

ABSTRACT

Halley, D.J. & M. Mari, M. (2004). Dry season social affiliation of African buffalo bulls at the Chobe riverfront, Botswana. *South African Journal of Wildlife Research* 34(2): 105 – 111.

African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) bulls alternate between living within large mixed-sex herds, and living solitarily, or in small single-sex groups, as ‘bachelors. Using radio-telemetry, we show that bulls in northern Chobe National Park, Botswana, spend the early dry season as bachelors, but switch to herd attendance in the later dry season. Bulls may move between different mixed herds at this time, but are very rarely found as bachelors. As bachelors they are found more often in Baikaiea woodland, away from the floodplain grassland and adjacent habitats, than are herds during the same period. This pattern of herd affiliation differs from that found in studies elsewhere in Africa. It seems most likely that it results from a combination of seasonal mating opportunities; foraging preferences and seasonal forage availability; and predation avoidance, in turn determined largely by the highly seasonal, semi-arid climate. Key words: buffalo, social affiliation, male behaviour, *Syncerus caffer*, foraging, reproduction.