

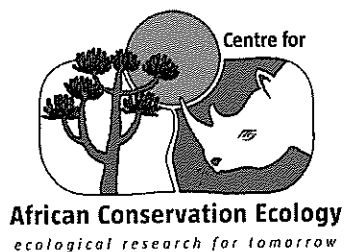
HISTORICAL INCIDENCE OF THE LARGER LAND MAMMALS IN THE BROADER EASTERN CAPE

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in moist and marshy places...I doubted whether this colour could be owing to any other cause...". No matter how Le Vaillant tried to convince the locals of the reason for the elephants' colour he was unable to do so. The 'ulceration' theory was destroyed when his Khoikhoi ate the meat of a 'red' elephant he shot, and suffered no ill effects!

In 1820, Moodie (2,1835:38-39) after crossing the Van Staden's River and passing through a forest of fine timber trees remarks that the "woods" were said to have "swarmed with elephants and buffaloes". In view of the excellent forest conditions and the many travellers who passed this way and who camped at Galgenbosch, near Thornhill, it is surprising that more records are not available.

Black rhinoceros

The only reference to rhinos west of Port Elizabeth is from Thunberg (2,1795:84), when writing of his visit to Kraggakamma and the various wild animals still living there in a state relatively undisturbed by the Colonists. Among these he mentions the "two-horned rhinoceroses" (repeated on p. 89). Although he is the only visitor to have mentioned rhinos there, their presence would have been quite possible, especially in the bushveld on the coastal plateau. By ecological probability these must have been black rhinos. They were in the Valley Bushveld west of Uitenhage only 20 km away until the late 1840s, as will be seen in Sector 2.

Hippopotamus

These animals must have occurred in all the rivers, including the Gamtoos, and the smaller rivers to the west of its mouth. FitzSimons (3,1925:157) tells of the many hippo teeth unearthed near Port Elizabeth and taken to the museum. Writing of the Baakens River, a small river which passes through the present urban area and enters the sea within the dockyard, FitzSimons says: "At some remote time this spruit was probably a fairly large river with many deep holes in which hippo lived. The complete skeleton of one was excavated within 100 yards [say metres] of the beach at the mouth of the river which was formerly a lagoon". This "spruit" as he called it, looks limpid and innocuous, but it can become a dangerous raging torrent when heavy rains fall within its comparatively small catchment area.

In 1776, Sparrman (2,1786:285) visited the Gamtoos River Mouth and made the interesting comment "That the hippopotamuses actually lived in salt water, I have seen evident proofs at the mouths both of Kromme [a large estuary 28 km west of the Gamtoos] and Camtour [= Gamtoos] rivers, particularly in the latter... In Krakekamma [= Kraggakamma] I saw on the beach manifest traces of a hippopotamus which had come out of the sea, but had retired thither again directly". A hippo

was shot by Robert Jacob Gordon at the Gamtoos River in January 1778 (Rookmaaker 1989:114). At Kraggakamma there was a natural lake, now known as Lake Farm, where passing travellers camped and from whence they went on their local hunting trips to the Chelsea Flats or down through the coastal bushveld to the sea. Sparrman would therefore have been somewhere near the present township of Seaview when he saw hippo spoor on the beach. Between the Gamtoos and Kromme estuaries, mentioned above, is a small river that still bears the name of Seekoeirivier [= Hippopotamus River].

In 1779, Paterson (1790:81), when at the Loerie River, a small tributary which enters the Gamtoos River about 16 direct km from the sea, makes the enlightening statement that the hippos had been so much hunted there that they seldom came out of the river. As the Gamtoos River was declared the eastern boundary of the Cape only in 1771 (although White farmers had begun to settle there as early as 1744), the exploitation of the hippo must have been severe.



Hippos were recorded at the mouth of the Gamtoos River Mouth in 1776 by the early Swedish zoologist Anders Sparrman, and in 1778, two years later, one was shot in this river (seen here) by the Dutch naturalist Robert Jacob Gordon. Hippos were once present in all the larger rivers and estuaries of the broader Eastern Cape. (Photo: André Boshoff)

Buffalo

The buffalo seems to have excited more attention than other large animals. In 1773, Thunberg (2,1795:79) saw pitfall traps dug for elephants and buffaloes on the Loerie River west of Van Staden's River, and, when camped at Kraggakamma, he wrote of numerous herds of buffaloes grazing adjacent to the plains, one being an extremely large herd. The coastal bush, and the forests which clothed the river slopes, were all well suited to the buffalo. In 1775, Sparrman (2,1786:4) found them at Galgenbosch, a regular outspan place for wagoners near the present Thornhill, 7 km west of the Van Staden's Gorge.

whose farm adjoins 'Amanzi' and who are not yet 60 years old tell of the day when as lads they were chased by elephants up the slope where now orange groves stand". Sir Percy's date of 1858 for the last rhino in the Cape is five years later than the 1853 date for rhino given by EHLS (1926) later under 'Black rhinoceros'. The exact date of this has yet to be determined. The last known date for the black rhino in the Eastern Cape is 1885 (see Sector 5).

2.2.4 THE MAMMAL PICTURE

2.2.4.1 Large mammals

Elephant

That elephants would have been plentiful along the Sundays River and in the dense bushveld to the west of it goes without saying – the herd still in the Addo Bush today, immediately to the east of the river, is proof of this. Barrow (1,1801:164) found elephants on the banks of the river in 1797, and Moodie (2,1835) found the same in 1820. In that large stretch of wild bushy country, and with all the food they could possibly need, their numbers could not have been otherwise than large, but with the occupation of the country by the eastward moving White farmers a conflict between these two factions became inevitable.

A party of hunters, including Mr Berry of Port Elizabeth, whilst hunting on the banks of the Sundays River, came across a herd of 70–80 elephants – they captured a young one for viewing at Berry's Hotel (*Eastern Province Herald*, 19 August 1864). In 1875, Sir Arthur Cunynghame (1879:286), a military man, quoted the *Uitenhage Times* newspaper as saying that a large troop of over 100 elephants was causing damage at 'Grassridge' a stretch of open grassveld about 75 km² in area on top of the watershed between the Coega and Sundays rivers, an open area surrounded by the Valley Bushveld so typical of the region and lying about 18 km north-east of Uitenhage and more or less halfway between Swartkops and Addo. The report states that "...the country, after they (*i.e.* the elephants) have crossed it, looks more like a well-used waggon-road than anything else...the farmers are talking of organising a party to go in pursuit of them. Their haunts may be easily reached from Prentice Kraal... Living as they do in comparative civilisation, these animals are far more wary and savage than those which are to be found farther from home". 'Prentice Kraal', a farm at Centlivres, lies 16 km north-east of Uitenhage and on the edge of Grassridge.

Further confirmation of elephant activity near Uitenhage in about the 1870s comes from Sir Percy FitzPatrick (*c.*1925:9) in the account of his farm 'Amanzi'. As recounted earlier, he wrote: "the Hartman brothers whose farm adjoins 'Amanzi' and who are not yet 60 years old, tell of the day when

as lads they were chased by elephants up the slope where now orange groves stand".

Further inland, at Bluecliff, 30 km north of Uitenhage on the road to Steytlerville, William Green (1868:21–22), a Sundays River pioneer, wrote: "...where elephants roamed when I came to these parts in 1884 there were only sledge paths to travel on...Bluecliff was our nearest station up to 1903". Also in 1884, the *Port Alfred Budget* for 16 January 1884, quoting from the *Eastern Province Herald*, mentions a troop of 30 elephants on the Sundays River not far from Addo. Still in the 1880s, but nearer Uitenhage, Bryden (1889:210) wrote: "As we passed through Uitenhage we heard that some of these obtrusive mammoths had been, a few days previously, destroying the telegraph posts and over-running the railway line close to town".

Thus did the elephant heap the wrath of both townsman and farmer upon it, and with the inevitable result. To what extent the following figures are correct – and they can be hardly more than uninspired guesses – a 'Game Census' on an undated press cutting for about 1910 lists "approximately 160" elephants in the Uitenhage district and "approximately 140" for the Alexandria districts eastwards across the Sundays River, and therefore including the Addo Bush.

In the prehistoric field, the Albany Museum monthly report for February 1947 lists the accession of an elephant molar from a shell mound at the Sundays River Mouth.

Black rhinoceros

The bushy country, often very dense in the valleys, strongly suggests that only the black rhino would have been there, certainly in historical times. It was at the Swartkops River that the eastward trekking travellers really began to meet the rhino and to refer to it in their texts. At the Cape it had been a common animal where it was recorded as early as 1647 (Raven-Hart 1967a:169) five years before Van Riebeeck's arrival. The wreck of the East Indiaman *Haerlem* compelled a party of survivors to wait ashore there until a ship called and rescued them from what was then not a regular port of call. Rhino records appear frequently in the journal of Jan van Riebeeck (1,1951) in 1652 and later. However, no adequate records of rhinos east of the Hottentots Holland Mountains have been found until Uitenhage is reached. Moodie (1,1835:249), in passing, mentions that the rhino and the buffalo had totally disappeared from the Swellendam district when he was there in 1819/20. He mentions a place name 'Rhenosterfontein', which although giving a possible hint of the occurrence of the species in historical times is not supported by any other evidence other than remains from De Hoop Nature Reserve near Bredasdorp. Bear in mind that Swellendam is a place that has received good

coverage in other respects, although a reference to a rhino on the Gourits River, near Mossel Bay comes to mind. Eastwards of this, along the coastal plateau, the rhino is not mentioned until Thunberg (2,1795:83) refers to it at Kraggakamma, just west of Port Elizabeth. Once the drier Valley Bushveld country around Uitenhage was reached the rhino began to come into its own. Rhino tracks were recorded by Robert Jacob Gordon at the Sundays River in January 1778 (Rookmaaker 1989:114).

In 1782, Le Vaillant (1,1790:280) found unidentified spoor between the Swartkops Salt Lake and the Swartkops River in the Port Elizabeth district, in country very suitable for rhino. His people assured him that they were not from a rhino. William Paterson (1790:83) met the rhino in 1779 at the Coega River only 10 km east of Swartkops where, he says, the country was very "much frequented by Lions, Rhinoceroses, and Buffaloes". Records of rhinos immediately east of the Sundays River are dealt with in the next sector (Sector 3: Sundays to Bushmans rivers), but it seems obvious that from the time of Paterson's visit rhinos were well on the way to being ousted by the domestic animals which had come with the settled farmers in the early 1770s, even though frontier farmers had been there much earlier. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Backhouse (1844:172) saying of the year 1838 that the two-horned rhino was still at 'Grassridge' and Addo, a statement implying some sort of surprise that such should still be the case.

If the records can be accepted, 'Grassridge' saw the second to last black rhino in the Cape in 1853. Rochlin (1961:259), quoting Henry Hall, a surveyor, wrote: "The last rhinoceros killed in the Cape Colony was an old male which was shot in 1853 on the Coega, or Grassridge, near Port Elizabeth". This rhino survived another 'last' Uitenhage rhino by only about four years, according to EHLS (1926), the initials of Prof. EHL Schwarz, a noted geologist. After mentioning that the last lion in Albany (Grahamstown) had been shot in 1849, Prof. Schwarz added "...the last rhinoceros [was] shot near Uitenhage on Red Hill about the same time". Red Hill is 6.4 km west of Uitenhage, and has the alternative names of 'Boshoogte' and 'Mimosadale'. Thus the 'last' Grassridge and Red Hill rhinos were only about 25 km apart. The 'Grassridge' incident was reported in the *Eastern Province Herald* of 8 November 1853; mention is made of the rhino being known in the neighbourhood for the past 20-30 years.

In the privately printed account of the history of his farm 'Amanzi', 11 km east-north-east of Uitenhage, Sir Percy FitzPatrick (c. 1925:9) wrote: "It is recorded in the old books that the last bull rhinoceros killed in the Cape Colony was shot on the Coega River, on what is now 'Amanzi'. That was in 1858". His date of 1858 conflicts with the

date of 1853 given by EHLS. Until the "old books" mentioned by Sir Percy have been found, the true date of this event must be in the balance. The latest 'last' date for the black rhino in the Cape is 1885 (Sector 5).

Hippopotamus

FitzSimons (3,1925:157), the then Director of the Port Elizabeth Museum, tells of hippo teeth coming to light from time to time near Port Elizabeth and being taken to the museum. Mr WH Gess, hon. archaeologist at the Port Elizabeth Museum, kindly supplied the following details of hippo remains at the museum (*in litt.* 14 March 1972): "Linkside, P.E.; Baakens River Mouth, Humewood; Amsterdamhoek at the mouth of the Swartkops River; Kleinskool, near Redhouse; Swartkops Brickfields during excavations at a depth of 6 m". The hippo would have been in both the Coega and Sundays rivers in strength.

Buffalo

The buffalo has given rise to several historical references. In 1775/76, Sparrman (2,1786:12,20, 315) saw buffaloes at the Little Sundays River towards the coast at Coega, and at the Sundays River Drift (? near Sunland). Swellengrebel recorded buffaloes at the "Zondagsrivier" on 9 November 1776 and at "Algoa Bay" on 11 November 1776 (Rookmaaker 1989:35). The species was recorded around Port Elizabeth by Gordon in January 1778 (Rookmaaker 1989:114). In 1779, Paterson (1790:83) knew it at Coega, as did Le Vaillant (1,1790:289) who shot three there.

In 1797, Barrow (1,1801:120) found buffaloes beside the Swartkops Saltpan and "...started a herd of fourteen buffaloes that had been rolling in the spring..." at Wolwefontein about 75 km north of Uitenhage up the wide valley of the Kariega River, a tributary of the Sundays River. In 1820, Moodie (2,1835:42) mentions that a great many buffaloes were shot at Coega and that there were great numbers of elephants and buffaloes along the Sundays River.

In the 1880s buffaloes were still wandering widely through the Uitenhage district. The *Port Alfred Budget* of 3 November 1881, quoting from the *Uitenhage Chronicle* mentions the shooting of a buffalo on a farm near Kariega railway station 40 km north of Uitenhage, and the same newspaper, again quoting the *Uitenhage Chronicle* but for 9 February 1882, reports the shooting of two buffaloes on Mr Snetler's farm 'Kruis River' within five miles [8 km] of this town", *i.e.* of Uitenhage. A herd of 14 had been seen lying down on top of the mountain near the homestead. A farm labourer stalked them and shot a young bull, and a young cow was shot by a Mr Rens.

Since they left Fredericksburg [this was near Peddie in the Ciskei] they had 4 000 Acres [1.62 ha] given them at the mouth of the Bushmans River, and there he tells me they are in the midst of these animals. The Boers come down in parties to kill them, and no less than Thirty-nine have been killed of late. So much for Mr Barrow's idea, who is, however the best writer on the Cape. He lately asserted that there were Fifty in the Colony. One of their Neighbours, a Dutchman was killed last week by one. His body was discovered trodden to a jelly, not a bone unbroken...". Philipps' reference to Mr Barrow indicated John Barrow, the colonial secretary, who had written a book on his travels (see Bibliography).

The monthly report of the Director of the Albany Museum for October 1937 mentions the receipt of two elephant molars from 'Paardevlei', 20 km south-west of Alexandria.

From Langebos eastwards to the Bushmans River, deep circular waterholes occur every now and then along shallow valleys thought to have been the beds of past water-courses but now blocked from entry to the river or the sea, and well grassed. Local opinion considers these hollows to have been old elephant wallows, an opinion based on the numbers of tusks, teeth and bones that have been found at the bottoms of these vleis. However, in conversation with Professors ED Mountain and HV Eales of the Department of Geology, Rhodes University, Grahamstown (31 July 1973), the author learnt that the hollows always occur over a limestone base that subsides, and leaves open surface sinkholes. Elephants and buffaloes doubtless wallowed there and might have caused some enlargement in so doing, but the depths of some of the holes and the steepness of the slopes as seen today would have been beyond the possibility of this happening by animal action. The reason that these sinkholes had not been filled by soil eroding into them, over the centuries, was explained by Prof. Eales. He considered that the sinkholes would have been very much deeper originally, and that their gradual filling by erosion is still in progress. Certainly, the surrounding grassveld is very dense, a factor that would reduce the rate of soil erosion considerably.

Black rhinoceros

Only Upper Alexandria has produced records of this species. In January 1779, Paterson (1790:83-84), when between Coerney and Sandflats, now the present village of Paterson, tells of a "great number of quadrupeds" there "...Lions, Panthers [= leopards], elephants, Rhinoceroses" etc.. And Lichtenstein (1,1812:417), in 1804, when travelling over a broad sloping hill covered from top to bottom in shrubs and trees, and probably therefore near the Addo Heights west of Sandflats, was told that the place swarmed with elephants, rhinos,

and buffaloes. He mentions seeing traces of them everywhere.

However, neither of these two reliable observers saw the rhino, they only heard of it being there. In 1816, La Trobe (1821:309) makes a vague reference to rhino at the 'Witte' River on the slopes of the Suurberg near Coerney but, on p.338, at the same place, he recounts that some members of the party had come there from Coerney via Ados Drift (Wittedrift?) and saw "elephants and rhinoceroses traces". Thus one sighting is known.

In 1838, Backhouse (1844:172) wrote that "The Two-horned Rhinoceros...still keeps a possession in the bushy ravines and woods of this part of the Colony [in this case the Addo Bush]...was formerly common throughout the country. Within the Colony, it is now rarely found, except in the thickets of the Eastern District, and there it is but seldom seen". For 1849, Cumming (1909:42 fn.) says that "...one solitary black rhinoceros, still found shelter in the vast jungles of the Zuurberg and Addo bush as late as the commencement of 1849". Shortridge (1,1934:416) quotes Bryden who mentions "a single rhino surviving in the Addo Bush" in 1851, presumably the same as Cumming's.

These 'last' dates of 1849 and 1851 match those given for 'last' rhinos in Sector 2 where the 'last' for Grassridge immediately west of Addo was in 1853 and the 'last' for Red Hill, immediately west of Uitenhage, was in 1849.

It is worth remarking on how few actual sightings of rhino are mentioned. The dangerous nature and uncertain temperament of the black rhino would have been well known and much feared, but the natural bush cover doubtless kept it from the view of passing travellers, and the more settled community would have made sure of shooting it out as soon as possible. None the less, it is strange that the dense cover, widely spread as it was and is, did not preserve the species in this area later than the 1840s-1850s, as it did the elephants and buffaloes.

