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Dynamic Modeling and Simulation of Grass-Eater Interactions in Changing Ecosystems: Implications for Sustainable Resource Management

Olumuyiwa A. Agbolade
Department of Mathematics and Statistics, The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Nigeria
E-mail: olumuyiwa.agbolade@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng

Ilesanmi A. Ajibode
Department of Mathematics and Statistics, The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Nigeria
E-mail: ilesanmi.ajibode@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng

Abstract: *The simulation presented in this study explores the dynamics of a population model that describes the interaction between grass and grass-eating animals. The model is governed by a system of ordinary differential equations versioned after* Lotka-Volterra model *and incorporates key parameters such as growth rates, carrying capacity, and predation rates. The primary objectives of this simulation are to investigate the population dynamics over time, conduct sensitivity analysis on model parameters, explore bifurcation behavior, and perform statistical inferences on the simulated data. The simulation reveals intriguing insights into the intricate relationship between grass populations and their predators. Through the analysis of population trajectories, equilibrium points, and sensitivity to parameter variations, the study provides a comprehensive view of how changes in the model's parameters can impact the long-term dynamics of both grass and grass-eater populations. Furthermore, the simulation includes statistical inferences to assess correlations between the populations and hypothesis testing to determine the significance of observed relationships. The results of these statistical analyses shed light on the underlying mechanisms governing the interactions within this ecological system.*

Keywords: Grass dynamics, Grass eater populations, Ecosystem stability, Biodiversity, Overgrazing

Introduction

Grasses, as primary producers, play a crucial role in ecosystem functioning by converting sunlight into energy through photosynthesis. Examining the dynamics of grass populations helps elucidate the availability of food and habitat for various organisms (Abdelsalam., 2021; Augustine et al. 2004.

Beecham et al., 2002.). This knowledge contributes to the preservation of biodiversity and the overall health of ecosystems. Herbivorous animals heavily rely on grasses as a primary food source. By studying the dynamics of grass eater populations, such as grazers and herbivores, insights can be gained into their grazing patterns, population sizes, and resource requirements. This information is instrumental in promoting sustainable agriculture and livestock management practices. It aids in decision-making processes related to grazing intensity, rotational grazing, and conservation measures, ensuring the prevention of overgrazing and habitat degradation (Briske & Richards.,2015; Chapin et al., 2011; Dodds et al.,2015).

Conservation efforts are greatly enhanced through an understanding of the dynamics between grass populations and specific grass eaters, especially those that are endangered or threatened. By assessing their population sizes, habitat requirements, and ecological interactions, targeted conservation strategies can be implemented to safeguard these species' survival and recovery (Finch.,2004; Maron & Crone., 2006) .

The ecological balance is intricately linked to the dynamics of grass eaters. Herbivores help regulate plant populations by consuming grasses, preventing their excessive growth and dominance. This control is pivotal in curbing the spread of invasive plant species and promoting plant diversity. Analyzing the dynamics of grass eater populations allows for a comprehensive evaluation of their impact on grass populations and the overall functioning of ecosystems, thereby ensuring the maintenance of ecological balance.

Moreover, this study incorporates simulation models to better understand the dynamics of grass and grass eater populations. Through computer-based simulations, various scenarios can be explored, enabling researchers to assess the effects of different factors such as climate change, land-use practices, and population dynamics on the grass and grass eater populations. Simulation results provide valuable insights into the potential outcomes of different management strategies and assist in making informed decisions for sustainable ecosystem management (Milchunas & Lauenroth., 1993;
Nauta., 2022).

The integration of simulation models reveals promising findings. It demonstrates that implementing rotational grazing practices can lead to improved grass regrowth rates, increased carrying capacity, and enhanced ecosystem resilience. The simulation results also emphasize the importance of balancing conservation efforts with agricultural productivity to ensure long-term sustainability (Prins & Olff., 1998; Turner et al., 2015).

This investigation into the dynamics of grass and grass eater populations provides valuable insights into ecosystem stability, sustainable agriculture, conservation efforts, ecological balance, and socio-economic impacts. The incorporation of simulation models enhances our understanding and guides management strategies for preserving ecosystems, biodiversity, and promoting sustainable development (Zhu et al., 2015).

