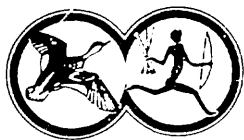


Mammals of the Wankie National Park, Rhodesia

by V. J. Wilson

National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia



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Habits

The species is mainly diurnal in habits but on moonlight nights, particularly if it is warm, they will come out and feed, and, on several occasions, they were seen crossing the road at night from one rocky outcrop to another. This habit was particularly noticeable on the road a few miles north of Shumba where there were large outcrops of rocks on both sides of the road, often very close to it.

In the Matopos National Park south of Bulawayo this species is closely associated with *Procarvia capensis*, a species not recorded from the Park.

Breeding

Only one immature female (V.997) was taken, which weighed 2½ lb. Young, often two with a single female, were seen on many occasions between the months of November and February and very young individuals in April. The young grow very slowly at first and, therefore, it is not easy to age small animals in the field, but from

observations available from the Matopos it would appear that there is a well defined breeding season, with a peak about January/February.

Food

Very few records are available of plants eaten but individuals were seen feeding on the fallen fruits of *Diospyros mespiliformis* and *Grewia flavescens*. The leaves and fruits of *Ziziphus mucronata* are often eaten in large quantities and one individual was seen to spend at least an hour feeding on the leaves and fruits of this tree. Other leaves eaten in the Park included *Combretum apiculatum*, *Croton meynhartii*, *Gardenia spatulifolia* and fresh leaves and stems of *Lonchocarpus capassa*. The only grass seen to be eaten appeared to be *Brachiaria deflexa*.

Predation

Several skulls of *H. brucei* were found at the base of a tree near Mandavu dam in which a Tawny Eagle nested. At the time (26th May 70) the eagle was present on the nest.

ORDER PERISSODACTYLA

Family RHINOCEROTIDAE

Genus DICEROS Gray, 1821

Diceros bicornis

Black Rhinoceros

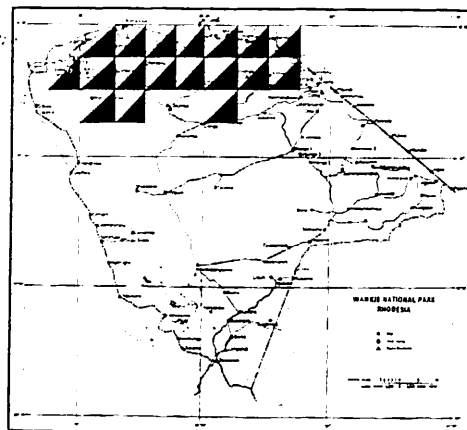
D. b. bicornis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Distribution and Notes

Selous (1908) records black rhino in the Dett vlei in October 1873 where, at that time, he observed both black and the squarelipped rhino. Many years later (1942) a pair of black was seen in the Park in the vicinity of the Deka River. One was shot in 1946 and the other wandered a great deal until, in 1956, it finally disappeared (Herbert & Austen, 1972).

In October 1962 six male and two female black rhinos were released in the Park in the Mandavu area and in March 1963 three females and another male were released.

In October 1965 another 40 were introduced into the Mandavu dam area. Of the 52 introduced several died from various causes but a number of calves have since been seen. Herbert & Austen (1972) state that at least 23+ are still to be found in



the Park and, as several calves were sighted, there is good evidence of their breeding successfully. J. Rushworth (*pers. comm.*) estimates the black rhinoceros population as at November 1973 to be c. 30 animals.

During the survey the writer saw black rhino on only five occasions. One was at Mtoa ruins, a

second at Deteema, a large adult cow at Tshompani dam, a sub-adult at Dolilo and a pair in the mopane near Dandari.

Mitchell (*pers. comm.*) saw two black rhino at Manzimbomvu Pan on 27th May 1970 which may well have been those seen by the writer at Dandari only a few months later.

Genus CERATOTHERIUM Gray, 1867

Ceratotherium simum

Squarelipped Rhinoceros

C. s. simum (Burchell, 1817)

Distribution

Herbert & Austen (1972) suggest that probably the last squarelipped rhino to occur in the vicinity of the Park was in the Dett vlei about five miles northeast of the Park's eastern boundary. This observation was made by Selous in 1873.

Thirty-five were received from Zululand over the period November 1966 to March 1967 of which 16 were males and 19 females. They were originally held in holding pens 24 miles southeast of Main Camp and finally released into the Park (Herbert & Austen, 1972).

Several animals moved great distances either into Botswana or north of the Park and a number died of various causes. Herbert & Austen (1972) state that in September 1971 there were at least 32 left in the Park or surrounding area of which possibly 26 remained of the original 35.

They suggest that four occurred in the Robins-Deteema area, four just outside the Park in the Wankie Controlled Hunting Area, two in the Sinamatella area, two at Shumba and 20+ in the Kennedy-Madundumela-Linkwasha (Inkwazi) vlei system.

J. Rushworth (*pers. comm.*) estimated the population to be c. 40 animals in November 1973.

During the present survey the writer observed the squarelipped rhino in a number of localities particularly in the Madundumela-Kennedy area and also at Deteema, dam, on the Tshowe drive, at Salt pans, near Sinamatella and also at Shumba.