Hippopotamus

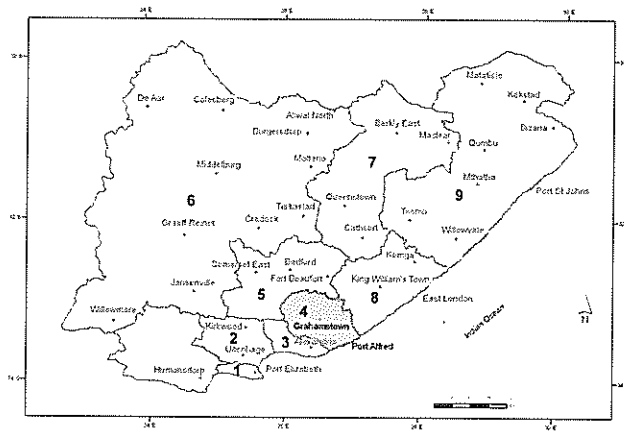
A surprising shortage of material from the rivers of the Alexandria district exists, but two records, both from Bushmans River mouth give provenance to what would have been a certain occurrence of the species there. Thus, the monthly report by the Director of the Albany Museum, Dr J Hewitt, for February 1933, mentions the accession of the jaws of a young hippo from there, and the monthly report for February 1938 refers to a mandible from there.

Buffalo

Upper Alexandria

With buffaloes still in the Addo Bush and under protection at the present time, the records are of academic interest only.

2.4 SECTOR FOUR: BUSHMANS RIVER TO THE GREAT FISH RIVER (ALBANY AND BATHURST DISTRICTS)



2.4.1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

With the sea as the southern boundary and with the Bushmans River as the western boundary, this sector is embraced by the wide sweep of the Great Fish River on its eastern and northern borders. The eastern extension of the Suurberg range separates it into a dry northern zone of Valley Bushveld and Karroid Broken Veld, and a moister southern zone of sour grassveld and bushclump-veld on the interfluves with Valley Bushveld in the kloofs and the river valleys. On the southern slopes of the mountains none of the discontinuous forest patches are as tall and extensive as those on the next inland range from the Bosberg to the Amathole Mountains.

To present a clearer picture of the mammal distribution, this sector is divided into three zones:

- ♦ **Upper Zone:** the Great Fish River Valley.
- ♦ **Central Zone:** the southern and south-western Albany sour grassveld and bushclump-veld.
- ♦ **Lower Zone:** the Bathurst district with its sour grassveld and bushclump-veld.

The two latter zones could be treated as one, but because each needs to have special emphasis placed on the types of plains game found there, they have been kept apart, more especially because the Bathurst district illustrates the strength of its game population when the Whites first settled there purposefully in 1820, *i.e.* in an area not wholly occupied by the Xhosa, in contrast with the Peddie district of the Ciskei, eastwards across the Great Fish River from Bathurst, which was already Xhosa-occupied, and settled to some extent.

The **Upper Zone** covers the Great Fish River Valley to the east, north and north-east of Grahamstown, with its dense Fish River Valley Bush of spekboom *Portulacaria afra* and other valuable drought resistant food plants favoured by browsing mammals, and with its contiguous areas of open

Karroid Broken Veld on the Dikkop Flats near Carlisle Bridge, 40 km north-west of Grahamstown, and at and near 'Table Farm', 11 km west of the same town. These drier and hotter zones lie north of the eastward extension of the Suurberg (last met with above Coerney in Sector 3). The bushed areas were too dense for plains game, but the buffalo, elephant, black rhino and kudu thrived.

On the other hand, the Karroid Broken Veld with its open stretches of karoo-bush *Pentzia incana*, carrying only lightly scattered bushclumps and some patches of more concentrated bush, were once occupied by plains game such as the springbok, true quagga, red hartebeest and eland, although the two last named species would have entered the Valley Bushveld.

The most northerly portion of the administrative division of Albany is known as the Fish River Rand. It lies to the north of the east-west line of the Great Fish River on high ground running into the vast open plains of the southern parts of the Bedford and Adelaide districts (dealt with in Sector 5). Here, plains game were very much at home, and it is more than probable that the black wildebeest found the southernmost point of its range on these plains; it has been recorded just south of Bedford.

The **Central Zone** covers the southern and south-western portions of the Albany district of sour grassveld, bushclump-veld, grassy and forested mountains, the Suurberg's eastwards extension to Grahamstown and beyond being, more or less, the northern boundary. Macchia (Fynbos) genera such as *Metasia*, *Erica*, *Protea* and *Leucospermum* are found along the mountains where allowed to persist under farming pressure.

In Sector 3 (Sundays to Bushmans rivers), this narrative had reached the outspan place at Rautenbach's Drift on the Bushmans River after crossing the famous hunting grounds of the

little to the elephants, but from this short item we get insight into how the animals moved from one river system to another, information so seldom given in the early records. In 1827 elephants were still visiting 'Fairfax', 11 km west of Port Alfred, 'Tharfield', about 12 km north-east of Port Alfred, and also the Riet and Kleinmond rivers (Morse Jones 1964:22).

The war of attrition against the elephants steadily had its effect. When James Backhouse (1844:290) was near Kaffir Drift, in April 1839, he could say no more than that elephants used to abound there, that they had made the track then in use, but that they were rarely seen. Nonetheless, some must have been there because Morse Jones (1964:131) for the next year, 1840, says: "Elephants were still being hunted by the Xhosa people in the Lower Fish River Valley" and for 1842 he added that "elephants were still plentiful in the Bushmans and Fish River valleys" (Morse Jones 3,1966:8), a statement he repeats for 1844, two years later (p.30).

Grocott's Daily Mail (undated but in 1949) carried the item: "Elephant pans are widely scattered in the Bathurst district. There is one on 'Lushington', and on the same farm is a big pool down on the river, lined with palms, which was frequented by elephants and hippos. The path taken by elephants from the forest pool is still there" (*i.e.* in 1949). Lushington Valley is 5 km north-west of Bathurst village and the *Phoenix reclinata* palms are still (in 1974) a feature of the river bank where the bridge on the Grahamstown/Bathurst road crosses the river.

In discussing these "elephant pans" with Professor ED Mountain of the Geology Department, Rhodes University (pers. comm. 21 July 1973) he stated that they occur over limestone and were caused by the subsidence of sinkholes. The resultant craters have been filled down the centuries by soil eroded in from the surrounding veld until they reached the stage of being the 'pans' or vleis we see after rain. Thus the primary cause was geological, not animal. The animal connection came later when the holes were shallow enough to allow wallowing by elephants, buffaloes, and probably both warthogs and bushpigs. The fact that elephant teeth, tusks and bones have been found in these hollows (and some of them are still quite deep) is incidental; beasts must have died there perhaps from being stuck in the mud at the bottom.

Other good examples of these hollows can be seen west of Bushmans River Mouth on the road to Boknes in Alexandria district. A deep one lies in the angle formed by the main trunk road through Kenton-on-Sea and the road from the north, and the Peddie district in the Ciskei has many scattered over the veld, even on the tops of the hills.

Black rhinoceros

Upper Zone (Albany, Fish River bush)

Of the far western border of the Albany district in 1803, Paravicini di Capelli (in De Kock 1965:244) wrote "...we found the tracks of a rhinoceros, which we tried to hunt in the dense bush" up the Bushmans River above Alicedale on the far western boundary of Albany district. That rhino would have been there is proved by the many references to it near Kommadagga, only about 15 km north of where di Capelli must have seen the spoor.

On the opposite boundary in the extreme east, William Paterson (1790:88) found hippos, rhinos, elephants and buffaloes in 1779 at what must have been Trompetters Drift at the Great Fish River on the eastern border of Albany. There can be little doubt that the Fish River Valley held more rhinos than has ever been indicated in the literature. Veld conditions were, and are, ideal for the browsing black rhino. In 1804, Lichtenstein (1,1812:431) says that rhino were frequently seen at what he calls Hermanuskraal, now known as Fort Brown at the Fish River Bridge on the road from Grahamstown to Fort Beaufort. He goes on to say that the rhino there were often hunted by people who came down from the Camdeboo, presumably from Graaff-Reinet in the East Cape Midlands, and from Agter Brintjies Hoogte at the present Somerset East, in the area where the town stands. One member of Lichtenstein's party hunted the Fish River bush from Fort Brown to the mouth, a distance of about 65 km and back, and in the twenty days he was away he shot five hippos, eight rhinos, nine hartebeests, as well as other lesser species. Lichtenstein also tells of meeting a large rhino at Fort Brown (p.437).

The French collector, Pierre-Antoine Delalande who, during his three years in South Africa from 1818 to 1820, collected 228 mammals of 50 species and 2 205 birds of 280 species, besides other zoological material, and killed a rhino in about 1819 at a place not clearly stated. Varley (1956:10) gives this as: "he killed the two horned rhinoceros on the banks of the Great Fish River" which might have been either in the Albany zone or the Bathurst zone of this sector. Varley writes (p.8): "He shot a two horned rhinoceros which nearly cost him his life. He had completely skinned the latter beast, and had gone back to look for men and transport to cart it away, fearing with some reason that it might be pilfered by [Xhosa] or devoured by wild animals. [Delalande wrote] 'I was returning on this errand when my horse which up till then had been completely docile, possibly irritated by the scent of the rhino, reared so violently that I could no longer control him; he threw me, and as I fell I badly bruised my head and smashed by shoulder'".

For 1820, Chase (1843:50) gives a record for Albany which in its vagueness might include the Bathurst district, the section then called Lower

Albany by some, a term nowadays used for that part of Albany between Grahamstown and the Bathurst district lying east of the Kariëga River. Chase wrote: "On the arrival of the Settlers in 1820, the elephant, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus were common; but they have either been destroyed, or have retired beyond civilisation. This statement confirms that by the year 1843 (at the most, when Chase wrote) the rhino had been exterminated. Whether the 1820 Settlers went purposely to the Albany region of the Fish River bush to hunt rhinos, or whether their share in the animal's destruction was confined to Bathurst, is not clear. For the 1820s Dugmore (in Van der Riet and Hewson 1958:10) says: "The rhinoceros crushed at will the thickets of the Fish River ravines" and for 1823, a map drawn by Lt J Foley, map maker of the 6th Regiment, refers to a rhino hunt at Committees Drift.

Rochlin (1961:259) quotes Henry Hall, a cartographer working in the Committees area in what he calls the Eccca Valley. This could have been the Brak River Valley running up through the level country west of Committees into the western escarpment containing the Eccca Pass, a name recently revived after the pass had been known as the Queen's Road or Queen's Pass. After saying that the last black rhino had been killed on Grassridge between Coega and Addo in 1853 (see Sector 2), Hall adds: "...another was killed in 1842 near the Eccca Valley in Lower Albany; and these, we believe, were the last survivors of the once numerous Chikoroo". His remarks on the Eccca Valley being in Lower Albany is a geographical error and can be ignored. His use of the word 'Chikoroo' stems from a common contemporary mispronunciation of the Tswana word 'tshukudu' for a rhino without identifying its species.

The eventual demise of what must have been the black rhino in the lower Fish River Valley is shown by WT Black (1901:23): "The elephant and the rhinoceros have years ago left the retreats of the Fish River bush", but he gives no date.

The monthly and annual reports of accessions by the Albany Museum show several interesting records of rhino material that lend confirmation to the various written records. Regrettably, these objects seem to have been victims in the 1941 fire at the Albany Museum, an event which has denied us the satisfaction of testing the judgement of earlier days.

The first specimen record known is in the August 1887 accession list of the Curator, Miss ME Glanville, and published in the local newspaper *Grocott's Penny Mail*. In those days the accessions were published monthly in both Grahamstown newspapers, by *Grocott's* and by the *Grahamstown Journal*. Press cuttings of the items are in a scrapbook at the Albany Museum.

The August 1887 report gives: "The lower jaw of a rhinoceros *R. bicornis* discovered by the Rev. N Abraham in an old bank of the Fish River, embedded in very hard clay and about 12 feet [3.6 m] above the present river bed. Mr Abraham has inferred from the height at which it was found that it is rather old, and from the fact that a piece of native pottery was found close by; it is probable the rhinoceros to whom the jaw belonged afforded a welcome repast to a band of lucky savages". Ignoring the archaeological and gastronomic speculations, it is to be regretted that a more precise locus than "in the Fish River" was not given. The Rev. Nendick Abraham was a most active participant in local natural history circles in the 1880s and was president of the Grahamstown Literary, Scientific and Medical Society in 1886. There must remain a lingering doubt on the jaw's true identity. In the second paragraph below, Mr Hewitt the museum's Director in 1928, states that the rhino material he received then was the first from the Albany district.

Also from the Fish River, this time with the definite locality of Committees on the bank of the Fish River 34 km east of Grahamstown, are three teeth claimed to be those of a rhino donated by a Mrs Welsh. Here again the locality favours the possibility of the rhino, whose provenance is in the local press, quoting the accessions at the Albany Museum in December 1887 and January 1888.

Nothing more seems to have been known of rhino remains along the Great Fish River until September 1928, 40 years later, when the Albany Museum received bones from 'Kleinpoort' about 9 km west of Committees at the bottom of Pluto's Vale in the Great Fish River Valley, well away from the river. Mr Hewitt wrote in his report: "Mr Pannell presented a few bones of a rhinoceros (from Kleinpoort), a record of much interest inasmuch as we have no other rhinoceros relic from the district". Mr Pannell who farmed at 'Kleinpoort' as on other farms in the Albany district, was a regular donor of a wide variety of natural history objects to the Albany Museum.

In August 1937, the monthly report stated that "Mr W Kelley-Paterson gave a rhinoceros tooth and rib found on that farm" *i.e.* the farm 'Green Hills', 20 km east of Grahamstown. This information conflicts with the label on another specimen that a bone from 'Green Hills' was presented by Mr Pannell, but he might well have done so at some other time. Mr Kelley-Paterson definitely farmed 'Green Hills'.

Finally, the monthly report for October 1937, two months later, states that bones were received from 'Governors Kop', 15 km east of Grahamstown and therefore adjacent to both 'Green Hills' and 'Kleinpoort'. Of these bones, the Director, Dr J Hewitt says: "Rhinoceros bones were presented

by Mr W Pannell – a very interesting contribution in view of the long extinction in the Eastern Province”. Whereas ‘Kleinpoort’ farm is in the dry Valley Bushveld of the Fish River Valley where the black rhino can be expected to have been, ‘Green Hills’ and ‘Governor’s Kop’ are on the upper ridge of greater rainfall where grass and *Macchia* (Fynbos) occur, but as portions of both farms run down on to the slopes of the Fish River Valley’s escarpment, the relics might have been found in these drier areas.

A 1977 mammal survey of the Albany district conducted by Mr PW Coetzee, nature conservation officer of the Albany Divisional Council (*in litt.* 25 October 1977), revealed that Mr Robert Palmer had found in the early 1970s amid the dry dust on the floor of an ‘overhang’ on his father’s farm ‘Strowan’, 5 km west of Grahamstown, a tough fragment of compressed hair strongly suggestive of rhino horn. Mr TT Hoole, a neighbouring farmer and keen naturalist, who examined the item agreed with the tentative diagnosis but, regrettably, Mr Palmer had not been able to trace the specimen for a comparison with museum material to be made.

If the initial diagnosis was correct, the record is the first for a part of the Albany district west of Grahamstown at this verge of the dry northern zone and the high rainfall mountain divide. Certainly, local veld conditions would have been suitable for rhinos, if only just, but as relics have been found 25 km eastwards under similar circumstances, this western record is useful confirmation even though the lower country on the coastal peneplain south of the divide has produced no historical rhino evidence.

From the historical rhino record given above it is seen that Hall (in Rochlin 1961:259) tells of a rhinoceros being “killed in 1842 near the Ecca Valley” which is only 17 km north-east of ‘Strowan’, and adds that it was one of the last of the once-numerous rhino there. The feasibility of a fragment of rhino horn surviving the 130 years from the 1840s to the 1970s was acceptable to Mr M Cronin, archaeologist at the Albany Museum, (pers. comm. November 1977) who gave instances of other fragile archaeological material having been found by him and his colleagues under somewhat similar circumstances, if not in Albany only.

Central Zone

(south and south-west of Grahamstown)

No firm records.

Lower Zone (Bathurst district)

Shortridge (1,1934:415) states that teeth and other rhino remains are in the Albany Museum collection from ‘Tharfield’, 13 km north-east of Port Alfred, and from ‘Saltvlei’ which is on the seafront of the immediate western outskirts of Port Alfred. His

bracketed district name of Uitenhage is incorrect.

Another rhino record for Bathurst was found in the July 1886 report of the curator of the Albany Museum (Miss ME Glanville) published in *Grocott’s Penny Mail*: “Molar tooth of rhinoceros found in the bush at Kasouga by Master Fred Holland”. Kasouga is 16 km west of Port Alfred on the coast. In the absence of the specimen, only this report tells the story, and once again we are left with doubtful provenance. At that time ‘Master Fred Holland’ would have been about 15 years old. Later, and throughout his long life he was to become a faithful supporter of the Albany Museum, and was well known to the author as a most conscientious naturalist.

Morse Jones (1968:16) found that “...there were some rhinoceros in the Fish River valley” in 1819, and for 1839, 20 years later, the same author (1964:125) said “Elephants still lived in the valleys of Lower Albany, and an occasional rhinoceros could be met with”. These two records are too vague to allow of a safe locality assessment. They might even refer to the central sector of Lower Albany south of the mountains and eastwards towards the Great Fish River. Apart from the bones mentioned above, no firm written records for rhino in Bathurst have been found. However, the fact that Mr Morse Jones specialised in 1820 Settler history might have convinced him that the rhino records he found were satisfactory for Bathurst district.

Hippopotamus

Upper Zone (Great Fish River Valley)

The hippopotamus occurred in good numbers all the way up the Great Fish River to beyond Cookhouse in the Somerset East district (described in Sector 5).

Of the upper part of the Great Fish River in Albany, the monthly reports of the Albany Museum have two records, one for April 1934 – a mandible from ‘Glen Ovis’, 10 km north-west of Carlisle Bridge; and another for December 1936 – a tusk from ‘Skeldrift’ near Carlisle Bridge. From Committees, lower down the Great Fish and about 33 km east of Grahamstown, came a mandible (monthly report 25 March 1946) while a tusk from Trompetters Drift further down the river was accessed in 1947 (monthly report, 11 June 1947).