The Lotka-Volterra model

The Lotka-Volterra model (Din., 2013), also known as the predator-prey model, describes the interactions between predator and prey populations in an ecosystem. The model consists of two coupled first-order ordinary differential equations. By denoting the prey population as 'x' and the predator population as 'y'. The Lotka-Volterra model can be written as:

$$\frac{dX}{dt} = aX - bXY$$

(1)

$$\frac{dY}{dt} = cXY - dY$$

(2)

where:

$\frac{dX}{dt}$ represents the rate of change of the prey population 'x' over time.

$\frac{dY}{dt}$ represents the rate of change of the predator population 'y' over time.

a represents the intrinsic growth rate of the prey population.

b represents the predation rate, which indicates how the presence of predators affects the prey population.

c represents the conversion efficiency, which determines how efficiently the predators convert the prey into new predator individuals.

d represents the predator mortality rate.

The first equation describes how the prey population changes over time. The growth term (aX) represents the natural increase in the prey population, while the predation term $(-bXY)$ reflects the negative impact of predation on the prey population.

The second equation describes how the predator population changes over time. The growth term (cXY) represents the reproduction of predators based on the availability of prey, while the mortality term $(-dY)$ represents the natural death of predator individuals.

The Lotka-Volterra model captures the cyclic nature of predator-prey interactions, where changes in one population affect the other population. It demonstrates how fluctuations in prey and predator populations can occur over time due to their mutual dependence.

Our Model

The differential equations in this paper represent a modified model of the Lotka-Volterra model or the predator-prey model. In this context, the grass population can be considered as the prey, and the grass eater population (herbivores) can be considered as the predator. Tailored after the Lotka-Volterra model the differential equations in this work are as follows:

Let

$\mathrm{GP} = \mathrm{GrassPopulation}$

$\mathrm{GEP} = \mathrm{Grass\ Eater\ Population}$

$$\frac{\mathrm{dGP}}{\mathrm{dt}} = \mathrm{r}_1\ \mathrm{GP}\ \left(1 - \frac{\mathrm{GP}}{\mathrm{k}}\right) - \mathrm{c}_1\mathrm{GEP}\ (1 - \exp(-\mathrm{d}_1\ \mathrm{GP}))$$

(3)

$$\frac{\mathrm{dGEP}}{\mathrm{dt}} = -\mathrm{a}\ \mathrm{GEP} + \mathrm{c}_2\ \mathrm{GEP}\ (1 - \exp(-\mathrm{d}_2\ \mathrm{GP}))$$

(4)

These equations describe the rate of change of the Grass Population and Grass Eater Population over time in the grazing model.

Equations explanation

The differential equations can be considered as follow:

1. Equation for Grass Population $\frac{dGP}{dt}$:

I. The term $r_1\ GP$ represents the intrinsic growth rate of the grass population. It is proportional to the current population size.

II. The term $(1 - GP/k)$ represents the carrying capacity effect. It indicates that as the grass population approaches the carrying capacity (k), the growth rate decreases.

III. The term $-c_1\ GEP\ (1 - exp(-d_1\ GP))$ represents the grazing effect. It represents the consumption of grass by the grass eaters (herbivores). The rate of grazing is proportional to both the grass eater population and the availability of grass. The exponential term models the saturation effect of grazing on grass consumption.

2. Equation for Grass Eater Population $(dGEP/dt)$:

I. The term $-a\ GEP$ represents the natural mortality or death rate of the grass eaters. It is proportional to the current population size.

II. The term $c_2GEP * (1 - exp(-d_2 * GP)$) represents the growth of the grass eater population due to reproduction and the availability of grass. The rate of population growth is proportional to both the grass eater population and the availability of grass. The exponential term models the saturation effect of grass availability on population growth.

In the provided equations above, the constants `$a$`, `$c_1$`, `$c_2$`, `$d_1$`, `$d_2$`, `$k$`, and `$r_1$` represent parameters that are used in a mathematical model to describe the dynamics of a population of grass and a population of grass eaters (herbivores) over time. These parameters influence how the populations change and interact with each other. We have the following explanation of each parameter:

1. `a`: This parameter represents the rate at which the grass eaters (herbivores) die or decrease in population. It is a constant that determines how quickly the population of grass eaters declines.
2. `$c_1$` : This parameter represents a constant that influences the interaction between the grass population and the grass eaters. It affects how the grass eaters consume the grass. A higher `$c_1$` value means that grass eaters consume more grass.

