



# Information Needs of Pastoral Livestock Keepers: Insights from Scouting Practices in Northern Kenya

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## Background

- Pastoralists use strategic mobility of herds to utilize rangeland resources
- Grazing areas are characterized by high temporal and spatial variability
- To make mobility decisions, pastoralists rely on current site-specific data
- Herders gather this information through scouting

## Research questions

- What specific information do herders consider to evaluate pasture areas?
- Which observation methods do herders use during scouting?
- How do herders assess the quality of pasture areas based on this?

## Conclusions

- Herders combine different observation methods (direct, proxy, local detection), to make informed and strategic decisions
- Assessments are based on a) known general conditions b) current observations and c) specific needs of different livestock species across seasons
- Herders prioritise real-time information such as water availability, pasture quality, and the presence or absence of threats like predators and pests



*"Livestock is like an arrow, you can only release it when you have a target"*  
(Borana elder & herder NI\_240608\_0045\_AM, 2024)

## Results

Specific information herders consider to evaluate pasture areas

- ✓ Clean and accessible water points
- ✓ Ideal vegetation composition
- ✓ Traces of old livestock camps
- ✓ Few other livestock camps
- ✓ Presence of healthy livestock
- ✓ Presence of well groomed livestock
- ✓ Presence of wild grazers
- ✗ Presence of vectors e.g., ticks, fleas
- ✗ Presence of predators
- ✗ Many other livestock camps
- ✗ Water logging soil

