

## NOTES ON SOME MAMMALS FROM NYASALAND AND ADJACENT AREAS

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### 1. Introduction

THIS paper discusses the occurrence, status and distribution of certain mammals in Nyasaland and adjoining territories, and is largely based on personal observations by two of us, C.W.B. and B.L.M., who were resident in Nyasaland from 1932 to 1952, and 1938 to 1954 respectively, and who both sent collections to the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria. In the following 'T.M.' refers to these specimens, which were identified by the late Dr. Austin Roberts, though where necessary the nomenclature has been brought into line with present usage. Sight records are mentioned as such.

Our paper is not primarily intended as an addition to Sweeney's check list (1959), the first work of its kind for Nyasaland, and a valuable pioneering effort. While some of our records add to the information in Sweeney's work, other points discussed are not directly relevant thereto, but are nevertheless worth including. In sections 2 and 3 references to Sweeney's list are given for each species considered.

### 2. Notes on particular species

*Elephantulus brachyrhynchus* subsp. (Sweeney, p. 4). Collected by C.W.B. at Chinteche (T.M.).

*Petrodromus tetradactylus venustus* Thomas (Sweeney, p. 59).

Sweeney rightly considers the occurrence of this form probable in the north-western part of Nyasaland, but was unable to trace the type locality. Moreau *et al.* (1946) give the type locality, Namwiwe, as being near Namitawa, on the Northern Rhodesia border at 09°55'S., 33°23'E. They were unable to trace Namwiwe on any map, though actually Namwiwi (*sic*) Village, 4551 ft., is shown on that in McClounie (1903) as about 12 miles southwest of Namitawa Hill. Incidentally the key to the map in Belcher (1930) gave Namwewe (*sic*) as being on the Nyika, just north of 11°S. Clearly this is incorrect, especially as this locality is only mentioned in Belcher's text, at altitude 4000 ft., under a barbet, *Tricholaema*

*diadematum* (= *Lybius leucomelas*), a chat, *Thamnolaea arnotti*, and a sunbird, *Nectarinia kilimensis*, all of which would be expected to occur in the locality and at the altitude given by McClounie (see Benson, 1953), but, except for the sunbird, could never normally occur on the Nyika. It is evident that when McClounie visited the area Namwiwe was actually in Northern Rhodesia, just across the border of Nyasaland, because in discussing his stay there he mentions a small stream running northwest to the Luangwa (the boundary between the two territories is of course the watershed between Nyasa and Luangwa drainage). Its position at that time may be assessed as at 10°05'S., 33°20'E., which is thus the correct type locality of *P.t. venustus*, though it is worth noting that the village itself may well have moved, perhaps several times, since 1903 when the subspecies was described and McClounie's paper published.

*Erinaceus frontalis* A. Smith (Sweeney, p. 5).

The following Nyasaland records are additional to Sweeney's list. Mitchell (1946) mentioned the Dowa Hills, but did not then give details. The record was in fact based on a skin personally seen by him. C. W. B. and V. J. Wilson (Tsetse Control Supervisor, Fort Jameson) have both seen pet hedgehogs which were caught at Lilongwe, in 1935 and 1960 respectively, while the following information has been elicited from Nyasaland Africans, who have been shown a specimen. Austin Pungwako, of Dedza District, has seen it at Mkhoma (Lilongwe District) and Maonde (Dedza District), but considers it to be very uncommon. Langford Mbewe, of Chinde's area, Mzimba District, has never seen it there, but has seen skins said to have been brought from Mbeya, Tanganyika. The spines are in demand in Mzimba for medicinal purposes. Adam Mungwira, of Karonga, has seen it once, at Mpata, 12 miles west of the District Headquarters. Finally, V. J. Wilson has sent us the skin of one found in a rubbish heap in a village near Fort Manning, on the Northern Rhodesia boundary at 13°45'S., 32°48'E., which is now in the National Museum, Bulawayo (N.M. 13365). Clearly no value was attached to it, as reported by Langford Mbewe from Mzimba, and it is very unlikely that it had been brought from afar for medicinal purposes. Also, Wilson was assured by the villagers that it existed naturally locally, and they knew it as "Soni", as also indeed did Mbewe and Mungwira.

