

A web app for population viability and harvesting analyses

WAYNE M. GETZ^{1,2,3} | OLIVER C. MUELLERKLEIN¹ |

RICHARD M. SALTER^{3,4} | COLIN J. CARLSON¹ |

ANDREW J. LYONS¹ | DANA P. SEIDEL¹

¹Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720 (Email: wgetz@berkeley.edu)

²School of Mathematical Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

³Numerus, Inc, 850 Iron Point Road, Suite 280, Folsom, CA 95630

⁴Computer Science Department, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH, 44074

Correspondence

Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

Email: wgetz@berkeley.edu

Wayne M. Getz and Oliver C. Muellerklein are co-first authors.

Abstract

Population viability analysis (PVA) is used to assess the probability that a biological population will persist for a specified period of time. Such models are typically cast as Markov processes that may include age, stage, sex and metapopulation structures, density-dependence and ecological interaction processes. They may also include harvesting, stocking, and thresholds that trigger interventions. Here we present a PVA web app that includes extensible user-selected options. Specifically, this PVA web app allows for the specification of one to ten age classes, one or two sexes, single population or metapopulation configurations with 2 or 3 subpopulations, as well as density-dependent settings for inducing region-specific carrying capacities. Movement among subpopulations can be influenced by age, metapopulation connectivity, and attractivity of regions based on the relative fitness of the youngest age classes in each region. Simulations can be carried out deterministically or stochastically, with a user-specified combination of demographic and environmental processes. This PVA web app is freely available at <http://www.numerusinc.com/webapps/pva> for running directly on any browser and device. It is easily modified by users familiar with the NovaModeler Software Platform.

KEYWORDS

PVA analysis, metapopulation movement, species conservation, rhino demography, Leslie matrix model

1 | INTRODUCTION

Highly valued animal and plant populations are declining at a dramatic rate worldwide (Barnosky et al., 2011), either as a result of overexploitation (Mullon, Freon, & Cury (2005), Godfray et al. (2010), Weinbaum, Brashares, Golden, & Getz (2013)), poaching (Chapron et al. 2008), Wittemyer 2011), global climate change, or the conversion of human settlement and development of pristine habitat (Ellis, 2011, Foley et al., 2011, Urban, 2015). The value of individuals within these populations comes from either ethical considerations (the conservation imperative: (Minteer & Collins, 2010) or resource utility



considerations (the management imperative: (Ostrom, Burger, Field, Norgaard, & Policansky, 1999)). Since seminal work of Beverton and Holt six decades ago (Beverton & Holt, 1957), mathematical models have played a central role in both evaluating (Metzger et al., 2010) and devising population management programs (Weinbaum et al., 2013), initially for exploitation and, more recently, conservation. The latter has been implemented through creating protected areas (Moffitt, White, & Botsford, 2011), improving their security (Watson, Dudley, Segan, & Hockings, 2014), and stocking or translocating individuals (Armstrong & Seddon, 2008, Seddon, Griffiths, Soorae, & Armstrong, 2014) to bolster or reestablish populations in selected areas. At the core of the most comprehensive and successful of these models is the Leslie matrix formulation (e.g., see Caswell, 2001), which provides a way of incorporating population vital rates (mortality and natality) into both harvesting (sustainable management) and population viability analysis (conservation management) models.

Impelled by the work of Beverton and Holt (1957), fisheries science has had a cadre of quantitatively trained individuals able to formulate and code sophisticated models used to manage fisheries by helping set quotas on harvesting effort and fish stock removals (Getz & Haight, 1989, Quinn & Deriso, 1999). From the 1980s onwards, quantitative population biologists have formulated Leslie matrix type models to help set quotas for trophy hunting or other types of exploitation of vertebrate populations (Getz & Haight, 1989), but it is only over the past 20 years that the application of Leslie matrix type models has found wide application in conservation biology (Beverton & Holt, 1957, Heppell, 1998, Menges, 2000, Wisdom, Mills, & Doak, 2000, Caswell, 2001, Fieberg & Ellner, 2001, Crone et al., 2011, Merow et al., 2014b). In some cases, when traits, such as age or size are considered as continuous rather than discrete variables, these models are more generally formulated as integral projections (e.g., see Easterling, Ellner, & Dixon, 2000, Merow et al., 2014a); though they revert to matrix models under numerical discretization schemes (Ellner & Rees, 2006, Rees, Childs, & Ellner, 2014). With a rapidly growing need to conserve endangered species, scientists and policymakers who have not been trained to code their own population models for numerical simulation, face the challenge of building best practice simulation models (Kettenring, Martinez, Starfield, & Getz, 2006) to aid them in their species management or conservation biology work. To support these researchers and managers, software applications platforms, such as RAMAS (e.g., see Crone et al., 2011) and VORTEX (Lacy, 1993, 2000, Brito & Da Fonseca, 2006, Lacy & Pollak, 2012), have been developed, particularly to aid population ecologists in using population viability analyses (PVA) (Beissinger & Westphal, 1998, Morris & Doak, 2002). VORTEX (Lacy & Pollak, 2012) takes an agent-based approach to modeling individuals and is able to include the type of information used to track lineages and pedigrees that are stored in studbook files (cf. Marker & Fund, 2012). VORTEX is also able to track, under the assumption of Mendelian inheritance, the fate of multiple genetic loci and assess levels of inbreeding. VORTEX runs in a Windows operating systems environment, as does RAMAS. RAMAS, though, is a commercial platform with multicomponent high-end products that can incorporate detailed landscape information and geographical information systems approaches into its analyses.