Most sight records of hippos have been made at or near the wagon-drifts through the river where travellers camped, and which they had of necessity to take. The roads were restricted by the density of the bush and by the steep and rugged nature of some of the escarpments. Trompetters Drift, 30 km east of Grahamstown and 5 km up-river from Hunt’s Drift where the national road from Grahamstown to King William’s Town crosses

it is not impossible that they were there before. They could have worked up from the Fish River Valley at the point where the Baviaans River joins it about 4 km north of Eastpoort railway station north of Cookhouse, and then entered the Valley Bushveld in the poort on the farm 'Waldeck', 13 km north-east of Eastpoort, where the dense vegetation would have been more than adequate for elephants. However, how far up the Baviaans Valley they would have gone is problematical. With more certainty they would have worked along the Bush-fountain stream that comes in from the east below 'Glen Lynden'. Taking this route, they could then have worked up the Lichtenstein Valley onto 'Chestnut Grove' with its good forests, and moved on over the nek into the Cowie River Valley, a branch of the Koonap River system, with its superior conditions of forest, grass and bush. And they could have made this trek in reverse, from the Cowie over the nek into the Baviaans. Nor is there any valid reason why they could not have wandered far up the Baviaans River, despite the weaker food resources there.

In the 1840s, Rose-Innes (1905:19) tells of the Rev. John Brownlee meeting 14 elephants at Blinkwater in the Kat River Valley above Fort Beaufort, presumably at what is now Lower Blinkwater, 10 km above Fort Beaufort.

Rhinoceros (black)

Rhino records for the western part of the sub-coastal region are good but without any positive indication of species. However, knowledge of the country and its veld types suggests the black rhino as the more likely species to have been there. Nevertheless, the 'Grassridge' white rhino record which came to light in 1961 in the Cradock district to the immediate north, cannot be ignored, the more so because the sweet grassveld (Acocks 1953: Map 1) which came down from the Orange Free State, through the Central East Cape Midlands and on to the Somerset East flats could have been attractive to white rhinos. We must keep alive the possibility of white rhinos having occurred there at a time before the Whites, in case bone or teeth relics come to light in the future.

On the plains of the south-eastern sector of the Somerset East district, from Kommadagga to the Bosberg where the town now stands, the rhino must have been fairly plentiful. Kommadagga was then an outspan where water, often very poor in quality, was available after the trek up the Bushmans River from Alicedale (Nieuwejaars Drift) about 25 km to the south-east. The veld there would have been dry karoo-bush until the sweet grassveld nearer Somerset East was encountered.

Robert Jacob Gordon recorded a "rhinoster" (species indet.) along the Great Fish River in January 1778 (Rookmaaker 1989:114). Sparrman (2,1786:90,95), when at Kommadagga on 17

December 1775, met the rhino for the first time on his travels and between 30 January and 3 February he met it near the Little Fish River about 10 km north of Kommadagga. Back at Kommadagga, on 6 February, he found a cow and calf and he remarked that the region abounded with both rhinos and lions. To the south of Cookhouse he saw the rhino on the plains west of the present Ripon-Sheldon-Middleton railway line. However, Sparrman's great contribution to our knowledge of the rhino in these parts is his description (p. 98) of how he dissected a rhino shot at Kommadagga. In so doing he leaves no doubt that it was a black rhino: "It was of an ash colour, excepting about the groin, where the skin is not near so thick, but is almost quite smooth, and of the colour of a man's flesh. The muzzle, or nose converges to a point, not only above and beneath, but likewise very visibly on the sides, nearly as it does in the tortoise. The upper lip is somewhat longer than the lower...". Sparrman's illustration in his Plate 3 confirms this description as being a black rhino, but that to him was merely a rhino. He did not know any other species in Africa, the white rhino not having been yet discovered.

On 1 November 1776, Hendrik Swellengrebel Jr (Forbes 1965:71) came down the west bank of the Great Fish River from Cookhouse, and when on what must have been the slopes of Wilton Hill, about 10 km west of Middleton station in the triangle formed by the junction of the Little Fish and Great Fish rivers, flushed a rhino which was promptly shot by a member of the party named Cloete.

Francois Le Vaillant did not have the same experience at Kommadagga when he was there in December 1782, only six years later. He did, however, come across what he took to be 'traces' of the rhino on the Plaatrivier, 20 km west of Pearston in the eastern Camdeboo, and 110 km north-west of Kommadagga, but he did not see any rhinos. In this he must have been disappointed because, according to Meester (in Le Vaillant 2,1973:7), although he "hunted fruitlessly for it" he later seems to have come to the conclusion that the rhino had been exterminated in the Cape before his coming. In referring to Sparrman's travels (1772-76) in his second narrative, Le Vaillant (cited by Meester *op.cit.*) says: "If there were an abundance of rhinoceroses in Quammedaka in the time of Dr Sparrman, there were none there in my time, any more than in the colony itself, which they deserted in proportion as it began to be better peopled".

In this conclusion he was wrong, not only of Kommadagga but also of the Colony. Nonetheless his remarks emphasise the point made from time to time in this narrative that not only are our sources of information very dependent on the narrow lines of the trek routes but also on the natural movements of animals from one place to another, in this case the rhinos at Kommadagga – possibly seasonal, possibly incidental.

Lichtenstein (1,1812:423), who was a Kommadagga in January 1804, 18 years later than Sparrman and 11 years after Le Vaillant, found many fresh traces of rhinos there, and although he does not seem to have seen any, he "found on the road a tolerably perfect skull of one of these creatures". John Barrow (2,1804:374) writes of rhinos in thickets from Bruintjieshoogte, west of Somerset East, to the banks of the Great Fish River, this in the country known colloquially in 1797 as the 'Agterbruintjieshoogte'.

As he mentioned above, few deviations from the regular inland trek route, which ran from Alicedale to the Bosberg, can have been made, except when a party headed more to the north-east, directly towards the present Cookhouse instead of to Somerset East, where the commissariat depot lay. For this reason, the south-western corner of the Somerset East district, in what is called the Noorsveld near Lake Mentz, about 50 km from Somerset East, is not documented and thereby denies us a view of what should have been good rhino country, not unlike that in the Fish River bush to the east.

An anomaly in rhino distribution in this sub-coastal region is revealed by Thomas Pringle (in AMLR 1951:55) when, in a letter dated 22 September 1820, to his friend, Sir Walter Scott, the novelist, soon after the Pringles had arrived in the Baviaans Valley, he wrote: "Luckily there are neither Elephants nor Rhinoceros in our valley tho' they abound on the Katt river 30 or 40 miles [48 or 64 km] eastward. They are reckoned very destructive animals & are far more dreaded by the boors than the lions or leopards". His Katt River is the Kat River that flows down from the Hogsback Mountain and passes Fort Beaufort, where the rhino has been recorded fairly well by others. It seems strange that, having been commonly mentioned for Kommadagga and other places not far south of Bedford, it should not have been in the Baviaans Valley, unless it had been shot out before the Pringles arrived.

If the experiences of Sparrman and Lichtenstein are any guide, the paucity of rhino records suggests an irregular incidence at any one place. It is from Thomas Pringle's book (1835:145), covering the Bedford and Adelaide districts in the 1820s, that more about the rhino is learnt. Writing of what he called the Ceded Territory which, in this case, covered the Upper Koonap Valley of the Adelaide district, he gives an insight into the declining status of the rhino: "The rhinoceros is nearly extirpated within the old limits of the colony; and even in the Ceded Territory it was so rare, that in all my excursions I never could even catch a glimpse of one". Obviously he must have heard tell of them, but on the face of things it is not surprising that so unpredictable and so dangerous an animal should have been the first to be selected for total extermination by a community trying to establish

itself, and perhaps it did not move away to safer quarters as other large mammals did.

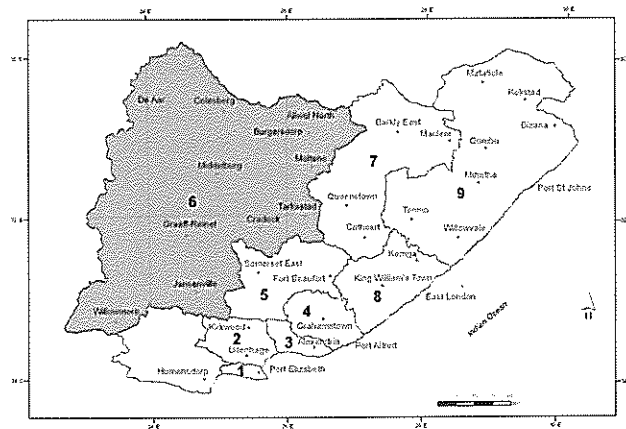
Mr Clayton Allsop, formerly of Wellington (South Africa), who subsequently emigrated to Australia, said that his great-grandfather, a Willem Groenewald (also father-in-law to General Louis Botha) shot a black rhino, of which Mr Allsop still had the horn, in the Fort Beaufort district in 1885, but possibly 1884 or 1886, with a flintlock (voorlaaier) 1821 Brown Bess Tower Musket (pers. comm. to PH Lloyd, 14 April 1988). In the process of shooting this rhino, Mr Allsop's great-grandfather apparently saved an Irishman's life, and this may have been reported in the press at the time. This record represents the last reported occurrence of the black rhino in the broader Eastern Cape.

Hippopotamus

Witmos Station, 25 km up the Fish River from Cookhouse, has produced hippo bones and teeth now found in the collections of the East London and Port Elizabeth museums. Hippos went much farther up the Fish River in pre-historic times. Thus, the annual report of the Albany Museum for 1903 mentions the receipt of hippo teeth from Cradock, 40 km up-river from Witmos, and in his monthly report of October 1930, Dr J Hewitt, the Director of the Albany Museum, reported on material he had received from Mr JJ Kissack, an archaeologist working at the sulphur springs, 5 km north of Cradock on the banks of the Fish River. Some sub-fossilised teeth and jaws of antelopes, hippos and zebras were found in association with an old type of stone implement at a depth of 2.5 m.

As can be seen in Sector 4, the hippo occurred all along the Great Fish River. Sparrman (2,1786:136) was obviously expecting to find hippos in the Little Fish River when he crossed it on his way towards the Great Fish River because he tells of looking for them. Unsuccessful with the living beast, he found their skulls at the Great Fish when he crossed it on 29 December 1775. The Little Fish River, which rises near Somerset East, enters the Great Fish about 12 km east of Ripon railway station. A month later, on 23 January 1776, Sparrman eventually saw hippos in the Great Fish when he reached 'Kokskraal', a farm 10 km north of Cookhouse and on the river frontage (pp.271, 276). Gordon recorded the hippo in the Great Fish River in December 1777 (Rookmaaker 1989:113). The species was also recorded in the "Kleyne Vischrievier" by Swellengrebel in November 1776 (Rookmaaker 1989:35). Although hippos must have been in these rivers, they would not necessarily have been seen at any and every place. There would have been plenty of 'seekoeigate' (hippo pools) all along the river that they could have occupied for a while before moving to others, their time at any one place being conditioned by the local food supply within range.

2.6 SECTOR SIX: THE EAST CAPE MIDLANDS (THE KAROO)



2.6.1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The term 'Midlands' is used loosely in the Eastern Cape and probably means different things to different people. Certainly no definitive boundaries exist any more than they do for the 'Natal Midlands' or for the 'Border', from East London to Queenstown. However, the term Midlands is convenient here in that it has some sort of geographical connotation to most people, even if, as in this case, many liberties are taken with its boundaries.

It may be true to say that most Eastern Cape people think of the Midlands in terms of the Aberdeen, Graaff-Reinet, Cradock and Middelburg districts, with Tarkastad sometimes attached when it is not considered as being part of the 'Border'. In our context, the Midlands has been extended to include all the country from the Sneeuwberg and the Winterberg ranges and the Orange River, eastwards to Aliwal North, together with the Camdeboo in the south on the lower ground.

When this historical mammal project was first planned, the Midland regions were excluded because the primary object then was a study of the mammal fauna in the traditionally Xhosa-occupied regions of the Ciskei and the Transkei that are coastal and sub-coastal in status. Along with this went a comparison between districts to the immediate west. However, as the work developed it became obvious that the vast drier hinterland brought great influence to bear, not only on the animals in the Transkei and Ciskei but also on the European-developed coastal and subcoastal regions. This interplay of forces had to be recorded in order to be understood. The same can be said of the Orange River and those in southern Natal, but a line had to be drawn somewhere and the regions included here form a fairly compact unit on which these other

contiguous regions were merely an extension of the game position, not an influence. They are discussed briefly in the appropriate places in the text.

A second cogent reason demanded that these Midlands districts be covered briefly. This was the discovery, when discussing wild animal life with farmers, that these modern owners of the land over which the game hordes tramped in the past have no conception of what past conditions were like, and many did not even know that springboks had eaten the veld now being consumed by their domestic sheep and cattle. To one whose work has brought him into contact with the Eastern Cape animal past this was something that needed attention in order to promote an appreciation of the background to this wonderful part of South Africa.

Unlike the coastal belt, much of the Midlands is Karoo veld, or more correctly Acocks' (1953:117) Veld Type 37, False Karroid Broken Veld. Dr Acocks maintains that the country we now call Karoo veld in the Midlands was once predominantly grassveld with karoo-bush at a minimum, and that under the pressure of grazing sheep the grass has receded and the karoo-bush *Pentzia incana* has become dominant. Hence his use of the term 'false' for the modern Karoo veld and for False Karroid Broken Veld, which is the country where the Karoo veld is dotted with bush in some degree or other, thereby earning it the title of 'broken' ('gebroke' in Afrikaans), as against a fairly consistent stand of karoo-bush veld with a minimum of bush in the open plains.

What little descriptive ecological material has been found suggests that even with the advent of the first settlers on the land, the karoo-bush was something of a factor in the veld cover. The records are too disconnected to allow the construction of

neighbour of the Glen Grey (Cacadu) district that became an integral part of the Transkei in 1976. One site is Buffelshoek to the west of the Boesmanhoek Pass, where the railway and road routes mount the Stormberg between the towns of Sterkstroom and Molteno; the others are Buffelskuilen and Buffelskloof, a little further to the west.

A search for mapped place-names bearing buffalo connotations covered the full distance from the mouth of the Orange River to its sources in Lesotho, without success. It is known that buffaloes occurred further west along the Orange River because Wikar in 1779 (in Mossop 1935:129) saw some just east of the Augrabies Falls, in much the same locality as Gordon saw his giraffes, both places being in that narrow extension south of the Orange River in what is better known as the large district of Gordonia, most of which lies north of the river and up into the Kalahari.

These Kakamas buffaloes were some 500 km west of our chosen western boundary of Philipstown district but they were still 800 km west of Aliwal North with its 'Buffelsvlei' connotation and with never a sight record between the two places. As WJ Burchell (2,1824:249) saw buffaloes in 1812 at Klaarwater, now known as Griquatown or Griekwastad, in the present Northern Cape, it is possible that they might have wandered as far as the confluence of the Vaal and Orange rivers. This would have brought them to within 120 km of our western boundary, and 370 km from Aliwal North. Certainly no buffalo sight records have been found east of this point along the Orange River, or on either side of it into the upper part of the Cape Midlands or southern regions of the Orange Free State. Had buffaloes been there, one traveller at least would surely have seen them and recorded them; men such as Cornwallis Harris and Gordon Cumming, in particular, to whom the shooting of a buffalo would have been a highlight of their experience.

White rhinoceros

Until 1974, when the bone collection in the Albany Museum produced a partial mandible, with teeth, of a white rhino from Cradock district, no record of this species south of the Orange River was known. This specimen was found washed out of a bank of the Grootbrakrivier at a point just below the wall of the Grassridge Irrigation Dam, in the northern part of the Cradock district, by Mr Keith Collett in 1961. The museum received the specimen in June 1961 but had never identified it.

Prior to the Cradock specimen, no remains of either species of rhino had been found in the Midlands north of the inland mountain chain. The nearest known records being those of Isaq Schrijver (Mossop 1931) near Aberdeen in the western Camdeboo in 1689, and of WJ Burchell (1824) in 1812

somewhere near De Aar. The latter were certainly black rhinos, as shown by Burchell's description and sketches, but Schrijver's are undetermined; on ecological grounds they should have been black rhinos. Both records lie just west of 24°E and therefore on the edge of the Great Karoo and with only 140 km between them.

In 1783, Le Vaillant (2,1790:332) claimed to have seen 'traces of a rhinoceros' on the Plaat River in the Pearston district of the eastern Camdeboo, a vague and therefore unreliable assumption, but one to be borne in mind against any future evidence that may come to light.

According to the reconstructed Vegetation Map for 1400 AD given by Dr J Acocks (1953, Map 1, opp. p.12), the region where the white rhino jaw was found on 'Grassridge' would have been well within the sweet grassveld region of the central Midlands, and therefore as suitable for the white rhino as the Karroid country west of 24°E would have been for Schrijver's and Burchell's black rhinos.

On the basis of these ecological theories, all rhinos south of the main inland mountain chain should have been black rhinos, in country where the extensive Valley Bushveld of the many river systems would have suited this large browser. Exceptional areas suitable for grass eating white rhinos south of the mountain chain would have been on the continuation of this central belt of sweetveld into the northern part of the Somerset East district and in the southern sector of Bedford district on to the Fish River Rand grassveld. If such was the case, the rhinos seen by Barrow (2,1804:374) in the thickets between Somerset East and Cookhouse in 1797 might have been white rhinos.

In the North-eastern Cape, on the farm 'Buffelsfontein', is a rock painting of a rhino of indeterminate species. This is far beyond any known actual occurrence of either species, being on the Molteno/Dordrecht border at 31°22'S; 26°41'E and about 70 km north-east of the rhino picture at Mostert's Hoek, Tarkastad.

Black rhinoceros

With the tentative exceptions, the central East Cape Midlands has produced neither sight record nor bone/tooth record of the black rhino, the exception being Le Vaillant's 'traces of rhinoceros' on 7 January 1783 on the Plaatrivier near Pearston in the eastern Camdeboo (Le Vaillant 2,1790:332); hardly a basis of safe provenance but one to be kept in mind. On his own previous admission he had not seen rhinos at Kommadagga in south-eastern Somerset East on his way up from the coast, and at the place where Sparrman (1786), in 1775, and Swellengrebel, in 1776, had seen them. From this Le Vaillant concluded that the rhino had been exterminated in the Colony, an incorrect assumption, as proved by Burchell in 1812.

That the eastern Camdeboo could have held rhinos is suggested by a prominence named Renosterkop' (Rhenoster Kop on an old map), 17 km south-west of Pearston and just south of the road to Jansenville. On 20 October 1776, Swellengrebel saw "rhino tracks" at the Melk River, south-east of Graaff-Reinet (Rookmaaker 1989:35).