*Hippotragus niger* Harris (Sweeney, p. 59).

Though one of us (Mitchell, 1953) suggested that this species might occur on the Nyika Plateau, this now appears to have been mistaken (Cater, 1954), montane habitat presumably being unsuitable for it, though it may well occur, or have occurred, at lower levels in the same general area.

*Tragelaphus spekei* subsp. (Sweeney, p. 59).

Sweeney states that this species is now extinct in Nyasaland. According to Lancaster (1953, 44), it crosses over the Northern Rhodesia border into Tanganyika and Nyasaland, this statement probably being based on personal experience. But from its limits in Northern Rhodesia (Ansell, 1960a, 71 and Map P), it is clear that, if it does range into Nyasaland, this could only be in the extreme northeast of Isoka District, whence it might extend eastwards to the upper reaches of the Songwe River. If this is so it may well survive there, as due to its habits and habitat it is not easily exterminated.

*Diceros bicornis* Linnaeus (Sweeney, p. 57).

Sweeney suggests the Northern Province of Nyasaland as a possible locality. Its presence there, at least in the past, is confirmed by McClounie (1903, 429) who recorded it as numerous on Mpanda Mountain, in the present Karonga District.

### 3. Remarks on discontinuities of distribution

There is a marked phenomenon of discontinuous distribution between the south and southwest of the African Continent and eastern Africa, among certain species frequenting semi-arid areas, reflecting a change to a moister environment in the intervening area in the present epoch. This is discussed elsewhere (Benson and White, 1961; Ansell, 1960a, xvii-xviii.) Although Benson and White's paper is confined mainly to birds, they do also discuss instances among larger mammals. Comment on the following such species is apposite.

*Hyaena brunnea* Thunberg (Sweeney pp. 25, 59).

This species probably does not occur north of the Zambesi. Its nearest relative, *H. hyaena* (Linnaeus), appears to be unknown south of central Tanganyika.

*Canis mesomelas* Schreber (Sweeney, p. 60).

Previous records of this species in Northern Rhodesia have been found erroneous (Ansell, 1960a, 111), and it seems

certain that it must also be absent from Nyasaland. Sweeney mentions it only in an Appendix, correctly pointing out that there is no definite record. It is widespread in the drier parts of Africa south of the Zambesi, reappearing in southern Tanganyika. Cater's suggestion (1954, p. 300) that there may be two species of jackal on the Nyika Plateau must be mistaken, and was apparently based only on sight records. It would appear that the only species of jackal in Nyasaland is *Canis adustus* Sundevall. This is a very variable species, which probably accounts for confusion in field identifications.

*Raphicerus campestris* Thunberg (Sweeney, p. 48).

Sweeney states that this species has been certainly recorded from Nyasaland, but gives no supporting details. Ellerman *et al.* (1953, 184) also states that it occurs, but give no authority, and Mr. R. W. Hayman has recently confirmed (*in litt.*) that there is no Nyasaland specimen in the British Museum (Natural History). It is in fact a typical example of the discontinuous distribution mentioned. In Northern Rhodesia it is only known in the southwest (Ansell, 1960a, Map G), reappearing in southwestern Tanganyika.

*Damaliscus lunatus* Burchell (Sweeney, pp. 58-59).

There is no reason to suppose that *D. lunatus* has ever been known in Nyasaland as today constituted (Ansell, 1960b, 393). It may also be noted that Sharpe's suggestion (in Johnston, 1898, 326) that it might occur in the Luangwa Valley of Northern Rhodesia was certainly mistaken.

*Connochaetes taurinus* subsp. (Sweeney, p. 59).