Our *NumerusOL* app, which we refer to as Numerus PVA, provides a more gentle entry into PVA than either VORTEX or RAMAS. Most importantly, Numerus PVA runs directly in a web-browser environment with access via the website Numerusinc.com. Further, it has sufficient flexibility to include two sexes, a variable sex ratio, three types of density-dependent mechanisms, and runs as either a deterministic or stochastic simulation (demographic, environmental or both) with one to three subpopulations. Migration of individuals among subpopulations incorporates propensity of individuals to move by age and sex, connectivity of regions, and attractivity of regions based on some criterion such as the anticipated fitness of individuals within those regions. Harvesting and stocking management options are also included. All of these components are wrapped in an intuitive web-based Graphical User Interface (GUI) that requires no computer programming and only an elementary understanding of discrete time population models using life table data.

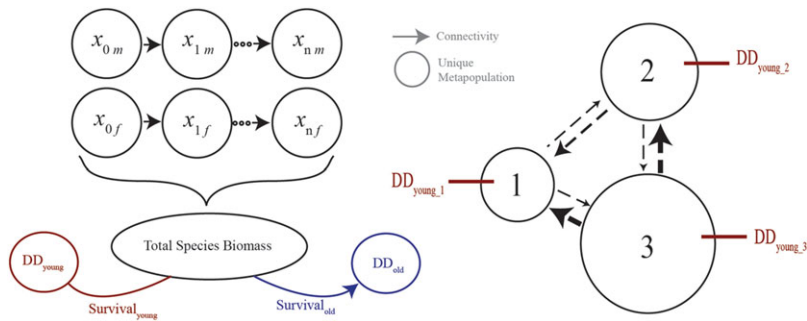


FIGURE 1 A flow diagram of a two-sex, age-structured, population model with density-dependent (DD) survival in the youngest and oldest classes that depend on the population biomass B (Equation (3)) (left side), and schematic of the metapopulation structure (right side) indicating regionally specific DD processes

Numerus PVA itself was constructed using the Numerus platform and the *NumerusOL* file conversion technology, which is based on our earlier Nova Platform (Salter, 2013, Getz, Salter, & Sippl-Swezey, 2015). Use of Numerus PVA, however, requires no knowledge of coding nor of the Nova modeling platform. The GUI provides data fields that can be entered online and key parameters manipulated using sliders. The app can be run in either deterministic or stochastic modes. The deterministic mode is most useful when evaluating various management strategies implemented in large population (generally in the context of sustainable fisheries or forestry exploitation rates that are optimal in some sense—cf. Getz & Haight, 1989). The stochastic mode includes demographic stochasticity (e.g., small population size effects) and environmental stochasticity (e.g., driving variable fluctuations drawn from climatic variable distributions). The former is critical to carrying out species extinction risk analyses, in other words PVA (Fieberg & Ellner, 2001), while the latter permits possible climate trend information to be accounted for in multidecadal simulations (cf. Wilmsers & Getz, 2004a).

2 | MODEL STRUCTURE AND SIMULATION MODES

2.1 | Demography

The demographic model underlying our app has the flexibility to include one or two sexes, single or metapopulation structure, and density-dependent (DD) effects (Figure 1). These DD effects can be implemented separately in each metapopulation region and in the context of reducing survival rates in the youngest male and female, oldest male and female, and maturing male age-classes. In all but the latter, we assume that survival is affected by the aggregated biomass variable B (Figure 1) that weights individuals by a user-specified age-sex relative value, rather than purely by the more usual population size (i.e., numbers). This allows us to correct for the fact the when density dependence arises through resource consumption then total biomass is more appropriate than population size for indexing the level of competition (Getz, 2011). In contrast, maturing male DD effects depend on the total number of males M that are \geq age r (age at which males mature; see figure in Appendix 3, SI online) because we assume these effects arise through contest competition or defense of territories. In essence, the model depicted in Figure 1 is a nonlinear elaboration of a discrete-time Leslie matrix formulation (Caswell, 2001), with details of the equations provided in Appendix 3 (SI).

The data needed to implement a Leslie matrix model of a homogeneous population are the age-specific survival rates s_i (the proportion individuals that survive from age i to age $i+1$) and the age-specific natality values b_i (the average number of newborns per unit time produced by adults of age i ;

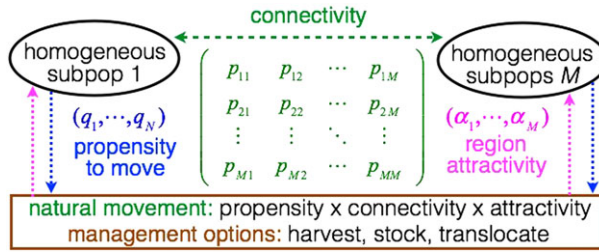


FIGURE 2 Depiction of the stochastic movement (i.e., migration) and management processes used to compute exchanges among and changes $M \leq 3$ regional subpopulation levels, as generated by *harvesting* and *stocking* (which can also be interpreted as translocations) and then *migration* (cf. Figure 3). The latter is computed in terms of (i) a *propensity* of individuals of different age-sex classes to leave their current regional location, (ii) a matrix that represents the *connectivity* (ease of movement) among regions; and (iii) an optional destination *attractivity* factor determined by the relative fitness of the youngest age class in region (DD1 and DD2 in Figure 1, as influence by ϕ defined in Equation (3))