With rhinos well documented south of the mountain chain, the assumption that these were all black rhinos seems warranted on ecological grounds. The Fish River bush, the dry Karroid Broken Veld near Kommadagga, the Addo Bush and the associated Valley Bushveld with its variations around Uitenhage, all accord with the black rhino's habitat and feeding requirements, but we have been left without any adequate description or illustration of skull and bones to prove the point beyond all doubt.

The gap in rhino evidence of any kind within the Central and Upper Midlands was altered in 1974 with the identification of the white rhino jawbone from 'Grassridge' in the Cradock district. At the same time, its discovery made obvious the fact that the identification of all future rhino remains will have to be treated with great care. In the absence of teeth or skulls, relics can be apportioned tentatively to the two rhino species on ecological grounds but with the appropriate question mark as a safety measure.

The question of the black rhino's status in the Midlands must now be shifted to the western border of the area, more or less at 24°E and at the eastern border of the true Karoo of the Great Karoo.

The first known rhino record there is that of a cow and calf seen and shot by Ensign Isaq Schrijver to the north-west of Aberdeen in 1689 (in Mossop 1931:229). An assessment of the vegetation there today (1974) would favour the black rhino but beyond that we know nothing. About 140 km to the north, near De Aar, WJ Burchell in 1812 shot one rhino and saw many which, from his description and illustrations, were certainly black rhinos. Westwards of a line from Aberdeen to De Aar (110 km to the west of Aberdeen, and just north-east of Beaufort West), RJ Gordon saw a rhino in 1778, and which he illustrated (No. 205 in the Gordon collection), and which proves to be the black rhino. Here, the animal was almost in the heart of the Great Karoo. Further to the north, rhinos were seen by RJ Gordon (in Barnard 1950:356) in 1779 just east of the Augrabies Falls, and by Wikar (in Mossop 1935:99) in 1779 at Seekoeisteek, further west along the Orange River in the Kenhardt district. Gordon's record here gives no hint of species, but Wikar's certainly points to the black rhino. He tells of coming upon six rhinos and of how he came to learn their habits and the best way to hunt them, helped as he was by the experience and advice of the local Khoikhoi who apparently

hunted rhinos with ease. Wikar (p.101) mentions the sudden and somewhat ill-directed charges made by an enraged rhino as "he slips past and cannot check his pace, or possibly he does not see your honourable self, for in any case his eyes are very small and, as the [Khoikhoi] tell me, his sight is weak; but when he is standing still, his hearing is all keener by contrast...This type of rhino does not look in the least like those I have seen drawings of. Its body closely resembles that of an elephant, but its head is almost like a pig's, with two horns, one above the other, loosely fixed in the skin". In a footnote, Wikar lifts the veil again by saying: "The rhinoceroses which I have seen resemble fairly well the description and drawing of them by P Kolbe". In this latter case, the animal is most certainly a black rhino and this helps the presumption that the six rhinos met by Wikar could have been black rhinos.

A final justification for black rhinos in the dry Karoo is the black rhino skull found in 1954 at Van Wyk's Vlei, 240 km west of Burchell's De Aar black rhino. The specimen is in the East London Museum.

Because of the deficiency in rhino records in the Midlands, a study of the 1:500 000 Trig. Survey maps for place-names bearing rhino connotation produced a fairly wide coverage which would certainly be greater on a map of smaller scale. However, perhaps the greatest interest in this map scrutiny came from a comparison between the names on a modern map and three names that appear on Map 15 in Forbes (1965), depicting the routes taken by RJ Gordon in the period 1777-1779 and giving a Rhinoster Kop, a Rhinosterberg, and a Rinosterberg.

Rhinoster Kop is shown by Gordon west of the 'Zoute Rivier' (= Soutrivier) and more or less at the place where today's map shows a Renosterkop (32°14'S; 22°54'E), 15 km west of the Soutrivier, and 30 km north-east of Beaufort West. According to Gordon's caption to his Drawing No. 205 of a rhino, he encountered a rhino in November 1778 near the sources of the Gamka River, where he would have been only 20 km west of his Rhinoster Kop, and of today's Renosterkop, which lies near the sources of several tributaries which develop into the Soutrivier. Gordon's Rhinosterberg is shown among a bunch of hillocks somewhere between Aberdeen and Graaff-Reinet but the same does not appear on the large scale Trig. Survey map. This site would be in the western Camdeboo. His other Rinosterberg is the well-known Renosterberg lying 25 km south-west of Middelburg in that district at 31°40'S; 24°50'E.

These three names on Gordon's map show how early in Central and Eastern Cape history the name 'Rhinoster' was being used for geographical features that presumably must have had some meaning for the farmers. It is known that farmers were already

settling the flat country between the Sneeuberg and the Orange River by the early 1770s.

The use of place-names as a guide to the gaps in animal distribution shows several other names associated with rhino on the western border of the Midlands to as far north as the Orange River. In Richmond district, 37 km south-east of Richmond, is a Renosterfontein (31°43'S; 24°08'E). In the De Aar district, a Renosterberg (30°25'S; 24°02'E) lies 26 km north of De Aar and 42 km west of Philipstown, while a Renosterfontein and a Renostervlakte (30°20'S; 23°55'E) are side by side on the Hondeblafrivier, a tributary of the Brak River which runs into the Orange River 37 km north-west of De Aar. Only 14 km to the north, in the far corner of the Britstown district, is a Renostervlei (30°13'S; 23°52'E) on the Durans River, another tributary of the Brak River. All these De Aar and neighbouring place-names are more or less where Burchell shot and met black rhinos in 1812 and they show that rhinos must have been reasonably common there to have been dubbed onto various local features, far more so than further east in the Midlands, as will be shown.

Still further north, on the southern bank of the Orange River where Gordon saw a supposed black rhino in 1779 at Augrabies, two Renosterkops are found only 9 km apart. One lies 23 km west of Kakamas at a point 8 km south of the Orange River; the other is 19 km north-west of Kakamas but only 1 km from the river. Down the Orange, 22 km north-west of Kakamas, a Renostereiland lies in the bed of the river just above the falls.

From these inland western and north-western black rhino records, added to those we know in the south-east, it is possible to reconstruct a picture of an inland population entering a funnel-like zone through the Jansenville Noorsveld and expanding within the Valley Bushveld of the Uitenhage and Albany districts, as given by sight records. That the species could have occupied a wider area is not impossible. For instance, it might have occurred further south into the Willowmore district and thence into the Little Karoo (there is one record from the Gourits River near Mossel Bay) and into the valleys of the Groot, Kouga and Baviaansrivier mountains – but we have no records to sustain this assumption. That it was not in the Langkloof during occupation by Whites is almost certain – no record of any kind has been found in what was the natural, and only, much travelled roadway from the west to the east in the earliest times.

Switching now to the eastern sector of the East Cape Midlands, only two place-names relating to rhinos were found on the Trig. Survey map, the Renosterberg at Middelburg and a Renosterkop (30°50'S; 26°05'E) 30 km north-west of Burgersdorp. Beyond that, the only rhino relic from the eastern sector of the Midlands is the white rhino jaw found near Cradock in 1961.

These references to the map certainly show a weakening of rhinos based on place-name 'distribution' for the eastern and north-eastern regions of the Eastern Cape hinterland, something that agrees with a lack of sight records and material relics there. To the north of the Midlands, across the Orange River, the Orange Free State knew very few rhinos in historical times.

In the East Cape Midlands any attempt to explain the absence of sight records must tread unstable ground. No accurate dating of bone and tooth material has been done, and only Dr James Kitching's rough estimate of between 200 and 500 years for the age of the objects he has handled gives any idea of a time scale. Using his estimate, and taking 1950 AD as a starting point, the spread is from 1450 to 1750 AD, the latter date coming just conceivably within the earliest trekboer pioneering vanguard in the Midlands.

As a background for the coastal belt's better documented provenance in the pioneer-farmer context, Cory (1,1910:20) states: "The first contact of Europeans with [Xhosa]...seems to have taken place in 1702..." at the Great Fish River. Later historians found that such contact took place at the Gamtoos River in about the same year, but Cory's statement goes on to say that the Xhosa were not established in what is now Bathurst district; they, like the Whites, were wandering hunters. And whereas the early settled farmers were occupying the west bank of the Gamtoos in the early 1740s, their counterparts were not to do so west of the Great Fish until about the 1770s. Between the 70 years from 1702 to the 1770s, many elephant hunting parties trekked to and from ['Xhosaland'] without settling.

Inland, things were happening on much the same lines. The frontier farmers were trying to "get away from it all" beyond government restrictions and, although initially trekkers, they had to settle somewhere in the end, and were eventually obliged to seek government aid in combating the San raids on their stock and on themselves.

When Ensign Isaq Schrijver shot a rhino cow near Aberdeen in 1689, no other white person had been as far east in that part of the Karoo. By 1730 (Wilson and Thompson 1969), the Little Karoo at Oudtshoorn was being occupied. From there a logical movement would be north-eastwards into the Camdeboo along the route taken by Schrijver 40 years before, and on into the valleys of the Sneeuberg. This is what happened. However, when did the first trekkers reach there and come back with stories of suitable ground for farming? That is the question most in need of an answer in order to come to real grips with the problems of when the big game animals were shot out, or if any were seen, and where.

In addition to the farmers coming into the Camdeboo from the southeast, another trek was

moving into the central part of the Great Karoo. C Graham Botha (1962:112) tells of farms being settled at Beaufort West in 1760, in the region immediately west of our Midlands border. Scott (1968:38) records that Petrus Pretorius was on the Landdrost River in the Camdeboo by 9 April 1766. This river name was used for the Sundays River at Graaff-Reinet in earliest times, as was another name for it, the Sneeu-berg's River. On Gordon's 1778 map (in Forbes 1965: Map 15) the name 'P Pretorius' appears just east of Graaff-Reinet at what seems to be on the modern Pretoriuskloof stream. And, just east of 'P Pretorius' is the name 'M Pretorius', possibly a brother on the neighbouring farm. Also near Graaff-Reinet on the same map are names such as Venter, Cloete, Opperman (with whom Governor van Plettenberg stayed in 1778), de Beer, van der Merven, with other farmers established farther up under the Lootsberg and Wapadsberg in the north-east, e.g. Meintjies, Forster, Burgers, Koester, etc.. All these pioneers must have entered the area in the late 1760s and early 1770s.

C Graham Botha's view of this Camdeboo settlement (1962:112) gives the year 1770 as a date when farms were taken up in the Graaff-Reinet region and further eastwards at Somerset East. "At this period the name appears in the record of Bruyntjes Hoogte, now Bruintjies Hoogte, which, with the Gamtoos River, was declared in 1770 the eastern colonial boundary". This means that, for the boundary to have been declared, the farmers must have settled there before this date. Botha tends to confirm this (p.118) when he tells of how Governor van Plettenberg stayed on the farm of Christiaan Opperman near Graaff-Reinet on his return from his trip to the Seekoeirivier near Hanover in 1778. He was shown San paintings "discovered ten years previously", in other words, in 1768.

Perhaps the most interesting name on Gordon's map is that of "Steph. Smidt, de laaste plaats", the most northerly farm he and his party found in 1777 when he was there. Using Forbes' corrected map of Gordon's journey, Smidt's farm would have been on the Seekoei River north of the Sneeu-berg and in the western part of the Middelburg district some 32 km west of Middelburg and about 7 km north of 'The Willows'.

The lot of these Sneeu-berg farmers was bedevilled by incessant raids on their stock by San inhabitants, whose traditional hunting grounds and waterholes were being invaded. The outcome was a petition to Governor van Plettenberg asking for assistance in addressing the problem. Thus, the desire to be shot of human civilized interference from the west was nullified, not by wild animals and the rigours of a wild frontier life, but by more humans – uncivilised and warlike.

That elephants must still have been somewhere in the Midlands during the late 1770s is shown

by the expedition being mounted in 1778 by the Prinsloo family at Somerset East for a trip to the Orange River. They would not have planned the trip unless they knew elephants were likely to be there. And if elephants were there, or not there, the hunters would not have held their fire on meeting buffaloes, rhinos or hippos. How much more easily they could be hunted in the open veld of the Midlands than in the dense cover and rough country along the coastal belt. The fact that the report stated that the hunters were going to the Orange River does not necessarily mean that they were going to the river itself; they could have been heading towards the river. A probable place for elephants would be what is called the Camdeboo Valley west of Graaff-Reinet in the valleys of the Swart and Droë (or Little Sundays) rivers over the farm 'Vrede' and up towards the mountains where the vegetation would have been most suitable for elephants.

This then is the nub of the case – the rhinos must have been shot out before the first chroniclers could see them, and say they had seen them, coupled with the probability that the four big game species were never in much strength inland. Being dangerous, and at the same time well fleshed, they would have been disposed of as quickly as possible. Between 1766, when we know that P Pretorius was near Graaff-Reinet, and 1777, when Gordon passed that way, 11 years of deliberate shooting could have accounted for what large animals had been there. If this happened in the Camdeboo Midlands, it would have happened later to the east, when that part of the inland region was entered by trekking farmers and their back-up settlers.

2.6.4 THE MAMMAL PICTURE

2.6.4.1 Large mammals

Elephant

As mentioned in the previous section, no sight records for the elephant in the East Cape Midlands have been found in any of the early works and the only evidence that elephants ranged into the dry interior comes from casual and infrequent unearthing of molars, skulls and tusks on farms. Such 'discoveries' have always to be tempered with the thought that the material might be discarded trophies shot elsewhere, taken home, and somehow thrown out. Elephants were plentiful enough only 50 km to the south in the coastal and sub-coastal belts, whence hunting parties could have returned with their trophies.

Nevertheless, some of the records bear a stamp of reliability and there seems to be no ecological reason why elephants should not have deserted the richer coastal belt and ventured up the valleys of the Great Fish River to Cradock, the Sundays River to Graaff-Reinet and the Grootrivier, a large

The devastating floods that struck the Eastern Cape in March 1974 brought to light a pair of elephant tusks on 'Blanco' (Mr JR Ryan) when a dam was breached. This farm lies 10 km south of Tarkastad on the Suurvlaakte stream which joins the Spring Valley stream to make the Riet River in a northward flow from the back of the Winterberg. This Riet River joins the Elands River that runs south-westwards to become the Tarka River that in turn joins the Great Fish River 22 km south of Cradock. There is no reason why elephants should not have come up these rivers and their tributaries in the past. Moreover, 'Blanco' is only 35 km north of the forests in the many valleys below the Winterberg where elephants were in strong supply. Although the tusks showed signs of exfoliation, a cross-section showed sound ivory still present. It is quite feasible that these relics are genuine for the locality and not trophies (Mr John Greig, pers. comm. September 1974).

Of the North-eastern Cape no relics have been forthcoming, apart from the Queenstown and Frontier Museum's exhibit of fossilised tusks from Dordrecht, a district 70 km north of Queenstown. Professor JVL Rennie, a geologist, but, at the time, Professor of Geography at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, who saw the specimens in the company of the author in 1957, thought that the degree of petrification was too great for them to have come from recent elephants.

No records of elephants along the Orange River on the northern border of the Midlands have been found. That elephants came up the Orange River from the far west is shown by Wikar (1779) who found them in 1779 between 'Beenbreek' and 'Yas' in the Kenhardt district. They were then about 680 river kilometres west of the Seekoeirivier, a tributary of the Orange River and the region for which the early travellers made. If elephants could thrive at 'Beenbreek' there seems no ecological reason why they should not have done so along the eastern branch of the Orange River. Their absence therefore is another of the anomalies of animal distribution, and one, in this case, shared by the buffalo which also came up the Orange River from the west but went a little further east of the elephants, though not to the eastern end of the Orange River in our region.

White rhinoceros

Until May 1974, when Mr John Greig, Research Officer of the then Cape Department of Nature Conservation, identified a partial mandible with teeth in the Albany Museum collection as belonging to a white rhino, all Eastern Cape rhino records south of the Orange River had been referred to the black rhino. Mr Greig sent the specimen to Mr IL Rautenbach, mammalogist at the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, who confirmed the diagnosis

(Meyer 1974:26). The result is that all written records on historical rhinos have had to be reassessed, and, unless reasonable certainty can be imputed to, say, a black rhino on the grounds of habitat, a record must be relegated to an indeterminate status.

The specimen's label showed it to have been received by the Albany Museum on 26 June 1961 from Mr Keith Collett of 'Grassridge', 45 km north of Cradock in the most northerly part of the Cradock district and on the common border with the Middelburg and Hofmeyr districts. From Mr Collett, Mr Greig learned that the jawbone had been washed out of a bank of the Grootbrakrivier at a point about 5 km below the wall of Grassridge Irrigation Dam. The locus is 31°46'S; 25°25'E, and the altitude 1021 m a.s.l.

Because the specimen had been washed out of the river bank it must have been buried under the silt of a former flood. Indeed, it may well have come down from very much higher up the Grootbrakrivier, even into the Steynsburg district where this river rises in the Suurberg, 60 km to the north of Grassridge, and just to the north-west of Steynsburg. Even so, the animal from which this fragment came would still have been well within Eastern Cape territory, and south of the Orange River.

A white rhino record immediately gives rise to the ecological problem of whether suitable grazing existed there, just as the browsing habit of the black rhino needs bushy conditions to satisfy that species' food preferences. As conditions stand today (1974), the Cradock and adjacent districts have little to offer the white rhino; the cover is predominantly Karoo veld *Pentzia incana*, with grass reduced to its minimum and seen at its best only in exceptional circumstances, such as in the wet summer of 1974. Certainly, no continuous grassveld cover of value to a white rhino exists there now, and the karroid conditions would not offer much attraction to a black rhino.

The change in, and in some cases deterioration of, the veld cover has been brought about since man's occupation and his overstocking with sheep gave rise to the eastward movement of the Karoo into what was once a grassveld area with karoo-bush in a subsidiary role (Acocks 1953:115). The very name of the farm on which the specimen was found, 'Grassridge', is a pointer to past conditions. The various records in the section on ecology in the East Cape Midlands give a picture of both karoo-bush *P. incana* and grass in the Cradock/Middelburg area in historical times, at least up to the middle of the 19th century when man had been there for about 40-50 years. For that time no records of rhinos have been set down in print.

