

THE LOADING OF BLACK AND WHITE RHINOCEROS FROM A BOMA ENCLOSURE INTO A TRAVELLING CRATE

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During the course of translocating both black and white rhinoceros *Rhinoceros bicornis* and *Ceratotherium simum* from one reserve to another, it is often necessary to retain them in a boma in temporary captivity. Subsequently the rhinos must be loaded into travelling crates from the boma, and various methods have been devised by the Natal Parks Board to do this. A feature common to all methods is the attachment of the travelling crate to the boma well before transportation is anticipated. The idea is that food can be placed in the crate allowing the rhino to enter and feed, thus becoming used to moving in and out.

Hitchins *et al.* (1972) loaded black rhinos by placing food in the crate after withholding it for the previous twenty-four hours. The hungry rhino readily entered, and the door was closed behind it. Tranquillizer was then injected intramuscularly using an ordinary hypodermic syringe. Difficulty was experienced administering the injections, except with very tame individuals, because the rhino, on being confined, struggled violently and was liable to damage itself.

Alternatively the rhino was darted with tranquillizer using the Cap Chur carbon dioxide-powered gas gun (Palmer Chemical and Equipment Co., Atlanta, Ga., U.S.A.) while still in the boma. Food was placed in the crate and when the animal entered the door was closed, by which time the tranquillizer had commenced taking effect and the rhino remained quiet. Both black and white rhinos can be loaded in this way.

The disadvantage of these methods was that if the rhino became suspicious of any abnormal human activity it would not enter the crate to feed, so an additional method was developed, and is now almost invariably used upon both species, and has proved satisfactory in loading hundreds of animals. The rhino is darted with a small amount of etorphine hydrochloride (M99) (Reckitt and Coleman). The dose for an adult rhino is 0,25 mg: for a subadult and juvenile it is 0,125 mg. Although white rhinos are much larger than black, the same doses are given for each age category. If the drug has had insufficient effect forty-five minutes after darting, an equal additional dose can be administered.

Once the drug starts to take sufficient effect – up to thirty minutes after darting – a bag or cloth is carefully waved in front of the animal's face without touching it. If there is no noise or additional distracting movement, the rhino slowly moves towards the cloth and can be led into the crate. The door is closed and the animal is almost unaware of confinement. Narcotic reversal drugs are not normally administered, but if the rhino becomes recumbent diprenorphine hydrochloride (M50/50) (Reckitt and Coleman) can be given intravenously into an ear vein.

REFERENCE

Hitchins, P.M., Keep, M.E. & RoCHAT, K. 1972. The immobilization and translocation of black rhinoceros from Hluhluwe Game Reserve to the Kruger National Park. *Lammergeyer* 17: 18–30.

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**EXTENSION OF RECORDED DISTRIBUTION OF THE PIPE FISH,
Microphis fluviatilis (PETERS, 1852)**

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Microphis fluviatilis (Pipe fish) is a euryhaline fish, described by Smith (1949) as an Indo-Pacific species which frequents rivers, having been found in Mozambique and in the upper reaches of the Zambezi river. According to Bruton and Cooper (1980), Pott recorded *M. fluviatilis* further south, in the Usutu River adjacent to the Ndumu Game Reserve, South Africa.

The authors collected three specimens of *Microphis fluviatilis* on 1 August 1985 in the Umfolozi River, Natal, South Africa, at a site approximately 25 km inland from the sea on Proksch Estate (28°27'S - 32°16'E), which is situated adjacent to the Mfuthululu Pan. The fish were collected when the Umfolozi River was very low, with many pools remaining in the sandy riverbed. The fish were netted in slow-flowing water adjacent to marginal vegetation, in a water depth of ca 700 mm. Two specimens were males which measured 161 mm and 173 mm, and the third was a female of 119 mm.

Two specimens were positively identified by Mr J.A. Cambrey, Albany Museum, with whom specimens are now lodged, reference No. NPB 1300, AMG/P 11575. One specimen was retained in the Natal Parks Board collection.

This collection record forms an extension to the southern distribution limit of *Microphis fluviatilis* in Africa. Since the Mkuzi River catchment separates the Usutu from the Umfolozi, it seems likely that *M. fluviatilis* will be found there too.

REFERENCES

- Bruton, M.N. & Cooper, K.H. 1980. The Ecology of Maputaland. Wildlife Society of Southern Africa.
Smith, J.L.B. 1949. The Sea Fishes of Southern Africa. Central News Agency. Cape Town, South Africa.

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