

Quantifying the social network dynamics of male African elephants using real-world data and agent-based simulations

Date	18 th Feb (Fri.)	
Time	16:00 (UTC+8)	
Venue	Zoom	

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We have a rich understanding of the hierarchical matrilineal social systems of female elephant groups and the importance of older females for the survival of populations. In contrast, we know relatively little about the social lives of male elephants after they disperse from their natal groups and the importance of older males, despite the fact that older males may be more at risk of being removed from populations by poachers and hunters due to their size and large tusks. Here I will present two recent studies showing (1) that older males, like females, have long-term social relationships and may be important for maintaining stable social networks among adult male elephants, and (2) that practical difficulties in collecting social network data from large, wide-ranging wild animals, such as elephants, can lead to skewed estimates of social network metrics, which can have important implications for management and conservation strategies.

All are welcome!



Dr Derek Murphy is a behavioural ecologist interested in animal social systems and social behaviour. His work has focused on vocal communication and social network dynamics in Old World monkeys and African elephants, as well as the impact of different data collection methods on estimates of social network metrics. He is currently a postdoc at the German Primate Centre, exploring the use of machine learning techniques to automate data collection on wild Guinea baboons. Previously he was a postdoc in the Applied Behavioural Ecology and Conservation lab at HKU, where he worked on elephant and meerkat social networks.

