

# Distribution patterns and status of some mammals in South West Africa

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## CONTENTS

Abstract . . . . .	6	6. Distributions patterns and status . . . . .	11
1. Introduction . . . . .	6	6.1 The larger mammals . . . . .	11
2. Resumé of physical geography . . . . .	6	6.1.1 African elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> Blumenbach . . . . .	11
2.1 Physiography . . . . .	6	6.1.2 Black rhinoceros <i>Diceros bicornis</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	12
2.1.1 The coastal desert in the west . . . . .	6	6.1.3 Burchell zebra <i>Equus burchelli antiquorum</i> H. Smith . . . . .	12
2.1.2 The escarpment . . . . .	6	6.1.4 Hartmann zebra <i>E. zebra hartmannae</i> Matshie . . . . .	12
2.1.3 The plateau in the east . . . . .	6	6.1.5 Hippopotamus <i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	13
2.2 Climate . . . . .	7	6.1.6 Giraffe <i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	13
2.3 Vegetation . . . . .	7	6.1.7 Roan antelope <i>Hippotragus equinus</i> Desmarest . . . . .	13
2.3.1 Deserts . . . . .	7	6.1.8 Tsessebe <i>Damaliscus lunatus</i> Burchell . . . . .	13
2.3.2 Savannas . . . . .	7	6.1.9 Red hartebeest <i>Alcelaphus caama</i> Cuvier . . . . .	14
2.3.3 Woodland . . . . .	8	6.1.10 Blue wildebeest <i>Connochaetus taurinus</i> Burchell . . . . .	14
3. The influence of man . . . . .	8	6.1.11 Kudu <i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i> Pallas . . . . .	14
4. Methodology and evaluation . . . . .	8	6.1.12 Eland <i>Taurotragus oryx</i> Pallas . . . . .	15
4.1. Questionnaires . . . . .	9	6.1.13 Gemsbok <i>Oryx gazella</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	15
4.2. Aerial surveys . . . . .	9	6.1.14 Buffalo <i>Synceus caffer</i> Sparrman . . . . .	15
4.3. Personal communications . . . . .	10	6.2 The smaller mammals . . . . .	16
5. Results . . . . .	10	6.2.1 Baboon <i>Papio ursinus</i> Kerr . . . . .	16
		6.2.2 Vervet monkey <i>Cercopithecus aethiops</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	16
		6.2.3 Dassies <i>Procavia capensis</i> Pallas and <i>Procavia wel-</i> <i>witchia</i> Gray . . . . .	16
		6.2.4 Porcupine <i>Hystrix africae-australis</i> Peters . . . . .	16
		6.2.5 Honey badger <i>Mellivora capensis</i> Schreber . . . . .	16
		6.2.6 Aardvark <i>Orycteropus afer</i> Pallas . . . . .	16
		6.2.7 Warthog <i>Phacochoerus aethiopicus</i> Pallas . . . . .	16
		6.2.8 Dikdik <i>Madoqua kirki</i> Günther . . . . .	17
		6.2.9 Duiker <i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	17
		6.2.10 Steenbok <i>Raphicerus campestris</i> Thunberg . . . . .	17
		6.2.11 Klipspringer <i>Oreotragus oreotragus</i> Zimmermann . . . . .	18
		6.1.12 Impala <i>Aepyceros melampus</i> Lichtenstein . . . . .	18
		6.2.13 Black-faced impala <i>Aepyceros</i> <i>Bocage</i> 1875 . . . . .	18
		6.2.14 Springbok <i>Antidorcas marsupialis</i> Zimmermann . . . . .	18
		6.2.15 Reedbuck <i>Redunca arundinum</i> Boddaert . . . . .	19
		6.2.16 Lechwe <i>Kobus leche</i> Gray . . . . .	19
		6.2.17 Sitatunga <i>Tragelaphus spekei</i> Selater . . . . .	19
		6.3 The predators . . . . .	19
		6.3.1 Lion <i>Panthera leo</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	19
		6.3.2 Leopard <i>Panthera pardus</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	19
		6.3.3 Cheetah <i>Acinonyx jubatus</i> Linnaeus . . . . .	20
		6.3.4 Spotted hyaena <i>Crocuta crocuta</i> Erxleben . . . . .	20
		6.3.5 Brown hyaena <i>Hyaena brunnea</i> Thunberg . . . . .	20
		6.3.6 Cape hunting dog <i>Lycan pictus</i> Temminck . . . . .	20
		6.3.7 Lynx <i>Felis caracal</i> Schreber . . . . .	20
		6.3.8 Black-backed Jackal <i>Canis mesomelas</i> Schreber . . . . .	20
		6.3.9 Side-striped Jackal <i>Canis adustus</i> Sundevall . . . . .	21
		6.3.10 Silver Fox <i>Lulpes chama</i> Smith . . . . .	21
		6.3.11 Bat eared fox <i>Otocyon megalotis</i> Desmarest . . . . .	21
		6.4 Unrecorded mammals . . . . .	21
		7. Discussion and conclusions . . . . .	21
		8. Acknowledgements . . . . .	22
		9. References . . . . .	23

