) we linked available and used habitats, where the latter was expressed as the number of GPS locations within each class. To test habitat selection by red deer, we calculated Manly selectivity measures (selection ratios=used/available) and analysed preference or avoidance of areas with varying hunting suitability. We used our hunting suitability model and not actual culling locations as a spatial indicator of perceived human threat, as the association between single hunting sites and predation risk within our study site is shaped by several unquantified factors (e.g. hunters' behaviour, number of red deer witnessing the death of a conspecific, wind).

By measuring used and available habitat for individuals separately, we considered that the proportions of different categories of available habitat and the use of those varied between each collared deer. Thus, we treated the selection of single animals as independent events and estimated selection ratios for each animal using a type III log-likelihood test statistic (Khi2L) approach. We used χ^2 tests to examine habitat selection for all animals and for each individual animal.

We calculated selectivity measures for day and night for each sex to consider temporal changes of preferences and sexual differences. We defined one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset as 'day' (daylight hours). We included only those individuals in the analyses for which sufficient data were available ($n_{(July-October)}=9$ females, 9 males; $n_{(November-December)}=8$ females, 7 males).

Results

Hunter judgements

Professional hunters assigned steep areas and higher vegetation density with low suitability values, whereas flat areas and low vegetation density were linked with high suitability values. Thus, *accessibility* and *transportability* (up- and down-hill) decreased with increasing slope. Declining vegetation density was linked with increasing *accessibility*, *visibility* and *transportability*. All mentioned relationships were non-linear (Supporting information). Areas steeper than 140% (54.46 degrees) were judged by hunters as not suitable, due to a lack of *accessibility* and impossibility to transport deer without technical devices.

Concerning hiking times, 12.5 min (± 2.75 min) were estimated by professional hunters to cover an optimal distance (optimal condition) between the hunting place and nearest road or hunting hut. They noted one reason for having some hiking was to avoid shooting next to infrastructure. Average hiking time (normal condition) was estimated as 30 min (± 4.45 min). Regarding maximum hiking time (worst condition), they would invest 90 min (± 8.04 min) to reach a hunting spot.

Hunting suitability model

The model indicated better hunting suitability from November to December compared to May to October (Fig. 3), which illustrates the influence of vegetation.

In general, open as well as flat areas with low vegetation density and regions close to roads or hunting huts were characterised by good suitability (Fig. 4a). A low suitability was linked to steep or rough areas, high vegetation densities and regions far away from infrastructure. The CA highlighted the unique influence of *visibility* on hunting suitability during May to October and November to December (Table 2). Effects of vegetation density on hunting suitability shown

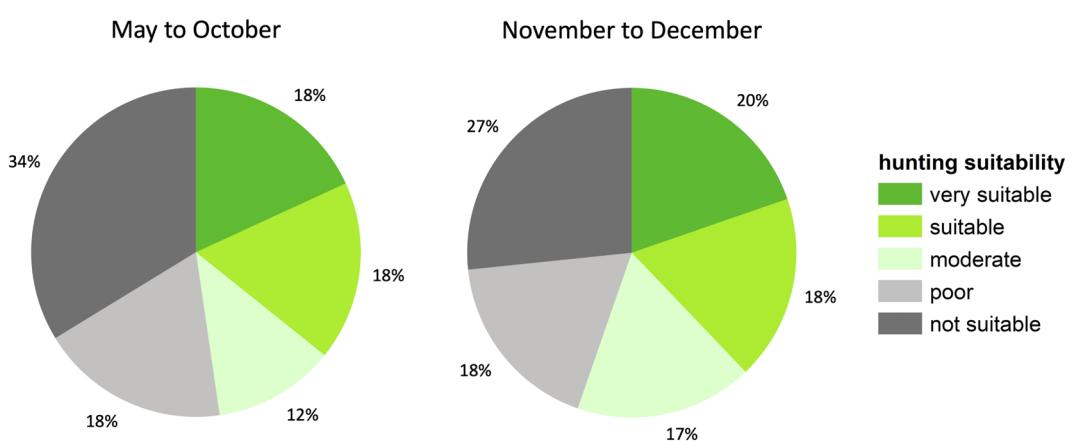


Figure 3. Changes in hunting suitability regarding red deer during the hunting season from May to October (growing vegetation) and November to December (outside of the vegetation period), illustrated in area percent. This figure relates to a study site of 3367 ha in the Central Alps.

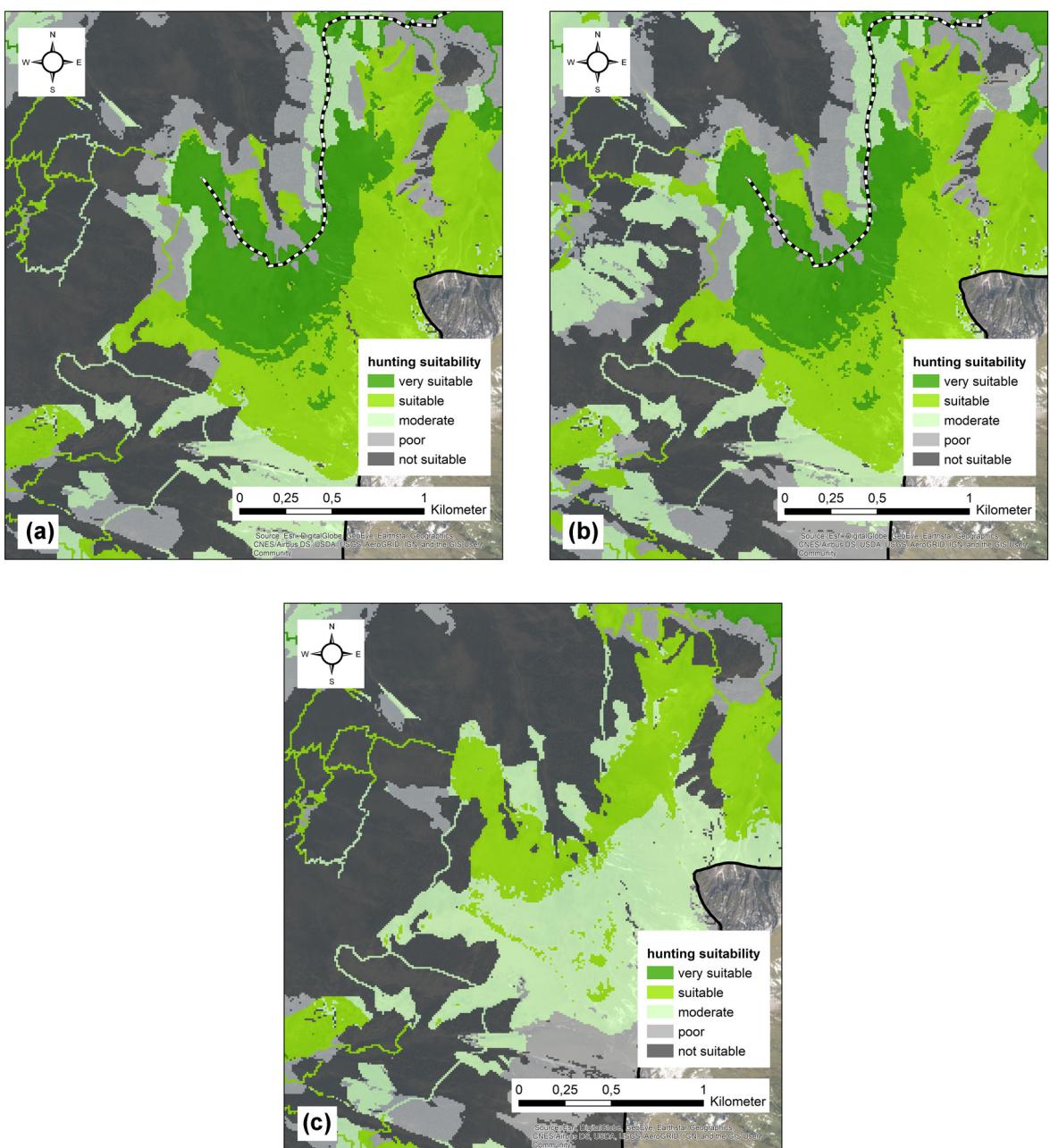


Figure 4. Hunting suitability regarding red deer within a part of the study site with a 10 m resolution from (a) May to October (growing vegetation), (b) November to December (outside of the vegetation period) and (c) May to October, under the assumption that no road (striped line) exists in this area. As trails were linked with minimal vegetation density values, they are also visible. The bold black line marks the border of the study site.

Table 2. Effects of commonality coefficients on hunting suitability regarding red deer in mountainous landscapes during May to October and November to December. Numbers represent the explained variation in percent. ¹ Accessibility of an area from a hunters' perspective, ² visibility of red deer, ³ transportability of shot red deer.

Coefficients	May–Oct			Nov–Dec		
	Unique	Common	Total	Unique	Common	Total
Accessibility ¹	2.83	32.73	35.56	2.79	38.10	40.89
Visibility ²	41.42	17.21	58.63	37.24	15.83	53.07
Transportability ³	5.22	53.34	58.56	5.55	57.21	62.76

