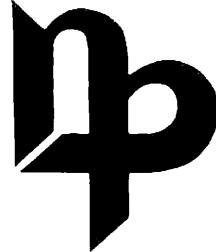


L. Hiltner-Joyles



South African Red Data Book – Terrestrial Mammals

Reay H N Smithers

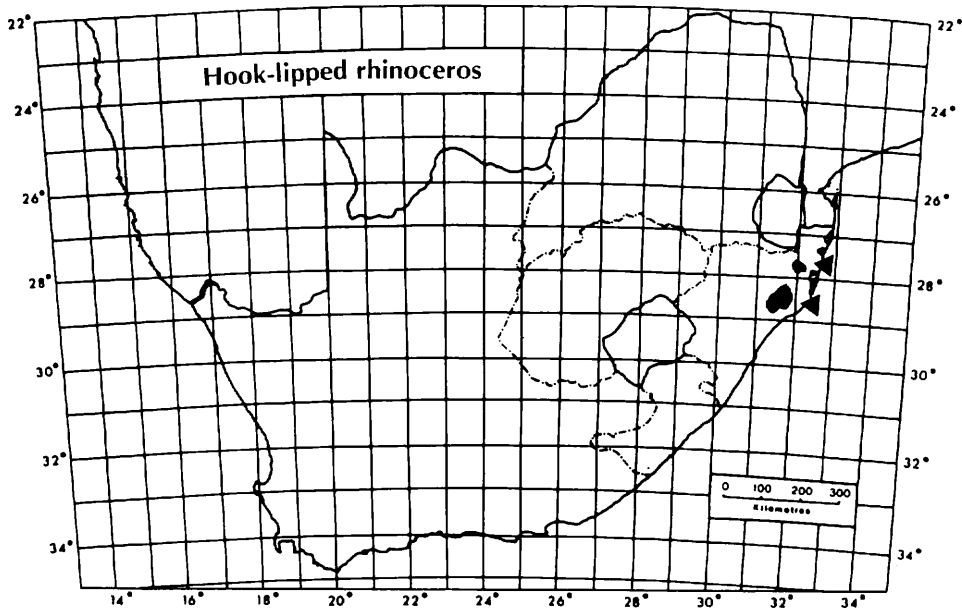
A report of the Committee for Nature Conservation Research
National Programme for Ecosystem Research

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMMES REPORT NO

125

1 x, 214

1986



HOOK-LIPPED RHINOCEROS
Swartrenoster

VULNERABLE

Diceros bicornis minor (Drummond, 1876)

1876. Rhinoceros bicornis minor Drummond, Proceedings of the Zoological Society, London: 109. All country southeast of the Zambezi. Zululand selected by Zukowsky (1876).

Order Perissodactyla

Family Rhinocerotidae

Other colloquial names

Black rhinoceros.

Present distribution

Naturally occurring populations are found only in the Hluhluwe Corridor Umfolozi Game Reserve Complex and Mkuze Game Reserve in Natal, with some spill over into adjacent areas.

Former distribution

The diary of Van Riebeeck for 1652 records the presence of rhinoceros, undoubtedly this species, in the vicinity of the fort at Cape Town and on the slopes of Table Mountain (Thom, 1958). Hunters and pioneers recorded their presence in Namaqualand and in the northern Cape Province (Mossop, 1935), the southern coastal areas of the Cape Province (Thunberg, 1795; Paterson, 1790), in the eastern Cape Province (Pringle, 1835), Natal (Baldwin, 1894), and the Transvaal (Gyldenstolpe, 1934). These and many

other records mentioned by Skead (1980) confirm that the species had a wide distribution in South Africa except that no historical record appears to exist of their presence in the Orange Free State. The proclamation of the Hluhluwe and Umfolozi Game Reserves in 1897 in Natal came just in time to save them from extinction.

Habitat

Savanna woodland and scrub. Being browsers they require that the habitat provides an adequate supply of food in the form of shrubs and young trees up to four metres in height, pushing over higher growth to reach the edible parts that grow out of reach. Habitat requirements include well developed woodland or thickets in which to shelter and a supply of water, seldom being found more than 15 km from it. Bush encroachment improves the habitat for this species.

