

Scientists study home range factors

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A team of European scientists says it has determined what factors affect the home range size among individuals of one species.

Instead of wandering aimlessly, most animals tend to stay in a certain area known as their home range.

Luca Borger of the University of Cambridge, Tim Coulson of Imperial College London and Novella Franconi of the University of Siena spent four years monitoring the movements of roe deer in southern Tuscany. They determined neighboring animals differ in the amount of area they use depending on the most abundant habitat type inside their home range.

They found the deer also respond to day length, with small home ranges in the summer and larger areas in autumn and winter.

"Yet, if it rains less or it is hotter than usual, the animals range over wider or smaller areas, depending on the habitat they are in," said Franconi.

"This is not only of scientific interest," added Coulson, "but is increasingly important to manage the effects of climate change and habitat alterations on animal populations."

The study appears in the journal *The American Naturalist*.

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