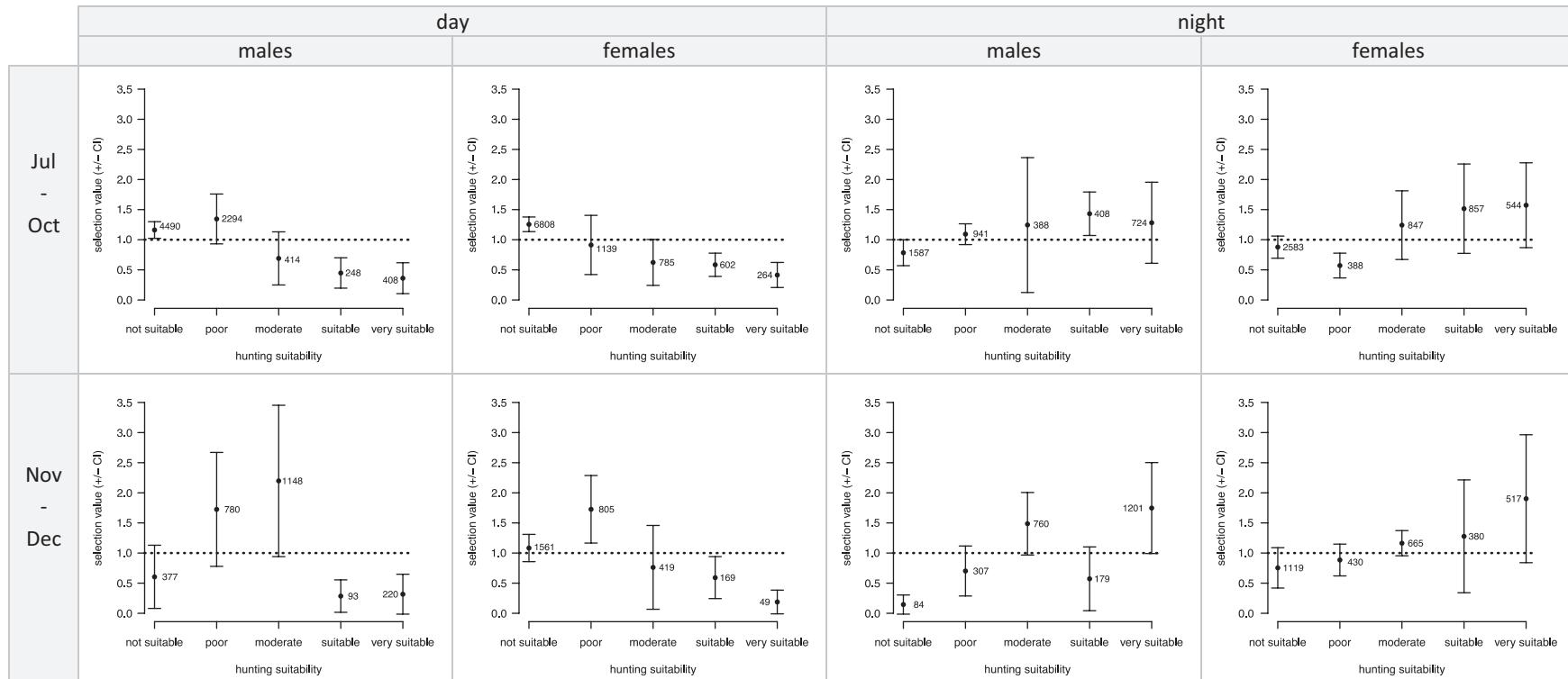


Figure 5. Selection of areas with varying hunting suitability by adult red deer of both sexes within the hunting season from July to October (9 females, 9 males) and November to December (8 females, 7 males) during day and night, respectively. One hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset was defined as 'day'. Points represent mean selection values. Values larger than 1 represent positive selection, whereas values smaller than 1 illustrate negative selection, if the 99% confidence intervals (CI) do not include the value of 1. If a CI overlaps 1, utilisation of areas conforms with their availability. Numbers next to selection values represent the amount of GPS points recorded for each hunting suitability class.

Table 3. Log-likelihood test statistic (Khi^2L), degrees of freedom (df) and p-values based on a habitat selection analysis according to Manly et al. (2002). Spatio-temporal habitat use by collared red deer was analysed in relation to assumed levels of anthropogenic predation risk based on areas of different hunting suitability. Selectivity measures were calculated separately for sex, season and time of the day.

	Males			Females		
	Khi ² L	df	p-value	Khi ² L	df	p-value
Jul–Oct						
Day	891.84	36	< 0.001	867.37	36	< 0.001
Night	322.33	36	< 0.001	529.32	36	< 0.001
Nov–Dec						
Day	1232.10	28	< 0.001	548.66	30	< 0.001
Night	955.23	28	< 0.001	413.28	30	< 0.001

in Fig. 4b, compared to Fig. 4a were most likely responsible for this strong unique influence of *visibility*. Regarding common effects, *transportability* followed by *accessibility* affected hunting suitability the most during both periods. To demonstrate common effects of *accessibility* and *transportability* we excluded one road in the analysis exemplarily. This exclusion reduced the suitability in surrounding areas visibly (Fig. 4c). Furthermore, *transportability* was strongly affected by its direction (up- or downhill). Uphill areas (transport downhill) resulted in better suitability compared to those downhill the road (transport uphill).

The empirical realism of the model was supported by all professional hunters that were active in the study site ($n=4$). They assessed randomly chosen areas with a diameter of 100 m, six for each hunting suitability class. A Spearman rank correlation showed a highly significant association ($p < 0.001$) and good positive relationship ($\rho=0.76$) between the model predictions and hunter judgements (Supporting information).

Landscape of fear effects

The comparison of used and available areas with varying hunting suitability revealed distinct patterns of habitat selection by red deer (Fig. 5). During daylight hours, areas suitable for hunting were avoided. During nighttime, this selection shifted and suitable areas were not avoided anymore. With slight differences, these patterns could be found during July to October and November to December for both sexes. Computed Manly's selectivity measures displayed highly significant overall habitat selection regarding males, females and both periods ($p < 0.001$, Table 3). The tested habitat selection for each collared deer was always very significant ($p < 0.01$).

Discussion

Increasing population densities of wild ungulates and associated negative effects, such as forest damages (Putman et al. 2011), in combination with inefficient hunting practices, highlight that additional solutions are needed to counteract rising numbers of these species. Thus, the request for science-based methods and tools is on the rise. Although multiple studies (Lebel et al. 2012, Lone et al. 2015, Plante et al.

2016) suggested that hunting suitability regarding ungulate species is shaped by various factors, to our best knowledge there is no published method until now to create a predictive map of hunting suitability. We filled this gap by developing a high-resolution hunting suitability model as an innovative and effective tool to inform wild ungulate management in mountainous landscapes and to objectively determine and visualise hunting suitability. We modelled this suitability regarding hide hunting and stalking. Results concerning drive hunting may be different.

Comparable to ideal HSM (Jedrzejewski et al. 2008) we built the model by using variables that can be readily measured via remote sensing and field surveys, to ensure an easy application to diverse mountainous hunting grounds. By combining three hunting suitability indices (*accessibility*, *visibility* and *transportability*), we were able to model hunting suitability realistically, which was verified by professional hunters that were active in the study site. Further, we were able to display unique and common influences of these indices on overall hunting suitability. The empirical realism of the model was additionally confirmed by red deer in our study site. In particular, we found that habitat selection of red deer followed our assumption that they perceive a landscape of heterogeneous anthropogenic predation risk, like we modelled it.

Cromsigt et al. (2013) highlighted that in hunted ungulates, temporally predictable risk should lead to adjustments of habitat selection. A study by Fattebert et al. (2019) demonstrated that red deer selects risky habitats mostly at night, when hunting risk was low. Our study supports these findings by providing evidence that red deer select habitat relative to overall hunting suitability. Our results illustrate that regions unsuitable for hunting, including areas with steeper slopes, complex topography, high vegetation density and areas far away from roads were used by red deer preferentially during daylight hours. Besides other benefits of using such areas (e.g. the use of forests for thermal cover (Mysterud and Østbye 1999, Gerhardt et al. 2013)), the spatio-temporal habitat use by red deer in our study site seems also to be shaped by perceived anthropogenic predation risk. We demonstrated that regions suitable for hunting, including open flat areas or areas close to roads were avoided by red deer during daylight hours. During nighttime, this avoidance behaviour disappeared. We found this pattern of habitat use in both sexes during July to October and November to December, which conforms to our risk-avoidance hypothesis. We thus suggest that red deer are capable to differentiate between areas according to hunting suitability, which corresponds with the level of anthropogenic predation risk. This species then adjusts its spatio-temporal habitat use to reduce the probability of being harvested.

These findings are supported by Wisdom et al. (2018), who demonstrated that wapiti *Cervus canadensis* in north-east Oregon (USA) prefer steep areas, presumably to avoid humans. In line with that, Lone et al. (2015) highlighted, that hunted red deer in central Norway select dense vegetation to

avoid being harvested. Padié et al. (2015) showed that roe deer in the southwest of France avoid risky habitats during the day but selected these habitats at night positively. Other studies especially regarding large mammals (Benítez-López 2018) like mouflon *Ovis gmelini* in France (Marchand et al. 2014), wild boar *Sus scrofa* in Sweden (Thurfjell et al. 2013) or white-tailed deer in Oklahoma (USA) (Little et al. 2016) had similar findings. Thus, wild ungulates of different regions seem to react to human disturbance and anthropogenic predation risk by an avoidance behaviour.

This behaviour can be linked with our model to provide detailed information about locations not suitable for hunting in which wild ungulates will likely retreat when perceived anthropogenic predation risk increases. The results of our study can be used to understand and explain marginal detectability and low harvest rates of ungulate species and associated management problems in regions comparable to our study site. Furthermore, our model can demonstrate how challenging it might be to regulate specific species in certain areas due to insufficient hunting suitability. The model can therefore provide valuable information especially for non-locals along with realistic background information for hunting authorities when setting hunting quotas (Trouwborst and Hackländer 2018). Regarding management recommendations, the verified behavioural plasticity of wild ungulates can be seen as an opportunity. By selectively altering the spatio-temporal distribution of anthropogenic predation risk, the LOF can be modified to increase visibility of species like red deer and therefore hunting success. Our model can serve as planning tool to decide where varying hunting strategies can be performed most efficiently to improve hunting success, reduce ungulate numbers and therefore lower human-wildlife conflicts. Such strategies could include an increase in hunting pressure to concentrate perceived anthropogenic predation risk in specific areas while lowering the risk in other areas to manage the spatial distribution of wild ungulates. Furthermore, in regions suitable for hunting long closed seasons with reduced anthropogenic predation risk can alternate with short open seasons to increase harvest rates by benefiting from reduced predator-avoidance behaviour. Thus, the utilisation of the model can contribute to selectively alter the spatial distribution of ungulate species in the landscape. Further, it can be used to adjust population numbers in relation to resources provided by the habitat and therefore also reduce intraspecific competition. Open foraging sites, which are suitable for hunting can become usable for species like red deer during daylight hours if hunting pressure is selectively reduced in such areas. Regarding sustainable wildlife management, the application of this new model can thus also have positive consequences for wild ungulates in the long term.

To modify a LOF successfully, it is important to be aware that perceived anthropogenic predation risk is not evenly distributed across the landscape. Furthermore, it is essential to know where various hunting strategies can be performed most efficiently. In this context a hunting suitability model can serve as necessary planning tool to alter anthropogenic predation risk across the landscape selectively. For the first time it is now possible to use

such a tool to visualise hunting suitability in mountainous landscapes, objectively and realistically.

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Conflicts of interest – The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Permits – Complied with federal and state laws, collaring and immobilisation of red deer were authorized by the responsible agencies of Salzburg (official notifications: 20401-01072/4/10-2015, 20401-01070/21/10-2015).