N.B.: Consideration varies with season & species

### Legend

- ✓ Favourable factors
- ✗ Unfavourable factors

Grazing units

Scout's route

Scale

General condition

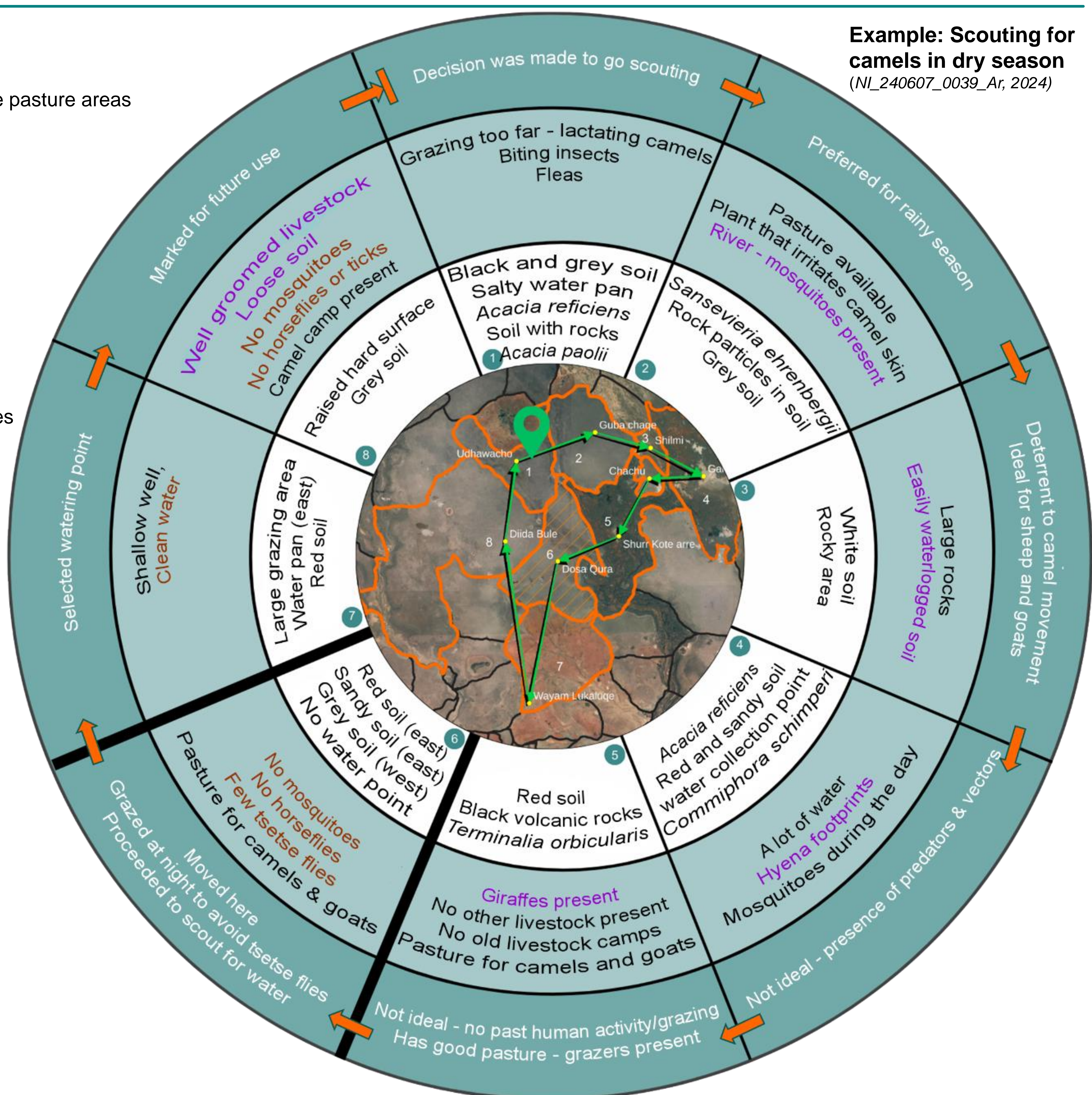
Current situation

Scout's evaluation

Direct observation

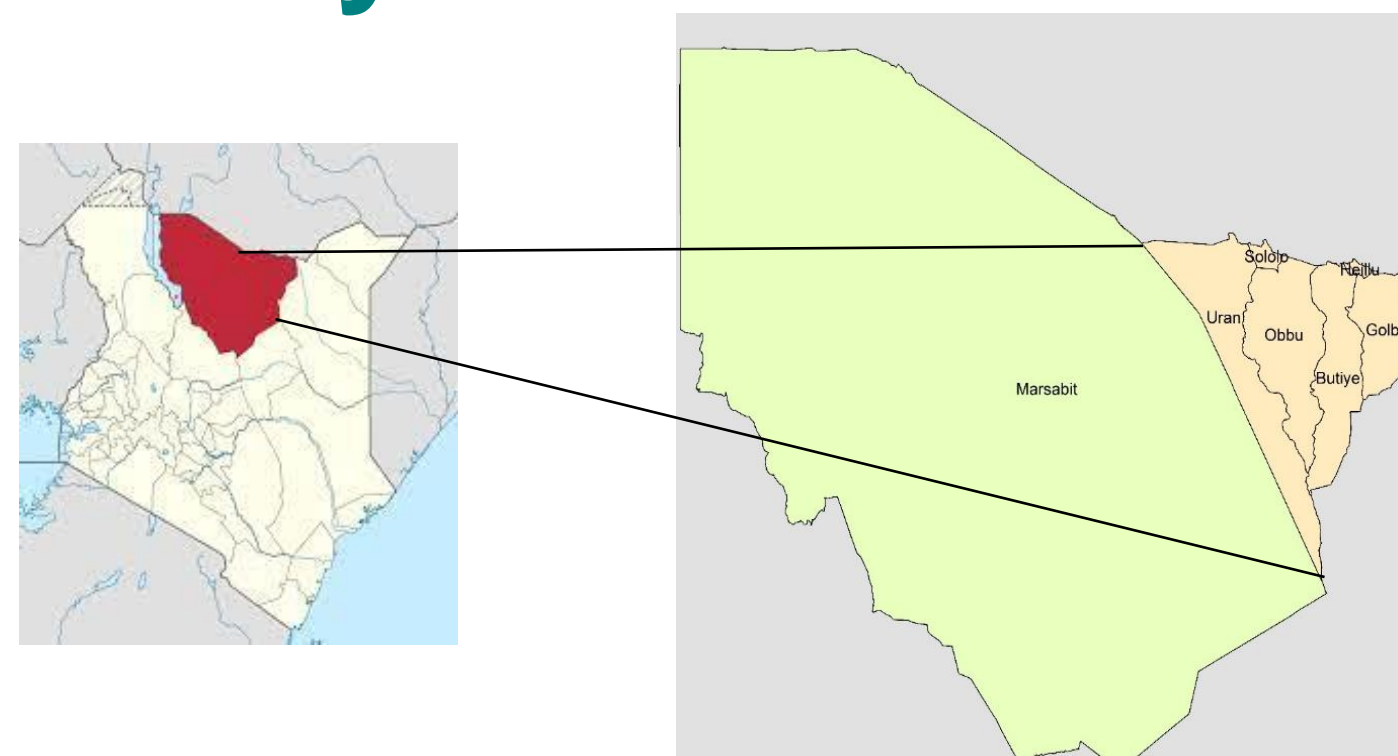
Local detection methods

Observation by proxy



**Example: Scouting for camels in dry season**  
(NI\_240607\_0039\_Ar, 2024)

## Study Area & Methods



Sololo, Marsabit County, Kenya

- Arid and semi-arid rangeland
- Home to Borana pastoralists
- Used by cattle, camels, sheep & goats



- 2 FGDs with scouts and herders (n=6, n=7)
- Narrative Interviews with scouts (n=8)
- Recordings transcribed
- Activity and Knowledge Analysis used to identify key themes
- Coding done with MAXQDA



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### Acknowledgment

This study was conducted within the BMBF and FONA funded project „Increasing efficiency in rangeland-based livestock value chains through machine learning and digital technologies “ (InfoRange)