or young-per-female when two sexes are invoked, with the sex of each being probabilistically allocated using the value of the sex ratio parameter—see Appendix 3 online for more details). If $x_i(t)$ is the number of individuals at time t in a model that does not differentiate by sex, then the number of newborns at time $t+1$ is (in Figure 1 we illustrate the more general sex differentiated model with variables x_{if} and x_{im} , $i = 0, \dots, n$)

$$x_0(t) = \sum_{i=1}^n b_i x_i(t) \quad (1)$$

Aging is included in the model through the equations

$$\begin{aligned} x_{i+1}(t+1) &= s_i x_i(t), \quad i = 0, \dots, n-2 \\ x_n(t+1) &= s_{n-1} x_{n-1}(t) + s_n x_n(t) \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

Density dependence in the model is introduced by multiplying either or both of the density independent survival rates s_0 and s_n by the factor

$$\phi = \frac{c^2}{c^2 + B^2}, \quad \text{where } B = \sum_{i=1}^n w_i x_i \text{ and } c > 0 \text{ is the competition constant} \quad (3)$$

This dependence is then generalized to be included in two sex models; and it can also be applied to males that may be motivated to engage in male–male competition on reaching sexual maturity, as illustrated in the figure in Appendix 3. In this case the density dependent factor is

$$\hat{\phi} = \frac{\hat{c}^2}{\hat{c}^2 + M^2}, \quad \text{where } M = \sum_{i=r}^n x_i, \quad r \text{ is the male maturity age and } \hat{c} > 0 \quad (4)$$

In addition, in a two-sex model, if there are no mature males during an iteration period, then births are set to zero for that period.

2.2 | Migration

To specify how individuals move among meta-population regions, a region-specific propensity-to-move vector \mathbf{q}_i of elements q_{ij} is entered (Figure 2): in particular, the value of q_{ij} represents the proportion of individuals of age-sex class i in region j that will move, taking into account that some may end up not



moving after considering the relative desirability of other regions compared to their home region. In addition a connectivity matrix P with elements p_{rs} (Figure 2) specifies the relative ease that individuals in region r are able to move to region s , should they have the propensity to do so. Thus the movement of individuals is determined both by this connectivity matrix and by a propensity for individuals of different ages to move at different rates (e.g., only maturing males in search of territory may move, and so on).

The movement (migration) module of Numerus PVA has one additional feature referred to as the *engage-relative-fitness* switch, which can be turned ON or OFF. If it is OFF, the probability of individuals moving from one region to another is determined solely by the vectors q_i and matrix P (Figure 2). If this switch is on then an additional relative attractiveness factor is applied for each region. These are the region-specific values of the factors ϕ , calculated in Equation (3) using region-specific parameters for reducing the survival of the youngest age classes in each region (see Appendix 3, SI, for details).

2.3 | Stochasticity

The model can run either deterministically or stochastically, where the latter may include either demographic or environmental sources (Engen, Lande, Sæther, & Weimerskirch, 2005). Demographic stochasticity arises from sampling theory (underlying vital parameters are treated probabilistically) and hence should be included when populations are small, because its effects are proportional to the inverse of the square root of population size (Desharnais et al., 2006). Environmental stochasticity is likely to affect various age classes differently, depending on the source of the stochasticity (e.g., climatic drivers versus disease). Here we make provision for environmental stochasticity to impact only the youngest age class, which is often the most vulnerable age class, as has been documented for large mammalian herbivores (Gaillard, Festa-Bianchet, & Yoccoz, 1998). Environmental stochasticity may also be important in senescing age classes (Wilmsers & Getz, 2004b). Such considerations can be included in customized versions of the model, as discussed in the Conclusion section. A deterministic simulation requires the demographic stochasticity switch to be OFF, and the environmental stochasticity slider to be set to 0. If demographic stochasticity is ON, then all survival computations of the form $s_i x_i$ are replaced with $\text{BINOMIAL}(x_i, s_i)$ computations and birth number computations $b_i x_i$ are replaced with $\text{BINOMIAL}(b_{\max} x_i, b_i/b_{\max})$ computations, where b_i (birth rate) has the interpretation of expected litter size and b_{\max} (birth max) is the maximum litter size. If the environmental stochasticity slider is > 0 then environmental stochasticity in the survival s_0 of the youngest age class is included up to a maximum level that is implement when the slider is set to 1 (see Appendix 1, SI, for more details). The slider value can be tuned over multiple simulations with different slider values until the simulated variance matches the desired or observed variance.

2.4 | Constraints

The current version of the software is limited to 1–10 age-classes for each of 1–2 sexes in each of 1–3 metapopulation regions and running the model for a maximum of 1000 steps. Future versions of the software will relax these constraints. The NovaScript file, underlying this *NumerusOL* implementation, was constructed using the Nova modeling platform (Salter, 2013, Getz et al., 2015) and it (see SI) can always be rapidly modified to supply the user with a version of the model that meets the user's needs.