Author contributions

Paul Griesberger: Conceptualization (equal); Data curation (lead); Formal analysis (lead); Investigation (lead); Methodology (equal); Project administration (equal); Resources (equal); Validation (lead); Visualization (lead); Writing – original draft (lead); Writing – review and editing (lead). **Leopold Obermaier:** Conceptualization (equal); Formal analysis (supporting); Funding acquisition (lead); Investigation (supporting); Methodology (equal); Project administration (equal); Resources (equal); Supervision (supporting); Validation (supporting); Visualization (supporting); Writing – review and editing (supporting). **Josef Zandl:** Conceptualization (supporting); Methodology (supporting); Project administration (supporting); Resources (equal); Validation (supporting); Writing – review and editing (supporting). **Gabrielle Stalder:** Conceptualization (supporting); Funding acquisition (supporting); Methodology (supporting); Project administration (supporting); Resources (equal); Writing – review and editing (supporting). **Walter Arnold:** Formal analysis (supporting); Funding acquisition (supporting); Methodology (supporting); Project administration (supporting); Resources (supporting); Supervision (supporting); Writing – original draft (supporting); Writing – review and editing (supporting). **Klaus Hackländer:** Conceptualization (equal); Funding acquisition (equal); Methodology (supporting); Project administration (supporting); Resources (supporting); Supervision (lead); Writing – original draft (supporting); Writing – review and editing (supporting).

Data availability statement

Data are available from the Dryad Digital Repository: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5061/dryad.rbnzs7hcp>> (Griesberger et al. 2022).

Supporting information

The supporting information associated with this article is available from the online version.

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4. Publikation III

Building a decision-support tool to inform sustainability approaches under complexity: Case study on managing wild ruminants

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Building a decision-support tool to inform sustainability approaches under complexity: Case study on managing wild ruminants

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Abstract In wildlife management, differing perspectives among stakeholders generate conflicts about how to achieve disparate sustainability goals that include ecological, economic, and sociocultural dimensions. To mitigate such conflicts, decisions regarding wildlife management must be taken thoughtfully. To our knowledge, there exists no integrative modeling framework to inform these decisions, considering all dimensions of sustainability. We constructed a decision-support tool based on stakeholder workshops and a Bayesian decision network to inform management of wild ruminants in the federal state of Lower Austria. We use collaborative decision analysis to compare resource allocations while accounting for trade-offs among dimensions of sustainability. The tool is designed for application by non-technical users across diverse decision-making contexts with particular sets of wildlife management actions, objectives, and uncertainties. Our tool represents an important step toward developing and evaluating a transparent and replicable approach for mitigating wildlife-based conflicts in Europe and beyond.

Keywords Bayesian decision network · Collaborative decision analysis · Decision-support tool · Resource allocations · Stakeholder workshops · Wildlife-based conflicts

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-024-02020-9>.

INTRODUCTION

Governments around the world have declared that managing and conserving wildlife along with associated ecosystem services are important means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2014; UN General Assembly 2015). This is a great challenge, as wildlife species along with their habitats are threatened by anticipated impacts of climate change and increasing demands for natural resources (IPCC 2014). Achieving sustainability should correspond with a thriving ecological system typified by diverse communities of free-living vertebrates (henceforth, wildlife) coexisting with humans, which is also reflected in the Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD Secretariat 2010).

Originally shaped by the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987) and the Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED 1992), sustainability is nowadays widely acknowledged to be represented by three dimensions, namely Ecology, Economics and Socioculture (Purvis et al. 2019). To guide the sustainable management of natural resources, 17 SDGs were specified at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 (UN General Assembly 2015). Wildlife species and associated natural resources are highly valued by people around the world (Schulp et al. 2014; Gren et al. 2018; Subroy et al. 2019) and their management is thus integral in many SDGs. Strategies to manage wildlife, however, have diverse effects on these species, their habitats and people involved in any kind, spanning all three dimensions of sustainability.

Some people directly benefit from wildlife by non-consumptive (observing) or consumptive (hunting) use of

these animals (Schulp et al. 2014; Mattsson et al. 2018), while others derive relational or nonuse values (Subroy et al. 2019). Still others perceive wildlife populations as being overabundant and posing threats to their social and economic well-being (Gren et al. 2018). Contrasting perspectives about wildlife management generate conflicts between people that are expressed in the media or public protests (Redpath et al. 2015; Nyhus 2016; Madden and McQuinn 2017; Pooley et al. 2017), which we refer to henceforth as wildlife-based conflicts or simply as conflicts. Actual and perceived impacts of wildlife on human livelihoods can generate conflicts about how to best manage these species. Opposing stakeholders may refuse to communicate, juxtaposed values preclude easy win-win solutions, and sensational media can exacerbate the differing sides to debates (Redpath et al. 2013). Wildlife-based conflicts therefore can manifest as wicked problems that undermine natural resource management and challenge achievement of the SDGs and Aichi Targets. Further, such conflicts are ill-structured, and therefore difficult to address with unilateral approaches (e.g., law enforcement and damage compensation programs; Marino et al. 2021). Decision-making processes, if well designed, can help to structure and mitigate wildlife-based conflicts (Mattsson et al. 2019). As such, collaborative decision analysis (CDA; Thorne et al. 2015) is a process that integrates methods of stakeholder engagement (Reed 2008), structured decision making (Runge et al. 2022), and multi-criteria decision analysis (Adem Esmail and Geneletti 2018) to inform natural resource management. Owing to the transparent methodology including stakeholder involvement, CDA has been useful for addressing wildlife-based conflicts (e.g., Mitchell et al. 2018; Mattsson et al. 2019; Marino et al. 2021; Johnson et al. 2022). CDA allows for incorporating perspectives of multiple stakeholders with differing viewpoints within the decision-making process, from conceptual framing of the decision problem through quantitative comparison of management options.

Existing applications of CDA to wildlife-based conflicts exhibit at least one of three challenges. First, these efforts have been tailored to specific decision contexts and many lack clear relevance to be applied across cases and regions (e.g., Mustajoki et al. 2011; Mattsson et al. 2019). Second, previous applications involved a combination of decision-analytic tools and expert elicitation that require high levels of expertise to properly conduct (e.g., Mustajoki et al. 2011; Johnson et al. 2022). Third, many studies have only involved up to two dimensions of sustainability (i.e., ecological and sociocultural) and have not integrated the economic dimension (e.g., Marino et al. 2021; Johnson et al. 2022). For this reason, their relevance to the SDGs is limited. To our knowledge, no applications to wildlife management (for other applications see review in Diaz-

Balteiro et al. 2017) have addressed all three dimensions at once. An accessible, transferable, and multi-dimensional framework for decision-making is needed to inform sustainable management of wildlife in the face of conflicts.

As a prominent example of wildlife-based conflicts, numbers of wild ruminants are increasing in many human-dominated landscapes across Europe (Apollonio et al. 2010) and beyond (Cromsigt et al. 2013). This increase often leads to negative effects at fine spatial scales, like damages on forests through browsing or bark stripping (Carpio et al. 2021). Elevated levels of herbivory may exceed ecological tipping points and compromise the integrity and functionality of forest functions, causing economic, ecological, and sociocultural degradation (Gerhardt et al. 2013). Conflicts between stakeholders about regulating herbivory, in turn, may hinder effective measures to minimize these negative impacts (Hodgson et al. 2020). Collaborative approaches to support decisions may help mitigate conflicts when managing overabundant populations of wild ruminants. Particularly hunting practices play an important role by regulating population numbers of herbivorous game species through harvesting and modifying spatial distribution of these species to reduce impacts on vegetation (Cromsigt et al. 2013; Heurich et al. 2015). As current hunting practices often fail in this context, however, conflicts triggered by wild ruminants are still a major problem in many regions (Valente et al. 2020). Recognizing these conflicts and balancing sustainability objectives are common challenges in game management (Law et al. 2021). Therefore, science-based methods and tools to inform sustainable management of overabundant wildlife populations are urgently needed in many regions worldwide.

In Austria (Central Europe), the hunting system with its associated laws and culture, provides an overarching framework within which decision makers act to influence ruminant populations and their interactions with the environment. Hunting is strictly bound to real estate, and hunting territories are either individual grounds when they exceed a minimum area of 115 ha or summarized into communal grounds. Landowners are free to hunt themselves or lease the territories (for details on hunting management in Austria see Trouwborst and Hackländer 2018 or Reimoser and Reimoser 2010). Hunting legislation is subdivided by provinces, with each Austrian province having its own hunting law. Regulations under these laws include annual harvesting of game species and economic compensation for game damages on forest vegetation and agricultural crops.

In the province of Lower Austria, hunting territories are leased or hunted for a time span of nine years, while adaptive game harvest plans are prepared by the local authorities for three-year intervals. Hunting in Austria is a long-standing tradition and is a substantial part of rural culture. Within Lower Austria, hunting bags for wild

ruminants for the hunting season 2020 totaled 92 545 individuals that were shot by hunters (88% roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), 8% red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), 2% chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) and 2% European mouflon (*Ovis gmelini*), fallow deer (*Dama dama*), sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) and Alpine ibex (*Capra ibex*); Statistics Austria 2022). In accordance with a high abundance of wildlife, wildlife-based conflicts are diverse (i.e., economic losses due to impact on vegetation, animal-vehicle crashes with economic and personal damage, tourism activities disturbing hunting activities) and sustainable management of wild ruminants is highly needed.

Our aim is to create a decision-support tool, taking into account the perspectives of diverse stakeholders regarding all three dimensions of sustainability in the management of wild ruminants. The decision context centers on Lower Austria and conflicts related to roe deer, red deer, and chamois. The management of these species involves many decision-making entities who often lack clearly defined objectives or management actions along with uncertainties about management effectiveness (Reimoser and Reimoser 2010). Through the principles of CDA and stakeholder workshops, we elicit and define existing problems, interests and objectives. Further, we determine possible actions to mitigate influencing factors that are at least partly beyond control of decision makers. In the backend of the tool, a Bayesian decision network enables a quantitative comparison of expected utilities between decision options. We base the frontend structure of the tool on perspectives and needs of decision makers and stakeholders, which we gather using focus group discussions and questionnaires. Thus, our tool can be easily applied by practitioners to address complex situations and inform their decisions on resource allocation while maximizing expected satisfaction of stakeholders. Ultimately, our study demonstrates how easy-to-use decision tools for practitioners can be developed to support sustainable management of wildlife in the face of wildlife-based conflicts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Overview

We used the principles of CDA (Mattsson et al. 2019) and structured decision making (Runge et al. 2022) for designing the decision-support tool along with stakeholder workshops and surveys (see Appendix S1 regarding questions asked during these surveys). In particular we followed the PrOACT steps, including Problem framing, identifying Objectives and Actions, followed by modeling Consequences and Trade-offs between objectives (Mattsson et al. 2019). We supplemented this in two ways. Within the problem-framing step, we identified stakeholders that influence or are affected by the decision. Immediately after

identifying objectives, we then specified external factors that can affect the objectives but are at least partly beyond control of the decision maker. These external factors provided important context for developing a resource allocation beyond the status quo within the actions step of the PrOACT process. To ensure the tool was coherent and accessible, we used an iterative and rapid prototyping approach by briefly revisiting individual PrOACT steps and revising the tool when needed. The intended user of our tool was a decision maker responsible for managing wild ruminants in Lower Austria, subsequently termed ‘user’.