The most convincing evidence that grazing conditions could have been suitable for the white rhinos is to be found in the map of the assumed veld conditions in about 1400 AD, as given by Dr

J Acocks (1953: Map No.1, opp. p. 12). It shows a wide belt of "Sweet Grassveld" covering the centre of South Africa from the Transvaal highveld through the Orange Free State and down into the East Cape Midlands, tapering off in a tongue running through the Somerset East district and on to the Fish River Rand south of Bedford. From the eastern flank of the Midlands, a spur of the sweet grassveld strikes north-eastwards through Queenstown and the districts to the north-east, and into Lesotho. This sweet grassveld's western border happens to coincide with the western border being used in this work, *viz.* the Philipstown, De Aar, Richmond, Murraysburg and the Aberdeen districts, west of which is Dr Acocks' veld type "Karoo (including Karroid Bushveld)" which brings with it varying conditions of Karoo and short bushes suitable for the black rhino, a fact proved by the black rhinos found by Burchell (2,1824:72) at 'Kaabi's Kraal' near De Aar in March 1812. His two illustrations (pp.46, 79) and his descriptions leave no doubt that the animal was a black rhino.

While the 'Grassridge' white rhino record bears the marks of a genuine specimen and not a trophy, the chance of the latter possibility has always to be kept in mind. Nevertheless, it is necessary at this stage to consider it as genuine, and to treat all other rhino records with more care and circumspection in apportioning species, especially in this Midlands area. Future floods and wash-aways might expose more white rhino relics in other Midland streams; they might even reveal black rhino relics there.

Black rhinoceros

That the black rhino was the most likely rhino species to have occurred in the Midlands during historical times is an assumption based on probability of distribution and ecology as outlined in the previous section. No adequate definition of the species, apart from one by Burchell on the western boundary, has been found in the various texts consulted.

The earliest record is that of the cow and calf seen by Ensign Isaq Schrijver (in Mossop 1931:229) on 9 February 1689 just west of the western-most buttress of the Aberdeen mountains and at the edge of the open plains running westwards towards Beaufort West in the Great Karoo. Schrijver wrote in his journal: "we caught the latter [*i.e.* the calf], but the mother fled. After we had sought to keep the said calf alive and had seen that it was impossible, we decided to slaughter it". Gordon reported seeing "rhino tracks" near Aberdeen in November 1777 (Rookmaaker 1989:113).

Still on the Camdeboo, but in its far eastern quarter 120 km east of Schrijver's encounter, Francois Le Vaillant (2,1790:332) found 'traces of a rhinoceros' at Plaat River in the Pearston district about 20 km west of Pearston. On 20 October 1776, Swellengrebel saw "rhino tracks" at the Melk River,

south-east of Graaff-Reinet (Rookmaaker 1989:35). On the whole, the rhino does not figure much in early records except in the Somerset East district. There is, however, a hill named Renosterkop, 17 km south-west of Pearston and lying just south of the road to Jansenville. This gives some indication of rhino possibilities there.

For the high ground between the Sneeuberg and the Orange River no written records of rhinos have been found further east than somewhere between Hanover and De Aar, yet, as shown repeatedly in this narrative, other game of great variety swarmed in large herds there. Trekker after trekker visited, hunted, or passed through the region without once mentioning a rhino. On the other hand, the name Renosterberg, for the prominent mountain 25 km south-west of Middelburg and just to the north-east of the Sneeuberg, rather suggests that the rhino might have been there. The earliest settlers are said to have arrived there in the early 1770s. Perhaps they had accounted for what few rhinos were there before the first literate travellers, such as Gordon, arrived in 1777 and 1778. To look at this prominent mountain feature with an eye to recognizing any likeness to the silhouette of a rhinoceros in its bulk is to meet disappointment, although an imaginative mind might see a possible rugged similarity to the profile of a rhino's nose with a short post-anterior horn. An equally imaginative mind in someone else might disagree.

John Barrow (1,1801:307) found the walls of a cave in the Tarkastad district decorated with art depicting "elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, and, among the rest, one of the camelopardalis", the last-named being the giraffe. This cave, as shown in the discussions on the giraffe and the two rhino species in Chapter 3, is on 'Rietfontein' in the Mostertshoek area of the Tarkastad district, 23 km north of Tarkastad. Cave paintings cannot be used as indicators of mammal distribution. Peripatetic artists are known to have sketched species on rock walls far beyond the ordinary ranges of these species.

Returning now to the western border of our Midlands region, WJ Burchell (2,1824:126), when travelling north-westwards towards the Orange River from Graaff-Reinet in 1812, and when somewhere near De Aar, wrote: "the rhinoceros, as my host informed me, and as my own experience afterwards confirmed, is now nearly expelled from the Colony; it being very rarely to be seen within the boundary...". Unfortunately, faithful chronicler and keen observer though he was, Burchell often leaves his readers uncertain of his whereabouts by inventing his own names for his camp sites, names such as Vulture Station or Astrild Station, which indicated events of moment to him but whose relevance means nothing today. When he did use place-names that have come down to us unchanged,

the thread of his treks can be pieced together. His 'pet' names cause considerable confusion in tracing his journey down from the Orange River during his visit to, and return from, Graaff-Reinet in 1812. When he was somewhere north-west of De Aar (p.36), he heard that rhinos were nearby and the next day he found rhino bones. Two days later, at a place he calls 'Kaabi's Kraal', which has defied efforts to trace it today (1974), four rhinos were seen (p.52) and on each of the two following days a rhino was shot.

These rhinos were certainly black rhinos – the two illustrations from his own pen leave no doubt of this, a front view on p.46 and a side view on p.79, which show clearly the characteristic prehensile lip. On p.75 he gives a short description: "On examining its mouth I found, agreeably to common opinion, no incisive, or fore, teeth in either jaw: in the upper jaw on each side, were five large grinders, and a smaller one at the back; but in the lower, there were six grinders besides the small back tooth". In a footnote on this same page, Burchell adds: "This Rhinoceros is of the species already described by Sparrman, under the name of *Rh. bicornis*. However, other species with two horns, having been since discovered, the name of *Rh. Africanus* has been substituted by Cuvier. And as I have subsequently discovered another species in Africa, also with two horns, this name would now, according to that principle of nomenclature, require again to be changed".

The new species he claimed to have discovered is the white rhino *Ceratotherium simum* which he took on 16 October 1812 at Chue Spring (Heuningvlei) 130 km north-north-west of Kuruman or 350 km and seven months after his experiences with the black rhinos at 'Kaabi's Kraal' in March.

In support of the black rhino's occurrence to the immediate west of Burchell's experience, Gordon (in Barnard 1950:348) shot a black rhino near the source of the Gamka River in 1778, 19 years before. This would have been about 200 km south-west of 'Kaabi's Kraal' and only about 10 km north-east of modern Beaufort West. This rhino is illustrated by Gordon, who like Burchell was an artist, if not in Burchell's class of excellence, and is No. 205 of the Gordon collection of pictures. Confirmation of this rhino's identity as a black rhino was obtained from the Keeper of the Rijksprentenkabinet at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, where the Gordon Collection of pictures is housed. He wrote (*in litt.* 11 February 1975): "No 205 was to all appearances a *Diceros bicornis* and shot at the source of the Gamka, or Leeuwenrivier. Though drawn in profile the upper lip is clearly pointed. On the other hand, the hump about the shoulders, peculiar to *C. simus*, is lacking, and the head rather on the small side".

By way of further confirmation that the dry country to the west supported the black rhino, a

skull found in 1954 by Dr M Courtenay Latimer at Van Wyk's Vlei in the Carnarvon district, 240 km west of Burchell's De Aar, was confirmed as that of a black rhino by the British Museum, London. This skull is in the East London Museum.

It is a sad fact that no bone, skull or tooth of a black rhino has been found in the East Cape Midlands. Some future discovery might well change the picture satisfactorily.

Rock paintings of rhinos in the East Cape Midlands. Because there has been some controversy concerning the validity of rock paintings as indications of rhino incidence, a study was made of the possibilities.

Shortridge (1,1934:428), in discussing rhino incidence, refers to rock paintings and leaves the matter rather in the air when he writes: "In *Rock Paintings of South Africa* (DF Bleek, 1930) there are reproductions of two [San] paintings of rhinoceros from the Eastern Cape Province, which may possibly have been intended to represent the White Species:

- ♦ From a cave at Rietfontein, Mostert's Hoek, Tarka Dist. This painting shows a rhinoceros with an elongated head and two slender horns, a giraffe is also shown alongside.
- ♦ From rocks on the banks of the White Kei near St Mark's Mission Station. A painting of a rhinoceros with a single curved anterior horn, but with a head not especially elongated. There are many other [San] paintings and engravings of the white rhinoceros in caves north of the Orange River".

A close examination of Bleek's reproductions of these paintings shows that:

Plate 1. This site on 'Rietfontein' is the one mentioned by Barrow (1,1801:307) and which is fully covered in the discussion on giraffe paintings under 'Giraffe' in Chapter 3. The farm is 23 km north-west of Tarkastad. The painting is of the right side of a rhino where the colour is strikingly white, touched in places with a slight wash of pink. The two horns look more like two thin upstanding sticks, the rear one longer than the anterior. The neck has a decided hump, a characteristic of the white rhino, but the back line is rather straight. The mouth is certainly square in this side view.

Plate 9. This painting is near St Mark's Mission just east of the White Kei River in the St Mark's (or Cofimvaba) district of the Transkei, and is of a right side-view of a rhino, which, as in Plate 1 above, is white. The single horn has a decided backward curve. The neck has a marked hump, and the back-line is straight. The mouth is not pointed. The whole effect is of a hippo with a horn on its nose!

While it is possible that these could be interpreted as white rhinos, the artwork is too rough to have any real significance. The fact that the animals are painted white is incidental, because, as will be seen below, paintings of rhinos not far distant from the above two are shown in red, black, and black-and-white.

Examining Shortridge's references to more paintings "north of the Orange River" we find the following in Bleek's book:

Plate 32. This rhino is jet black, its body lightly speckled with small pale rings. It has a weak horn, a weak rump, and a square mouth. Found on 'Merino' at the Knoffelspruit, which flows into the Orange River 'a few miles above Diepkloof'. 'Merino' (No. 559) is in the Rouxville district of the south-east Orange Free State lying 18 km south-east of Rouxville and only 3 km from the Orange River.

Plate 47. The rhino is wholly red. It has a weak hump, a single horn and a very pointed mouth. Found on 'Elandskloof' on the Vegkopspruit, which flows into the Orange River through Zastron district in the south-eastern Orange Free State. The farm is 17 km south-east of Zastron.

Plate 63. This rhino's body is black but it has a white belly and chest. It has one horn, no hump and a straight back. Found on 'Kareefontein' on the Caledon River in the Ladybrand district, Orange Free State.

Once again, the square mouth appears in two of the three above cases, while the one representation of an animal with a pointed mouth is painted wholly red. Colour as an identification factor can be ruled out in all instances. Whether the square mouth was painted purposely to represent the white rhino we shall never know. At best, it can be said that, from what weak evidence we have of the southern range of the white rhino, these paintings might have come within its distribution, and also that of the black rhino, if less so.

Hippopotamus

The Camdeboo has produced no historical records of the hippo. It is difficult to believe that this species did not go well up the Sundays River to Graaff-Reinet and beyond. If the dry nature of the Noorsveld in Jansenville, through which the Sundays River passes between the inland plains and the coastal belt, could have deterred it, why was it not deterred by somewhat similar veld in the Great Fish River north of Grahamstown, where it was common all along that river? Despite the absence of these historical sight records, enough specimens, in the form of teeth, tusks, skulls, and even a near-

complete skeleton, have been found to exclude all doubt that the hippo occurred all over the Midlands.

For Graaff-Reinet, in the poort near the head of the Sundays River, Dr James Kitching of the Bernard Price Institute for Palaeontological Research at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (*in litt.* 19 March 1974) has kindly provided information from his personal records. He reports "teeth and limb bones from the Sundays River" immediately below Adendorp, a small village only 4 km south of Graaff-Reinet. Further inland, in the same district, he says that "part of a lower jaw and a scapula" were found in the Gatsrivier, a small tributary of the Sundays River on 'Government-skop'. Dr Kitching estimates the hippo relics to be between 200 and 500 years old.

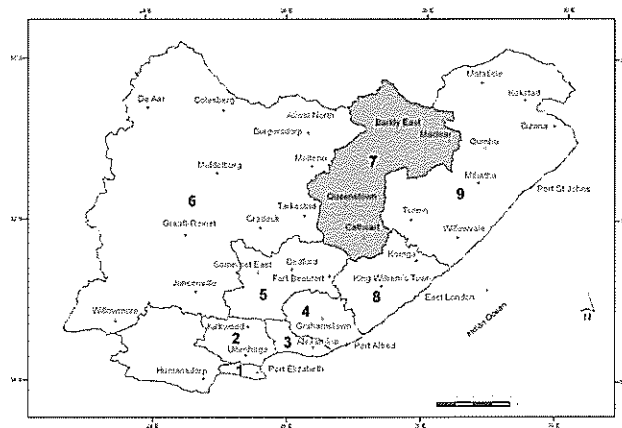
For the western Camdeboo, at a point 16 km east of Aberdeen, on 'Oudedrift', through which runs a small tributary of the Camdeboo River, non-fossilised hippo teeth were found at a point about 0.8 km from the main Camdeboo River course. Mr Richard Rubidge (*in litt.* 16 March 1974) has these teeth in the famous Wellwood Museum of Karoo fossils on his farm. The Camdeboo River runs eastwards and joins the Sundays River a few kilometres north of Kendrew. As hippos went so far up one small tributary, the Sundays River might once have been fairly well stocked with them.

To the north-west of Aberdeen, and more strictly just beyond our chosen western border, a few more records are essential to our assessment of historical hippo penetration into the hinterland. Dr James Kitching has supplied valuable evidence of an almost complete hippo skull and skeleton from 'Swarte Bosch' on the Buffelsrivier in the Murraysburg district. This river makes a wide westward sweep through northern Murraysburg before turning south to become the Kariëga River which runs into the Grootrivier which itself eventually runs into the Gamtoos River. 'Swarte Bosch' is 35 km west of Murraysburg village. Thus, the hippo was about 250 km directly from the coast and probably about 470 river kilometres from the Gamtoos Estuary, where Sector 1 revealed numbers of hippo both there and in the neighbouring Kabeljou and Seekoei rivers.

From this information it becomes obvious that hippos must have lived in the Stellenboschvlei (still so-called in 1974), a well-known source of water 45 km south-west of Murraysburg on the Buffalo River and on the old trek-route from Aberdeen over the Great Karoo to Waaifontein, from where the wagons struck south-westwards towards Beaufort West. 'Stellenboschvlei' is mentioned frequently in old books without comment on hippos, yet it was only 45 river kilometres south of 'Swarte Bosch'.

As with the Camdeboo, so with the Central Midlands, recourse must be had to the unearthing

2.7 SECTOR SEVEN: THE BORDER INTERIOR AND NORTH-EASTERN CAPE



2.7.1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

These most eastern and north-eastern parts of the Eastern Cape, on the high ground bounding on the Ciskei and Transkei, are the worst documented of any sector yet studied, partly because no regular trekkpaths crossed their open grasslands to hunting grounds inland, and partly because they were the last regions to be occupied by Whites in the mid-19th century and later. As a result, we have been denied knowledge of animals in an important area connecting herds of plains game of the Central Midlands with those in East Griqualand, the high-ground constituent of the Transkeian Territories where a fair population of plains game occurred on the Mzimvubu Flats, between Matatiele and Kokstad, in the 1860s. Fortunately, the Bontebok Flats, in the Cathcart district to the south, are well documented, chiefly because the game there was hunted by British army officers stationed on the frontier. They have left a few records from which, together with scraps found here and there, a reasonable picture can be drawn.

Sector 7 can be divided conveniently into two sub-sections:

- ♦ The Border Interior
- ♦ The North-eastern Cape

The Border Interior

The term 'Border Interior' is one of convenience relevant only to this work. It embraces the Cathcart, Queenstown, Sterkstroom and Glen Grey districts, of which the first three are currently (1974) farmed for the most part by commercial farmers, whereas the last has a communal farming system in place.

The word 'Border' has no definite geographical or administrative significance. It is used loosely today for East London and its hinterland, embracing the

coastal and sub-coastal low country of the Ciskei between the Great Fish and the Great Kei rivers of Sector 8 and the high-ground hinterland north of the Amathole Mountains in the Cathcart, Queenstown and Sterkstroom districts. It is the former British Kaffraria, which in itself was a variable factor politically. In other words, once the west/east traveller crossed the Great Fish River he had passed out of the 'Eastern Province', another term of convenience, and had entered the 'Border', with its variable affinities meaning different things to different people.

Partly by virtue of missionary endeavour there, the somewhat isolated Border district of Glen Grey has provided unexpected items on plains game up to the very western borders of the Transkei. Indwe, too, is another district to have produced some surprises, if to a lesser extent, but the adjacent commercially farmed districts of Elliot and Maclear, also south of the southern Drakensberg escarpment, have produced a bare minimum.

The south-western, the southern, and most of the eastern boundary of our Border Interior follows the mountain summit line from the Winterberg eastwards along the Elandsberg, the Amatholes, and the Kologha mountains to the Great Fish River, north-east of Stutterheim. The eastern boundary follows the Great Kei for only 30 km of the Cathcart and Queenstown districts before the river splits into its two constituents, namely the Swart Kei, coming from the west through the centre of Queenstown district, and the White Kei, coming down from the Stormberg in the north, and, in so doing, forming the 40 km eastern boundary between Glen Grey and the Transkei. In the 19th century, a narrow eastward projection of the Queenstown district, a tongue of mostly commercial farmland, from Imvani via Bolotwa to the White Kei, produced information



The Windvoëlberg at Cathcart. Elephant remains from the farm 'Tarsus', at the western end of this mountain, provide good evidence that at times elephants roamed into open country away from the wooded river valleys and the coast. (Photo: André Boshoff)

In about 1940 an elephant molar was found exposed in a grove of trees on 'Riversdale' at Tylden railway station in the Queenstown district, a farm bounded for most of its length by the Swart Kei River, a large and important tributary of the Great Kei. This molar is in the Queenstown and Frontier Museum.

Mr AGB Spence of 'Contest' found an elephant tusk embedded in the bank of the Bolotwa River, which enters the White Kei River about 45 km east of Queenstown. In addition, the Amathole Museum has two molars labelled from near Queenstown. A discovery that takes elephants farther inland in this drier area than any so far found is referred to by Derricourt (1973:14) as an elephant mandible found in the sandbank of what must have been the Swartkeirivier near 'Tentergate'. This would have been on the Tarkastad/Queenstown border and about 19 km south-east of Tarkastad.

For the North-eastern Cape, the apparently fossilised tusks from Dordrecht on exhibition in the Queenstown and Frontier Museum are mentioned on the chance that something similar will be found in future. Professor JVL Rennie, then in the Department of Geology at Rhodes University, expressed the personal opinion in 1957 that the degree of petrification was too great for the tusks to have been from recent elephants.