East of the Shire Rift *C.t. johnstoni* Sclater occurred at one time in Nyasaland at the south end of Lake Chilwa (Ellerman *et al.*, 1953), but according to Sweeney was finally shot out about 1925. It is interesting to note, however, that it may still occur very close to the Nyasaland border in Portuguese East Africa, as Mr. M. Ronaldson (of whom see further below, under vernacular names) has reported a herd of some 20 animals, as well as several smaller groups in the vicinity of Tundu hill, 16°00'S., 35°54'E., during 1949, some of which were actually shot. In 1953 herds averaging four to ten were still present in several places between Tundu and Mecanhelas 15°12'S., 35°54'E. Their habitat in this area is *Brachystegia* woodland interspersed with large open dambos. Though Ronaldson did not himself visit the area again, the wildebeest,

were reported to him in 1956 and he considers it likely that they remain even now as the country is but sparsely inhabited.

The species may also still exist on the Njesi Plateau, farther north in Portuguese territory (Benson and White, 1961).

The species has never been recorded in Nyasaland west of the Shire Rift, but one of us (B.L.M.) suggests that *C.t. cooksoni* Blaine may at one time have occupied part of the Kasungu District immediately adjacent to the Northern Rhodesia border. There is a place about 33°12'E, 13°00'S. known as "dambo la nyumbwe" ("nyumbwe" a vernacular name for wildebeest), and the fact that *C.t. cooksoni* may very occasionally wander to the plateau in the Eastern Province of Northern Rhodesia (Ansell, 1960a, xx) lends support to such a view.

The distribution of this species seems clearly a modification of the south/southwest and eastern discontinuity.

*Redunca fulvorufa* Afzelius (Sweeney, p. 51).

Despite the presence of apparently suitable habitat in Nyasaland, remarked upon by Sweeney, it seems certain that this species must be absent from the territory. It ranges north to the Transvaal and Zululand, and is again found in Tanganyika, but there is no indication of its presence in the intervening areas. *Pace Ellerman et al.* (1953, 191), it is unknown from Southern Rhodesia (Benson and White, 1961), and Mr. R. W. Hayman has confirmed (*in litt.*) that the British Museum (Natural History) has no specimen from Southern Rhodesia. The discontinuity of distribution in this case does not correspond with that of those species already mentioned, but is one of a number of instances quoted by Benson and White for montane species.

#### 4. Vernacular names

We fully concur with Sweeney's remarks (p. 3) on the need for caution in using African vernacular names for identification purposes, and the observations at the end of his Appendix B should be born in mind. No name is listed below which is merely a corruption of one given by Sweeney.

Mr. Michael Ronaldson, whose home is in the Mlanje District, and who is now working with our department, has very kindly provided us with a list of names from that district,

which is inhabited by Nyanja, Yao and Lomwe speaking people.

Recently, for quite another purpose, Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin, of the National Museum, Bulawayo, kindly lent us specimens of many species recorded from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The opportunity was taken at the same time to obtain names of these specimens from Messrs. Langford Mbewe and Adam Mungwira, respectively Tumbuka speaking from Chief Chinde's area in the Mzimba District, and Henga speaking from near Karonga District Headquarters. In the same way we are grateful to Messrs. Grant Sale and Austin Pungwako for a few Nyanja names from Blantyre and Dedza respectively. A few extra names from Mitchell (1946) are also included.

The following abbreviations are used:—

Ny, Nyanja, Y, Yao, L, Lomwe (all from Mlanje, Ronaldson); B, Nyanja, Blantyre (Sale); Dz, Nyanja, Dedza (Pungwako); Mz, Tumbuka, Mzimba, District (Mbewe); Ka, Henga, Karonga (Mungwira); Ph, Sena, Port Herald (B.L.M.); C, Nyanja, Cholo and Chikwawa (B.L.M.); Da, Chewa, lake shore of Dowa District (B.L.M.); FM, Yao, Fort Maguire (B.L.M.).

The number used in each case refers to that used for the species in Sweeney's list.