### 6.1.2 Black Rhinoceros: *Diceros bicornis* Gray -

The present distribution of the black rhinoceros in South West Africa is fully discussed by Joubert (1971). They occur in northern Kaokoland from Epeembe in the east to Otjipembae in the west. A concentration also occurs around Otjiwero and Okauzuma while in the east a few individuals frequent Ombombo-Owambo. Rhino also occur in the Orupembe, Sanitates, Okonjombo area as well as at Ongango and Kaoko-Otavi in the central part of Kaokoland and at Purros and Otjikondawirongo in southern Kaokoland. In the eastern Etosha National Park a few individuals have been reported from Gobaub and other waterholes in the vicinity, as well as from Chudop, Ombika, Okaukuejo and Grünwald. They reach their biggest concentration however, on the escarpment to the west of Otjovosandu. From there they occur westwards to Mudorib and as far south as the Ugab.

A census showed that approximately 15 rhino occurred to the north of the Ugab River, in Damaraland. This figure includes those animals, on farms adjoining the previous boundary of the park along the west, in the Unjab drainage system. In Kaokoland they number approximately 30. The Nature Conservation and Tourism Division has started with a project to translocate as many as possible of these animals from along Ugab drainage to localities in the Etosha National Park. Up to date more than 50 of these valuable animals have been successfully translocated and released into the Park. There must be approximately 150 of these valuable animals at present in South West Africa, with more than 80 per cent of the total occurring in the Etosha National Park.

### 6.1.3 Burchell's zebra: *Equus burchelli antiquorum* (Hamilton-Smith)

Despite their rather restricted distribution in South West Africa, Burchell's zebra still occur in relatively large numbers in the Etosha National Park. They attain their highest concentration in the eastern part of the Etosha National Park, where they show a marked migration pattern. This migration pattern consists of a general movement during the dry season towards the north-east, around both sides of the Etosha salina; the animals along the south-eastern side of the Etosha salina moving towards the Andoni plain, just north of Namutoni, and the animals along the western side of the pan moving into southern Owambo. With the onset of the rains the general movement is then again in a south-westerly direction down both sides of the pan, the movement generally terminating on the plains around Okaukuejo including Groot vlakke en Gembokvlakke.

They do not occur at all in the central area of the Park (known as the 19th parallel), probably due to certain habitat limitations. In the western Etosha National Park, they only occur around Otjovosandu and about 16 km further to the west. In Kaokoland they are mostly limited to the plateau regions. It is interesting, however, that in northern Kaoko-

land they occur in the escarpment transition zone right down to Orupembe on the subdesert Namib plains. They occur in the Otjiha and Baynes Mountains and it is indeed a strange sight to cross a high mountain pass and suddenly observe Burchell's zebra a few hundred feet higher up against the mountain side. It appears as though they have expanded their distribution range here and in the process pushed the Hartmann zebra completely out of this area which is essentially a Hartmann zebra habitat.

Shortridge's observation in 1934 seems to confirm this. He found that Burchell's zebra only occurred as far west as Kaoko-Otavi while Hartmann's zebra sometimes moved as far inland as the Ruacana Falls. Today Burchell's zebra occur as far as Orupembe which is 160 km further west than Kaoko-Otavi, while Hartmann's zebra do not occur further east in Kaokoland than approximately Okonjombo (48 km east of Orupembe). Along the eastern side of the territory Burchell's zebra only occur around Tsotsana (Kavango) and along the Botswana border with none in the western Caprivi. At present there are still approximately 16 000 Burchell zebra in South West Africa of which more than 90 per cent occur in the Etosha National Park, with the rest occurring mainly in Kaokoland.

### 6.1.4 Hartmann zebra: *Equus zebra hartmannae* (Matschie)

There is a marked similarity between the distribution of Hartmann zebra and the past distribution of the black rhinoceros in South West Africa. They both occur mainly in the mountainous transition belt between the Namib Desert in the west and the plateau to the east. The Hartmann zebra, however, seems to be much more habitat specific than the black rhinoceros (Joubert, 1973). According to Shortridge (1934) they do not occur further east than Otjovosandu. At present in the Ugab drainage, however, they occur another 200 kilometres further inland (east) on farms near Outjo.