Rhinoceros

There has been no evidence of the rhino in either the Cathcart or Queenstown districts. This lends support to the opinion expressed in the discussion on the Transkei (Sector 9) that rhinos were never in the Transkei in historical times, despite the bones found at the Toleni Bridge in the Butterworth district and which were said to have been those of a rhino.

The closest black rhino records found in the higher inland plateau are about 250 km to the north-west of the Compassberg, near De Aar in the upper Karoo where they were seen by Burchell (2,1824:126) in 1812. Rhinos were on the lower plateau in the Albany district along the Great Fish River and only about 130 km from Toleni. However, the discovery in the Albany Museum, Grahamstown, of the partial jawbone of a white rhino from 'Grassridge' in the Cradock district, only 100 km west of Queenstown, opens the door to the possibility of the species' wider pre-historical range than history has given us (see Sector 6).

Hippopotamus

As with the elephant, the incidence of the hippo is mostly known from the evidence of teeth, skulls or bones, and, as the Great Kei and the White Kei rivers contribute to the boundary of our Border Interior and the Transkei, any remarks for these rivers apply equally to both sectors. FitzSimons (3,1920:157) wrote: "I have found remains so far inland as Cathcart and St Mark's", the latter being just within the Transkei and east of the railway bridge over the White Kei on the railway line from Imvani Junction in the Queenstown district to Qamata in the St Mark's district.

In 1893 the annual report of the Albany Museum records the receipt of a lower jaw from the White Kei River near St Mark's Mission in much the same place as that given by FitzSimons. This is as far up the White Kei as hippo remains have been found, probably because the area has been so poorly documented.

The Great Kei and its two upper branches, the Swart Kei and the White Kei, become confluent at a point where the Cathcart, Queenstown and St Mark's districts converge, about 30 km north-east of Cathcart. The three rivers would have been suitable for hippos. Their long and secluded water-holes or 'seekoeigate', as in other South African rivers, would have been longer, wider and deeper than they are today, now that soil erosion from ill-managed farmland has filled them with silt. Feeding conditions on the banks would also have been suitable for hippos. If hippos could exist along the lower reaches of the Orange River in the arid adjacent vegetation they would have been better served by the sweet grass near the Kei. Unfortunately, the Swart Kei has provided no records of its past hippo population, but a specimen now in the Queenstown and Frontier Museum sheds light on how far up-river the hippos went. A portion of a skull was donated to the museum by the late Mr SH Newey of 'Madeley', 23 km west of Queenstown on the road to Tarkastad and on the Klaassmitsrivier, a tributary of the Swart Kei coming down from the Stormberg near Sterkstroom in the north. The donor's son, Mr George Newey, stated (*in litt.* 10 January 1970)

intended to regularise the barter trade between the Xhosa and the colonists, which had become subject of much abuse. Godfrey (1924:118) quotes Mrs Ross, wife of a missionary at Alice, as saying that she had “heard that 22 000 lbs [c. 9 900 kg] of ivory had been sold “within four months of its [the Fair’s] establishment. Before the Fair commenced ivory was very cheap but shortly afterwards its value rose tenfold...the average weight of tusks in a large elephant was from 20-28 lbs [9-12.7 kg]”. Although this ivory would not necessarily have come only from Ciskeian elephants, its mass does give some indication of the incidence of elephants.

Thomas Philipps (in Keppel-Jones 1960:239), who had been an 1820 Settler, was surprised at the Fair’s returns in 1825. “I saw a return of the [Xhosa] Fair today, the whole amount is valued at about two thousand pounds sterling! Most astonishing and wonderful! In less than 8 or 9 months, Elephants’ tusks, Hides, Gum and Curiosities. I saw two tusks today that weighed 98 pounds each [44.4 kg]!! However, there have been some brought in which weighed 102...[46.2 kg]”.

In 1825, for Fort Willshire, Long (1948:78-85) quotes a statement sent on 31 March 1825 by Lord Charles Somerset, the Governor of the Cape, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: “On 13 March 1825 the Acting Market Master at Fort Willshire... presented the ‘Return of Ivory Purchased from the [Xhosa]’ (Records 20:181) which showed that from 18 August 1824 to 11 January 1825 [*i.e.* 5 months] 38 424 lbs [17 428 kg] had been purchased, while 12 017 lbs [5 450 kg] were purchased from 21 January 1825 to 12 March 1825 [2 months] making a total of 50 441 lbs [22 878 kg] [*i.e.* in 7 months]. He stated that the Colonists paid on the average one rix-dollar to one-and-a-half rix-dollars per pound”.

For the 1820s, Godfrey (1924:118) says: “In the old days elephants were widespread over open country but the great forest at Pirie was not considered an elephant forest. Yet even here teeth and tusks came to light...”. He was referring to those mentioned as being found below the Maden Dam. For 1823, Kay (1833:59) mentions elephants on the Bega [= Bira] River, a small river just west of the Keiskamma. He also saw their roads through the bush.

Also for the 1820s, Moodie (2,1835:269) writes of Xhosa hunting elephants on what would appear to be the Buffalo River, somewhere between King William’s Town and East London. For 1820 (p.65), when east of Kaffir Drift on the lower Great Fish River, he tells of hundreds of mimosa trees [= sweet-thorn *Acacia karroo*] turned up by elephants and he adds that a great part of their food consisted of mimosa roots. At Fredericksburg, a temporary but soon abandoned settlement a little to the east of Peddie where Moodie spent some time, he tells (p.74) how troops of elephants were often seen

browsing among the scattered mimosa trees and of how eight or nine were shot at one elephant hunt. And at Trompetter’s Drift, across the Great Fish River west of Peddie, he saw several troops of elephants drinking (p.126).

In 1825, Kay (1833:69) disturbed a herd of elephants near Wesleyville, then a mission station on the Twecu River, a small tributary of the Chalumna River in the western part of the East London district and only some 17 km from the sea. In the next year, 1826, Kay (p.136) saw “a numerous herd” of elephants close to the mission station at Mount Coke, 13 km south of King William’s Town, and says that three of them were killed by the Xhosa there. The fact that three of them could have been killed by the local people poses the question of why the Xhosa had not exterminated the elephants many years before, but perhaps they had guns at Mount Coke.

Steedman (1,1835:21,22) also speaks of a “numerous herd of elephants” at Mount Coke in 1826 and tells of three being killed there a few weeks before he was there, but these are the same three mentioned by Kay. Shortly afterwards he was in the Alice district and, when travelling to Fort Willshire (p.61), came up with what he called a large herd of elephants that later (p.67) turned out to be “eight or ten”, some of which were females with young. If he regarded 8-10 animals as a large herd, his and other reports that do not give an exact number must be treated with caution.

The reason why elephants survived in the Transkei and Ciskei is because the Xhosa tribesmen had no idea of the commercial value of the ivory in the animal’s tusks. European and Far Eastern commerce had not yet touched the people. In addition, the killing of an elephant was a difficult task and its flesh was not considered palatable enough to warrant the expenditure of so much energy. There were easier ways of obtaining meat. Alberti (1807, in Fehr 1968:76) emphasises this when he says: “...an Elephant is only rarely killed by [Xhosa], and which is why the rings made from their teeth remain unchanged in value”. Alberti’s elephant “teeth” were, of course, the tusks, which he goes on to say were made into arm bands.

Black rhinoceros

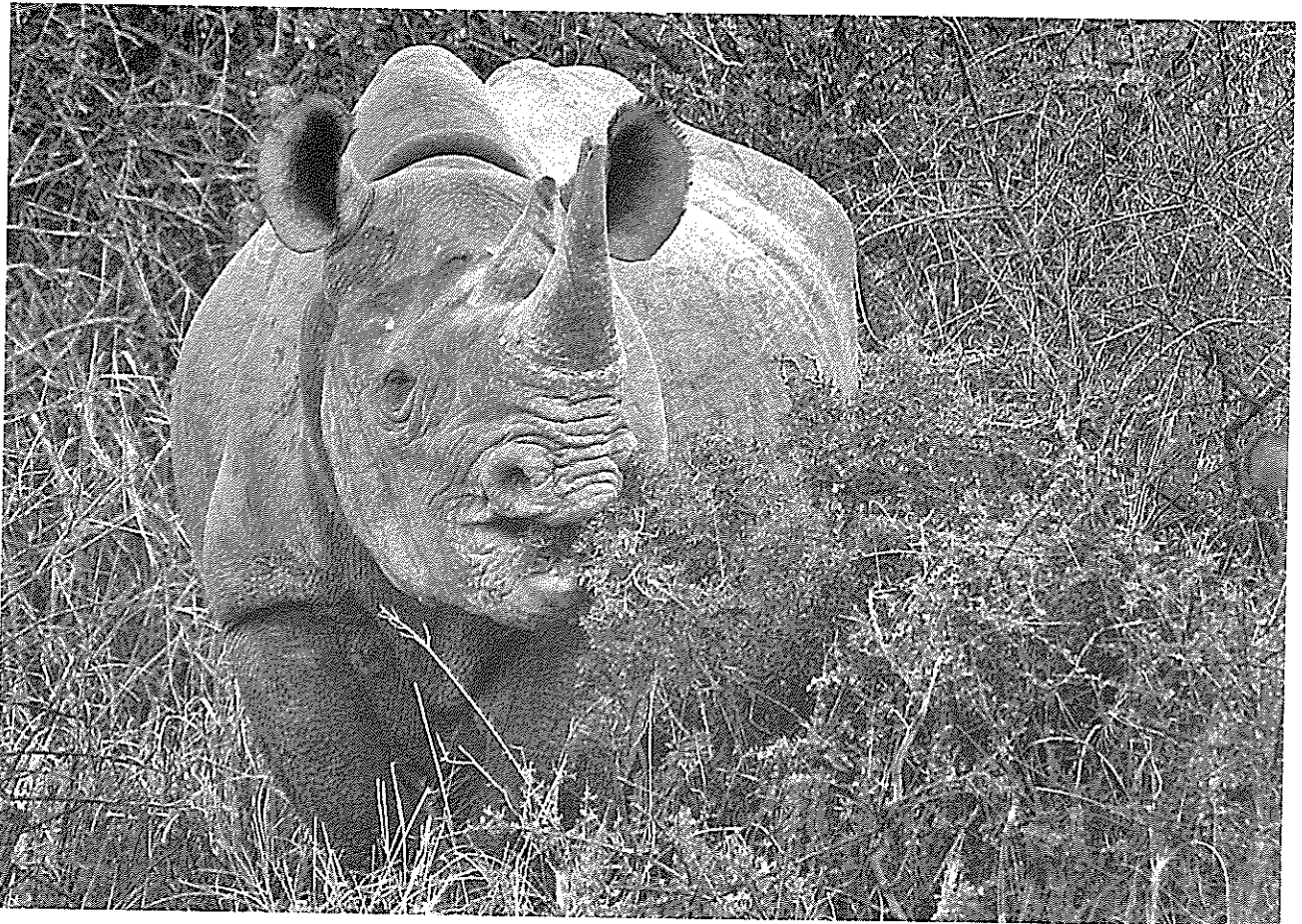
To what extent the rhino, and on ecological grounds it would have been the black rhino, occurred in the Ciskei is debatable. That it was known at Fort Brown on the Albany side of the Great Fish River, between Grahamstown and Fort Beaufort, is shown by the records in Sector 4. Such being the case, it must have occurred also on the opposite side of the river in the Ciskei. In addition, Moodie (2,1835:91) says: “There were a considerable number of rhinoceroses and buffaloes in the bushes along the banks of the Fish river”. This was in 1819, in the south-western

corner of the Peddie district, an area he would have known well.

Further confirmation of the rhino east of the Great Fish River comes from Rev. James Backhouse (1844:290) when he says: "The common two-horned Rhinoceros...still to be found here". "Here" is at 'Newtondale', on the east bank of the Fish River near Kaffir Drift, in about 1839.

Mrs John Ross (in Godfrey 1924) refers to the rhino on the Ncera (River), a small tributary of the Tyumie River about 5 km to the east of Alice, but as she seemed to be generalising, the record is doubtful, although not necessarily entirely unacceptable. Had the rhino been there in any strength, or in the neighbourhood, Lichtenstein might well

have mentioned it when he passed that way in 1804. The only other rhino report, and one much further to the east, is that of rhino bones unearthed during the building of a railway bridge at Toleni, in the southern Transkei (see Transkei, Sector 9); the provenance of this record is doubtful. Shortridge (1,1934:416) remarks on a rhino molar in the Amathole Museum, King William's Town, "from an unrecorded locality in Kaffraria", a tragedy of neglected museology which, when combined with a term as vague as "Kaffraria", which itself could be anywhere in the Ciskei, and even in the Transkei, renders the molar useless as a specimen or as a source of distributional information.



Early sightings from the lower Great Fish River Valley and its close environs provide the most easterly acceptable, known, records of the black rhino in the broader Eastern Cape. The next confirmed records are from Zululand, some 700 km to the north-east. The incidence of this species in the intervening countryside is unknown. (Photo: Piet Heymans)

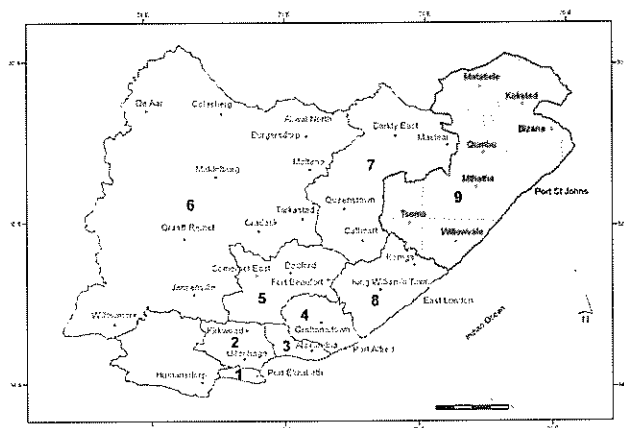
Hippopotamus

As with the elephant, evidence on the former distribution of the hippo is still being brought to light when teeth and tusks are unearthed and taken to museums. Specimens in the Amathole Museum, King William's Town, can be taken as examples: 'Brakfontein' on the Keiskamma River, Alice district; at Keiskamma River Mouth, and the Bega [= Bira] River Mouth on the Peddie coast; on the

Nahoon River near Berlin, King William's Town district; in a shell mound on the Buffalo River near East London; at Qinera River Mouth, East London; inland from Haga-Haga, a coastal resort 40 km up-coast from East London; at Kei River Mouth, on the Transkei border.

The 1892 annual report of the Albany Museum records the accession of hippo tusks and molars from the Goosha River Mouth on the Peddie coast 13 km west of the Keiskamma River Mouth. Barrow

2.9 SECTOR NINE: THE TRANSKEI AND EAST GRIQUALAND (GREAT KEI RIVER TO THE MTAMVUNA RIVER, AND THE HINTERLAND)



2.9.1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Before dealing with the mammal picture in the Transkeian Territories, as a whole, it is as well to give a brief outline of that composite piece of country known colloquially as 'the Transkei'. In essence this term is applicable only to seven districts in the southern and south-eastern parts of the territory, four being in Fingoland (Butterworth, Idutywa, Nqamakwe and Tsoomo), two in Gcalekaland (Kentani and Willowvale), and one in Bomvanaland (Elliotdale). The area has the Great Kei and the Bashee (Mbashe) Rivers as its southern and northern boundaries respectively, the sea is on the east and Tembuland and Emigrant Tembuland lie to the west. It is this name 'Transkei' that is now used colloquially to cover the Transkeian Territories as a whole.

In the south-east and south, as mentioned above, are Gcalekaland, Bomvanaland, and Fingoland. Immediately to the north and north-east is Tembuland, with Umtata as its capital town, while to the west, bounded by the White Kei River in the far west, is Emigrant Tembuland to which was added, in 1975, the Glen Grey district of the Ciskei, dealt with in this work under Sector 7 (the Border Interior). The Herschel district, adjacent to Lesotho, was also added to the Transkei in 1975. Immediately up-coast from Tembuland, and south of the Mzimvubu River, is West Pondoland, north of the Mzimvubu River and as far as the Mtamvuna River, the boundary with Natal. In the inland high-altitude north-western quarter lies the largest division of all, East Griqualand, of which only Mount Currie (Kokstad) was commercially farmed (in 1974).

With a seaboard of 250 km, popularly known as the Wild Coast, the Transkei rises in four steps from

richly grassed, well forested, almost subtropical, country to a higher and less forested step, and then up two further steps, each of which in turn shows a steady decrease in bush and forest in favour of open grassveld, with forest surviving only as patches on the moister mountain slopes. On the whole, the country is well watered by its many rivers and their tributaries.

2.9.2 THE ECOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The general scarcity of useful information on the state of the vegetation in the various areas of the Transkei and East Griqualand is to some extent overcome by reasonably good reports left by one or two travellers. Hopefully, more may come to light in the future when hidden manuscripts are found, edited and published.

For an overall picture, as it was in the 1890s, Schunke (1893:1-8), although late on the scene, gives a reasonable account of the whole Transkeian picture. He mentions the four terraces by which the country rises in altitude from the coast inland. Starting with the coastal region he says (p.2): "...there is a wild and romantic alternation of swelling hills and deep gorges and of rolling grasslands, forest and jungle". Then, moving inland, he says: "The first terrace is less rugged than the coast region, it presents the appearance of an open undulating grass country...The upper terrace is also undulatory in its nature...". He then makes a remark all too true but one not generally appreciated, *viz.* that few parts of South Africa are so well watered as "Kaffraria Proper".

Schunke enlarges on his opening generalisations by saying (p.7): "The country is covered to the

ever seen”, no mean achievement in the face of competition from Fynn. Like Van Reenen, 40 years before, many of Bain’s oxen sickened and died, but he does not say what became of the ivory.

By now elephant numbers must have been waning under the sustained hunting pressure. Obviously, each hunter would have been working on the principle of ‘every man for himself’ and of taking the booty while it lasted, before the other fellows got it.

Morse Jones (1964:63) tells of a James Collis hunting elephants in 1833 at the Umzimkulu River in southern Natal, an area much closer to the headquarters of the Natal hunters from Port Natal, *e.g.* Fynn and company. Thus, despite being so close to Durban, elephant numbers must still have been strong.