2.5 | Event sequence

Since the order of events matters in a discrete time simulation—e.g., an individual that dies first cannot then be harvested, and vice versa—it is necessary to pay attention to this order when formulating



FIGURE 3 Sequence of events used to compute the transition of the age class vector \mathbf{x} from times t to $t+1$. From this we see that density-dependent (DD#, cf. Figure 1) survivorship, when applied, takes effect prior to harvesting, stocking and migration

transition equations from one time step to the next. The order that we use to calculate the number of individuals in age class i at time t , i.e., $x_i(t)$, that make it into age class $i+1$ at time $t+1$, depends first on the number that die from natural causes (as determined by the survival parameter s_i), then on those removed by harvesting, then on those added by stocking, and finally the numbers lost and gained through migration (Figure 3). The implication of this is that individuals that move do not include those that are harvested, but may include those that are stocked. Also, the density-dependent mortality depends on the population state at the beginning of the discrete interval of time and hence does not account for population changes from harvesting, stocking, or movement.

3 | SETTING UP A MODEL RUN

At the simplest level, one can choose to run the model in deterministic mode for a single-sex homogeneous population with no density dependence. At its most complex, the Numerus PVA can be run in two-sex, density-dependent, metapopulation mode, with both demographic and environmental stochasticity switched on, where all parameters are metapopulation region specific. The values of parameters can either be entered manually or by importing an appropriately configured csv file (Figure S1, SI online). Using the manual entry approach (with or without the self-guided tutorial) the data that are entered on the following pages, which appear sequentially:

- i. *Population data*: number of regions; number of age classes, one or two sex, and male-maturity-age by region in the two-sex case, density dependence options by region (young, old, or mature males in the case of two-sex case) (Figure S2, SI online). These data are used to set up the forms for the pages that follow, since the much of the remaining data is age-class and region specific.
- ii. *Core population parameters*: initial numbers by age for each region, survival and birth rates by age for each region, “birth max” by age (will only be used for models with demographic stochasticity) for each region, and finally both female sex ratio and male maturity age by region. These data pertain to the entries needed to implement a Leslie Matrix population projection model.
- iii. *Biomass and movement parameters*: relative biomass of each of the age/sex classes in each region; density-dependence parameters (youngest age class, oldest age class, males transitioning to sexual maturity) in each region; propensity to move by age/sex class for each region; region connectivity matrix. These data are used to implement the density dependent functions that modify survival rates of the youngest, oldest, and maturing male age classes in each region, as well as determine stochastic movement rates among regions.
- iv. *Stocking and harvesting values*: age-class specific stocking and harvesting rates (numbers to be added or removed) each time interval or on a regular schedule with adjustable frequencies; and additional harvesting pressure that removes specified numbers of individuals, but randomly from cohort ranges set by sliders.
- v. *Interactive model implementation*: a page from which runs are executed once with the option to control the following settings or switches (Figure S3, SI online): simulation length setting, save

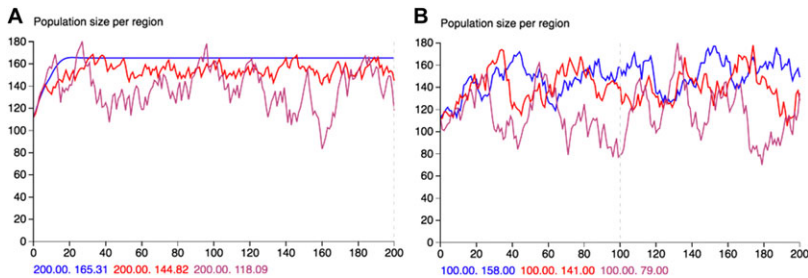


FIGURE 4 Simulations of model using parameters in Table 1, female sex-ratio = 0.6 and male maturity age is 3 in all three regions, and density-dependent survival is only in the youngest group (parameter $c100$), with no (blue), half (red), and maximum (purple) levels of environmental stochasticity with demographic stochasticity OFF (A.) and ON (B.). The size of the population is read out $t = 200$ (A.) and $t = 100$ (B.) where we note that when demographic stochasticity is OFF (A.), the model predicts fractional numbers, while when demographic stochasticity is ON, the model predicts whole numbers. Initial values for male and female cohorts in all cases were: male = $(10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,4)'$ (' denotes the vector is transposed from a column to a row) and female = $(10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,4)'$

model output switch; pseudoextinction threshold setting, density dependent engagement switches; demographic stochasticity switch, environmental stochastic switches and levels by region, as well as random harvesting values (number specified, by individuals chosen from random classes within specified cohort ranges). On running the model visual output will be generated (Figure S4, SI online) and an optional csv file generated.

4 | ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

We illustrate implementation of our PVA web app, using an exemplar data set that is inspired by the life-history and conservation predicament of the black rhino, *Diceros bicornis*, in southern Africa; but has not been fitted to any particular population because parameters vary quite considerable among populations. This species, like other rhino species, is close to extinction (it is on the IUCN's critically endangered list—next step, extinct in the wild), with fewer than a few thousand individuals alive at this time. Because this species is subject to the devastating effects of intense poaching for rhino horn, locations and numbers are kept confidential by managers of national parks and conservation areas. Further, while some life history data on birth and survival rates are available, these rates vary from one area to another, and often life table construction (natality and mortality rates at each age) relies on misleading values obtained from individuals kept in zoos (e.g., longevity in zoos can be greatly different from longevity in the wild; while calf survival depends on predation pressure). Thus we stress that our dataset exemplar should not be regarded as applicable to any specific rhino population and the model itself is essentially generic. The analysis that follows here is not meant to apply to any real population, but is provided for the purpose of illustrating how conservation decisions for the species can be evaluated using our Numerus PVA app.