Throughout the study and corresponding PrOACT steps, we used several methods of knowledge synthesis (Pullin et al. 2016; Dicks et al. 2017) to extract necessary information for developing the tool. These methodologies included a non-systematic literature review, group discussions within a facilitation team (researchers/analysts), group discussions during six stakeholder workshops, semi-structured interviews, and individual questionnaires for stakeholders. The literature sources included an indicator framework for sustainable hunting in Austria by Forstner et al. (2006) and an extension of this framework (Daim et al. 2017). Online questionnaires were administered approximately two weeks before the second through fifth workshop. Anonymous responses from the questionnaires were summarized, presented, and discussed during the workshops, giving participants the opportunity to clarify or reflect on their responses.

The facilitation team used a consistent process for identifying the list of possible stakeholders, objectives, external factors, and actions (henceforth, factors). Redundant factors were combined, and others were eliminated if they fell outside the decision context. When factors were identified, a concise phrase and definition was constructed for each factor to ensure they were unique and would be understandable for practitioners. The facilitators presented the proposed phrases to the workshop participants during multiple workshops, individual questionnaires, and via email. The facilitation team then adapted the objectives based on feedback from participants. This approach ensured that the factors available for selection in the decision tool were relevant for real-world decisions. In the following subsections we provide justifications and details about our preparation, communication, and tailoring of the PrOACT steps for developing the decision-support tool.

Preparatory phase and communication throughout the study

Prior to the development of the decision tool, a preparatory phase included the formation of a facilitation team consisting of three researchers with expertise in decision analysis, workshop facilitation and the ecology and

management of wildlife in Austria. The core team included the facilitation team and the deputy director of the forestry agency in Lower Austria. This decision maker was included in the core team, as the decision context involved mitigating the impacts of wild ruminants on forest vegetation. During an initial one-hour meeting, roles of the core team members were discussed. In particular, it was determined that the facilitation team should play a neutral role by leading the facilitation of workshops and further assist the decision-making process.

The facilitation team met in person and over video conference every one to three weeks throughout the study. These meetings helped to ensure that the tool provided a robust decision analysis while remaining accessible for workshop participants. This team asked themselves questions such as, “Will a decision maker know what information to enter in the tool?” or “Does this set of entries in the tool provide a correct comparison of decision options?”. Further, the facilitation team led a series of stakeholder workshops. Regarding the decision context, the first three workshops focused on the province level of Lower Austria. Stakeholders from the district level were invited as part of the last three workshops to ensure that this local level is also incorporated within the decision-making process. The workshops were held at intervals of two to four months and lasted four to seven hours each.

During these workshops the facilitators presented the aims of the study along with the current structure of the tool, facilitated open discussions, and administered individual questionnaires to elicit necessary information for developing the tool. Facilitators asked questions including, “Are all potentially relevant objectives available for selection?”. Furthermore, three semi-structured interviews in the form of video conferences with the provincial authority were held between individual workshops to discuss the progress of the tool. The facilitators used these opportunities to ensure that each new version of the tool met the needs and expectations of the authority. This provided an important series of checks before presenting these versions to all participants. Questionnaires outside of workshops were additionally used to get further feedback from the participants regarding the progress of the tool.

Stakeholder selection and decision question

During an initial conversation, the core team confirmed that the forestry agency representative would have the authority to implement possible recommendations from the CDA process. Consequently, the forestry agency represented a key decision maker and likely user of the decision tool. The core team began by identifying stakeholders that should be considered regarding the management of wild ruminants within but not limited to Lower Austria.

Stakeholders were selected based on assessments and prior knowledge of the core team. In particular, the core team identified organizations who are responsible for managing wild ruminants and their habitats. Next, representatives of each stakeholder group were identified for participation in the decision-analytic process. The core team selected individuals who had practical experience with the management of wild ruminants in Lower Austria and are able to make management decisions at the province or district level. As coordinating a large group of participants through workshops would require professional facilitation, the total number of stakeholder representatives was limited to ten.

During the first two stakeholder workshops, the main goal was to describe the current status and perspectives regarding the management of wild ruminants and to identify existing problems in this context. Subsequently, defined problems were checked with the participants whether they were within their authority to address through decision-making. An overarching decision question was formed based on these problems. This decision question included a brief description of the decision maker, the overarching objective, and the spatial extent. During these initial workshops the facilitators clarified with participants the spatial resolutions, temporal scales, and legal framework for the focal decisions. Within the framework of workshops three to six, participants were asked to define suitable management objectives, external factors, and actions, with regard to the decision question. Further, these workshops were used by the facilitators to present prototypes of the tool, which were continuously adapted based on the feedback of the participants.

Factors

To define management objectives for inclusion in the tool, each workshop participant independently identified concerns and wishes from their perspective as a stakeholder. The facilitators elicited these concerns and wishes during the first workshop by having the participants write them down on sheets of paper and then displaying them on the wall. Between workshops the facilitators converted these concerns and wishes into objectives using the verb–noun format (e.g., maintain abundance of red deer) and presented them to participants during subsequent workshops to ensure the meaning was captured. The facilitators assigned each objective to one of the three dimensions of sustainability, resulting in ecological, economic, and sociocultural objectives. External factors were defined as factors having strong potential influence on objectives and are mostly beyond the direct control of decision makers. These were important to consider before identifying actions, as the actions and associated decision options should aim to address the influence of these external factors when trying

to achieve the objectives. When developing an interface within the tool to elicit decision options, the facilitation team considered the maximum number of actions and allowed the user to choose between types of resources to be invested in each action. This was important to ensure that the tool remained simple to use while allowing for a realistic set of actions to compare.

Consequences and trade-offs

Based on discussions during the workshops and responses to the surveys, the facilitation team assessed the importance of accounting for uncertainties when predicting effects of decision options and external factors on the objectives. This allowed for choosing an appropriate framework for the decision analysis underlying the tool. The facilitation team also considered ways of reducing the level of complexity of the predictive models and the commensurate elicitation burden. Simplifications were done judiciously to ensure that the tool could inform real-world decisions. These approaches included limiting the number of objectives, external factors, and actions that users could select. Another approach to reduce the elicitation burden was indirectly acquiring numerical inputs by asking the user to respond to discrete-choice questions.

As the aim of the study was to develop a decision-support tool to inform management of wild ruminants by accounting for the three dimensions of sustainability, the tool requires that the user specifies multiple objectives. To minimize complexity of the tool despite having multiple objectives while accounting for uncertainty, the facilitation team considered two alternatives for eliciting trade-offs between objectives. First, the relatively time-intensive approach of directly eliciting utility values for every combination of outcomes (Cinelli et al. 2014). Second, an approach that minimized elicitation burden by asking the level of importance for each objective and transforming these entries into utility values in the backend of the tool.

RESULTS

Overview

The end product of this study was a decision-support tool that was implemented using Microsoft Excel 2016 and the associated Visual Basic Editor for macros (Appendix S2). Responses to surveys and workshop discussions informed the structure and content of the tool. In short, workshop participants wanted the decision-support tool to be intuitive and customized for their decision context. They wanted a tool that they could use on their own rather than rely on a facilitator using software, especially designed for decision

analysis (e.g., Netica; Norsys 2016). Thus, the facilitators used Excel for implementing the tool, as this software is widely applied and familiar to many users. Excel does not require extensive training for basic functionalities and is equipped with many built-in functions that simplify complex calculations. As such, Excel offered the facilitators the necessary features to implement the decision-support tool rapidly and minimized time between rounds of feedback on the tool design. Excel files are easily shared and edited, as this software is not only available for Windows but also for macOS and mobile devices (iOS and Android). To simplify the applicability of the tool in Lower Austria, we developed a user manual (in German) with step-by-step instructions on applying the tool. The tool was named JAKEtool based on the project acronym that refers to the project title in German.

The JAKEtool includes a frontend for users to provide information, some of which was for their own reference, while other entries are used for computations in the backend that are invisible to the user. The tool is embedded in an Excel workbook that contains a number of worksheets. The structure of the tool is shown in Fig. 1. The layout of some worksheets depends on the entries in previous sheets. Therefore, it is important to enter the information starting with the first worksheet. The user fills the tool with information starting with worksheet 1 and working through the other worksheets from left to right. The user can be a single decision maker or a facilitator who gathers the necessary information. It is recommended that the first use of the tool be guided by a facilitator.

Given that decisions are made for individual management units with particular stakeholders, objectives, external factors, and actions, the tool allows the user to select such factors from a list (henceforth, factor catalog; Table S1). To ensure the result is relevant for their management context, proposed definitions may be adapted by the user. Such definitions of objectives, actions, and external factors must be clear and sufficiently detailed to assure practical implementation and traceability regarding the logic of these factors. This helps to guarantee that future users applying the tool for a given management unit can understand and build on earlier applications of the tool. The number of factors that can be selected by the user was limited to ensure the usability of the tool while ensuring enough complexity to inform real-world management of wild ruminants.

In the following sections, we describe how the results of each PrOACT step informed the structure and content of the JAKEtool.

Stakeholder selection and decision question

The core team identified six stakeholder groups that affect or are affected by the management of wild ruminants in

Lower Austria: (1) the forestry sector, (2) the agricultural sector, (3) the hunting sector, (4) the tourism sector, (5) the nature conservation sector, and (6) private landowners. Within the first two workshops, an individual representing each of these groups described their concerns regarding the management of wild ruminants in Lower Austria. Based on moderated group discussions, the following decision question was formed: "How can sustainability of management of wild ruminants in Lower Austria be maximized, under consideration of all affected stakeholder interests within a certain spatial extent?". Stakeholders or decision makers involved with managing wild ruminants might be focal user of our tool. As a first step in the tool, the focal user identifies the management unit and time frame along with any relevant stakeholders, including decision makers, and scores their importance relative to their own importance within the decision context (Fig. 2a).

