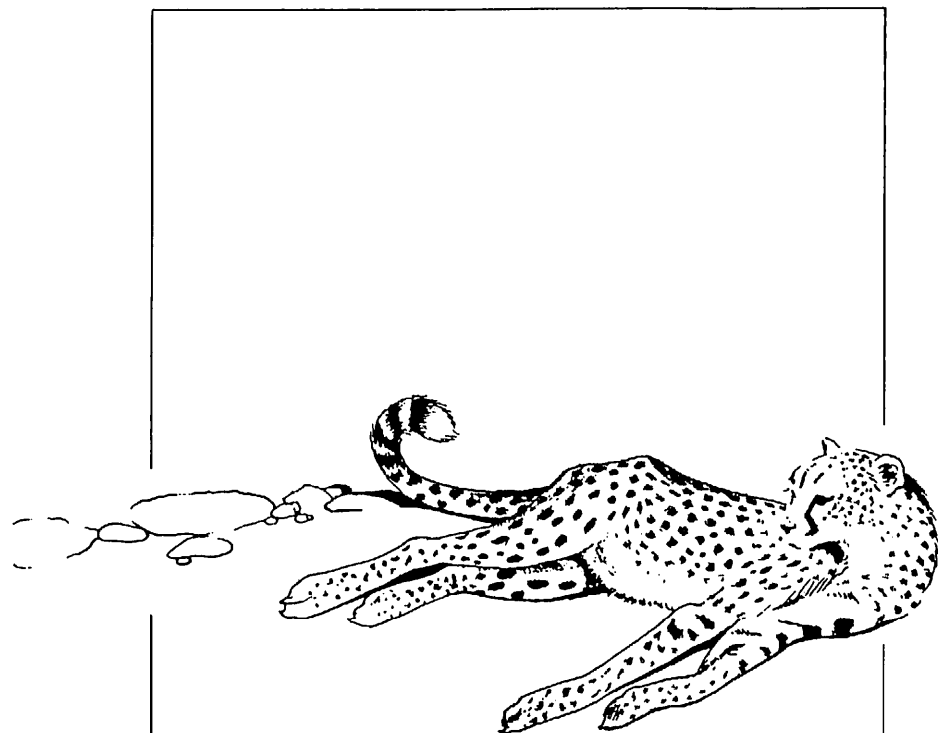


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**LAND MAMMALS
of SOUTHERN AFRICA**

A field guide

Rey HN Smithers

**Illustrations by
Clare Abbott**

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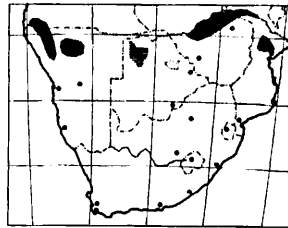
its teeth. It is more sluggish than the other dassies although agile in the trees, leaping from branch to branch and climbing onto the thinner branches. During the day it rests in hollow trees or among matted creepers or other foliage. Little is known about its diet or reproduction, but it is probably a browser. Litters of up to three are known. (S293)

Order PERISSODACTYLA, the odd-toed ungulates. In members of this Order the main mass of the body is borne on the third digits of the feet, either three toes being in contact with the ground, as in the rhinoceroses, or a single toe, as in the zebras. The Order is represented in the Subregion by two Families: the RHINOCEROTIDAE, with two species, the square-lipped (white) and hook-lipped (black) rhinoceros, and the EQUIDAE, the mountain and Burchell's zebras.

HOOK-LIPPED OR BLACK RHINOCEROS

(Swartrenoster)
Diceros bicornis

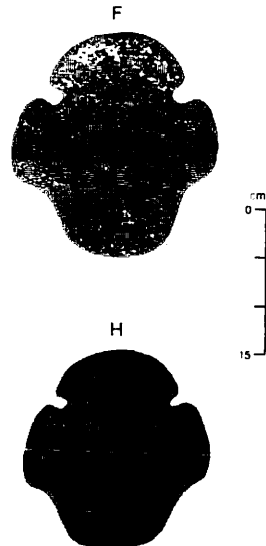
Plate 39
No. 1



Shoulder height about 1,6 m, mean mass: males about 850 kg, females 880 kg.