4.1 | Basic population parameters

The intercalf interval of mature female rhinos is approximately 3+ years (includes 1.3 years for gestation). For this reason, it is convenient to organize the population into age classes that each span three years: i.e., the basic iteration units for t in the model will be 3-year intervals. Hence if the model is used to project population change over T units of time, the corresponding number of years for the projection is $3T$ (Note: in Figures 4 and 5 the x-axis denotes units of t , while in the Figure 6 the units are

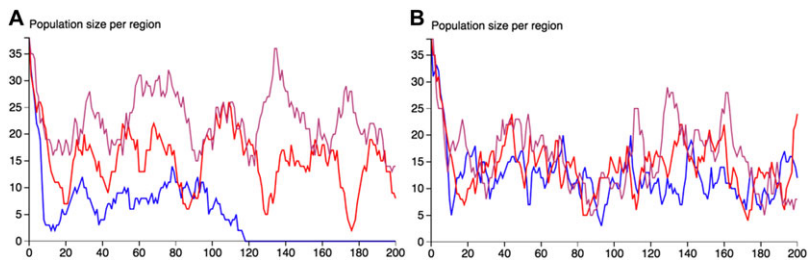


FIGURE 5 Screen captured simulation output from Numerus PVA using parameters in Table 1, sex ratio = 0.6, and density-dependent survival in the youngest age group in each of three regions, where the parameter c has values $c = 5$ (blue), $c = 10$ (red) and $c = 15$ (purple), respectively. The cases of no migration among regions (A.) and movement of males and females in age class 3 (i.e., 7–9 year olds) only among regions (B.) are illustrated. Initial values for male and female cohorts in all cases were: male = (3,3,3,3,2,2,1,1,1)′ and female = (3,3,3,3,2,2,1,1,1)′

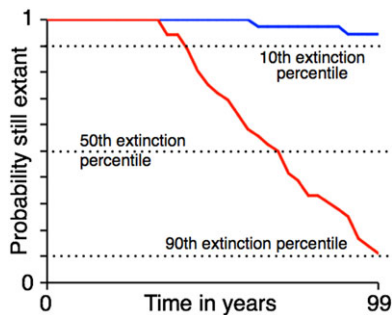


FIGURE 6 Extinction curves obtained for data generated by Numerus PVA for no harvesting (blue) and random harvesting (red; see text for details) of 1 male and 1 female in each time period. Data obtained from 36 simulations (i.e., 12 repeated simulations in 3-region mode with no migration) in each case

TABLE 1 Life table of a large mammalian herbivore

Age (class; i)	Male survival	Female survival	Young / female	Female weights*	Male weights*
0–3 (calf: 1)	0.80	0.80	0	0.5	0.5
3+–6 (subadult: 2)	0.90	0.95	0.3	0.75	1
6+–9 (young adult: 3)	0.90	0.95	0.95	0.75	1
9+–12 (mature adult: 4)	0.90	0.95	0.95	0.75	1
12+–15 (mature adult: 5)	0.90	0.95	0.95	0.75	1
15+–18 (mature adult: 6)	0.90	0.95	0.95	0.75	1
18+–21 (mature adult: 7)	0.90	0.95	0.95	0.75	1
21+–24 (mature adult: 8)	0.90	0.95	0.95	0.75	1
>24 (aging adult: 9)	0.60	0.60	0.5	0.75	1

*Relative units in terms of resource consumption.

years rather than t). Recent estimates of calf, adult female, and adult male survival of rhino in an area of Namibia regarded as relatively unproductive for rhino growth was respectively 0.793, 0.944, and 0.910 (Brodie et al., 2011). These data, rounded to the nearest 0.05, are listed in Table 1, along with the estimate that females in this region produce 0.315 calves per female per year. The female sex ratio used is 0.6, based on estimates reported in Law, Fike, & Lent, 2014, and the male maturity age is taken to be 2 (age 6+–9). These data, when used in a 9-age class, female only Leslie matrix model yield a density-independent growth rate of 6.4% per annum (see SI Appendix 2).



4.2 | Density dependence

The carrying capacity for rhino in two Zululand parks in South Africa, has been estimated at 0.4 and 1.6 rhino km^{-2} (Conway & Goodman, 1989), while values for this species in drier regions of southern Africa have been estimated to be as low as < 0.1 rhino km^{-2} (Linklater et al., 2011). In this illustrative example, we include the effects of density-dependence only on the survival of the young: that is DD1 and DD2 in Figure 1, which is tantamount to multiplying the density independent survival constants for males and females in Table 1 by the function given in Equation (1). We note that setting $c = 50, 100$, and 150 producing carrying capacities (i.e., equilibrium values) of around 69, 138 and 208 individuals (Figure S6; implying reserves of corresponding sizes in square kilometers).

4.3 | Stochasticity

For purposes of comparison, we run the model with the parameter values specified in Table 1, the sex ratio at 0.6 (female biased), and $c = 100$ in deterministic, and environmental stochasticity at half max and at full max settings (the environmental stochasticity sliders are set at 0, 0.5, and 1, respectively) (Figure 4A). We repeated this simulation with demographic stochasticity switched ON (Figure 4B). First we note from visual inspection of Figure 4 that variance increases with increasing levels of environmental stochasticity and that the model predicts whole numbers when demographic stochasticity is ON, but fractional numbers when demographic stochasticity is OFF. This is consistent with the requirement that demographic stochasticity be ON when population size is relatively small (tens or hundreds) and can only be safely ignored when population sizes are close to a thousand or more, in which case the interpretation of the state variables is density (i.e., fractional numbers are meaningful) rather than size (fractional numbers are nonsensical).