Factors

We identified 24 objectives for inclusion within the factor catalog in the decision-support tool. Of these, seven were ecological, seven were economic, and ten were sociocultural. The frontend allows the user to select up to two objectives for each sustainability dimension (Fig. 2b). A

proposed definition is provided, and the user may adapt this to their own decision context. The user is then asked to define the current and desired status of each objective, which is important information when providing predictions in a later step. Next, the user rates each selected objective based on an importance weight using a 5-point scale (Fig. 2c, d).

Based on a moderate to high uncertainty regarding their influence on objectives, eight external factors were chosen for inclusion in the factor catalog. The user can choose up to two external factors and later account for these when predicting effects of the decision options on the objectives. For each external factor, the user chooses a pair of potential scenarios like 1) increase vs. stable or decrease; or 2) increase or stable vs. decrease (Fig. 2e). The user is then asked to indicate the level of uncertainty about the future trajectory of each external factor along a 5-point scale (Fig. 2f).

The user does not see the probability associated with their response, but this probability is used for the decision-analytic computations in the backend of the tool. Workshop participants explicitly requested that the probabilities are indirectly elicited and hidden in the backend computations, as direct elicitation or display of probabilities would add cognitive burden for users without improving the quality of inputs.

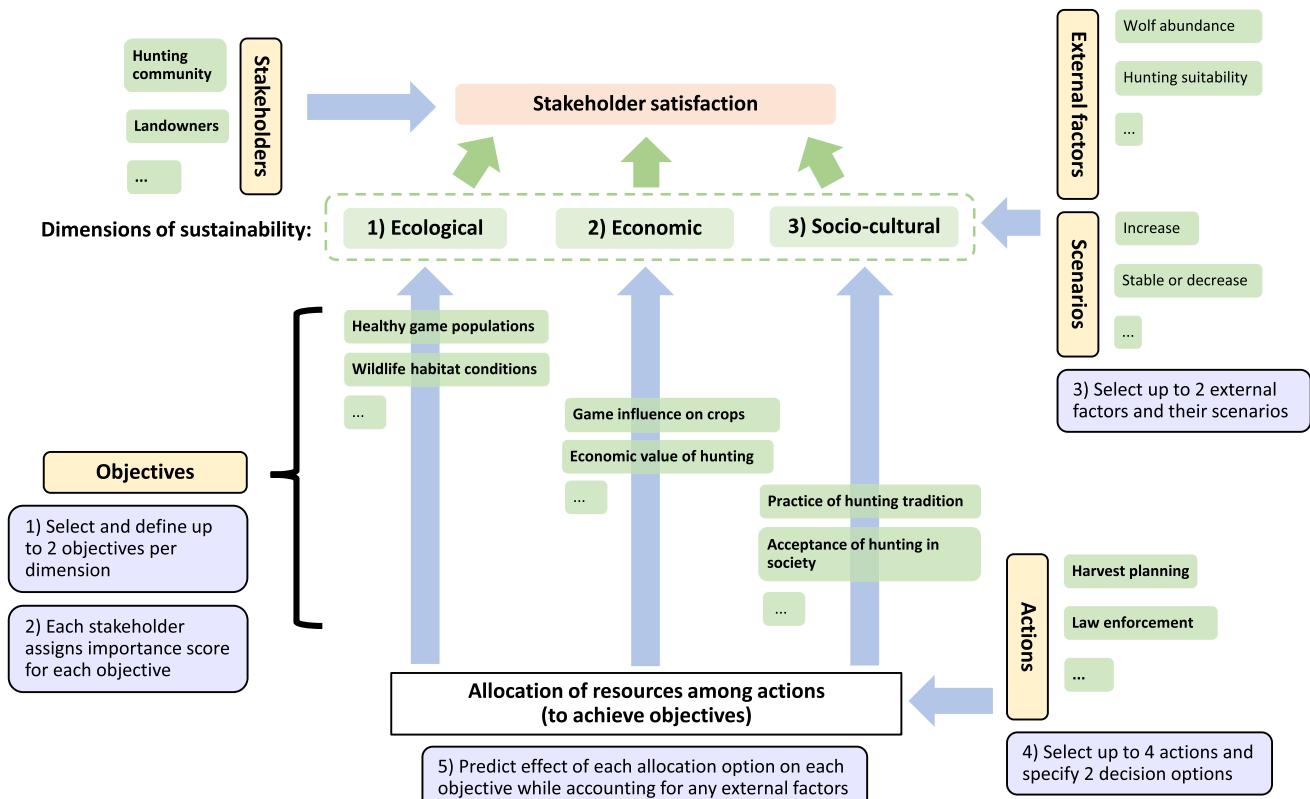


Fig. 1 Influence diagram illustrating the structure of the JAKEtool, including the sequence of elicitation steps (white boxes) and example selections from the factor catalog (green boxes) for each factor (yellow boxes). Blue boxes: steps of using the tool

a

Management unit (e.g. hunting ground, district): Hunting ground X																			
Time frame for objectives (future years): 2023-2025																			
<p>In addition to your own stakeholder group, you can add up to two other groups. Choose from the provided stakeholder list or create your own group by entering it into the corresponding field.</p>		Does a member of the chosen stakeholder group have authority to allocate resources (e.g. time, money) concerning the management of wild ruminants?	Rank the importance of your own satisfaction ¹ along with the satisfaction of the other chosen stakeholders.																
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Stakeholder group</th> <th>yes or no</th> <th>not important intermediate very important</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Your Satisfaction -></td> <td>yes</td> <td><input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Tourism sector</td> <td>no</td> <td><input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>[no additional stakeholders]</td> <td></td> <td><input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Stakeholder group		yes or no	not important intermediate very important	1	Your Satisfaction ->	yes	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	2	Tourism sector	no	<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	3	[no additional stakeholders]		<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>		
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b

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Time frame for objectives (future years): 2023-2025																		
1) Choose up to two management objectives regarding each dimension of sustainability. You can either use one of the objectives provided or create your own objective by writing it directly into the field.	2) Describe your understanding of each objective. You can use one of the descriptions provided or write your own.	3) Describe the actual and desired state regarding each management objective. The desired state should be reachable within the chosen timeframe. Keep in mind that objectives need to be measurable.																
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e

Management unit (e.g. hunting ground, district): Hunting ground X			
Time frame for objectives (future years): 2023-2025			
1) Choose up to two external factors that are beyond your full control for which you are quite uncertain about their effect on the objectives.	2) Describe your understanding of each external factor.	3) Select a scenario for each external factor; the opposing scenario is provided.	4) Describe your understanding of each scenario.
External factor	Description	Suggested description	Scenario 1 Scenario 2
1: Abundance of wolves	Annual number of individual wolves intersecting the hunting territory (i.e., "abundance")	The average number of wolves (including young and adult) that are present on any given day	How will the abundance of wolves in the selected management unit change in the future? increasing decreasing or stable
			Annual abundance increasing by >20% Annual abundance decreasing or stable, or increasing by <= 20%

f

Management unit (e.g. hunting ground, district): Hunting ground X												
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Fig. 2 **a** Hypothetical example illustrating elicitation of the management unit, time frame, and stakeholders within the JAKEtool. **b** Hypothetical example illustrating elicitation of objectives within the JAKEtool. For simplicity, a subset of the objectives is shown. **c, d** Importance of objectives are entered separately for each stakeholder group along a 5-point scale. **e** Hypothetical example illustrating elicitation of an external factor within the JAKEtool. Up to two may be specified; one is shown for simplicity. **f** Level of uncertainty about future trajectory is entered for each external factor along a 5-point scale. Yellow fields: fields providing general instructions, green fields: fields to edit, blue fields: fields providing information regarding the choices available, gray fields: no data entered

We identified 21 possible actions that could be implemented to achieve one or more objectives. As some of these actions could affect objectives falling under multiple dimensions of sustainability, the actions were not subdivided among the dimensions. The user then constructs decision options as two possible ways of allocating resources among actions. In particular, the user indicates which type of resource will be allocated (i.e., time or money), they then select two to four actions, and finally they allocate the resources among the actions (Fig. 3a). The tool later compares the performance of these two resource allocations and visualizes the allocations as pie charts. As an alternative, we considered having the user simply choose two contrasting sets of actions for each decision option. Workshop participants preferred giving the allocation percentages, as this provides a more concise and transparent description of each decision option.

Consequences, trade-offs, and backend computations

A Bayesian decision network (BDN) was deemed suitable for computing expected performance of each decision option in the backend of the tool. In particular, the BDN allows for comparing decision options while accounting for their uncertain effects on one or more objectives (Mattsson et al. 2019). This comparison takes into account not only uncertainties about effects of decision options on objectives but also the compounding effects of external factors. The facilitators constructed the BDN with two decision options in a decision node and 11 stochastic nodes using program Netica (Fig. 4, Appendix S3). The stochastic nodes include two external factors, three ultimate objectives representing the dimensions of sustainability, and two objectives for each dimension. Each external factor node has two states represented by the two scenarios. Likewise, each objective node has two states that, respectively, represent achieving and failing to achieve the desired condition for that objective. Finally, each dimension of sustainability has two states representing possible trajectories in the future: “increase or stable” vs. “decrease”.

The user provides the predicted outcome under each possible combination of decision option and trajectory for the external factors along a 5-point scale (Fig. 3b), which is analogous to the approach used for predicting the trajectory of each external factor. The scale represents the range of uncertainty and the direction of the effect. The participants were adamant that the predictions be simplified to this extent to ensure that non-technical users could readily fill out the tool. This simplification, however, allowed us to convert the user input into a conditional probability for the corresponding node in the BDN. The calculations for the BDN were then implemented in the backend of the tool and

verified by comparing results after entering trial values in the conditional probability tables for the stochastic nodes and percent satisfaction values in the utility node.

The second type of input required for the BDN is the utility (i.e., level of satisfaction) associated with each possible combination of objective states. We tried directly eliciting these utilities from workshop participants, and they were concerned that this placed a large cognitive burden. In short, they questioned the ability of users to directly and accurately quantify their satisfaction in this way. Instead, based on further discussion with the participants, the facilitation team designed the tool for deriving the utilities and corresponding trade-offs between objectives based on an importance weight for each objective elicited using a 5-point scale (Fig. 2c, d). The backend of the tool converts this entry into a score as follows: 1 point = 0% importance, 2 points = 25% importance, 3 points = 50% importance, 4 points = 75% importance, and 5 points = 100% importance. The importance weights for the individual objectives were then used to compute utility values for all possible combinations of states for the three sustainability dimensions.

