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ON THE PRESENT STATUS OF UNGULATE MAMMALS IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA

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INTRODUCTORY

South West Africa is a former German colony administered by the Union of South Africa under a League of Nations Mandate. It has an area of 318,099 square miles and lies between Latitude 17° and 29° S. and Longitude 12° and 21° E. (excluding the Caprivi Zipfel). On the North it is bounded by Angola and on the East by the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Cape Province of the Union of South Africa, which also borders the country in the South. The northern portion of the Territory falls within the Tropics and the southern portion within the South Temperate Zone.

The following introductory paragraphs are unfortunately rather long. They are included on the assumption that the majority of readers are not equipped with the background knowledge necessary to follow the succeeding account of the faunal distribution.

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE AND CLIMATE (*)

The greater part of South West Africa forms part of the main South African Plateau and its interior basin, the Kalahari. It has a mean altitude of 4,000 feet above sea level and is separated from the Atlantic Ocean by a strip of coastal desert, the Namib, with an average width of some 65 miles, which extends along the entire coastline.

Apart from the Okavango and Cunene rivers which form a part of the northern boundary, the Kwando and Zambezi, which

fringe the Caprivi Zipfel, and the Orange, there are no perennial rivers. A number of beds drain the central highlands after heavy rains however. From the central highlands of Damaraland, in which the capital city, Windhoek, lies at an altitude of some 5,500 feet, isolated peaks and ranges extend to the Otavi Mountains and Grootfontein Hills in the North-East, and to the mountains of the Kaokoveld in the North-West. Flat-topped hills and plateaux succeed the highlands southwards.

The rainfall is strongly seasonal in character. Ninety per cent of the annual precipitation falls in the summer, from December to April. The average annual rainfall increases regularly from South-West (under 25 mm) to North-East (500 mm and more). Only in the extreme North, in Ovamboland and the Okavango Native Territory, do the climatic conditions permit intensive agriculture. Except where irrigation is possible, farming in the remaining areas is pastoral and extensive. In the South sheep are run while the North is mainly a cattle ranching area.

In general, the mean monthly maximum temperatures reach a peak in December and a minimum in July. Maximum and minimum temperatures are a few degrees higher in the North and a few degrees lower in the South. The days are hot and the nights cold, reflecting the climate of a sub-tropical inland plateau. Along the coast however the days are seldom hot except when an inland wind causes temperatures to rise in winter.

VEGETATION

This description is of necessity very broad and is taken mainly from Agricultural Commission Report (2). The coastal desert is partly innocent of plant cover and, at best, supports sparse grass, succulents and low scrub. South of Latitude 24° S. scrub and arid shrub-grass predominates but this merges into thorn-tree savannah towards the North-East. North of this Latitude various types of tree and bush savannah occur, with belts of open forest towards the North. The north-eastern sector of the Territory, from the border farms in the Grootfontein and Tsumeb districts to the Angola boundary, is vegetationally distinct in that it supports extensive, dry deciduous forest.

* The major part of this description is taken from Shortridge's account (1).

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Great Namaqualand and Damaraland from the Orange River.... to about the latitude of the Waterberg ». (Otjiwarongo district). In the Outjo district, the Kaokoveld and the Grootfontein hills it is, he says, replaced by *Heterohyrax*. However, the animal which both he and Roberts (7) called *Heterohyrax wetwitschi* is referred to *Procavia capensis wetwitschi* Gray, 1868 by Ellerman et al (5). It is therefore difficult to separate the ranges of the two genera. At any rate *Dendrohyrax* (Subgenus *Heterohyrax*) does occur in the Territory since the last-named authors list *Dendrohyrax (Heterohyrax) brucei tsumebensis* Roberts, 1938 and *D. b. otjiwarongensis* Roberts, 1946 from the Tsumeb and Otjiwarongo districts respectively.

Dendrohyrax arboreus A. Smith, 1827 is recorded by Shortridge from « the Eastern and (probably) the Central Caprivi ».

Family RHINOCEROTIDAE

Diceros bicornis Linnaeus, 1758.

The questionnaires record the Black Rhinoceros only from the Outjo district, where it occurs on a number of farms in the northern section. The species ranges throughout the Kaokoveld and, occasionally, into the Etosha Pan region where a single animal has recently been observed. Shortridge believed that there were between 40 and 80 Black Rhinoceros in the Kaokoveld but in view of the number recorded on farming land I believe the higher figure to be more accurate (much of the northern part of Outjo district fell within the Kaokoveld in 1934).

The species does not appear to range along the Okavango river but it has been recorded from the Eastern Caprivi.

⁶² *Diceros (Ceratotherium) simus* Burchell, 1817.

Although the White Rhinoceros appears on the list of protected game I believe that this was a mistake or a safeguard in case the animal should be found in the Kaokoveld. I have heard reports of two types of Rhinoceros in that territory and in Angola but a belief in the existence of two forms of several other species is widespread and, in this case, the informants have limited themselves to vague generalities. It is safe to assume that the White Rhinoceros does not occur in South West Africa.

Family EQUIDAE

Equus (Hippotigris) zebra hartmannae Matschie, 1898.

Within its rather restricted range, Hartmann's Mountain Zebra is numerous. Analysis of the questionnaires reveals it to be widespread only in the districts of Outjo (48 % of all farms), Karibib (45 %), Windhoek (21 %), Lüderitz (21 %) and Maltahöhe (39 %). It is also reported to be common in the Native Reserves in the Omaruru district and is found in the eastern part of Game Reserve III. No records were received from Tsumeb, Grootfontein and Gobabis and in the remaining districts it is rare. It is therefore in the mountain ranges bordering the Namib, from the vicinity of the Orange river northwards to Angola that this species is most at home. Shortridge describes a similar range.

When the rains have been favourable it ranges deep into the desert and may sometimes cause severe damage to grazing on the nearby farms. In the Kaokoveld its range overlaps that of Burchell's Zebra and mixed herds have been recorded. Natives state that occasional wanderers have been seen near the Etosha Pan but no recent occurrences are known to me.

Equus burchelli antiquorum H. Smith, 1841.

Chapman's Zebra is unfortunately not listed as a game animal and it was therefore omitted from the questionnaires. In spite of this, many farmers in areas in which the animal is abundant recorded it, but the information thus obtained is probably incomplete. Unlike Hartmann's Mountain Zebra, this Zebra is not confined to mountainous areas and indeed is generally absent from them. The 20° S. Latitude roughly marks the southern limit of its range, within which it is most abundant in the vicinity of the Etosha Pan. Herds of several thousands may be encountered here when new grass springs up after the first rains. A fair number of farmers in the Tsumeb district recorded Chapman's Zebra and it must be assumed that it also occurs on those properties in the district of Grootfontein which adjoin Game Reserve II. This is certainly the case with many of the Outjo district farms so situated, albeit usually only at certain times. On some of the farms I suspect that both Zebras occur side by side as they do in the Kaokoveld. There Chapman's ranges further East than Hartmann's however