Habits

They tend to be solitary, the only stable bond being between the female and her calf which persists until the birth of the females next calf. All other associations are transitory. The males are not territorial but may fight over a female in oestrus but not over a piece of territory. Their home ranges, which vary in size according to their sex, age and the type of habitat in which they occur, being smaller where there are dense stands of shrubs or thickets and larger in more open country. The bulls tend to be aggressive in encounters with other bulls but usually deliberately avoid contact. They deposit their dung in latrines, which are used by a number of individuals, vigorously scraping the heap with the back feet which, by being scented in this manner, mark their presence in their tracks. They may also defaecate fortuitously anywhere in the home range. The bulls urinate in a backward directed spray in short bursts on to bushes or other objects, the females in squirts as they move. Urination advertises their presence in an area to other conspecifics. Where hunted or disturbed they have a reputation of being irascible and bad tempered which is not in evidence where they are left undisturbed. They are assiduous wallowers in mud or dust, which no doubt has a function in thermoregulation and in controlling ectoparasites.

Breeding in the wild

Precopulatory behaviour involves complex encounters between the bull and cow, the latter squirting urine onto the ground which the bull sniffs and performs flehmen to test if she is in oestrus. Courtship is largely governed by the cow, the pair sparring with their horns or nudging each other with their heads, the bull prodding the cow with his horn between the hind legs. The gestation period is about 15 months, a single calf being born at any time during the year. The interval between calves is about three years. The calf walks by the side of its mother and starts to wean at about a few weeks of age, suckling continuing until it is about a year old. Females with a calf are extremely intolerant of disturbance and the female will vigorously defend the calf against predators such as lions and spotted hyaenas. The females reject their calves at two to four years of age either during the next pregnancy or at the birth of the next calf.

Breeding potential in captivity

Have been bred freely in zoos in South Africa and overseas in the past but there are indications today that breeding under these conditions has declined within recent years. Breeding under zoo conditions, on account of their size, could never be a factor in their conservation.

Reasons for decline

Hunting pressure and poaching encouraged by the high price obtained for the horns appear to have been the main factors leading to the reduction in their distributional range and numbers in the past both in South Africa and in Africa as a whole. These factors do not apply in South Africa at the moment.

Numbers in captivity

The National Zoological Gardens, Pretoria and the Johannesburg Zoo each have a single male (1985) and the International Zoo Yearbook (1984) reports that they are widely held by zoos overseas.

Protective measures in operation

Listed as a Specially Protected species in Natal with viable populations in the Hluhluwe Corridor Umfolozi Game Reserve Complex from which surplus stock has been made available for translocation to approved reserved areas both inside and outside the province as well as to zoos in South Africa and overseas.

Protective measures proposed

A continuation of the present practice of reintroduction to approved areas from surplus stocks in Natal. Suitable habitat remains available for translocated stock and the Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation in the Cape are considering their reintroduction to the De Hoop Nature Reserve and the Andries Vosloo Provincial Nature Reserve. The South African Nature Foundation has joined forces with the Natal Parks Board in initiating a project aimed at improving breeding success and assisting in the translocation of stock to safe areas.

Current research

A detailed study of the population in the Hluhluwe Corridor Umfolozi Game Reserve Complex was undertaken by Hitchins (1967, 1968b, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1975) and the population is currently (1985) being surveyed by P.M. Hitchins with the financial assistance of the Natal Parks Board and the Endangered Wildlife Trust. P.J. Viljoen of the Eugene Marais Chair of Wildlife Management, University of Pretoria includes data on this species in his study of elephants in Kaokoland and Damaraland, Namibia. See also: Guggisberg (1966); Goddard (1967, 1968); Hitchins (1968b); Schenkel & Schenkel-Hullinger (1969); Hitchins (1969); E. Joubert (1969); Goddard (1970a,b,c); Moss (1976) and Smithers (1983).

Remarks

Formerly widely distributed in Sub-Saharan Africa the hook-lipped rhinoceros today survives only in a series of small islands of distribution scattered throughout its former range. In the main this has been brought about by the unprecedented level of poaching, encouraged by the high value of the horn which finds a ready market in the Yemen and the Far East. In the northern parts of their range the level of poaching is such that it is difficult to keep pace with the changing situation as they quickly disappear locally. Believing that conservation measures are in themselves insufficient to ensure the future existence of the species in the northern parts of its range, the Rhino Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature is endeavouring to control or if possible stop the trade in rhinoceros horn.

Dr. E.B. Martin (Our living world, June 1985) stated that Africa's hook-lipped rhinoceros populations had fallen from 65 000 in 1970 to 7 500 in 1985 representing the slaughter of 90% of the population in 15 years. In June 1986 the latest estimates give a figure of 6 000 of which some 650 are found in South Africa.

Poaching has not reached these high levels in the southern parts of their range until recently when the population in the Zambesi Valley in Zimbabwe became subject to poaching from across the river from Zambia. Specially trained anti-poaching units have had to be organised to combat this encroachment which has reached serious proportions.