Computing utilities assumed an additive utility function (Clemen and Reilly 2013) with independence among sustainability dimensions and comprised four steps. First, the importance score for each sustainability dimension was determined based on the average importance score between the associated objectives. Second, based on these importance scores, all possible combinations of states were ordered from 1 to 8 with the best possible state having a rank of 1 and the worst possible outcome having a rank of 8. Third, the top rank (1) was assigned a utility of 100 and the lowest rank (8) was assigned a utility of 0.

In the fourth and final step, these ranks and corresponding utility values were fit to a linear regression (Fig. 5):

$$U = 114.29 - 14.286 \times r$$

where U is the utility value, and r is the rank of a focal state. When scores were equal between dimensions of sustainability, the average rank was computed among tying members. If all scores were tied, then the rank was set to 3 for all combinations that had one decreasing state (i.e., state numbers 2–4). Continuing with this example, the rank was set to 6 for all combinations that had two decreasing states (i.e., state numbers 7–8). If scores were equal between two of the three dimensions, then the rank was set to 1.5 for tying states 1 and 2 (i.e., one of the focal states decreasing) and to 6.5 for tying states 6 and 7 (i.e., both focal states decreasing). The rank for each non-tying state was altered by 0.5 to maintain the assumption of an additive utility function. In particular, state 4 was given a rank of 3.5 and state 5 was given a rank of 5.5.

a

Management unit (e.g. hunting ground, district): Hunting ground X	Time frame for objectives (future years): 2023-2025	a																												
Choose resource type → money																														
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b

Management unit (e.g. hunting ground, district): Hunting ground X	PREDICTIONS ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION																	
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decreasing or stable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>												

Fig. 3 **a** Hypothetical example illustrating elicitation of resource allocations within the JAKEtool. A definition for each action may be entered; only one shown for simplicity. **b** Hypothetical example illustrating elicitation of predicted outcomes for the first ecological objective within the JAKEtool. Yellow fields: fields providing general instructions, green fields: fields to edit, blue fields: fields providing information regarding the choices available

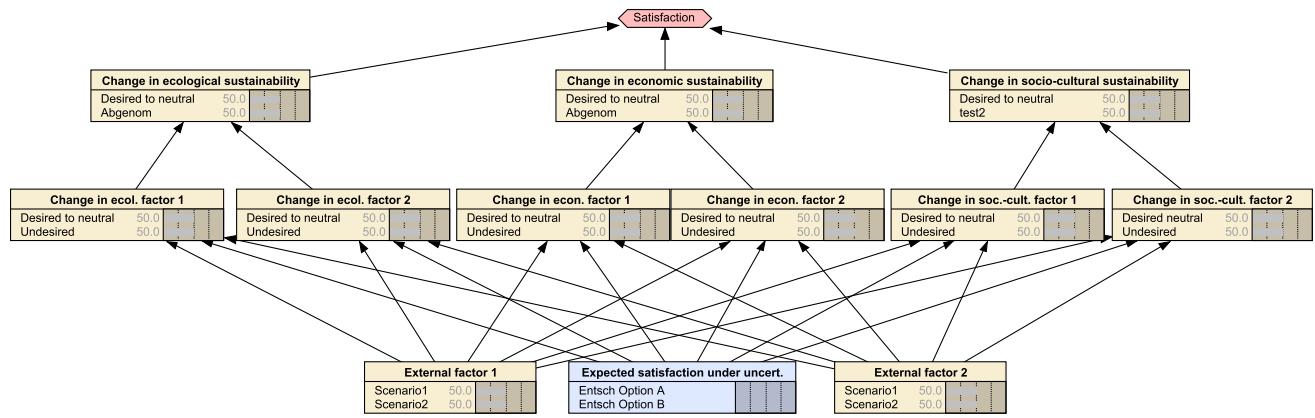


Fig. 4 Bayesian decision network (BDN) developed using program Netica, which was used to verify results provided by the JAKEtool. Yellow boxes: stochastic nodes, blue box: decision node

The JAKEtool then compares performance of two decision options using an expected utility (i.e., expected satisfaction), which is computed using the BDN algorithm:

$$E(U_k) = \sum_i \sum_j \left(\sum_a \sum_b (\Pr(\text{dim}_{ijkab}) \times \Pr(\text{extfactor}_{ab})) \times U_{ij} \right)$$

where i , j , and k index the three sustainability dimensions, two sustainability dimension states (dim), and the two decision options, respectively. The external factors and external factor states (extfactor) are, respectively, indexed by a and b . The first term is the probability (\Pr) of a sustainability dimension state j for dimension i given a decision option k and external factor state b of external factor a . The probability of the latter is represented by the second term. The probability of each sustainability dimension state is given as:

$$\Pr(\text{dim}_{ijkab}) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_r^n \Pr(\text{obj}_{ijkabr})$$

where r indexes the n objectives (obj) corresponding to sustainability dimension i . State j of the sustainability dimension i is set equal to that of the corresponding objective. For example, if the focal dimension state is optimistic (i.e., stable or increasing), then the corresponding state r for each objective within that dimension is set to achieve the desired condition for each objective. By calculating the average between probabilities of the objectives under sustainability dimension j , we assume that the n objectives have identical influence on the trajectory of this dimension.

The final result of the tool consists of two graphs. The first graph compares the expected satisfaction of the focal user with respect to the two decision options. The second graph makes the same comparison but regarding the expected satisfaction averaged across all stakeholder groups, including that of the focal user (Fig. 6).

Prospects for usefulness of the tool

Of the seven workshop participants who responded to the survey administered between the third and fourth workshop, five were quite satisfied (score = 4 of 5) and two were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (score = 3 of 5) with the management of wild ruminants in Lower Austria. Therefore, none of the participants said they were extremely satisfied, revealing the opportunity to improve or to maintain their current level of satisfaction through the support provided by the tool. Based on results from the survey during the fifth workshop, five workshop participants were quite satisfied, and one was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the presented version of the tool. This version was largely identical to the final one, aside from minor adjustments. The deputy director of the forestry agency in Lower Austria, the main funder of the project, verbalized positive statements about the tool during the workshops. For example, he asserted that the tool has strong potential to inform real-world decisions regarding management of wild ungulates while raising awareness among practitioners about the complexity of such decision-making. Through the use of the tool, he expects that dynamics within this complex system will become more understandable and explicitly taken into account in decision-making processes.

Tool demonstration

We filled out the tool for a hypothetical hunting territory in Lower Austria based on our knowledge and experience (Appendix S4). In particular, we identified the stakeholders, objectives, external factors, and actions to represent a realistic case. The intent was to illustrate the practical application of the tool while preparing a worked example that did not reveal private information from actual decision makers.

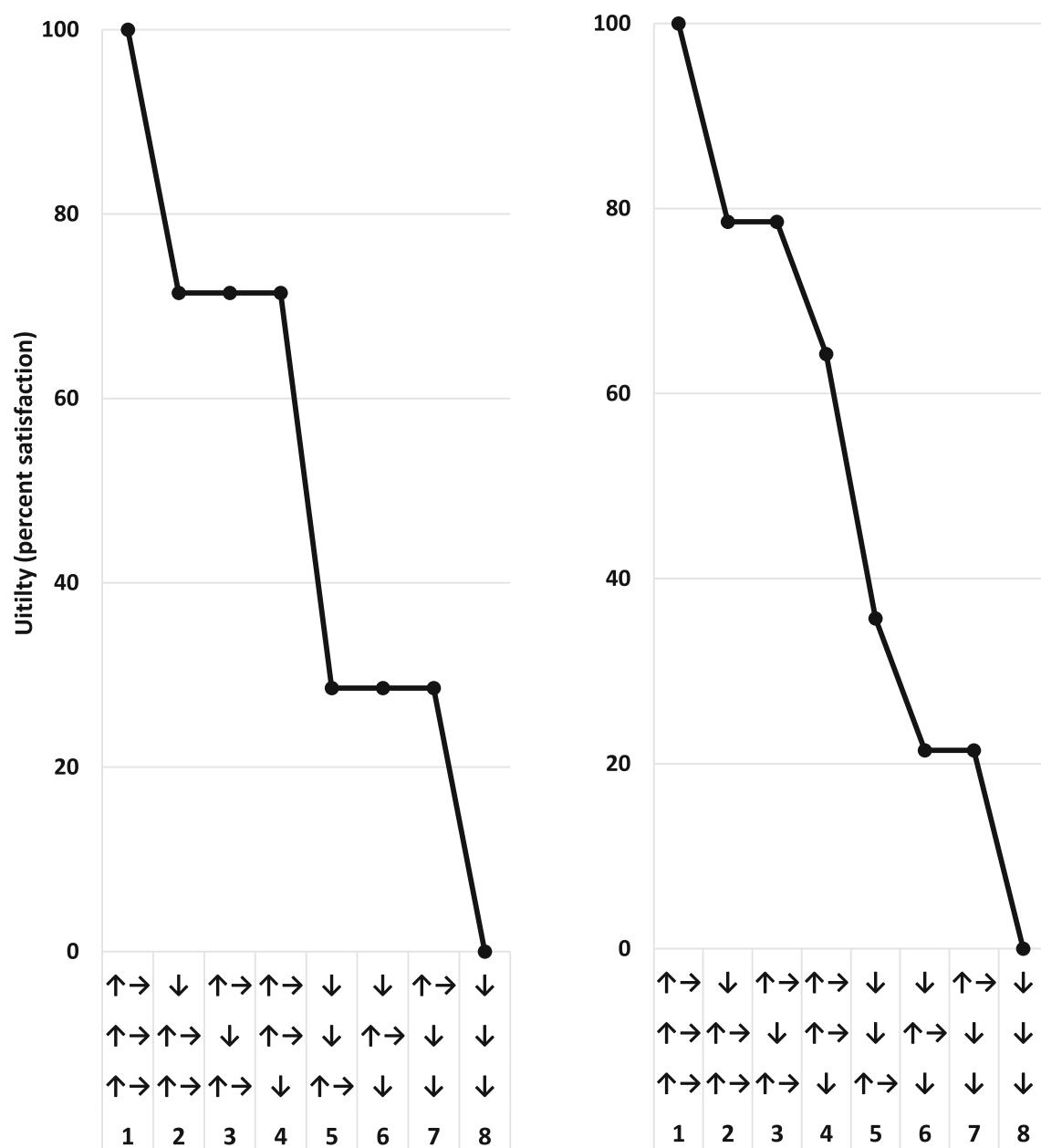


Fig. 5 Utility. Modeled levels of satisfaction (i.e., utility) among eight combinations of states regarding changes in an index representing each of the three dimensions of sustainability. The index is the average of importance scores between objectives under a given dimension. The index and scores are not graphed, but changes in the indices are represented by arrows: $\uparrow\rightarrow$ = increase or stable; \downarrow decrease. Satisfaction regarding intermediate scenarios (i.e., states 2 through 7) depend on the ranking of importance scores among the dimensions by users of a decision-support tool as illustrated by two examples: (left) three-way tie among dimensions; (right) tie for second rank between ecological and economic dimensions

