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Within a very short time the Kruger National Park will be starting another season—most likely another record-breaking season, for each year it becomes increasingly popular. The following brief notes are timely and may help to add to the interest of visitors who are not thoroughly acquainted with the mammals of South Africa's premier National Park and for various reasons have not made a study of more detailed accounts than can be given here.

## MAMMALS of the Kruger National Park

By Leo Lownds

THE following notes on the wild denizens of the Kruger National Park are intended merely to provide visitors with a very brief outline of the extraordinary variety of species common to the Park. A few notes on their distribution and the likelihood of seeing them are also given.

"The North" refers to the Letaba, Shingwedzi and Punda Maria sections.

"The South" refers to that part of the Park south of the Oliphants River, and embraces the Pretoriuskop, Malelane, Crocodile Bridge, Skukuza, Tshokwane and Satara sections.

### THE CARNIVORA

**Lion, leopard and cheetah.**—Distributed throughout the Park. Visitors are likely to see more lions near Pretoriuskop and Skukuza than elsewhere. Cheetahs are rather more numerous in the north.

**Serval, Caracal (rooi-kat or lynx) and wild-cat.**—All these are well distributed throughout the Park, but owing to their nocturnal habits they are very seldom seen by tourists.

**Spotted Hyena.**—Quite frequently seen in all sections of the Park during daylight. Its eerie calls are often heard at night from the rest camps.

**Brown Hyena (Strand-wolf).**—A very much rarer species, although well-distributed.

**Aard Wolf (Manhaarjakkals).**—An interesting animal which lies up in holes and is very seldom seen in daylight. Although nowhere plentiful, it has a wide range.

**Saddle-backed Jackal.**—Plentiful throughout the Park, particularly so near Pretoriuskop, where quite a number may usually be seen on a day's run.

**Side-striped Jackal.**—More nocturnal and solitary than its handsome cousin, and prefers thick bush country.

**African Hunting Dog (Wild Dog).**—Distributed throughout the Park, in packs of four or five to twenty or more. With its striking markings of black, white and khaki, should not be confused with hyena. Wild dogs became very scarce some years ago, but are now reported to be increasing.

**Civet, and the Genets.**—The former may be seen occasionally,

just after sunset, but the genets are even more nocturnal and are very rarely seen.

**Mongoose family.**—The larger species appear to be strictly nocturnal, but the small Brown Mongoose is often seen, generally in a family party hopping in and out of holes in large anthecaps.

**Cape Otter, Ratel, and two species of Polecat or Skunk.**—These are also included in the carnivora, but are very seldom seen.

**Crocodile.**—Although not a mammal, the crocodile may well be included in this list. It is found in all the permanent rivers, and also in many isolated pools in "dry" water courses. More are probably seen by visitors in the Shingwedzi and Sabi than elsewhere.

### ANTELOPES

For simplicity, and quite unscientifically, the following 17 species of antelope have been listed in three groups—large, medium and small.

The first group includes eland, roan, sable, kudu, waterbuck and wildebeest. In the second group are: Nyala, tsessebe, reedbuck, impala, bushbuck and mountain reedbuck (rooi rhebok).



Klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*). Distributed throughout the Park and, indeed, throughout Africa as far north as Ethiopia.

(Photo: Dick Wolff.)

The last group includes duiker, steenbok, klipspringer, Sharpe's steenbok and red duiker.

Many of these are familiar to all visitors, and little need be said about kudu, wildebeest, waterbuck, impala, duiker, steenbok and klipspringer. They are all plentiful throughout the Park, waterbuck being more numerous in the North.

**Eland.**—Seldom if ever seen in the South, this, the largest of all the antelopes, is often seen by tourists in the North, and should be looked for particularly between Letaba and Shingwedzi.

**Roan Antelope.**—Formerly fairly plentiful, nowadays a rarity in the South, although a few are occasionally seen on the "Jock" road and elsewhere. It is much more often seen in the North, between the Letaba River and Punda Maria. Its large size—second to Eland—colour, and donkey-like ears are the main recognition features.

**Sable Antelope.**—Many small and some large herds of this most handsome antelope are distributed throughout the Park. Rather more plentiful in the North, and in the vicinity of Tshokwane and Satara, than elsewhere.

**Nyala.**—Except for occasional wanderers, found only in certain localities in the North. It is most usually seen on the banks of the Pafuri, in the Punda Maria section and along the Shingwedzi. The bull is a most impressive-looking grey-black animal, about the size of a kudu cow, with horns rather similar to those of a young kudu bull. He has a deep fringe on the throat and chest, and a white crest along the spine. The female, half his size, is much the same colour as an impala, but with bright white stripes down the flanks.

**Tsessebe.**—Formerly plentiful throughout the Park, has now unfortunately become almost a rarity in the South. Although by no means plentiful, tsessebe are usually seen by all visitors to the North, between the Letaba and Shingwedzi, and near Punda Maria.

**Reedbuck.**—Although more plentiful in the North, are distributed throughout the Park, preferring vleis and long-grass country. A family party of reedbuck may often be seen on the "island" in the Lily Pan near Tshokwane, and pairs are frequently seen on the nine-mile loop near Malelane.

**Bushbuck.**—Found sparingly throughout the Park, and should be looked for in thick bush near any of the rivers.

**Mountain Reedbuck (Rooi Rhebok).**—Very seldom seen by tourists, as their habitat in the Park is limited to the range of hills near Malelane camp, with no road nearby. They are occasionally seen from the roads near Malelane after a grass fire or a prolonged drought has driven them down from the hills.

**Sharpe's Steenbok (Grysbok).**—A little-known antelope which

is a rarity in the South, but well distributed in the North: it is most likely to be seen amongst the palms on the banks of the Letaba and Shingwedzi, and along the Lebombo range. It has a grizzly coat quite unlike the sleek coat of a steenbok, and, instead of running and leaping, scuttles away like a rabbit.