1. Nanikata (L).
2. Gumbwa (PH); Litawala (Y,FM); Rethle (L).
3. Gumbwambale (PH).
4. Soni, see section 2 above.

5/6. Mphuce (L).

8-12. Munnuka (Mz).

13-17. Nyakalemwalemwa (PH); Lichinjji (FM). At Dedza, C.W.B. has heard a name Msanamzana for a species of fruit bat found during the rains in caves, and considered a great delicacy. The bats are caught in nets and sold in local markets. The only cave dwelling fruit bat among those listed by Sweeney, or known from Northern Rhodesia, is *Rousettus aegyphiacus*, to which the name Mleme seems applicable. It may be that Msanamzana is merely an alternative name for this species, but the point is worth further investigation.

18/49. Naituthu, (Ny); Kaputi (FM); Inkulukusha (Ka). Nanzezi, given by Sweeney, should perhaps

- be restricted to the Hirundinidae and Apodidae (Aves).
50. Neko, Mathache, Nekutha (L); Kapiri (FM); Kaundi (Mz).
  51. Sila (Da).
  55. Ulo (PH); Nachama (L).
  56. Nkhonde (Ny); Nsimwe (L); Nchimbu (FM).
  57. Khwatwe (L).
  58. Pumpi (Mz, Ka).
  59. Onyipi (L).
  61. Nkuli (FM); Chimbuli (Ka).
  - 62/63 Mbiti (PH); Katubwi (Mz); Imbao (Ka).
  65. Thugo (L); Fututu (Da); Zukazuka (Mz, Ka).
  - 66/67. Munyapa (L).
  68. Nyeka (L).
  69. Kandindi (FM); Kampumbu (Mz).
  70. Kali (Mz).
  71. Msukunya (Nyanja) (Stigand and Lyell, 1906, 152).
  73. Kalakala (PH); Nikhatantau (L).
  75. Thika (PH); Khuthupa (L); Chimbwe (Mz); Itsindingo (Ka).
  76. Kakwio. Chewa name in Central Province (Wood, in Maydon 1951, 316).
  77. Lisimba (Y, FM); Phodogoma (L).
  78. Nan'thavi (L); Liwole (Ka).
  79. Bonga (PH).
  80. Chiwalawala (Mz, Ka).
  83. Nsele (PH); Mbaure (FM); Nengo (Da); Gode (Mz).
  84. Kalunga (Y).
  85. Kajolombwe (Ny). This name from Ronaldson lends support to B.L.M.'s sight records given in section 2 above.
  86. Ncelela (L); Lileje (FM); Benga (Mz).
  89. Belama (Mz).
  90. Kasapembe (FM).
  91. Ngwime (Y, FM); Nawili, Okhove (L); Kunda (Mz).
  92. Nahurama (L); Chivuko (Mz).
  94. Chisoni (Ny); Chanasa (Y); Kasena (Mz).
  96. Munyima (L); Phinzu (Bt, Dz); Julungwcle (Mz).
  102. Tilonje (Ny); Pinji (Dz).
  105. Kokota (Mz).
  107. Chingalui (FM); Nikhule (L).

113. Chithwa (Ny).
115. Nambalala (Dz).
120. Chavuko (Mz).
121. Masatanjira (Bt, Dz).
123. Dondwe (Dz); Mpundu (Mz).
- 124/25. Ethechi (L); Sezi (Mz).
127. Nahuo (L).
128. Kamzume (Mz).
129. Zumba (Ny); Ngangaila (Y, FM); Nthupa (L).
130. Epila (L).
132. Njou (PH); Ethepo (L). Tuskless animals are Nyungwa (Nyanja) or Nachuula (Yao) (Lyell, 1929, 73).
137. Mutupa (L); Chisulu (C). Note the distinction in Cholo/Chikwawa from 141, for which Kadumba is used.
138. Ngolombwe (Y); Ngolongwe (FM); Nahe (L); Huluku (Dz).
140. Tungwa (Mz).
143. Khomache (L); Nkhozi (Da); Njugumawe (Ka).
144. Nsengo (PH).
145. Okhotwe (L).
149. Mbalapi (Y, FM); Ephalavi (L); Luzi (Mz, Ka).
150. Ngose (Y, FM); Okondo (L).
151. Nthuka (PH).
152. Paala (L).
155. Enari (L).
156. Pwethe (L).
157. Opithi (L); Boli (Mz).