Habitat

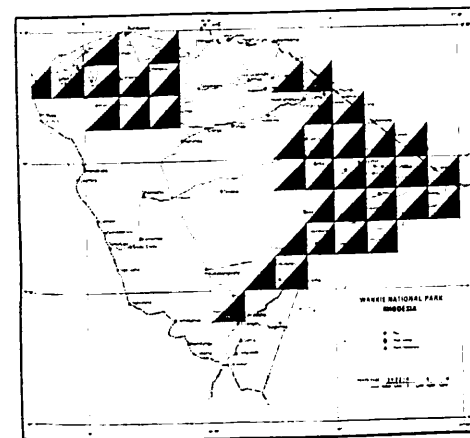
The rhino were originally released in the extensive vlei system near Manga I and Manga 2 Pans which was judged to be the most suitable habitat in the Park. The area is largely open vlei which continues down into the Madundumela system.

Habits

In June 1970 12 were seen together in the Linkwasha vlei and over a distance of four miles a total of 17 were seen all on the same day. On being disturbed the group of 12 split into three separate parties of three, five and four animals. Two, a male and a female, were seen wallowing in the mud near Deteema dam and single animals were seen on many occasions in other areas.

Food

In the Linkwasha vlei the species was recorded feeding on *Cynodon dactylon*, *Aristida* spp.



Eragrostis pallens, *Heteropogon contortus* and *Panicum maximum*. There were records of them feeding on *Echinochloa stagnina*, *Panicum repens*, *Urochloa rhodesiensis* and *Setaria anceps*. From the few records available it is difficult to say which grasses are preferred.

Breeding

Very small individuals, judged to be only a

month or two old, were seen on three occasions as follows:

9th Aug. 69	Kennedy vlei
10th Mar. 70	Linkwasha vlei
15th Jul. 70	Linkwasha vlei

Herbert & Austen (1972) believe that, as numerous calves and sub-adults were recorded, a viable population has been established.

Family EQUIDAE

Genus EQUUS Linnaeus, 1758

Equus burchelli (Gray, 1824)

Burchell's Zebra

Taxonomic Notes

The two subspecies, *E. b. chapmani* (Layard, 1865) and *E. b. antiquorum* (H. Smith 1841) may well intergrade in the Park, the difference between the two devolving upon the amount and extent of striping on the legs. *E. b. chapmani* has the legs completely striped down to the hooves while in *E. b. antiquorum* the legs are never wholly striped.

Smithers (1971) states that, in the Tamafupa area of Botswana which lies on the Rhodesian border, some zebra have the legs wholly striped, in others they are weakly marked below the knees, while some have practically no sign of marking at all below the knee. He therefore suggests that the populations in the area are intermediate between *E. b. chapmani* and *E. b. antiquorum*.

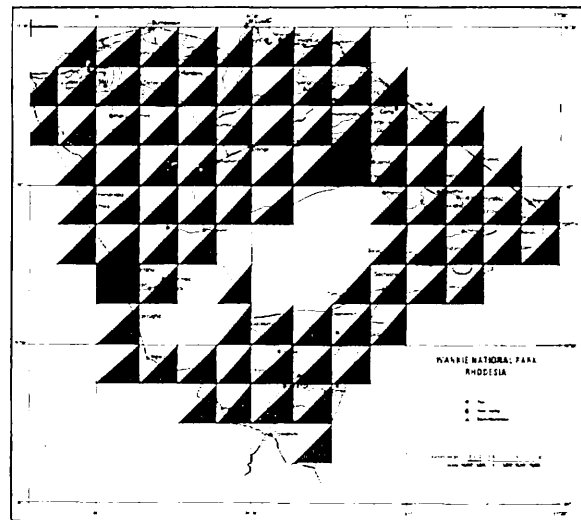
In the Park approximately 45% of the 200+ animals observed had marking right to the hooves the remainder had hardly any marking at all. This supports Smithers' (1971) suggestion.

Distribution

Zebra have a wide distribution in the Park and are found to be particularly plentiful around Nehimba and Shakwanki where over 250 were seen over a distance of 12 miles in November 1970. According to National Parks records the largest concentration of zebra seen was in the Deka Estates area where c.400 were seen by Williamson (*pers. comm.*) on 8th Oct. 73. Nine herds seen on Kennedy I flats on 21st Feb. 73 consisted of 147 animals, and another 9 herds totalling 167 animals was seen at Ngamo on the same day (J. Rushworth, *pers. comm.*)

The largest single herd was 196 seen by Williamson on Deka Estates on 8th Aug. 73 while Rushworth recorded 145 together at Sedina Pan on 17th Feb. 73.

The species is common in the area between Main Camp and Ngamo and again on the Tshowe drive in the Robins area. The species was not recorded in several areas south of Tendele but it is believed that, as this area was not well covered, they have been overlooked.



Habitat

Particularly common in areas of open grassland such as in the Linkwasha vlei, Tshowe drive and around Nehimba. However they are also common in *Baikiaea* woodland south of Main Camp and in the hilly country north and east of Robins.

Habits

A gregarious species, herds of up to 196 animals seen. Normally herds would be in the region of 6-20 animals and often even the larger groups