At one time occurred on the slopes of Table Mountain and had a wide distribution throughout the Subregion. The only naturally occurring populations today are those found in the extreme northwestern parts of Namibia, where very few are left; those in the Hluhluwe-Corridor-Umfolozi game reserve complex in Natal, in the Zambezi Valley in northeastern Zimbabwe and in central Mozambique. Being browsers, their habitat requirements are an adequate food supply in the form of shrubs and trees up to about 4 m high, shade to rest in during the hotter parts of the day, water to drink and to bathe in, and mud in which to wallow.

Characteristic features that distinguish the hook-lipped rhinoceros from its square-lipped relative include the prehensile upper lip, used in grasping food, the shorter head, longer neck and smaller, rounded ears. It lacks the conspicuous hump seen on the shoulders of the square-lipped rhinoceros and is dark grey with lighter underparts. The thick skin has a sparse



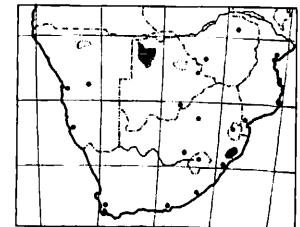
coat of bristly hairs, there are hairy fringes to the rounded ears and a tuft of black hair on the end of the tail. There are sweat glands scattered over the surface of the skin, which exude droplets of sweat under stress, and it suffers from skin lesions, caused by a filaria parasite. These lesions are blood encrusted and ulcerate and haemorrhage. The horns of the hook-lipped rhinoceros are similar in composition to those of the square-lipped rhinoceros, but the larger front horn is round at the base. The cushioned feet lack the indentation on their rear edge that is manifest in the spoor of the square-lipped rhinoceros.

Through its browsing it prunes bushes so that they become rounded on the sides and top. As it cuts the stems with its premolar teeth, the bushes show no sign of the breaking or tearing that is characteristic of elephant feeding. It is solitary in habits; the only stable bond is between the cow and her calf and this relationship persists into the cow's next pregnancy. Other associations are transitory. The bulls do not defend a territory and generally avoid contact with other adult bulls, but will fight them over an oestrous cow, and there is a high mortality in bulls between eight and ten years of age. Bulls will test the mettle of other bulls by charging at them, screaming, with head lowered, or will buffet them with the horns. Prior to copulation there are complex encounters between the bull and the cow. The latter squirts urine onto the ground which the bull will sniff and then exhibit flehmen. The bull approaches the cow stiff-legged, his hind legs dragging, and they may spar with their horns, the cow commonly attacking him. A single calf is born at any time throughout the year after a gestation period of about 15 months. The cow suckles her calf for about a year, but it starts to browse on its own at about a few weeks old. She calls it by emitting a high-pitched mew; the calf, if it has strayed, calls its mother with a bellowing squeal. Calf mortality is high, caused by predation by lions and hyaenas. (S296)

SQUARE-LIPPED OR WHITE RHINOCEROS

(Witrenoster)
Ceratotherium simum

Plate 39
No. 2



Shoulder height: males about 1,8 m, females about 1,6 m; mass: males 2 000-2 300 kg, females 1 400-1 600 kg.

Today, only occurs naturally in the Hluhluwe-Corridor-Umfolozi game reserve complex in Natal, but has, from surplus populations in this area, been widely translocated to many reserves and to privately owned properties in the Subregion and to zoos overseas. Its habitat requirements include flat terrain,

drinking water and mud in which to wallow and areas of palatable short grasses on which to graze.

Grey in colour, the body with a sparse coat of bristly hair, the skin with scattered sweat glands, which exude droplets of sweat when the individual is under stress. The two horns, borne by both sexes, are situated on top of the muzzle and are composed of a mass of tubular hair. They are outgrowths of the skin and are not attached to the skull. The front horn is usually much larger than the hind, its base with a straighter transverse front edge than in the hook-lipped rhinoceros. It has poor sight but acute senses of smell and hearing. Characteristic features are the elongated head, pointed ears, wide, squared-off lips, and the distinct hump on top of the shoulders. The feet have three digits, each armed with stout nails, and are cushioned underneath. The soles have a distinct indentation on the rear edges, which marks in the spoor and distinguishes it from that of hook-lipped rhino, which lacks this feature. The skin is very thick and is folded on the front of the shoulders and at the junctions of the limbs and the body.