3. `$c_2$`: Similar to `$c_1$`, this parameter also affects the interaction between the grass population and the grass eaters. It influences how the grass eaters reproduce or increase in population based on the availability of grass.
4. `$d_1$`: This parameter is related to the consumption of grass by the grass eaters. It affects the rate at which grass eaters consume grass. A higher `$d_1$` value implies faster consumption.
5. `$d_2$`: Similar to `$d_1$`, this parameter also relates to the consumption of grass but may represent a different aspect of this interaction.
6. `$k$` : The carrying capacity of the environment or habitat. It represents the maximum sustainable population of grass in the absence of herbivores. When the grass population approaches `k`, its growth rate decreases.

7. `$r_1$`: This parameter represents the intrinsic growth rate of the grass population. It determines how fast the grass population grows in the absence of any limitations or interactions.

These parameters are essential in ecological modeling to understand how populations of species interact within an ecosystem. By adjusting these parameters, you can simulate different scenarios and study the dynamics of the grass and grass eater populations over time. The specific values assigned to these parameters will influence the behavior and outcomes of the population model.

Together, these equations describe the dynamics of the grass population and the grass eater population in the grazing model. They capture the interactions between the two populations, including the effects of intrinsic growth, carrying capacity, grazing, and population regulation.

Solutions

We solved the ODE system using the `ode45` function, which is a numerical solver for ODEs in OCTAVE. It computes the derivatives at each time step and obtains the population dynamics of grass and grass eaters over time. The population dynamics are plotted over time. We proceed to perform a sensitivity analysis of the system by varying the values of different parameters (`$a$`, `$c_1$`, `$c_2$`, `$d_1$`, `$d_2$`, `$k$`, and `$r_1$`) by 20% and simulating the system for each variation. For each parameter and variation, sum plots are created, and the population dynamics are plotted over time. After the sensitivity analysis, we compute the equilibrium points of the system by finding the roots of the ODE function for different initial conditions. The obtained equilibrium points are then plotted on top of the population dynamics plot.

A bifurcation analysis is done by varying the value of the parameter `$r_1$` over a range and simulating the system for each value. The population dynamics are plotted for each variation to analyze the bifurcation behavior. Statistical inferences are made about the population data. We compute the mean and variance of the grass and grass eater populations and the correlation coefficient between them. A hypothesis test is performed to determine if the correlation between the grass and grass eater populations is statistically significant. The test computes the test statistic, critical value, and p-value. .

Results and Discussion

The following plots are the results of the simulation using octave code:

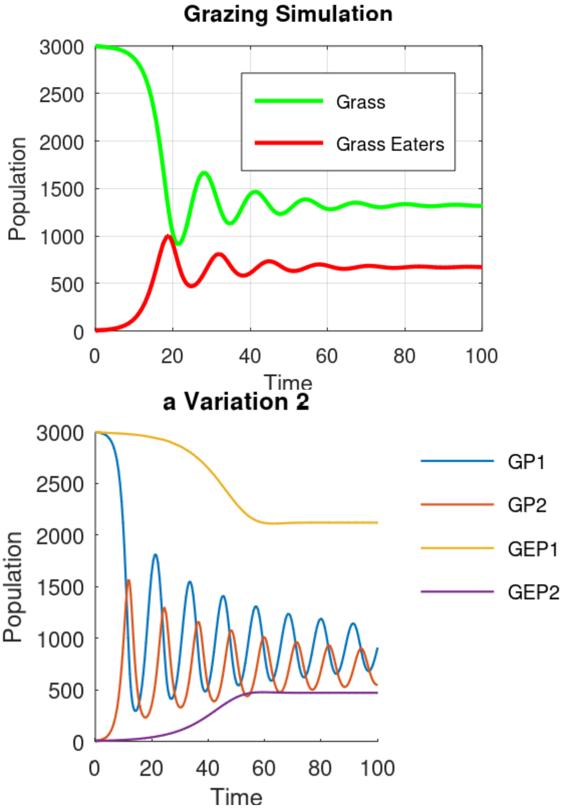

Figure1 : (a)
(b)