4.4 | Movement

For the three components of migration—propensity to move, connectivity, and region attractivity (Figure 2)—we allowed individuals only in the third age class to move (i.e., those aged 7–9 years, through the propensity to move vectors: male = $(0,0,1,0,0,0,0,0,0)'$; female = $(0,0,1,0,0,0,0,0,0)'$), we assumed all regions were equally accessible for another (i.e., the connectivity matrix was filled with 1s); and we assumed all regions were equally attractive (i.e., the “Migration with Relative Fitness” switch was OFF). Notice that extinction occurs in region 3 without migration (Figure 5A.), but the populations in the three regions are somewhat equalized when migration occurs (Figure 5B.).

4.5 | Poaching

We carried out an assessment of the effects of poaching by running the model with parameters used to generate Figure 4, but with youngest age group density-dependent survival parameter set at $c = 10$ (i.e., the red trajectory in Figure 5A applies) under both *no poaching* (harvesting) and *poaching* scenarios. We obtained 36 replicate runs for the no poaching scenario by running the model in 3-region mode 12 times under the assumption of no migration, where the red trajectory in Figure 5A is but one example. We then reran with harvesting set to removing 1 male and 1 female in each time period drawing the individual at random from cohorts 4 to 9 for the males and 5–9 for the females. This level of poaching considerably increases the population’s risk of extinction from comfortably less than 10% over a 99-year interval (simulation interval is 33 time units) (blue curve, Figure 6) to almost 90% (red curve, Figure 6)



5 | CONCLUSION

The Numerus PVA app presented here when in its one region, one sex, no density dependence, deterministic mode can be used as a class room tool to introduce students to the behavior of Leslie matrix (discrete time, linear, age-structured) models. The app can also be used to introduce students to discrete stochastic process models and their application to PVA risk analysis by enabling demographic stochasticity (i.e., flipping its switch on the app) and incorporating density-dependence into the youngest or oldest age class. Additionally, the app can also be used in the classroom to introduce notions of population management through both harvesting and stocking actions, as well as for exploring migration processes in metapopulation settings. Beyond this the Numerus PVA app can be used in research, though the current constraints limit its application to 20 age-sex classes and 3 regions. These constraints are easily relaxed and users can contact Numerus (at Numerusinc.com) to obtain more powerful versions and make extensive runs on high performance computing clusters.

6 | GLOSSARY

Biomass: The total mass of a population is commonly used in ecology and resource management in lieu of population size as an alternative to the number of individuals. In Numerus PVA, biomass is used to implement density-dependence (DD) effects.

DD effects: Demographic or environmental limits that reduce population growth as populations get larger. Numerus PVA provides density-dependence options that affect survivorship of the youngest age classes youngest female (DD1) and male (DD2), oldest female (DD3) and male (DD4), and mature male (DD5) age-classes, as illustrated in the figure in Appendix 3.

Demographic stochasticity: Random fluctuations arising from the probabilistic nature of applying vital rates to individuals at every life stage in both sexes.

Environmental stochasticity: Random, environmentally induced fluctuations in survivorship. In Numerus PVA, environmental stochasticity is an option for survivorship of the first life stage only (i.e., environmentally induced juvenile mortality).

Leslie matrix: A transition matrix underlying a discrete-time, linear, age-structured population dynamic model.

Metapopulation: A set of connected subpopulations. In Numerus PVA, metapopulations are modeled as a weighted node network with implicit movement of individuals along vertices.

Metapopulation connectivity: An underlying matrix with entries, scaled to take values on the interval $[0,1]$, that represent the relative ease-of-transition among different nodes in the metapopulation.

Perron root: The dominant eigenvalue of a square nonnegative matrix; the Perron root of a Leslie matrix is the rate of population growth.

Propensity to move: In Numerus PVA, movement propensity is an age- and sex-based demographic state specifying the likelihood of emigration to another area (independent of destination).

Pseudoextinction: The event horizon of population size, below which extinction is certain. In Numerus PVA, pseudoextinction levels can also be treated as thresholds for interventions such as *ex situ* captive breeding programs.

Regional attractivity: In Numerus PVA, once the decision to move has been made, and the connectivity of nodes accounted for, an intrinsic variability in quality of possible destination regions remains. We use the comparative intensity of density-dependent (DD) effects on survivorship of the youngest age class (quantity ϕ in Equation (3), with c pertaining the youngest female age class) to scale this quality so that individuals are more likely to go to regions with smaller rather than bigger DD1 effects.



FUNDING STATEMENT

The modeling material and analyses were supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant CNS-0939153. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The model was formulated by WMG, the application produced by OM, using technologies pioneered by RS. Training videos were created by AJL. All authors contributed to the look of the app. The draft was produced by WMG and all authors helped with the figures and editing of the text.