Further south an isolated population is found in the Erongo Mountains. They occur all over the mountains, but especially on the eastern and south-eastern slopes. The bulk of the Hartmann zebra population in South West Africa occurs within the region from the Swakop River southwards along the escarpment as far south as Theronsberg in the Zaris Mountain range. They only occur eastward into the Khomas Hochland along the Kuiseb and Gaub drainage systems as far as the farms Jonkergrab and Tara. A large concentration remains in the Naukluft Mountain range. In the south the Hartmann zebra are almost exclusively limited to the Fish River Canyon and the Huns Mountains immediately to the west.

Their distribution in Kaokoland has shrunk considerably when compared to the distribution given by Shortridge (1934). In Kaokoland they reach their highest concentration around Orupembe. They are, however, relatively scarce and only approximately 300 occur here. In the Damaraland they are much more common, probably due until recently to pro-

tection from hunting pressure as well as from competition with livestock. According to Joubert (*op cit*) there are still some 7 000 Hartmann zebra in South West Africa. The questionnaire returns give a total of 16 435.

#### 6.1.5 Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* Linnaeus

The distribution and numbers of hippopotamus are almost the same as that reported by Shortridge (1934). They only occur in the Swartbooisdrift area of the Cunene River and number approximately four to six animals. In the Okavango River they were only recorded east of Bagani where the river broadens out before entering Botswana. Here they number approximately nine animals. They appear to be relatively abundant in the Kwando River.

#### 6.1.6 Giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis* Linnaeus

The distribution of giraffe has changed considerably in the north-western parts of South West Africa since Shortridge (1934) published his account on their distribution. From Sesfontein westwards they were very scarce and could have been considered absent. At present however, a concentration of about 15 animals may be found in the lower Hoanib River just before the dunes, approximately 8 kilometres from the coast. The river is sealed in this locality by sanddunes and forms a wide valley with a dense stand of *Acacia albida*; *A. giraffae* and *A. tortilis* trees. It is known to the senior author that these animals have occurred in this locality since they were first observed in 1965.

Shortridge *ibid* mentions that in Kaokoland they occur mainly in the east-central and eastern portions of the Territory. He further states that, according to Native information giraffe did not extend west of the Sesfontein-Kaoko-Otavi line, nor along the valley of the lower Cunene. At present however, they do not occur in the east-central and eastern parts but only to the west of a line between Sanitatas and Orupembe and sometimes wander as far west as the Munutum River. Small parties are at times, also seen west of the Hartmann Mountains. They number between 10 and 15 individuals. Although usually restricted to open woodland and tall shrub savanna they may sometimes be seen miles from the nearest tree, striding purposefully across a flat open plain.

Giraffe are quite common to the south of the Etosha Pan, especially around Namutoni and Okaukuejo, but they very seldom occur in the central Etosha National Park. Around Otjovasandu, however, and especially on Kaross, they are again plentiful. They also occur on a quite number of farms in the Tsumeb (49,5%); Outjo (31,2%) and Grootfontein (17,1%) districts. According to the questionnaire returns there are still approximately 2 718 giraffe on farmland, and although specially protected, permits have had to be issued to farmers during recent years, to reduce the numbers of giraffe on some farms

in the abovementioned districts. A small number also occur in the Otjiwarongo district.

Shortridge *op cit* estimated that there were 400 giraffe in South West Africa during 1934, of which approximately 200 occurred in the Kaokoveld and the rest in the Grootfontein district and beyond into Kavango and Bushmanland. During the present survey, a figure of approximately 4 000 for all of South West Africa was obtained of which Joubert *et al* (1973) counted 935 animals in the Etosha National Park.

#### 6.1.7 Roan *Hippotragus equinus* Desmarest

Roan has had its range considerably reduced in South West Africa since Shortridge (1934) published his account. Shortridge *op. cit.* recorded them from the Ruacana Falls eastwards, throughout all of eastern Owambo and the Kavango and as far south as the Etosha National Park and the Waterberg. At present roan is strictly limited to three general areas in the Kavango (Carelse, pers com 1973). They occur in the western part of the Kavango near Kuringkuru, occasionally along the Omuramba Omtako and along the eastern omurambas leading into Botswana and the Caprivi.

Even in 1934 Shortridge *op cit* reported their numbers to be a great deal less than that of wildebeest, kudu or eland. Thus, apparently never abundant, their numbers have declined sharply. Hofmeyr (1974) estimates their present figure, excluding the Caprivi to be approximately 400. The present authors, after recent surveys, would like to suggest a figure of approximately 300, for all of South West Africa (the Caprivi included), and even considers this figure to be over optimistic.