The square-lipped rhinoceros is found in small groups consisting of a territorial bull, subordinate bulls and cows with their offspring. The territorial bulls mark their territories by spray urination and by defecating in latrines along their boundaries. They will charge trespassing bulls or horn clash with them until they move off, but, when a female is in oestrus, fighting may ensue and combatants are sometimes seriously wounded by the horns or by the shoulder battering which takes place. If deposed, the territorial bull may be allowed to remain providing he demonstrates his submissiveness. Square-lipped rhinoceros walk slowly with their heads close to the ground, their nostrils sometimes in contact with it and marking in the spoor, but under stress can gallop at speeds of up to 40 km/h. They mud wallow, especially in hot weather, as a means of thermoregulation and to get rid of ectoparasites. They are grazers and drink water regularly. A single calf is born at any time of the year after a gestation period of 16 months. During the two or three years of association of cow and calf, the calf usually walks in front of its mother and is guided by gentle taps from her horn.

(S295)

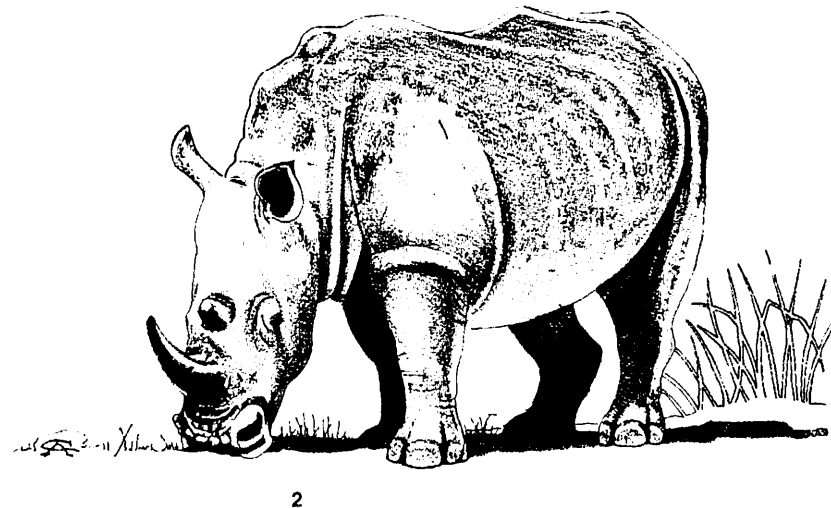
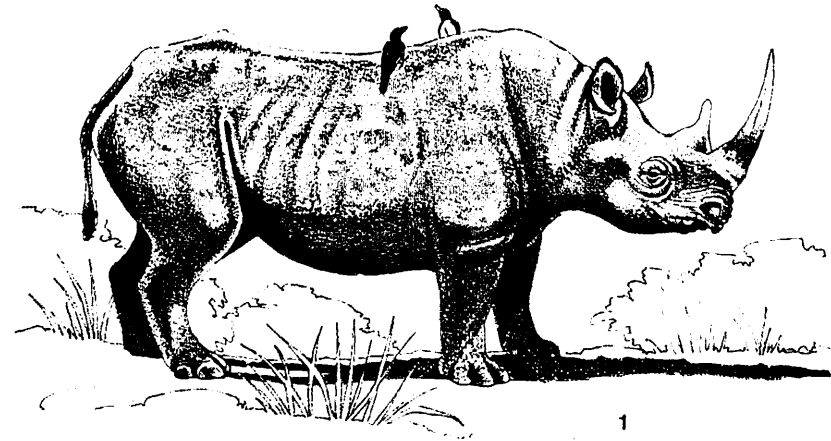
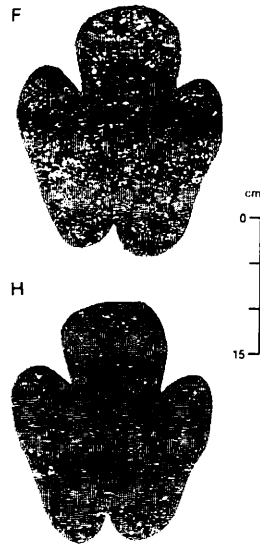


Plate 39: 1. Hook-lipped (black) rhinoceros (p. 138). 2. Square-lipped (white) rhinoceros (p. 139).