ACCESS NUMERUS PVA APP

This web app can be accessed at <http://www.numerusinc.com/webapps/pva>, where a training video and classroom exercise are also available.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong D. P., & Seddon P. J. (2008). *Directions in Reintroduction Biology*. *Trends Ecol. Evol.* 23:20–25.
- Barnosky, A. D., Matzke, N., Tomiya, S., Wogan, G. O. U., Swartz, B., Quental, T. B., Marshall, C., McGuire, J. L., Lindsey, E. L., Maguire, K. C., Mersey, B., & Ferrer, E. A. (2011). *Has the Earth's Sixth Mass Extinction Already Arrived?* *Nature* 471:51–57.
- Beissinger, S. R., & Westphal, M. I. (1998). *On the Use of Demographic Models of Population Viability in Endangered Species Management*. *J. Wildlife Manag.* 821–841.
- Beverton, R. J. H., & Holt, S. J. (1957). *On the Dynamics of Exploited Fish Populations*. London, United Kingdom: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.
- Brito, D., & Da Fonseca, G. A. B. (2006). *Evaluation of Minimum Viable Population Size and Conservation Status of the Long-Furred Woolly Mouse Opossum Micoureus paraguayanus: An Endemic Marsupial of the Atlantic Forest*. *Biodiver. Conserv.* 15:1713–1728.
- Brodie, J. F., Muntifering, J., Hearn, M., Loutit, B., Loutit, R., Brell, B., Uri-Khob, S., Leader-Williams, N., & du Preez, P. (2011). *Population Recovery of Black Rhinoceros in North-West Namibia Following Poaching*. *Anim. Conserv.* 14:354–362.
- Caswell, H. (2001). *Matrix Population Models: Construction, Analysis, and Interpretation*. 2nd edition. Sinauer Associates, Sunderland, MA.
- Chapron, G., Miquelle, D. G., Lambert, A., Goodrich, J. M., Legendre, S., & Clobert, J. (2008). *The Impact on Tigers of Poaching Versus Prey Depletion*. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 45:1667–1674.
- Conway, A. J., & Goodman, P. S. 1989. *Population Characteristics and Management of Black Rhinoceros Diceros-Bicornis-Minor and White Rhinoceros Ceratotherium-Simum-Simum in Ndumu-Game-Reserve, South-Africa*. *Biol. Conserv.* 47:109–122.
- Crone, E. E., Menges, E. S., Ellis, M. M., Bell, T., Bierzychudek, P., Ehrlen, J., Kaye, T. N., Knight, T. M., Lesica, P., Morris, W. F., Oostermeijer, G., Quintana-Ascencio, P. F., Stanley, A., Ticktin, T., Valverde, T., & Williams, J. L. (2011). *How Do Plant Ecologists Use Matrix Population Models?* *Ecol. Lett.* 14:1–8.
- Desharnais, R. A., Costantino, R. F., Cushing, J. M., Henson, S. M., Dennis, B., & King, A. A. (2006). *Experimental Support of the Scaling Rule for Demographic Stochasticity*. *Ecol. Lett.* 9:537–547.
- Easterling, M. R., Ellner, S. P., & Dixon, P. M. 2000. *Size-Specific Sensitivity: Applying a New Structured Population Model*. *Ecology* 81:694–708.
- Ellis, E. C. (2011). *Anthropogenic Transformation of the Terrestrial Biosphere*. *Philos. Trans. R. Soc. A—Math. Phys. Eng. Sci.* 369:1010–1035.
- Ellner, S. P., & Rees, M. (2006). *Integral Projection Models for Species with Complex Demography*. *Am. Natural.* 167:410–428.
- Engen, S., Lande, R., Sæther, B.-E., & Weimerskirch, H. (2005). *Extinction in Relation to Demographic and Environmental Stochasticity in Age-Structured Models*. *Math. Biosci.* 195:210–227.