For the 1850s, Rochlin (1961:259), after saying that only at Knysna, Addo, and the Sundays River were elephant still to be found, apart from the Transkei, gives an interesting opinion on elephant movements. He says: “The Fish River bush was formerly a very favourite haunt of theirs, but after the war of 1836, being much disturbed, they appear to have migrated in a body through the Buffalo forest [*i.e.* at King William’s Town] and across the Great Kei into the almost inaccessible thickets east of the Umzimvobo, near the Natal frontier, where they are still numerous”.

Holt (1959:1) sets the seal on elephants at Mqanduli in West Pondoland. “One of the last reported occurrences of elephant in our area was about 1860 when a small herd travelled eastwards through the upper part of the Mqanduli district”. Presumably, this herd would have been heading for the Mzimvubu River forests. The last report to have been found is Schunke’s (1893:9) statement: “Elephants which were plentiful in the coast forests are now extinct”.

It is surprising what little effect the Xhosa seem to have had on the elephant population. Pitfalls should have made capture fairly easy, and the flesh of even one elephant would have fed a great many meat-hungry people. However, the tusks had no real value until the Whites arrived. Hunter (1936:95) mentions that at a hunt “...the hide and tusks of rhinoceros, hippopotami and elephants were the prerequisites of the paramount chief”. Even this superior stake in the booty does not seem to have encouraged his warriors to hunt the bigger game.

Rhinoceros

The status of the rhino – the black rhino by inference – is vague. Hunter (1936:95) includes it in a list of species hunted by the Pondos in pre-White times but gives no further evidence of rhino incidence.

Steedman (1,1835:254), writing of the year 1830 when he travelled between the Mzimvubu River

and Natal in the Lusikisiki and Bizana districts, said: “The rhinoceros also inhabits the thick bushy coverts”. However, he is the only author to have mentioned the rhino there and the date, as late as 1830, tends to raise suspicions of the true provenance of his statement.

WT Brownlee (1925:24) reports the finding of rhino remains during the building of the railway bridge over the Toleni River, near the Great Kei River in the southern part of the Butterworth district. He wrote: “In the neighbourhood of ‘um-Kombe’, another kloof, called the ‘Umkonjana’, or ‘Little um-Kombe’, enters the Toleni”. This rhino record is 150 km east of other known rhino country in the Cape, near Fort Brown on the Great Fish River in Albany. It is also 115 km east of a record for rhino at the Ncera River near Alice in the Ciskei (Sector 8). Nevertheless, the word umKhombe is the isiXhosa word for ‘rhinoceros’. If we are to accept the possibility of place-names with animal connotations as guides to the previous distribution of such animals, then the rhino could have been in the southern Transkei, at least. The dry Valley Bushveld of the Great Kei Valley and its tributaries should have suited it admirably. If the isiXhosa name of ‘uMkhombe’ for ‘rhinoceros’ means that the Xhosa knew the species, the name could have been brought with them from their previous Zulu connections. Doke *et al.* (1958) give ‘umKhombe’ as the Zulu name for the white rhino, whereas they give ‘ubhejane’ for the black rhino. This is not to suggest that the white rhino occurred in the Transkei, it merely indicates a rhino connotation.

This name problem was submitted to Prof. HW Pahl of the Xhosa Dictionary Project at the University of Fort Hare at Alice. His reply (*in litt.* 7 November 1974) stated: “Several rivers have been named after mammals or birds in the isiXhosa-speaking area, *e.g.* iNqwenkala (serval cat); iPhuthi (blue duiker); Zingcuka (hyaenas); Zagwityi (quail); iNdwe (Blue Crane) and so on. It therefore seems quite reasonable to assume that uMkhombe and the diminutive uMkhonjana were similarly named, *viz.* after the rhinoceros and its calf. None of my staff can find any other explanation for these names. The other connotation of uMkhombe, namely a ship, has the sea as its location and could not have been applied to any feature so far inland”.

The reasons for the naming of these rivers after the rhino, in the absence of any historical reference to the species being seen there, must remain obscure. Was it there when the amaXhosa first arrived and crossed the Great Kei in the late 16th century, only to be killed off before anyone could report on it?

Of the Toleni River discovery, Dr M Courtenay-Latimer, when Director of the East London Museum, stated (*in litt.* 23 September 1970) that she had heard of the rhino remains there but had always thought they had been sent to the

Amathole Museum in King William's Town. They were not there in 1970.

Appeals to the Curator of the South African Railway Museum in Johannesburg, and to the Directors of the Albany, South African and Transvaal museums, have shown that the Toleni bones are not in their collections. From dates kindly supplied by Mr Coffee, Curator of the Railway Museum (*in litt.* 22 May 1973) the railway branch line from Amabele Junction on the East London/Johannesburg main line to its terminus at Umtata was built between 1904 and 1916. The section most appropriate to the Toleni context, from Komga to Eagle and Butterworth, was built in 1905/06. Eagle station, only 4 km south of Toleni, was reached in 1905 and lies in the far south of the Butterworth district.

In the absence of the bones for confirmation, the nagging doubt persists that they might have been those of either an elephant or a hippo, perhaps even of a buffalo.

Hippopotamus

Chief interest in the hippo revolves around the distance inland up the main rivers and their tributaries that it ventured before intensive persecution came its way. Not much evidence is available anywhere, except in larger rivers such as the Orange, Vaal and Limpopo. All the estuaries along the Transkei coast must have had their share of hippos and many of them are well documented.

FitzSimons (3,1920:157) says: "I have found remains so far inland as Cathcart and St Marks". St Marks is a mission near Thembuland, and is opposite the Bolotwa area of the Queenstown district. FitzSimons' specimens would have been about 130 straight river kilometres from the sea while his Cathcart ones would have been about 100 km from the sea. In 1893, the lower jaw of a hippo was found embedded in the mud of the White Kei River near St Marks, and was accessioned by the Albany Museum in either November or December of that year, according to a press report by the then curator, Dr S Schönland. This supports FitzSimons' report of finding hippo remains there.

Stow (1905:200), writing of the Great Kei below its junction with the White Kei, says that "...all the deep pools of the surrounding rivers swarmed with hippopotami" while the San were there but, when the Xhosa drove out the San, they soon "exterminated the great pachyderms...The last hippopotamus on the 'Neiba' [= 'Nciba', the isiXhosa name for the Great Kei River] was killed in the pool opposite Madolo's Cave". This cave, on the banks of the Great Kei and known as the Palace Cave of the Python, belonged to a minor chief, Madolo. However, as this is prehistory it is difficult to know how factual the information is and how much has been drawn on

circumstantial inference. This pool could have been about 100 km from the coast.

WT Brownlee (1925:24), also drawing on folklore, mentions that at "Lwagcice", a pool on the Tsitsa River below junction Ferry on the Qumbu/Tsolo district boundary and about 100 km from the sea, "The [San] are said to have killed the last hippo in the Tsitsa". The Tsitsa is a large tributary of the Mzimvubu River that in itself was renowned for its hippos and whose isiXhosa name means 'the home of the hippopotamus'. This opinion, that it was the San who had killed the last hippo, contradicts Stow's contention that the San had not bothered about hippo and that the Xhosa had been the cause of the hippo's extermination, inland at all events.

Records of hippos in the estuaries are so numerous that only a few need be quoted; almost all rivers from the Kei to the Mtamvuna have provided evidence of this, even some of the smallest.



The Mzintlava River Estuary, 18 km north-east of Port St Johns. There is ample evidence that the rivers and estuaries on the Transkei coast – the Wild Coast – all carried healthy hippo populations. The information at hand indicates that the hippo did not survive beyond the 1890s in the Transkei. (Photo: John Costello).

The 29 elephants shot by Jacob van Reenen in 1790 (in Kirby 1958), and the eventual dumping of most of the ivory at the Bashee on the return trip, were as nothing compared with what he did to the hippo in the Transkei. In 57 days of travel, over a distance of 260 km, Van Reenen shot 61 hippos, 34 on the outward trip and 27 on the return trip, all between the Great Kei River in the south and the Mbotyi River in the Lusikisiki district, his northernmost point of travel. At the Bashee River his total bag was 19 hippos, on both the outward and homeward trips. At the Mbotyi River he shot two in the sea at the mouth, and at the White Kei, when having his final fling, he shot no fewer than 14, relating in his narrative (p.109) that he "left fully half of the fat behind". Bearing in mind the primitive nature of firearms in 1790, one wonders how many wounded

CHAPTER 3

SPECIES' OCCURRENCE AND STATUS: SOME DISTRIBUTIONAL, ECOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOGENIC PERSPECTIVES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To compile a complete mammal species list from historical records is impossible because most of the small- and medium-sized mammals were never mentioned in print. The early authors were seldom zoologists seeking information on mammals or on natural history subjects; they were travellers, missionaries, hunters, or self-seekers bent on satisfying their own interests. Whatever they wrote about mammals was incidental to the event of each day's journey and we have to be thankful that they recorded as much about natural history as they did. By the very nature of their experiences, the large animals and the antelopes, both predominantly diurnal, received most attention, whereas the smaller animals were overlooked by virtue of their insignificance, their retiring ways, and their more nocturnal habits. Smaller antelopes – like the duikers and the steenbok – were overlooked in print because their commonness made them little more than items to be shot for the pot. Significantly, the distribution patterns of these lesser animals have been less affected by man's occupation because they were never massacred on the grand scale as were the larger antelopes or the dangerous predatory animals, in order to bring farming and general living conditions into line with man's secure existence in the country. Indeed the changing face of things has worked to their advantage in some cases, and has increased their ranges and numbers accordingly, and surreptitiously. The rock hyrax is a case in point, an extreme one perhaps but nevertheless a pointer to what can, and does, happen when an alien force breaks a traditional pattern.

Distribution maps

A map, showing the historical, natural distribution is provided for each of the mammal species where the quality and quantity of distributional data makes this worthwhile. The distribution records in the text have been classified according to five types (Table 3.1). A few records, for which the identification and locality information are particularly vague, have been omitted from the distribution maps.

Table 3.1 Classification of records for the distribution maps, and symbols used.

Locality	Identification (ID)	
	Accurate	Questionable
Precise*	Solid circle = specimen (material) record Solid square = sight record	Open square = sight record
Imprecise**	Triangle = sight record	Question mark = sight or specimen record

* *e.g.* On the Fish River, 2.5 miles north of Cookhouse; ** *e.g.* 'Mqanduli district' or 'East Pondoland'

3.2 SPECIES' ACCOUNTS

Taxonomy, order of listing and nomenclature closely follow Skinner and Chimimba (2005), who in turn closely follow Bronner *et al.* (2003). See 1.5 for the full taxonomic list and the scientific, English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa common names.

Only those species that are known to have occurred naturally in the broader Eastern Cape, in historical times, are included in this chapter. The inclusion of one of these species – the white rhinoceros – is based on a single item of evidence (a partial jawbone and teeth) and therefore its historical incidence in the region must be treated with caution; consequently, this issue is discussed in some detail.

Although it is concluded that the giraffe never occurred historically in the broader Eastern Cape, its incidence in the region remains controversial and consequently it has been included in this chapter, along with a relatively detailed discussion.

Valley (1898) and the regions nearby; Somerset East (1776); Bathurst (1839); 'Bowden', Albany (1893/94); along the Swartkei River, near Queens-town (1825) and Middelburg in 1895. A fairly wide coverage, on the whole.

African striped weasel

Another nocturnal species, it is seen far less often than the striped polecat. It has attracted no attention because it has no outstanding characters but, like the polecat, its distribution was widespread from the coastal districts into the Midlands and the North-eastern Cape.

Striped polecat

This highly nocturnal species has received very little mention, although its distribution would have been as widespread as it is now. When seen or killed it was often referred to in print as the 'zorilla', its early generic name, and comment on its musky stench was seldom overlooked.

In contrast with the past's oversight of the polecat by people travelling in slow-moving vehicles, today's symptom of speedy travel is the growing number of dead bodies along main country roads – polecats killed by motor-cars at night. A popular explanation for this mortality – and one with merit – is that a polecat on the road reacts to the sudden approach of a car in the way it would do to an enemy; it turns its hindquarters towards the danger, lifts its tail, and excretes the offensive defensive stench which has evolved to cope with most situations not involving speeding motor-cars.

White rhinoceros

When this work on the historical incidence of mammals in the broader Eastern Cape was started, no thought was given to the white, or square-lipped, rhino as an inhabitant in the Eastern Cape. However, the discovery in the Albany Museum of a partial jaw and teeth of the white rhino from 'Grassridge' in the Cradock district changed the whole picture. This was the first such specimen to have been taken south of the Orange River, and because of its unique position, the whole picture of this rhinoceros immediately north of the Orange River, from the river mouth in Namibia through the Northern Cape and the southern Orange Free State, has also been studied in order to present a background picture of the species' known proximity to the Cape. Most references are weak and contentious but are given here in order to present all for proper appreciation of their value. Thus, the three regions north of the Orange have been given, followed by all records south of the Orange River starting, as with the northern records, in the far western Cape and moving eastwards to meet the Cradock record in the East Cape Midlands.

As with most bone material from large game animals, the contentious factor is always that a specimen might have had trophy value originally, and not genuine locality provenance. The fact of this 'Grassridge' specimen being found so far beyond any other known rhino relic brings this into greater perspective, and although it has been argued elsewhere in this work that ecologically the animal could have been there, the fact that early members of the Collett family from 'Grassridge', the Messrs Dudley and Herbert Collett, were keen big-game hunters in northern regions demands that the status of the jawbone be treated with great caution. Despite this, the case is reviewed here as though the specimen is a genuine local relic. The future may hold the answer, either way.

The white rhinoceros north of the Orange River In southern Namibia

What was thought to be the first-ever record of the white rhino is mentioned by Shortridge (1,1934:428) as coming from Parsons in 1743 "(*Phil. Trans.* Pl.111, Fig. 6, horn figured)". However, this was not given as specifically for Namibia or South Africa; the statement was based on an error of judgement by Parsons, a fact discovered by Dr R Bigalke (1963:5), Director of the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria, whose request to Mr RW Hayman of the British Museum for an opinion of Parsons' statement brought the reply (*in litt.* 21 May 1963) that it was incomplete and inaccurate. This record, then, must be discarded.

Shortridge (*op. cit.*) then refers to a weathered pair of white rhino horns discovered at Seeheim in the Keetmanshoop district of southern Namibia (called 'Great Namaqualand' by him) by G Wickham in 1919. These, he says, are in the Port Elizabeth Museum. Mr John Greig, then Research Officer of the Department of Nature Conservation at Grahamstown, was sent, on requesting a loan of the horns for study, only one very much weathered and exfoliated horn bearing no provenance whatever. The author saw this specimen on 24 April 1974 and regretfully had to disregard it as an object of value to this study.

Shortridge (*op. cit.* p. 425), writing of a time which might have been in the 1880s, said: "Beyond any reasonable doubt the White Rhinoceros has been extinct in [Namibia] for the last 50 years or more...The supposed survival of a few 'White Rhino' in the (mountainous) Kaokoveld is evidently due to mistaken reports. The Black species has a habit of wallowing in limestone pits and naturally becomes tinged with white, after doing so".

However, eight years later, Shortridge (1942:72) changed his mind, after finding more convincing evidence, because he states: "In 1895-96 Alexander recorded both species of rhino from the Fish River valley in Great Namaqualand". Shortridge

was wrong in his use of the dates 1895/96 in the above quotation, if indeed he really meant James Edward Alexander, which, from the context, he obviously did. The years should have been given, as indicated elsewhere, as 1836/37. He died in 1885, which further excludes Shortridge's 1895/96 from probability.

In the Northern Cape

The type specimen of the white rhino stands to the credit of William James Burchell (*Bull. Soc. Philom., Paris*, 97, 1817) from "the interior of South Africa" near 26°S. Shortridge (1934) gave this as near Kuruman, but since then a more precise locality of Heuningvlei (once Chue Spring) on the Makuba Range, 80 miles [130 km] north-north-west of Kuruman, has been chosen. This was taken from a map by Cave (1947:141-146) when discussing Burchell's drawings of rhinos, now lodged in the Gubbins Collection, Witwatersrand University Library, Johannesburg. The latitude of the Makuba range is 26°15'S but the hills lie not in the Kuruman district, as is generally thought, but in the Vryburg district, 170 km west-north-west of Vryburg.

In neither of his two volumes does Burchell give the circumstances of his discovery of the white rhino at Chue Spring (or Heuningvlei) on 16 October 1812. His narrative stops short of this part of his journey, but, on p.75 of the second volume, he describes the black rhino shot at Kaabi's Kraal near De Aar in March 1812, seven months earlier, and in a footnote on the same page, alludes to his having found a new species: "The new species here alluded to, I have named *Rhinoceros simus* (*Bulletin des Sciences*; livr. de Juin 1817, p.96) from the flattened form of its nose and mouth, by which, and by its greater size, and the proportions of its head, it is remarkably distinguished from the other African species. A more complete account of this, is reserved for a future opportunity, as it belongs to a part of my journal not included in the present volume".

His remarks on the animal's "flattened form of its nose and mouth" leave no doubt as to the species concerned. How great the tragedy that the "future opportunity" of describing the rest of his journey has been lost to us, possibly by the loss of a manuscript. In conversation in 1972 with Mr RK Burchell, a relative of the late William James Burchell and then living in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, it was learnt that he remembered his father referring to a manuscript which, as he told his son, had been lent to someone but which was never heard of again. The South African Burchells have been a well-established family in the Bedford district of the Eastern Cape for many years.

The Northern Cape has produced many historical references on the white rhino, all of which are sound. Most of these were in the Mafeking area and can be found in Steedman (2,1835:232), citing

a letter from AG Bain to JC Chase, for the year 1826; AG Bain (in Lister 1949:39) for 1834; and Dr Andrew Smith (in Kirby 1939:36,39) for 1835, etc..

Slater (1,1900:302) states: "An imperfect skull is preserved in the South African Museum, which was dug out of the black peaty soil at a depth of eight feet [2.4 m], about twelve miles [19 km] from the Vaal River in the Kimberley district, in 1893; this is the southernmost locality yet recorded". Asked for his opinion on this specimen, Dr QB Hendey, palaeontologist at the South African Museum, replied (*in litt.* 14 June 1974): "The Kimberley district white rhino mentioned by Shortridge [Slater?], of which I have so far found no other record, would, I think, have to be classed as 'a fossil of uncertain age'. In this instance, the specimen actually conforms to the classic definition of a fossil - 'dug out of the earth' - although 'a remnant of past life' is perhaps a more realistic definition of the term" (he added that Mrs DM Leakey was then checking the bone collection at the South African Museum and would report on the specimen later).