### 5. Acknowledgements.

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We must also thank Dr. J. Meester, of the Transvaal Museum, for the list of C.W.B.'s Nyasaland mammal specimens in that collection, and for re-examining certain of them; to Mr. R. W. Hayman of the British Museum (Natural History) for looking through and reporting on certain specimens in London; and to those gentlemen whose names are already mentioned for providing vernacular names.

## POSTSCRIPT.

Further to our notes on *Erinaceus frontalis* A. Smith (Sweeney, p. 5), Mr. G. D. Hayes tells us that he has recently had a live specimen which was picked up on the Blantyre/Chileka road. Every African, without exception, to whom he showed it immediately called it "Chisoni". Also, it is reported to be in fact quite common at Lilongwe. When there recently, Hayes was told by Mr. D. Elder, of the Lilongwe Hotel, that he gets two a year brought to him on average. A family of six has been reported from the Provincial Commissioner's garden there. Hayes has also had a report of one being found in an African's hut at Mlanje, and of another seen on a road at night near Balaka.

With reference to *Beamys major* Dollman (Sweeney, p. 34), Mr. Hayes has drawn our attention to a note in the Annual Report of the Curator of the Nyasaland Museum (Mr. P. Hanney) for 1960/61 to the effect that several short trips have been made to Zoa, near Sandama, where with the co-operation of Mr. B. Morris, the habits of this rare rat are being studied. Sandama, incidentally, is at approximately 16°17'S., 35°17'E., and altitude 1,200 feet above sea-level.

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## LAKE NYASA IN 1893

This article first appeared in 'Vyaro Na Vyaro' Vol. 6 No. 4, January 1940.

The author who served in the British Navy recalls the things which happened when he came to Lake Nyasa soon after the Government was established. Ed.

I was one of the naval contingent who went to Lake Nyasa 46 years ago, i.e. in 1893; there were:—  
 Commander Chas. Hope Robinson; Lieutenant E. C. Villiers; Gunner J. W. De Matose; Doctors Harper and McKay and 23 men of various ratings (28 in all)  
 I was the youngest of the party.

We came up the Zambezi, after calling at Zanzibar and taking a contingent with us from there and one Interpreter. We proceeded as far as Port Herald; on the *Mosquito* and *Herald*, then transferred to the *Livingstone* which took us further up, then we transferred to barges for the last stage. We set off on the march to Blantyre, and then on the Upper Shire River, where we embarked on the *Dove* (stern paddler) for Fort Johnston.

We completed the building of the *Adventure* and *Pioneer* at Makanjira British Central Africa Expedition; this then began what was called the Makanjira Expedition; the party consisted of a regiment of Sikhs from India and the local African Rifles who sailed away in the *Itala* and our two ships.

I well remember now the Captain saying, "Priscott, I am leaving you behind in charge of the Fort." I may say I was not very cheered at being left alone. The Expedition speedily dealt with Makanjira, (who had headed some traders) but I believe I was alone at the Fort for about six weeks, during which time I had a bad attack of dysentery. Fortunately for me, my boys came running in shouting "Mzungu coming" and it turned out to be some German Missionaries of whom one was a Doctor, who tended me.

When the Captain came back; he said, "I hear you have been ill, Priscott" I said, "Yes, and I don't wish to remain here any more by myself."

I expect now people in Nyasaland use coins for trade, but we paid all our boys with calico, we had about 80 to 100 from

- "*Tatera leucogaster*" and "*T. tabora*".  
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