During the summer of 1970, the Division successfully translocated 74 roan to Otjovasandu in the Etosha National Park from the Chaudum River in the Kavango. (Hofmeyr, 1974). These animals have since almost quadrupled their number. As a further safeguard to ensure their survival the Division is at present contemplating translocating part of this population to the Waterberg Plateau Park.

#### 6.1.8 Tsessebe *Damaliscus lunatus* Burchell

At present tsessebe occur only in the extreme north-eastern corner of the Kavango and in the Caprivi. On three of the questionnaire returns, farmers claimed to have tsessebe on their farms. The occurrence of tsessebe on farms however, is very doubtful, and previous rumours of Lichtenstein's hartebeest and or tsessebe that have been investigated, turned out to be negative. The Kavango area was recently covered (1974) during an aerial survey by the authors and it is doubtful if more than 100 of these animals still occur in South West Africa. Their range and status has declined considerably since Shortridge (1934).

hunting dog, spotted hyaena, brown hyaena and side-striped jackal. The other six species viz. leopard, cheetah, lynx, black-backed jackal, bat-eared fox and silver-fox occur largely on farmland. According to the estimated figures for the various predator species, it appears that approximately 90 percent of the predators, also occur on farmland.

4. The lion, Cape hunting dog and brown hyaena are the three predators species, whose distribution and status show a marked decline since Shortridge (1934). Although this might be because these species have had the most direct confrontation with man, it also shows a lack of ability to adapt to changing situations, when compared to the other predators viz. leopard, cheetah and black-backed jackal.

5. Springbok and kudu are the most numerous game species in South West Africa today, each species totalling more than a hundred thousand individuals. These two species together form  $\pm$  54 percent of the game animals on farmland.

6. Eland showed the smallest increase in numbers compared to van der Spuy's (1962) figures viz. 27.9 percent, but since they are considered to be a truly nomadic species, it is quite possible that the present day restriction of movement, by fences etc. has a detrimental effect on their recruitment rate.

7. Hartebeest and Hartmann mountain zebra are both considered by farmers to compete directly with their live-stock and are exterminated at an alarming rate.

8. Blue wildebeest, apparently occurred in large numbers on farmland and was considered by Shortridge (1934) to be the "most plentiful of large open-country antelope in South West Africa." According to the questionnaire returns there are at present only 245 of these animals on farmland. The alarming low total of approximately 4 200 individuals, most of which occur in the Etosha National Park, is suggested by the authors, for all of South West Africa.

9. The eight game species occurring only in Bantu territory can all be considered to be endangered species with their present low populations figures in South West Africa.

They are:

Tsessebe	100 individuals
Buffalo	30 individuals
Reedbuck	50 individuals
Lechwe	100 individuals
Sitatunga	11 individuals
Hippopotamus	13 individuals
Roan and	300 individuals
Black-faced impala	1 000 individuals

Two of these species have been translocated with considerable success by the Division of Nature Conservation and Tourism, viz. black-faced impala and roan, and their survival, at present seems ensured. With three of the abovementioned species viz. lechwe, hippopotamus and sitatunga however, the problem arises that their habitat requirements are so specific that no suitable conservation areas exists outside their present range.

10. The overall situation regarding the predators is much more promising. Despite the fact that the distribution and status of the lion has declined considerably, their survival is ensured in the Etosha National Park. Three other species however, do give cause for alarm viz. Cape hunting dog, brown hyaena and spotted hyaena. The latter two species still maintain small breeding nuclei in various conservation areas and with proper management practices might improve their status. The authors however, are not too sure about the future of the Cape hunting dog. Unless these animals can increase their numbers so as to cope with successful hunting, they are not expected to survive. The problem is further aggravated by the fact that there are very few wild dogs left in any of the conservation areas in SWA.

11. Despite problems elsewhere in Southern Africa, the situation regarding the spotted cats in South West Africa, is satisfactory at present. The questionnaire returns confirmed general beliefs that they were in no danger of becoming extinct at present.

12. The division has already made substantial progress in assuring the continued survival of several endangered species. Black rhinoceros, roan and black-faced impala have been very successfully re-introduced to the Etosha National Park. The Division hopes to translocate and re-introduce buffalo, tsessebe and reedbuck into existing conservation areas. To relieve the problem regarding the Hartmann mountain zebra and gemsbok, approval has been granted to extend the Naukluft Mountain Zebra Park by 144 000 ha which will then link it with the Namib Desert Park and thus ensure the survival of viable units of Hartmann mountain zebra and gemsbok.

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