In the Republic of South Africa, owing to high level supervision by conservation agencies and the strict control of the export of horn, poaching is not at the moment a major factor in their conservation but there is no room for complacency for the future.

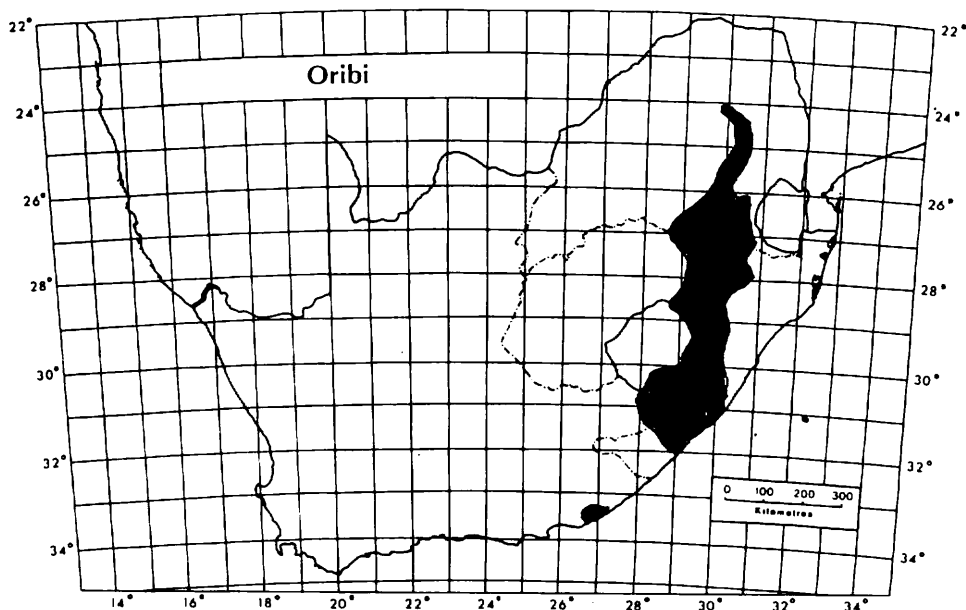
D.T. Rowe-Rowe (in litt.) reports that in Natal in 1985 there were an estimated 300 in the Hluhluwe Corridor Umfolozi Game Reserve Complex, 70 in Mkuzi Game Reserve, 30 in Ndumu Game Reserve, 40 in the Itala Game Reserve, four in the Weenen Nature Reserve and 10 in the East Shores Nature Reserve, St. Lucia. Hitchins (1984) reviewed the translocation of 138 from the Corridor linking Hluhluwe and Umfolozi Game Reserves to reserves in Natal, the Transvaal and Bophuthatswana. The stock presently held in the Addo National Park Cape Province arose from an importation from East Africa of the subspecies D. b. michaeli.

The early history of the species in this part of Africa is one of over-exploitation to the verge of extinction. Only the proclamation of reserves in Natal in 1897 came just in time to allow for their rehabilitation. Through careful conservation the Natal Parks Board has within recent years been able to make available surplus stock from their reserves for translocation to other safe areas with the result that today there is a healthy and growing population in South Africa and it has been deemed possible to remove the species from the Endangered category to that of Vulnerable. Providing the present processes continue it may in time be possible to downgrade them still further and perhaps even to remove them from the list altogether.

It is fortunate that there remain many safe areas within their former range into which they can be reintroduced but they are unfortunately not suitable for introduction to the smaller reserves to which the public has access on

foot, owing to their unpredictable nature.

The nominate form, D. b. bicornis, described from a specimen from the "Cape of Good Hope" is now extinct.



ORIBI

Oorbietjie

VULNERABLE

Ourebia ourebi ourebi (Zimmermann, 1783)

1783. Antilope ourebi Zimmermann, Geographische Geschichte 3: 268. Cape of Good Hope. Uitenhage district according to Roberts (1951: 337).

Order Artiodactyla

Family Bovidae

Present distribution

They occur in the south-eastern Transvaal; the extreme north-eastern parts of the Orange Free State; in the north-western, and the central western and southern parts of Natal; in the northern parts of the Transkei and in the Bathurst District of the eastern Cape Province. Throughout their whole range their distribution is today patchy and discontinuous.

Former distribution

Their distribution was probably less fragmented and may even have been continuous from the south-eastern Transvaal southwards and certainly extended west from the Bathurst area to at least the Uitenhage district and probably to the Langkloof (Thunberg, 1795).