**Red Duiker (Msumbi).**—Probably very seldom, if ever, seen by tourists in the Park, where its range is limited to one or two thickly-bushed hills near the Pretoriuskop gate.

#### OTHER MAMMALS

Again it is quite unnecessary to write notes about several animals which are plentiful throughout the Park. In this category come the giraffe, hippo, zebra, warthog, Chacma baboon, vervet monkey, and grey-footed squirrel.



(Photo: W. F. Schack)

**Elephant.**—The greater proportion of the elephant population in the K.N.P. (now estimated at 800) lives in the North, and numbers are usually seen daily by visitors to Letaba and Shingwedzi. In every section of the Park, however, except near Pretoriuskop, there are individuals and small herds. Almost all these are bulls.

**Buffalo.**—Distributed in suitable localities throughout the Park, the largest herd—over 1,000 strong—living in the Crocodile Bridge section. Small parties of bulls, and at times a considerable herd, are often seen on the nine-mile loop.

**Bush-Pig.**—A strictly nocturnal animal, quite different from

the warthog. Although well distributed along most of the rivers, is very seldom seen by visitors.

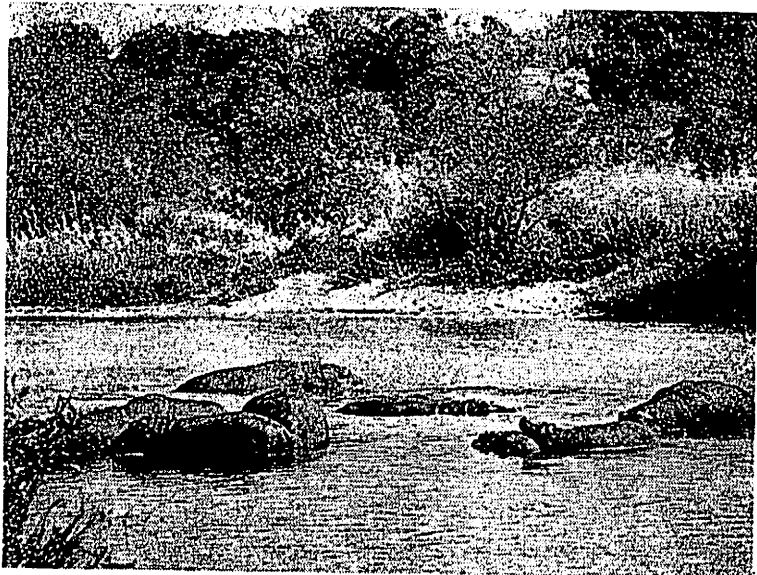
**Rodents.**—Several varieties of hares, and the rock-rabbit, or dassie, are seen at times. The Spring-hare, not found in most parts of the Lowveld, is fairly common in the North. The cane-rat is plentiful, but seldom seen.

**Antbear, Scaly Anteater, Porcupine and two varieties of Lemur (Bush-baby).**—These would all be of interest to visitors if they would only show themselves in the daytime.

**Black Rhinoceros.**—Although a few were known to exist in the Park some 20 years ago, there has been no authentic report of one being seen since 1936. In that year, ranger Kirkman tracked and obtained a close-up view of an old female in the dense bush south of the Sabi.

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In conclusion, visitors to the Park who are not quite sure that they can recognise and name everything they see, might well provide themselves with one or both of two well-illustrated booklets—"Animals of the Kruger National Park" by C. T. Astley Maberly, and "A Guide to Some Common Animals of the Kruger National Park," by Dr. R. Bigalke.



The Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) occurs throughout the Kruger National Park in all the larger rivers. Practically all the other animals must be watched from the safety of a car, but a short walk is often necessitated in order to view the normally placid and inoffensive hippo. These were photographed in the Sabi River by R. W. King.

The Kruger National Park offers

## Other Things Than Lions

By B. J. BRIDGE

Illustrated by W. D. Wheeler

MANY people seem to measure the enjoyment of a visit to the Kruger National Park by the number of lions or elephant seen. The proximity of these animals usually produces a thrill of excitement, or possibly of fear, and it is natural that one should like to describe encounters with them. Nevertheless, the search for lion or elephant should not be allowed to become a fetish with the true nature lover. Some people, in their eagerness to find these animals, miss an enormous amount of interesting, instructive and amusing material for the very reason that they cannot or will not spare the time to pause and observe the less ferocious forms of life.

Last January my family derived much pleasure in watching a large herd of wildebeest, including many cows with newly-born calves. The herd was not more than half a mile from Pretorius Kop camp and one morning, at this spot, we were the object of much derision from passing lion-seekers when it was found that we were wasting time on mere wildebeest.

We observed particularly a cow with her calf who had become separated from the main herd. The calf seemed to be gambolling about full of early morning joy, and it was quite moving to observe the anxious maternal watchfulness of the cow.

**Jackals on the Attack** As we drew nearer we were amazed to find that some jackals were making a concerted attack on the calf. Two jackals darted at his flank and, as soon as the mother had succeeded in driving them off, a third slunk in from the opposite direction. When the cow turned to deal with this new danger, the original attackers returned to the fray. This process was repeated over and over again but the wise mother, whenever she got breathing space, was nudging her calf in the direction of the main herd which they were ultimately successful in rejoining. We heaved a sigh of relief when three or four of the older members of the herd made short work of putting the jackals to flight.

A friend of mine recently came upon a cobra and a mongoose engaged in mortal combat in the middle of a Kruger Park road. Most of us have read descriptions of such encounters, but very few have actually witnessed them.

The mongoose made several lightning dashes towards the snake. Each time it drew back a split second before the snake