DISCUSSION

We built a ready-to-use decision-support tool for decision makers and stakeholders of various backgrounds faced with decisions within the management of wild ruminants at a fine spatial scale. Although developed based on decision contexts in Lower Austria, we believe it can be readily adapted for use in any region around the world. It allows

for gaining a conceptual understanding of a complex decision along with a quantitative comparison of user-selected management options. The iterative nature of the tool development and providing written protocols of the workshops helped to build trust in the process while tailoring modifications of the decision model to the interests and needs of decision makers and stakeholders. Although we were unable to test real-world applications of the tool

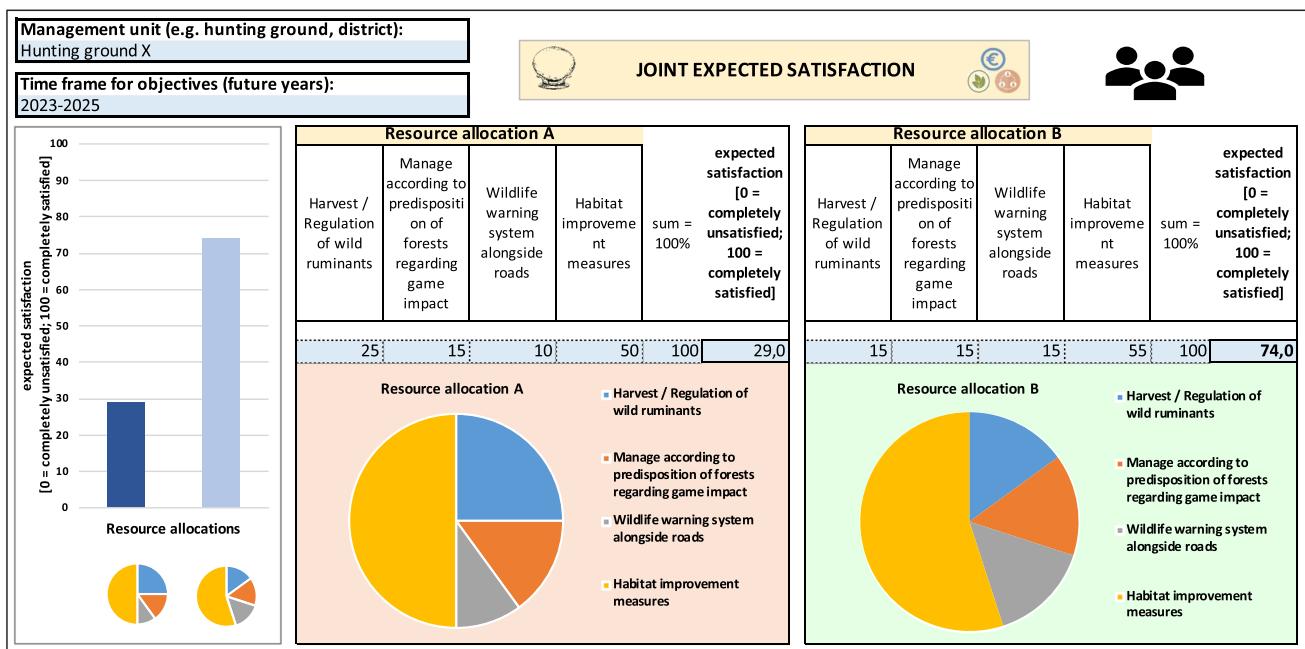


Fig. 6 Hypothetical example illustrating the comparison between expected satisfaction averaged across stakeholder groups within the JAKEtool. An analogous result is provided for the focal user, but for simplicity this is not shown here. Yellow fields: fields providing general instructions, blue fields: fields providing information regarding the choices available

due to time constraints, all participants, except for one, indicated that the tool would be effective at addressing obstacles to their decision-making.

Although the decision tool represents an important advance for sustainable management of wild ruminants, we recognize areas for future work to increase its robustness and usefulness. The most important need is to develop the tool as an open-source web application that is fast and user friendly. The Excel macros are often slow and navigating between the sheets can be cumbersome. These difficulties may discourage some practitioners from using the existing tool. Due to insufficient resources available, we were not able to develop an open-source web application or implement a stand-alone graphical user interface. When necessary resources become available, an important next step is to develop such a web application for broader use.

Predictive models did not exist for parameterizing predictions in the decision model. The tool therefore relies on users to specify levels of uncertainty regarding effects of external factors and resource allocations on objectives. The decision model structure is suited for calculating expected value of perfect information (Runge 2011), which would quantify the level of importance for reducing each uncertainty. Practitioners could then work with researchers if needed to address these uncertainties through literature review, data collection, and predictive modeling. Identifying uncertainties to address through linking management and monitoring could form the basis for a formal adaptive

management program that includes stakeholder involvement (Williams and Brown 2014; Mattsson et al. 2018). The tool could be extended to update model weights based on information collected by practitioners or researchers, and these weights would in turn improve model predictions and increase likelihood of achieving objectives (e.g., Nichols et al. 2007; Powell et al. 2022).

The participants in our study were satisfied with the simple design of the tool, but there may be users who would like to explicitly address more complex decision contexts or access advanced features. To accommodate additional complexity, the BDN could be administered using code. Implementing the decision model in a programming language would allow for more efficient generation of additional nodes and edges representing added factors and corresponding relationships in the decision model. The code would be embedded in the backend of the web application mentioned above to maintain the accessibility of the tool for practitioners.

An advanced feature that would increase the robustness of results from the tool would relax the assumption of an additive utility function. An open-source web application could include an interactive graph that allows the user to adjust their utility function after eliciting importance scores for the objectives (Dewancker et al. 2016). This would minimize elicitation burden while allowing for a more rigorous analysis tailored to the more nuanced trade-offs faced by practitioners.

Another important need is to evaluate the usefulness of the tool in real-world applications. This should be conducted using a before-after-control-impact design to obtain robust inferences (Eikelboom and Janssen 2017). Furthermore, hunting collectives are randomly selected to ensure a representative sample within a given federal state or region. Before and after applying the tool to a focal decision, researchers would survey practitioners about their satisfaction with the management of wild ruminants in the selected hunting collective. Statistical analyses would examine the potential difference in satisfaction before and after the use of the tool in control (i.e., nonuser of tool) and treatment (i.e., user of tool) groups. Finally, qualitative interview questions regarding the usefulness of the tool can be applied for evaluation and making improvements. These findings would allow for a better understanding of not only the immediate usefulness of the tool but also how it could be further improved.

CONCLUSION

Worldwide, modern wildlife management is faced with complex problems. As stakeholder interests are diverse and oftentimes contradicting, decision tools offer great possibilities in applying a theory of change (Allen et al. 2017) in addressing complex situations and therefore mitigating wildlife-based conflicts. Hence, such tools can be helpful additions to the wildlife management toolbox in many countries. Structuring objectives according to the pillars of sustainability while allowing users to select particular objectives, actions, and external factors would ensure that the results are applicable to real-world decisions. Otherwise, decision tools are likely to fail in practical usability and be only useful in an academic context. We furthermore strongly argue for integrative and participatory approaches such as stakeholder workshops to inform development of decision tools. Engaging with stakeholders of all perspectives within complex problems is a key principle of sustainability sciences (van Kerkhoff 2014). During the stakeholder workshops, we elicited practical information and developed our tool in accordance with mission-driven science (International Science Council 2021).

Our tool is responsive to real-world needs of game managers around the globe, as users can define the decision context for applying the tool. Further, the tool is supportive to policy and practitioners in that quantitative comparisons of management options provide a level of transparency that is often sought by natural resource managers (International Science Council 2021). We thus enhanced the research-action interface for sustainability (van Kerkhoff and Lebel 2006) by integrating decision science in a decision-support tool designed for practitioners concerned about ecological,

economic, and sociocultural aspects in the systems they manage. Although the tool was tailored for management of wild ruminants, the underlying structure is applicable to other sectors of natural resource management dealing with sustainability issues including forestry, agriculture, nature-based tourism, fisheries, nature conservation, and regional planning. Thus, our tool represents an important step toward developing and evaluating a transparent and replicable approach for mitigating wildlife-based conflicts worldwide.

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Author contributions All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript. PG contributed to conceptualization, methodology, validation, investigation, resources, data curation, writing—original draft, writing—review and editing, visualization, and project administration. FK was involved in conceptualization, investigation, resources, writing—original draft preparation, and writing—review and editing. KH contributed to conceptualization, supervision, and funding acquisition. BM provided software and was involved in conceptualization, methodology, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation, writing—original draft, writing—review and editing, visualization, supervision, project administration, and funding acquisition.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Paul Griesberger (✉) received the BSc degree in biology (zoology) from University of Vienna, the MSc degree in wildlife ecology and wildlife management from University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU) and is currently a doctoral student at the Institute of Wildlife Biology and Game Management (IWJ) at BOKU. His research interests include wildlife management, wildlife ecology, wildlife behavior and physiology, with a focus on wild ungulates. His doctoral thesis focuses on challenges and approaches regarding the management of wild ungulates in Austria.

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Klaus Hackländer studied biology (zoology and nature conservation) at the Philipps-University Marburg (1997) and received a Ph.D. in zoology from the University Vienna in 2001. He worked as post doc at the Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology, University of Veterinary Sciences, Vienna and became full professor at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) in 2005. He heads the Institute of Wildlife Biology and Game Management at BOKU and is CEO of the Deutsche Wildtier Stiftung (German Wildlife Foundation). His research focuses on reproductive and population ecology in mammals as well as wildlife management, i.e., conservation, control and sustainable use of mammals and birds. Klaus Hackländer is active in numerous scientific boards, e.g., as President of the Applied Science Division of the International Council of Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), Member of the IUCN SSC Lagomorph Specialist Group, and General Secretary of the World Lagomorph Society.