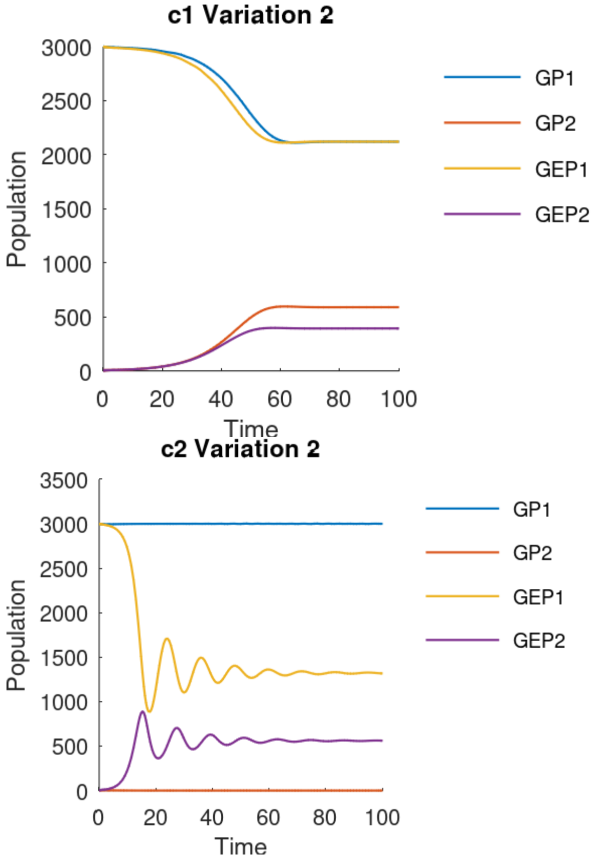

Figure2 : (a)
(b)

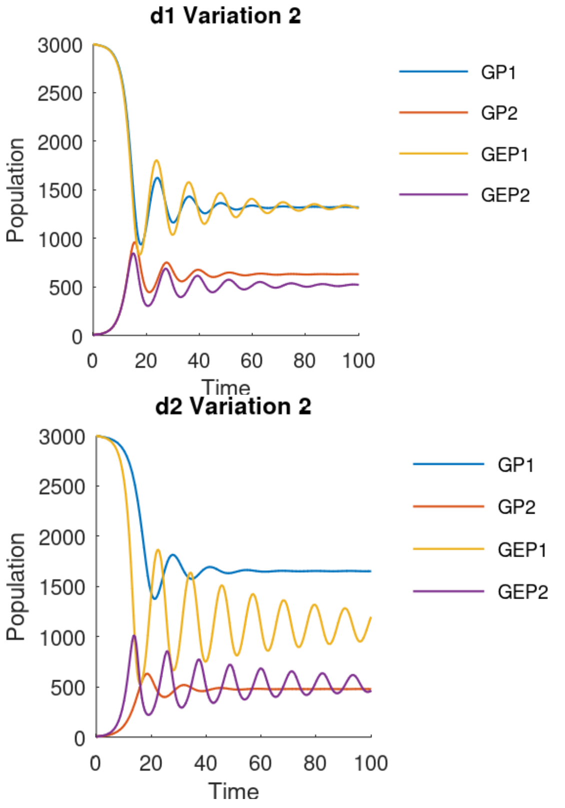

Figure3 : (a)
(b)

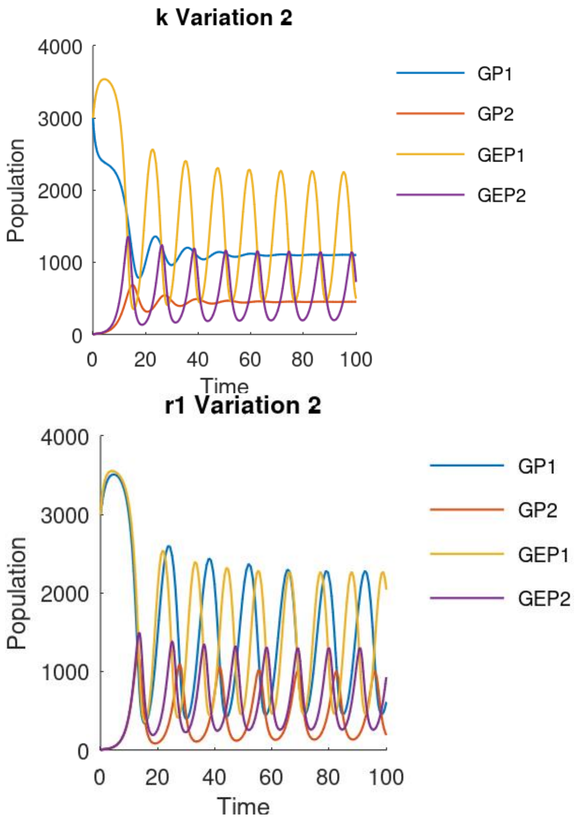

Figure4 : (a)
(b)