- Fieberg, J., & Ellner, S. P. (2001). *Stochastic Matrix Models for Conservation and Management: A Comparative Review of Methods*. *Ecol. Lett.* 4:244–266.
- Foley, J. A., Ramankutty, N., Brauman, K. A., Cassidy, E. S., Gerber, J. S., Johnston, M., Mueller, N. D., O'Connell, C., Ray, D. K., West, P. C., Balzer, C., Bennett, E. M., Carpenter, S. R., Hill, J., Monfreda, C., Polasky, S., Rockstrom, J., Sheehan, J., Siebert, S., Tilman, D., & Zaks, D. P. M. (2011). *Solutions for a Cultivated Planet*. *Nature* 478:337–342.
- Gaillard, J.-M., Festa-Bianchet, M., & Yoccoz, N. G. 1998. *Population Dynamics of Large Herbivores: Variable Recruitment with Constant Adult Survival*. *Trends Ecol. Evol.* 13:58–63.
- Getz, W. M. (2011). *Biomass Transformation Webs Provide a Unified Approach to Consumer–Resource Modelling*. *Ecol. Lett.* 14:113–124.
- Getz, W. M., & Haight, R. G. (1989). *Population Harvesting: Demographic Models of Fish, Forest, and Animal Resources*. (MPB-27). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Getz, W. M., Salter, R. M., & Sippl-Swezey, N. (2015). *Using Nova to Construct Agent-Based Models for Epidemiological Teaching and Research*, in *Proceedings of the 2015 Winter Simulation Conference* (pp. 3490–3501). IEEE Press.
- Godfray, H. C. J., Beddington, J. R., Crute, I. R., Haddad, L., Lawrence, D., Muir, J. F., Pretty, J., Robinson, S., Thomas, S. M., & Toulmin, C. (2010). *Food Security: The Challenge of Feeding 9 Billion People*. *Science* 327:812–818.
- Heppell, S. S. (1998). *Application of Life-History Theory and Population Model Analysis to Turtle Conservation*. *Copeia* 1:367–375.
- Kettenring, K. M., Martinez, B. T., Starfield, A. M., & Getz, W. M. (2006). *Good Practices for Sharing Ecological Models*. *Bioscience* 56:59–64.
- Lacy, R., & Pollak, J. (2012). *Vortex: A Stochastic Simulation of the Extinction Process*. Version 10.0. Chicago Zoological Society, Brookfield, IL.
- Lacy, R. C. (1993). *VORTEX: A Computer Simulation Model for Population Viability Analysis*. *Wildlife Res.* 20:45–65.
- Lacy, R. C. (2000). *Structure of the VORTEX Simulation Model for Population Viability Analysis*. *Ecol. Bull.* 1:191–203.
- Law, P. R., Fike, B., & Lent, P. C. (2014). *Birth Sex in an Expanding Black Rhinoceros (Diceros bicornis minor) Population*. *J. Mammal.* 95:349–356.
- Linklater, W. L., Adcock, K., du Preez P., Swaisgood, R. R., Law, P. R., Knight, M. H., Gedir, J. V., & Kerley, G. I. H. (2011). *Guidelines for Large Herbivore Translocation Simplified: Black Rhinoceros Case Study*. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 48:493–502.
- Marker, L., & Fund, C. C. (2012). *International Cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus) Studbook*. Cheetah Conservation Fund, Namibia.
- Menges, E. S. (2000). *Population Viability Analyses in Plants: Challenges and Opportunities*. *Trends Ecol. Evol.* 15:51–56.
- Merow, C., Dahlgren, J. P., Metcalf, C. J. E., Childs, D. Z., Evans, M. E., Jongejans, E., Record, S., Rees, M., Salguero-Gómez, R., & McMahon, S. M. (2014a). *Advancing Population Ecology with Integral Projection Models: A Practical Guide*. *Methods Ecol. Evol.* 5:99–110.
- Merow, C., Latimer, A. M., Wilson, A. M., McMahon, S. M., Rebelo, A. G., & Silander, J. A. (2014b). *On Using Integral Projection Models to Generate Demographically Driven Predictions of Species 'Distributions: Development and Validation Using Sparse Data*. *Ecography* 37:1167–1183.
- Metzger, K. L., Sinclair, A. R. E., Hilborn, R., Hopcraft, J. G. C., & Mduma, S. A. R. (2010). *Evaluating the Protection of Wildlife in Parks: The Case of African Buffalo in Serengeti*. *Biodiver. Conserv.* 19:3431–3444.
- Minteer, B. A., and Collins, J. P. (2010). *Move it or Lose It? The Ecological Ethics of Relocating Species Under Climate Change*. *Ecol. Applicat.* 20:1801–1804.
- Moffitt, E. A., White, J. W., & Botsford, L. W. (2011). *The Utility and Limitations of Size and Spacing Guidelines for Designing Marine Protected Area (MPA) Networks*. *Biol. Conserv.* 144:306–318.
- Morris, W. F., & Doak, D. F. (2002). *Quantitative Conservation Biology: Theory and Practice of Population Viability Analysis*. Sinauer Associates, Sunderland, MA.
- Mullon, C., Freon, P., & Cury, P. (2005). *The Dynamics of Collapse in World Fisheries*. *Fish Fisher.* 6:111–120.
- Ostrom, E., Burger, J., Field, C. B., Norgaard, R. B., & Policansky, D. (1999). *Sustainability—Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges*. *Science* 284:278–282.
- Quinn, T. J., & Deriso, R. B. (1999). *Quantitative Fish Dynamics*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Rees, M., Childs, D. Z., & Ellner, S. P. (2014). *Building Integral Projection Models: A User's Guide*. *J. Anim. Ecol.* 83:528–545.
- Salter, R. M. (2013). *Nova: A Modern Platform for System Dynamics, Spatial, and Agent-Based Modeling*. *Proc. Comp. Sci.* 18:1784–1793.
- Seddon, P. J., Griffiths, C. J., Soorae, P. S., & Armstrong, D. P. (2014). *Reversing Defaunation: Restoring Species in a Changing World*. *Science* 345:406–412.



- Urban, M. C. (2015). *Accelerating Extinction Risk from Climate Change*. *Science* 348:571–573.
- Watson, J. E. M., Dudley, N., Segan, D. B., & Hockings, M. (2014). *The Performance and Potential of Protected Areas*. *Nature* 515:67–73.
- Weinbaum, K. Z., Brashares, J. S., Golden, C. D., & Getz, W. M. (2013). *Searching for Sustainability: Are Assessments of Wildlife Harvests Behind the Times?* *Ecol. Lett.* 16:99–111.
- Wilmsers, C. C., & Getz, W. M. (2004a). *Simulating the Effects of Wolf-Elk Population Dynamics on Resource Flow to Scavengers*. *Ecol. Modell.* 177:193–208.
- Wilmsers, C. C., & Getz, W. M. (2004b). *Simulating the Effects of Wolf-Elk Population Dynamics on Resource Flow to Scavengers*. *Ecol. Modell.* 177:193–208.
- Wisdom, M. J., Mills, L. S., & Doak, D. F. (2000). *Life Stage Simulation Analysis: Estimating Vital-Rate Effects on Population Growth for Conservation*. *Ecology* 81:628–641.
- Wittemyer G. (2011). *Effects of Economic Downturns on Mortality of Wild African Elephants*. *Conserv. Biol.* 25:1002–1009.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found online in the supporting information tab for this article.