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Brady Mattsson received a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri, USA in 1999. Next, he obtained a Master of Science in Biology with a minor in Statistics from the University of Minnesota at Duluth, Minnesota, USA in 2001. He then completed his PhD in Forest Resources at the University of Georgia (UGA) in Athens, Georgia, USA in 2006. He worked as a postdoctoral researcher at UGA for three years before working as a Research Ecologist for the US Geological Survey (USGS) from 2009 through 2012. Afterward he worked as an independent contractor for the USGS until 2015 when he began as a Marie Curie Incoming

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Erklärung zum Einsatz von generativen KI-Tools

Ich habe DeepL verwendet, um auf Grundlage der von mir verfassten deutschen Zusammenfassung, eine erste Fassung des englischen Abstracts zu erstellen. Dieser Abstract wurde anschließend sprachlich überarbeitet.

Anhang A: Wissenschaftlicher Lebenslauf

Nachfolgend findet sich eine Zusammenfassung der wissenschaftlichen Aktivitäten des Verfassers von 2017 bis Mitte 2024, die einen Bezug zum Thema dieser Dissertation aufweisen.

Forschungsprojekte (Mitwirkung od. Projektleitung)

- **Lebensraumkonkurrenz zwischen der Alpengämse und anderer (Wild)-Wiederkäuer**
Projektleitung: Paul Griesberger
Geldgeber: Nationalpark Hohe Tauern Salzburg
Laufzeit: 01.04.2022 – 31.08.2024
- **Anwendbarkeit des Benford-Gesetzes auf Bewegungsdaten von Rotwild in Wildgehegen**
Projektleitung: Paul Griesberger
Geldgeber: Universität für Bodenkultur Wien
Laufzeit: 01.01.2022 – 01.01.2024
- **Erforschung klimatischer und anthropogener Einflüsse auf die Gämse zur Entwicklung eines nachhaltigen Managements**
Projektleitung: Klaus Hackländer
Primärer Geldgeber: Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft FFG
Laufzeit: 01.01.2022 – 31.12.2025
- **Rotwild in den Hohen Tauern – Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten hinsichtlich des Raum-Zeit-Verhaltens und der Aktivität dieser Wildart beim Vergleich zweier Projektgebiete – Herausforderungen und Lösungswege**
Projektleitung: Paul Griesberger
Geldgeber: Nationalpark Hohe Tauern Salzburg
Laufzeit: 01.02.2021 – 30.09.2021
- **Jagdliche Bewirtschaftung von Wildwiederkäuern in Niederösterreich: Entwicklung eines zukunftsorientierten Entscheidungsmodells**
Projektleitung: Brady Mattsson
Geldgeber: Landesforstdirektion NÖ, NÖ Jagdverband, Land&Forst Betriebe NÖ
Laufzeit: 12.12.2019 – 31.07.2021
- **Integrales Wildtiermanagement nach Sturmschäden im Wald**
Projektleitung: Klaus Hackländer
Primärer Geldgeber: Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft FFG
Laufzeit: 15.01.2015 – 15.01.2018

Auszeichnungen

- Granser – United Global Academy Forschungspreis für eine Nachhaltige Jagd (2022)
- Forschungsstipendium Nationalpark Hohe Tauern (2021/2022)
- YO Research Award by the CIC (International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, 2020)

Vorträge

2024

- **Überwinterungsstrategien des Rotwilds**
11. Rotwildsymposium der Deutschen Wildtier Stiftung

- **Bewirtschaftung von Rotwild – Herausforderungen und Lösungswege**
Jagdkundentag der Österreichischen Bundesforste
- **Situation des wiederkäuenden Schalenwildes**
29. Österreichische Jägertagung
- **Mathematical approaches in wildlife research: Applicability of Benford's law to movement data of red deer**
Research Symposium des Dep. für Integrative Biologie und Biodiversitätsforschung
- **Nachtaktivität – Ursachen und Auswirkungen**
Jahresversammlung des Steirischen Jagdschutzvereins Kirchbach

2023

- **Nächtliche Beunruhigungen auf Rotwild – Einblicke in ein Rotwild Telemetrieprojekt**
Anblick Fachtagung „Nachtaktiv“
- **Die Alpengämse – Einblick in aktuelle Forschungsprojekte**
Nationalpark Hohe Tauern Pressereise

2022

- **Wildtiere als Teil des Waldes**
Studieninfotag der Universität für Bodenkultur Wien

2021

- **Hunting suitability model – a new tool for red deer management**
CIC – virtual event

2020

- **Projekte zum Thema Wildschadensmanagement und Wildbewirtschaftung**
Seminar für Forstangestellte 2020 der NÖ Landarbeiterkammer in Zusammenarbeit mit der Forstabteilung der Landwirtschaftskammer NÖ

2019

- **How do human activities shape the behaviour and physiology of red deer? – a telemetric approach**
Research Symposium des Departments für Integrative Biologie und Biodiversitätsforschung
- **Integrales Rotwildmanagement – Strategievernetzung zwischen Forst-, Land-, Jagd- und Tourismuswirtschaft**
3. Pinzgauer Reviertag
- **How do human activities shape the behaviour and physiology of red deer? – a telemetric approach**
Wilhelminenberg Seminar Talks
- **Einfluss menschlicher Aktivität auf das Raumnutzungsverhalten und die Physiologie von Rotwild**
gemeinsame Tagung der Österreichischen Gesellschaft der Tierärzte Sektion Wildtierkunde und Umweltforschung und der Höheren Bundeslehr- und Forschungsanstalt Raumberg-Gumpenstein
- **Effiziente Kahlwildregulierung – aber wie?**
Hegeschau des Rotwildgebietes Odenwald

2018

- **Werden Wildtiere durch die Jagd (als Freizeitaktivität) gestört?**
FVA Fachtagung "Werden Wildtiere durch Freizeitaktivitäten gestört?" - Erkenntnisse aus der Forschung für die Praxis

Veröffentlichte Publikationen

- **Griesberger, P., Kunz, F., Reimoser, F., Hackländer, K., & Obermair, L.** (2024). Lauern an der Kante. *Wild und Hund*, 12/2024, 14-18.
- **Griesberger, P.** (2024). Unsichtbares sichtbar machen! *Der Anblick*, 06/2024, 26-29.
- **Kunz, F., Griesberger, P., Reimoser, F., Hackländer, K., & Obermair, L.** (2024). Durch gezielten Jagddruck Verbiss vermeiden? *Der Anblick*, 04/2024, 34-36.
- **Griesberger, P., Kunz, F., Hackländer, K., & Mattsson, B.** (2024). Building a decision-support tool to inform sustainability approaches under complexity: Case study on managing wild ruminants. *Ambio*. doi: [10.1007/s13280-024-02020-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-024-02020-9)
- **Griesberger, P., & Nöbauer, S.** (2024). Schalenwildforschung in den Hohen Tauern. *Tätigkeitsbericht Nationalpark Hohe Tauern Salzburg*, 2023, 30-31
- **Griesberger, P., Kunz, F., Reimoser, F., Hackländer, K., & Obermair, L.** (2023). Spatial distribution of hunting and its potential effect on browsing impact of roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) on forest vegetation. *Diversity*, 15(5), 613. doi: [10.3390/d15050613](https://doi.org/10.3390/d15050613)
- **Griesberger, P.** (2023). In der Hirschbrunft kommt Bewegung rein. *Weidblatt*, Oktober 23, 16-19.
- **Griesberger, P., Kunz, F., Reimoser, F., Hackländer, K., & Obermair, L.** (2023). Verbissreduktion durch Bejagung im Wald. *Der OÖ Jäger*, September 2023, 12-15.
- **Griesberger, P., & Nöbauer, S.** (2023). Alpengämse im Fokus: Schalenwildmanagement in den Hohen Tauern. *Tätigkeitsbericht Nationalpark Hohe Tauern Salzburg*, 2022, 30-31.
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., Zandl, J., Stalder, G., Arnold, W., & Hackländer, K.** (2022). Bejagbarkeitsmodell: ein neues Werkzeug für das Management wildlebender Huftiere. *Poster im Rahmen des 10. Rotwildsymposiums der Deutschen Wildtierstiftung*.
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., Zandl, J., Stalder, G., Reimoser, F., Arnold, W., & Hackländer, K.** (2022). Integrales Rotwildmanagement – Ein Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis. *Beiträge zur Jagd- und Wildforschung*, 47, 147-218.

- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., Zandl, J., Stalder, G., Arnold, W., & Hackländer, K.** (2022). Hunting suitability model: a new tool for managing wild ungulates. *Wildlife Biology*, May 2022(3), 1–11. doi: [10.1002/wlb3.01021](https://doi.org/10.1002/wlb3.01021)
- **Griesberger, P.** (2022). Rotwild in den Hohen Tauern. *Tätigkeitsbericht Nationalpark Hohe Tauern Salzburg*, 2021, 20-21.
- **Pröger, L., Griesberger, P., Hackländer, K., Brunner, N., & Kühleitner, M.** (2021). Benford's law for telemetry data of wildlife. *Stats*, 4, 943-9. doi: [10.3390/stats4040055](https://doi.org/10.3390/stats4040055)
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., Zandl, J., Stalder, G., Reimoser, F., Arnold, W., & Hackländer, K.** (2021). Integrales Rotwildmanagement – Ein Brückenschlag zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis. *Der Anblick*, 1. Auflage 4/2021, 1-35.
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., Zandl, J., Stalder, G., Arnold, W., & Hackländer, K.** (2021). Hirsche unter Freizeitdruck. *Wild und Hund*, 6/2021, 12-18.
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., & Hackländer, K.** (2020). Rotwild: Wie lenken? *St. Hubertus*, 10/2020, 8-12.
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., & Hackländer, K.** (2019). Rotwild: Geister der Nacht. *Pirsch*, 17/2019, 6-12.
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., Arnold, W., & Hackländer, K.** (2019). Sehen aber nicht gesehen werden. *Steirische Jägerin*, 54-57.
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., & Hackländer, K.** (2018). Rotwild: schlecht bejagbare Bereiche als Rückzugsorte. *Weidwerk*, 10/2018, 24-27.
- **Griesberger, P., Obermair, L., & Hackländer, K.** (2017). Gebirgsrevier: Welche Flächen sind bejagbar? *Weidwerk*, 11/2017, 18-21.