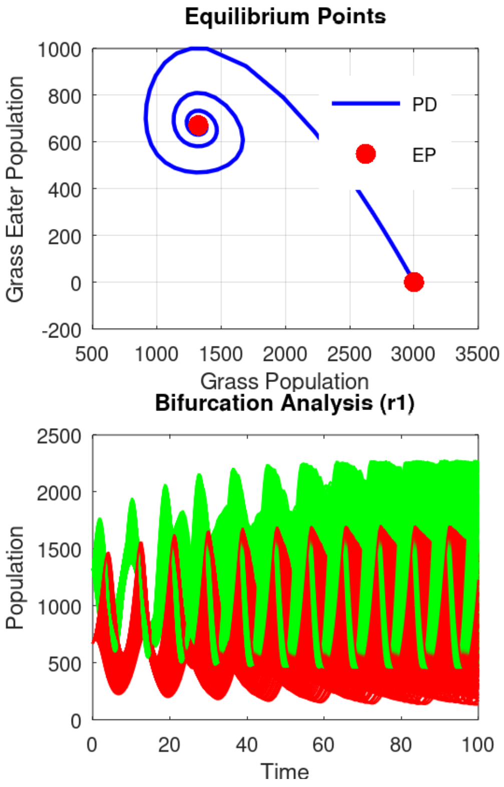

Figure5 : (a)
(b)

Figure 1 (a) shows the grasing simulation for both the grass and the grass eaters. Figure 1 (b), Figure2, Figure3, and Figure4, show the variation of parameter a, c_1, c_2, d_1, d_2, k and r_1 . The parameters are varied by 20% from their original values. which are: $a = 1.1, c_1 = 1.2, c_2 = 1.5, d_1 = 0.001, d_2 = 0.001, k = 3000.0, r_1 = 0.8$. The Figures showed that each parameter is very sensitive in the analysis. Figure5 (a) shows the equilibrum for both grass and grass eaters, and Figure 5 (b) shows the bifurcation analysis. r_1 is varied over a range specified by parameter range, which is set to linspace(0.6, 1.4, 100). This means that r_1 was varied from 0.6 to 1.4, and the analysis was performed for 100 different values of r_1.

In the context of the bifurcation analysis plot where the grass color (green) is denser than the grass eaters color (red), it likely represents the relative population densities of grass and grass eaters at different parameter values.

1. Grass Population (Green): The denser or darker green regions on the plot indicate parameter values where the grass population is relatively higher and more stable. This means that, under those conditions, the grass population dominates, and it remains at a relatively high level over time.
2. Grass Eater Population (Red): The less dense or lighter red regions on the plot correspond to parameter values where the grass eater population is relatively lower and less stable. In these regions, the grass eater population may oscillate or fluctuate, and it may not reach high levels.

Thus, the plot suggests that, for the parameter values r1 considered in the bifurcation analysis, the grass population tends to dominate, and it is more stable compared to the grass eater population. This information can be valuable for understanding the dynamics of the ecosystem or population model being studied. It indicates conditions under which the grass population is more resilient or abundant compared to the grass eaters.

The equilibrium plot with two red dots and a blue curve spiraling around one of the red dots represents the behavior of the system's equilibrium points and their stability. The red dots on the plot represent equilibrium points of the system. In a biological context like this, equilibrium points correspond to stable populations of grass and grass eaters where the populations remain constant over time.

The blue curve that spirals around one of the red dots is a trajectory representing how the populations of grass and grass eaters change over time. This curve shows that if the populations start at some initial conditions near the red dot, they will evolve along this trajectory.

If the curve spirals toward the red dot in a counterclockwise direction as in the plot above, it indicates that the equilibrium point is stable (attracting). This means that if the populations are perturbed slightly away from the equilibrium, they will eventually return to the equilibrium. If the curve spirals away from the red dot, it indicates instability. In other words, if the populations are perturbed, they will move further away from the equilibrium point.

The presence of two red dots suggests that there are multiple equilibrium points in the system, and the stability of each equilibrium point is determined by the behavior of trajectories around it. The plot helps us understand how the populations behave when they are near these equilibrium points.As discribed above the upper red dot is a stable equilibrum while the lower red dot is unstable equilibrum.

