

LIVWEIGHTS OF SOME MAMMALS FROM HLUHLUWE GAME RESERVE, ZULULAND

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by
P. M. HITCHINS
(Natal Parks Board)

Liveweight measurements are required for the calculation and comparison of the biomass and value of game animals as meat producers. Because of the variability in weight of each species throughout Africa, calculations should only be made with locally collected information.

The following data were collected from specimens obtained during game control operations and natural deaths in Hluhluwe Game Reserve, Zululand.

Adult and immature animals were separated on their dentition. All female weights are exclusive of the conceptus.

All weights are given in pounds.

	No. in sample	Range	Mean	
Black Rhinoceros	Male	8	1563-2254	1882.5
	Female	6	1586-2500	1953.3
Burchell's Zebra	Male	10	529-705	608.2
	Female	7	559-692	617.6
Warthog	Male	36	114-229	168.8
	Female	66	88-152	114.4
Waterbuck	Male	—	—	—
	Female	4	409-425	415.0
Impala	Male	134	104-167	132.9
	Female	78	87-118	100.4
Blue Wildebeest	Male	98	392-648	521.9
	Female	95	312-556	418.9
Bushbuck	Male	1	—	100.0
	Female	2	69-75	72.0
Nyala	Male	22	151-314	231.0
	Female	75	99-178	138.5
African Buffalo	Male	14	1046-1895	1466.6
	Female	—	—	—

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES OF NATURAL HISTORY INTEREST

1. Bats

St. Lucia Estuary (June): Little Free-tailed Bat: *Tadarida pumila*:
Observation by: Ranger M. G. Behr.

Several bat species are recorded transporting their young when out feeding and this *Tadarida* can now join the list. On the evening of 28th June, the customary large numbers of these bats were emerging from the roof of the office. One was captured and it was found to be a female with twin youngsters, one harboured against the mother's side under each wing.

2. Parental Care

(a) Hluhluwe Game Reserve (February): Zebra *Equus burchelli* and Hyaena *Crocuta crocuta*:
Observation by: Ranger P. M. Hitchins.

Came upon a small herd of zebra, consisting of four adults, one immature and one small foal, just as one of the adults was in the act of chasing away a sub adult hyaena. The zebra consistently used its fore feet for striking at the predator.

(b) Mkuzi Game Reserve (February): Impala *Aepyceros melampus* and Black-backed jackal *Canis mesomelas*.
Observation by: Ranger M. G. Behr.

A jackal was watched approaching a small juvenile impala. The predator actually got as far as sinking its teeth into the rump of the antelope before it was heavily butted in the side by two large impala females, both of which then chased the jackal right away from the vicinity.

3. Timely Veterinary Aid

(a) Umfolozi Game Reserve (March): Square-lipped (White) Rhinoceros: *Ceratotherium simum simum*:
Observation by: Veterinary Research Officer M. E. Keep.

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Whilst demonstrating rhino capture to a film company an animal was observed with a snare round its front leg, dragging several yards of wire behind it. The animal was therefore immobilized and the snare removed; fortunately it had not been in place very long and had not damaged the tissues. When released the rhino walked away quite happily and sound on all four legs.

(b) Umfolozi Game Reserve (March):

The very next day an adult male was observed with a snare around its neck. This rhino was also darted whereupon it was found that the wire noose had cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. The wound was also very septic. The snare was removed, necrotic tissue cut away and

the wound irrigated and dressed. Large doses of long acting antibiotics were injected. The rhino was then released and has subsequently been observed by members of the staff on several occasions. Reports indicate that the wound is healing satisfactorily and the animal is maintaining excellent condition.

4. Breeding Notes

(a) Loteni Nature Reserve (August, September and October): Eland *Taurotragus oryx*:

Observations by: Senior Ranger A. E. A. Root and Technical Officer H. L. Stainthorpe.

Among the eland which are kept in partial captivity it has been possible to obtain some precise gestation periods. Figures for three animals were 277, 274 and 273 days. It may be of interest also to record some times associated with an eland birth, which occurred when officers were close at hand. They read: labour commenced 1227 hours: calf born 1454 hours: calf first bleated 1459 hours: calf first suckled 1509 hours; the calf, a heifer, was weighed at 1606 hours and scaled 65 lbs.

(b) Mkuzi Game Reserve (September): Warthog *Phacocoercus aethiopicus*.

Observation by: Ranger W. E. Willox.

From two warthog females, shot during control operations, the fetuses were removed and checked. The litter in the one case consisted of 4 males and 1 female; in the other of 1 male and 3 females.

5. Early Records

Bergville district: Lion *Panthera leo* and Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius*.

Contributed by: Ranger A. J. Tedder.

Records of early distribution of mammals in Natal, in the case of all too many species are few and far between. Two such records, very kindly conveyed by Mr. C. A. Sclanders of "Linwood", Bergville, even though it is possible that they may have been recorded elsewhere, are here deserving of repetition.

It appears that in 1949 a Mr. F. A. Steytler, during his journey, to trace the precise route into Natal taken by Piet Retief during the Great Trek, visited the farm "Linwood". Mr. Steytler showed Mr. Sclanders extracts from the diary written by a Rev. Smit who accompanied Piet Retief's party. One of the entries mentioned three horses being killed by lions on 23rd November 1837, and two hippos being shot in the Tugela River on the same day. It is historically interesting also to mention that an entry of the following day, 24th November 1837, recorded the birth of the party's first child in Natal, one Jan Hendrick de Lange. All these

events took place at Ventersdrift which, together with another Tugela River drift used by the Voortrekkers Lombardsdrift is on the farm "Linwood" and at a point just above the confluence of the Venter's Spruit with the Tugela River. With some accuracy, therefore, it can be said that in 1837 lions and hippos occurred a few miles northeast of Bergville village, near the borders of the farms registered as "Schoongezigt" and "Venters Lager", in Lat. 29°28' East: Long. 28°41' South.

6. Ostrich Diversions

Mkuzi Game Reserve (July): Ostrich *Struthio camelus*.

Observation by: Ranger M. G. Behr.

The reserve's one and only ostrich, an adult female, finds some digression in her solitude by frequent high speed chases after impala. The antelope seem unable to outrun the bird and on a recent occasion she was seen actually nipping the posterior of an indignant ram travelling at full stretch. On another afternoon the ostrich was watched being repeatedly dived at by an adult Martial Eagle *Polemaëtus belliosus*. No harm came to either bird but the dancing, twisting and turning of the ostrich to evade the eagle would have done justice to any hip-swinging session.

7. Competent Anglers

Charters Creek, St. Lucia (April): White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*.

Observation by: Senior Ranger R. M. Murray.

A flock of pelicans was watched carrying out a most effective exhibition of communal fishing tactics. A shoal of fish was herded out of a pan into a hippo channel, which latter became narrower and narrower before coming to a blind end. As the channel narrowed so the pelicans were literally leap-frogging each other, a hungry bird quickly taking the place of its satiated leader.

8. Fatal Greed

St. Lucia Game Reserve (October): Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*.

Observation by: Senior Ranger R. M. Murray.

Carried out a post mortem on a goliath heron found dead at the lake shore. The bird had died from asphyxiation, having tried to swallow the tail end of a large rock salmon, discarded by an angler. The piece of fish which had stuck in the bird's throat was estimated to weigh about 1 lb. The heron weighed 11 lbs. 1 oz.