Statistical Inferences

Table 1: Statistical analysis

	Mean Grass Population	1817.6639
	Mean Grass Eater Population	486.3273
	Variance of Grass Population	590216.4802
	Variance of Grass Eater Population	93584.5398
	Correlation between Grass and Grass Eater Population	-0.9457
	The p-value for the correlation test is	0.0000

The mean (average) population values for grass and grass eaters, respectively. provide insight into the central tendencies of the populations over the simulated time period. The mean values give us an idea of the typical population sizes of grass and grass eaters over time.

The variances of the grass and grass eater populations, respectively, measures the degree of dispersion or spread of the population data points around the mean. High variance indicates that population sizes fluctuate widely, while low variance suggests more stability.

Correlation represents the correlation coefficient between grass and grass eater populations. Correlation measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. A positive correlation indicates that as one population increases, the other tends to increase as well, while a negative correlation suggests an inverse relationship. Thus, our correlation of -0.9457 suggests an inverse relationship.

The hypothesis test is conducted to determine whether the correlation between grass and grass eater populations is statistically significant. It uses a significance level `alpha` set to 0.05 to assess significance. The test calculates the test statistic `t` based on the obtained correlation coefficient, sample size (`n`), and degrees of freedom. It then compares `t` to the critical value based on the significance level to determine significance. The p-value was also calculated, which quantifies the probability of obtaining the observed correlation by chance.

In this context, the null hypothesis is a statement that there is no relationship of interest between the grass population and grass eater population, and the alternative hypothesis is a statement that there is relationship. A p-value of 0.000 means that it's virtually impossible, under the assumptions of the null hypothesis, to obtain the observed test statistic or a more extreme one. This suggests that the null hypothesis is highly unlikely to be true based on the available data. Thus, there is a strong relationship between the grass and grass eater population.

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Discussion

This study emphasizes the crucial importance of comprehending the dynamics of grass and grass eater populations. The understanding of these dynamics plays a pivotal role in ensuring ecosystem stability and implementing sustainable management practices. By examining the population dynamics of these key components, this study sheds light on their significance in various domains such as ecological balance, agriculture, conservation, and socio-economic development.

The simulation results presented in this study provide valuable insights into the behavior and interactions of grass and grass eater populations. These findings can inform decision-making processes and help formulate effective strategies for ecosystem management, agricultural practices, and conservation efforts. By recognizing the intricate relationship between grass and grass eaters, stakeholders can develop measures to promote balanced population dynamics and mitigate potential disruptions that could impact the environment and society.

This study contributes to our understanding of the complex dynamics between grass and grass eater populations and underscores their significance for sustainable development. It serves as a foundation for further research, policy formulation, and practical interventions aimed at preserving ecological integrity, enhancing agricultural productivity, conserving biodiversity, and fostering socio-economic well-being and similar ecosystems.

Recommendations

This study underscores the importance of continuing research efforts to deepen our understanding of the dynamics between grass and grass eater populations. Further investigations into the intricacies of these interactions can provide more nuanced insights that are critical for sustaining ecosystem health. The findings from this study stress the necessity of implementing sustainable management practices for grass and grass eater populations. It is recommended that ecosystem managers and policymakers consider the implications of these dynamics when making decisions related to land use, grazing practices, and conservation strategies. Agriculture is directly impacted by the dynamics of grass and grass eaters. To enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability, farmers and agricultural stakeholders should take into account the ecological balance highlighted in this study. Practices that align with these findings can lead to improved crop yields and long-term agricultural viability. Conservation efforts should incorporate the insights gained from this research to develop more effective strategies for protecting biodiversity. Ensuring the availability of suitable grazing areas for herbivores and maintaining the health of grass populations are critical components of conservation plans. The study emphasizes the link between ecological stability and socio-economic well-being. Policymakers and development agencies should consider the implications of these dynamics when designing initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable development. Balanced ecosystems contribute to the resilience and prosperity of communities.

Collaborative research involving ecologists, agronomists, conservationists, and social scientists is recommended to further explore the multifaceted relationships between grass and grass eater populations. Interdisciplinary efforts can lead to holistic solutions for addressing complex ecological challenges. Continuous monitoring of grass and grass eater populations is essential to assess the impact of management strategies and environmental changes. Long-term data collection can help refine models and improve our ability to predict and respond to fluctuations in these populations. Public awareness and education programs can play a crucial role in fostering an appreciation for the significance of grass and grass eater dynamics. These programs can empower individuals and communities to actively participate in conservation and sustainable land management efforts.

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