In the Orange Free State

Du Plessis (1969:21) sums up the historical situation clearly: "No conclusive evidence exists that *C. simum* ever ranged into the Orange Free State (Bigalke 1963). Bryden (1899) expresses uncertainty as to whether the first pioneers encountered the white species here, but he was inclined to think that they did since places were shown to him just north of the Vaal river on the grassy plains of southern Transvaal where the species had occurred. He also describes the pasture to the south of the Vaal river as very suitable for this animal and the river as easily fordable at many points during the dry season".

Bryden's comment that "the pasture to the south of the Vaal River "was" very suitable for this animal" should not be dismissed lightly. We have the discovery of the white rhino teeth from the Cradock district, in the East Cape Midlands, in 1961, as an example of that might have been the animal's distribution in earlier times. The sweet grassveld of the Orange Free State and of 'Grassridge' at Cradock would have been much the same, according to Acocks (1953: Map 1). It is true to say that sight records of rhino of any species in the Orange Free State are so scarce that no rhino was common there during occupation by Whites. Nonetheless, many place names in the north-western corner of the Free State contain the name 'Rhenoster' in their context and cannot be ignored entirely. Perhaps both the white rhino and the black rhino were there, but if we are to estimate the probability on ecological grounds, the white rhino should be the favourite.

Bigalke (1963:7) refers to a white rhino skull, found in 1961 by Dr AC Hoffman, Director of the National Museum, Bloemfontein, in the Valsrivier, near Kroonstad. From Mr CD Lynch, mammalogist

at the museum, it was learned (*in litt.* 18 June 1974) that "A white Rhino skull without mandibles (No. m623) was found in the Vals River in 1958 on the farm 'Letitia' (No. 1367), district Kroonstad. It was donated by Mr Bester. This is probably the skull Dr Bigalke is referring to as being found in 1961". 'Letitia' lies on the north bank of the Vals River, 26 km east-south-east of Kroonstad, at 27°45'S; 27°30'E.

Bigalke also referred to part of a semi-fossilized skull from Fauresmith, said to be that of a white rhino but thought by Mr CD Lynch (*op. cit.*) to "appear to be that of a Black Rhino. Whether this is the other skull Bigalke is referring to, I don't know". Mr Lynch's further comments strongly suggest that it must be this other skull. It is "a half-fossilized skull, without mandibles (No. m622) found in 1934 by F Rabie on the farm 'Telegraafsfontein' (No. 644) district Fauresmith". This farm lies on the Riet River, 31 km north-west of Fauresmith, at 29°03'S; 25°07'E.

The white rhinoceros south of the Orange River

In studying the three regions immediately north of the Orange River, *i.e.* the records based on chance visitations there by early travellers, it seems that the north-western regions of the Cape would have had greater chances of having white rhinos than either the central or eastern regions because white rhinos came further south towards the Orange River. This would seem contrary to ecological argument which would expect this grazing rhino to have thrived on the excellence of the belt of sweet grassveld which came down from the Highveld, passed through the Orange Free State, and went deep into the East Cape Midlands, as far as Somerset East, even during historical times. However, there is not the slightest sight record of the white rhino having done so.

Shortridge (1,1934:428) puts the case bluntly, perhaps too bluntly, when he says: "There seems to be no authentic historical record of the existence of White Rhinoceros anywhere south of the Orange River" but he goes on to say that "According to Rowland Ward, the White Rhinoceros was exterminated south of the Orange River early in the 18th century, but no authority is quoted" (Shortridge omits this Rowland Ward reference in his bibliography).

Bryden (1897:182), also generalising on the situation, south of the Orange River for the late 17th century in Bushmanland: "Its modern range has invariably been between the Orange River and the Zambesi, and it has never been found north of the latter river" (this is incorrect). He continues: "There can be little doubt, I think, that, prior to the beginning of this century [*i.e.* 18th century], this enormous terrestrial mammal...wandered upon the great grassy plains of Bushmanland (a continuation of the Kalahari desert) just south of the Orange

River. Native tradition has it so". He then cites Barrow's comment on the white rhino at Hantam Mountains near Calvinia (to be discussed later). "... but at all events later Europeans have never encountered this rhinoceros south of the Orange". He then mentions that Burchell, Andrew Smith, Cornwallis Harris and others found it north of the Orange.

Following the above generalisations, we shall now take what few early references there are from west to east across the Cape, *i.e.* below and south of the three regions used when studying the white rhino's distribution north of the Orange River.

SF du Plessis (1969:19), when discussing the possibility of the white rhino's occurrence south of the Orange River, sums up the position admirably: "The question of the occurrence of the white rhinoceros south of the Orange river had never been properly settled and the chances are that it never will be. This species was usually described as being distributed between the Orange River in the south and the 17th degree south latitude in the north, (*i.e.* just south of the Sahara) but occasional references exist of its occurrence south of the Orange river in the Cape. Most of the early authors who encountered rhinoceroses just south of this river unfortunately seldom specified the species, thereby making it impossible to outline the southern boundary of its distribution with any degree of certainty. The rhinoceroses encountered by Wikar (Mossop 1935) in 1779, for example, could also have included the square-lipped species, since he describes them just south of the lower Orange river near the present-day Goodhouse and Kakamas, just north of which they are known to have occurred. Although Shortridge (1934) and others contend that the square-lipped rhinoceros did not occur south of the Orange, the possibility cannot be ruled out entirely since the river in itself did not offer a formidable barrier in dry periods.

The unknown author of *Een Generale Beschryving van de Colonie De Kaap de Goede Hoop*, 1796-98, (VC 104, Cape Archives) as a rule gives a very accurate survey of the larger animals of the Cape Colony at that time. His observations and descriptions were correct and corroborated by those of latter authors. One of his statements, however, may have rested on mistaken identity. When he reviews the fauna of the Great, Middle and Little Roggeveld he writes of this area: "Onder anderen is de witte Rhinoceros overvloediglijk in, en waarschynlijk eigenaardig aan, dit gedeelte van het land. De zelve verschild in niets van de gemeene twee hoornige Afrikaansche Rhinoceros, als alleen in groote, waar in het dezelve aanmerkelijk overtreft, en in de dunheid en buigzaamheid van het vel". A free translation of this is: "Inter alia, the white rhino is plentiful in, and peculiar to, this part of the country; it differs in no way from the two-horned African rhino except in size, in which the latter notably surpassed [it], and in the thinness and pliability of its skin".

Hence, Du Plessis' comments on the mistaken identity. The white rhino is larger than the black. There is no significant difference in the qualities of their hides. Du Plessis continues: "Barrow (1801) contends that the white rhinoceros was not uncommon beyond the Hantam mountain range on the outskirts of the Cape Colony of that time. He lists the differences between the white and black species but does not mention the lip structure. Bigalke (1963) doubts if Barrow's rhino could be definitely identified as the white species since the differences given (colour and thinness of skin) are not recognised criteria of distinction".

Dr Bigalke's opinion on the lack of validity of skin thickness as a criterion in determining the species is based on his experience with rhinos when he was Director of the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria; also, his denial of skin colour as a criterion is based on the experience of anyone with knowledge of rhinoceroses, be they White or Black, in the veld. However, Barrow, unlike the unknown author quoted above, did make a size differentiation in favour of the white rhino, which cannot be laid aside lightly. Barrow's actual words (1,1801:395) covered an event that took place in 1790 behind the Hantam Mountain in the Calvinia district. This range lies 280 km south-east of Pella in Namaqualand at the point where the Orange River's southern bend is closest to the Hantamberge. The 280 km is a very considerable distance, but the region known as Little Bushmanland would have included the so-called Toa Grassveld, at about 29°20'S; 18°30'E, which might possibly have been attractive to a grazing animal like the white rhino. The name 'Twa' or 'T'waa' ('Toa') is used colloquially for several species of the *Aristida* genus of 'steek' grasses. Although Barrow had previously travelled through Namaqualand to the west, he does not seem to have seen rhinos there and to have had enough experience of them in order to be able to make comparisons between the black and the white. If the white really was involved, he must have taken his knowledge from local residents. Otherwise why should he have said white? He does not say he actually saw white rhinos, or any rhinos, in the Hantam; the knowledge that prompted his remark came from a Namaqua Chief who may or may not have been exaggerating.

All we know is what Barrow has left in the following paragraph: "In our descent of the mountain, we were driven to seek shelter from the violence of the rain in a mixed horde of Bastards and Namaquas. The chief was of the former description. In his younger days he had been a great lover of the chace... He boasted that, in one excursion, he had killed seven camelopardales and three white rhinoceroses. The latter is not uncommon on the skirts of the colony behind the Hantam Mountains, and seems to be a variety only of the African two-

horned rhinoceros. It differs from it in color, which is a pale carnation, in size, which is considerably larger, and in the thinness of its skin; all of which may perhaps be the effects of age".

Du Plessis then gives another instance of white rhinos south of the Orange, but unfortunately he omits the author in his bibliography: "Carmichael Smythe (1805) compiled a map very similar to that of Barrow and had it printed in 1805 by Arrow-smith. On this he states: "The White Rhinoceros [is] plentiful in this part of the Country..." and indicates its presence in the present Bushmanland. Shortridge (1942) does not clarify the issue with the following statement: "Although the Black Rhinoceros (*D. bicornis*) was always, presumably, more plentiful than *Ceratotherium simum* south of the Orange River. !haba the [Khoikhoi] name, still surviving, refers correctly to the white species, in indication of its former occurrence in Little Namaqualand".

Du Plessis' remarks, quoted earlier, that Wikar could have seen white rhinos south of the Orange River near the present Goodhouse and Kakamas, opposite which, on the northern bank of the river, they were known to occur, is somewhat counter-balanced by Wikar's own account (p.99) of flushing six rhinos near Seekoeisteek, west of the Augrabies Falls and in the Kenhardt district. He tells of how the animals charged at their adversaries with ill-directed aim and (p.101) of how a rhino "slips past and cannot check his pace, or possibly he does not see your honourable self, for in any case his eyes are very small and, as the [Khoikhoi] tell me, his sight is weak; but when he is standing still, his hearing is all the keener by contrast". Wikar then added: "This type of rhino does not look in the least like those I have seen drawings of. Its body closely resembles that of an elephant, but its head is almost like a pig's, with two horns, one above the other loosely fixed in the skin". In a footnote (p.100), Wikar clarifies the picture slightly by saying: "The rhinoceroses which I have seen resemble fairly well the description and drawing of them by P Kolbe". This description is given at the beginning of this chapter on the black rhino at the Cape.

As an observer Wikar was no fool and from the close contact he had with Khoikhoi hunters throughout his trek along the Orange River, hunters who had come to excel at hunting rhinos, as Wikar himself says, he would surely have learnt from them, if he had not discovered it himself, that two types of rhino existed in the area. Hunters living as close to nature as the Khoikhoi would soon have come to know the habits that distinguish the black from the white rhino, details of their temperament and their eyesight, etc..

Using the ecological background as a measure of the possibility of white rhino incidence, the knowledge (a) that elephants in historical times came as far south as Tiervlei near the Cape

Peninsula (Leibbrandt 1896:47), (b) that this was good grassveld which the frontier settlers found to their delight, and (c) that the East India Company established outpost grazing farms well into the Malmesbury district, might lead to the thought that not only the black rhino occurred there. Indeed, by carrying this inference further, this rhino might also have roamed the grassy districts of Caledon, Swellendam and Riversdale. True, rhino records from the latter region are conspicuous by their absence, but what right have we to be more certain that the black rhino was at the Cape than white rhino? The two observations on the black rhino quoted, by Du Plessis (1969:8) and by Kolben (1731), are hardly sufficient to enable a cast-iron statement to be made. One criterion against the white rhino's chances of being in these south-westerly sectors is the fact that nobody commented on a rhino with a square jaw. Enough rhino records stand as proof of a rhino being there in historical times. Surely, comment on two possible types of rhino would have been forthcoming – had both been there?

For that part of the country south of the Orange River, and lying south of the region known as the Northern Cape, no white rhino references are known. Here, perhaps, the Great Karoo proved too severe for the white rhino, but satisfactory instances of the black rhino are known.

This leaves the East Cape Midlands and the south-eastern Cape, lying south of the Orange Free State. Here, again, records are weak and, but for the discovery in the Albany Museum of a white rhino jawbone from Cradock, would not have been considered at all. Shortridge (1934:428) includes the statement that "Pringle (1822) mentions two supposed varieties of rhinoceros in the Eastern Cape, but, as already pointed out by Hewitt, it is doubtful if either of these could have been referable to the White Species" (see Hewitt 1,1931:55). The suggestion that two species of rhino were there must have come from hearsay because Thomas Pringle (1835:145), when discussing rhinos and their scarcity near the Bedford and Adelaide areas which he knew well, states that he had never seen one, but his remark about two species is forgivable when one studies the rhino in South Africa and reads of the almost indescribable confusion which existed over their speciation, up to five species being given by some authors, and then based mostly on the type of horn each carried.

The white rhino jaw-bone from 'Grassridge', Cradock, East Cape Midlands

Until May 1974, when Mr John Greig, then Research Officer of the Cape Department of Nature Conservation, identified as white rhino material a partial mandible with teeth in the Albany Museum collection, all Eastern Cape rhino records south of the Orange River had been presumed to belong to

the black rhino. For reassurance, Mr Greig sent the specimen to Mr IL Rautenbach, mammalogist at the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, who confirmed the diagnosis (Meyer 1974:26). The result is that all historical records on rhinos have to be reassessed, and unless reasonable certainty can be imputed to, say, a black rhino on the grounds of habitat, the record must be relegated to an indeterminate status.

The specimen's label showed it to have been received by the Albany Museum on 26 June 1961 from Mr Keith Collett of 'Grassridge'. This farm is 45 km north of Cradock, in the most northerly part of the Cradock district, and on the common border with the Middelburg and Hofmeyr districts. From Mr Collett, Mr Greig learnt that the jawbone had been washed out of a bank of the Grootbrakrivier at a point about 5 km below the wall of Grassridge Irrigation Dam. The locus is 31°46'S; 25°5'E and the altitude 1021 m a.s.l.

Regrettably, the specimen's provenance as a local relic, and not as a trophy brought in from outside, is surrounded by the doubt that earlier members of the Collett family at 'Grassridge', the Messrs Dudley and Herbert Collett, are known to have hunted big game to the north, which means that they might have brought home a skull of a white rhino shot on an expedition. Bearing this doubt firmly in mind, a discussion of the specimen as though it were a genuine local product can do no harm, and might even stimulate others to seek further along rivers in the Midlands after floods, and to send any large bone or skull specimens to museums in the hope that other relics from other rivers will help determine the 'Grassridge' specimen, either way.

Because the specimen had been washed out of the river bank it must have been buried under the silt of a former flood. Indeed it may well have come down from very much higher up the Grootbrakrivier, even into the Steynsburg district where this river rises in the Suurberge, 60 km to the north and just to the north-west of Steynsburg. Even so, the animal from which this fragment came would still have been well within Eastern Cape territory and south of the Orange River.

A white rhino specimen at any place immediately gives rise to the ecological problem of whether suitable grazing could have been available there, just as the browsing habit of the black rhino needs bushy conditions for the animal's food preferences. By today's standards (1974), the Cradock and adjacent districts have little to offer the white rhino; the cover is predominantly karoo veld (mainly *Pentzia incana*), with grass reduced to its minimum and seen only in exceptional circumstances, such as the wet summer of 1974. Certainly, no grassveld of value to a white rhino, and few adequate karroid conditions of use to a black rhino, now exist.

The change, and in most cases deterioration, in the veld-cover has come about since man's occupation and his overstocking with sheep. This, in turn, has given rise to the eastward movement of the Karoo into what was once grassveld, with the Karoo in a subsidiary role. The very name of the farm on which the specimen was found, 'Grassridge', is a pointer to past conditions. The various records given in the section on the ecology of Sector 6 (East Cape Midlands) give a picture of both karoo-bush *P. incana* and grass in the Cradock/Middelburg area up to the middle of the 19th century. Whites had then been there for about 40-50 years, for which time no records of rhinos in that area have been found.

The most convincing evidence of grazing conditions suitable for white rhinos is to be found in the map of assumed veld conditions for about 1400AD given by Dr J Acocks (1953, Map No.1, opp. p.12). He shows a wide belt of sweet veld covering the centre of South Africa from the Transvaal Highveld down through the Orange Free State and southwards over most of the East Cape Midlands until it tapers off in a tongue running through the Somerset East district and on to the Fish River Rand south of Bedford. From the eastern flank of the Midlands a spur of this sweetveld strikes north-eastwards through Queenstown and

the districts to the north and north-east, and into Lesotho. The sweetveld's western border happens to coincide with the western border selected for this work, *viz.* Phillipstown, De Aar, Richmond, Murraysburg and the upper part of the Aberdeen district. West of here is the veld-type called by Acocks "Karoo (including Karroid Bushveld)", which brings with it conditions suitable for the black rhino, proof of which being the black rhinos seen and shot by Burchell (2,1824:72) at 'Kaabi's Kraal', near De Aar, in March 1812. Fortunately, his two illustrations (pp. 46, 79) and his description leave no doubt of the animal being a black rhino.

Summary of the most southerly known white rhino specimen records

The most southern white rhino records, in descending order of latitude, are listed in Table 3.3. Only records of specimens are given, not contentious sight or hearsay records. If the contentious record of Barrow's white rhino at the Hantamberge at Calvinia is true, its latitude would be 31°25'S, or only about 21 minutes north of the Eastern Cape's most southerly record at 'Grassridge', Cradock. The latter record is still equally contentious, even though a specimen is involved.

Table 3.3 The most southern white rhino records.

Date	Latitude	Locality
1812	26°18'S	Heuningvlei (Chue Spring), Makuba Range, Vryburg district, (130 km north-north-west of Kuruman) (= Type Locality)
1919	26°49'S	Seeheim, Keetmanshoop district, Namibia (weathered horns, apparently lost).
1958 or 1961	c. 27°40'S	Farm 'Letitia', Valsrivier, Kroonstad district, Orange Free State.
1895	c. 28°40'S	19 km from Vaal River, Kimberley district, Northern Cape.
1961	31°46'S	'Grassridge', 45 km north of Cradock, East Cape Midlands.

Rock paintings as evidence of the white rhino in the Eastern Cape

As the contentious subject of the use of rock art as distributional evidence keeps cropping up, the various published records are here considered and, if possible, disposed of as aspects of any value.

When Shortridge (1,1934:428) discusses rhino incidence from rock paintings, he leaves the matter in the air. He writes: "In *Rock Paintings of South Africa* (Bleek 1930) there are reproductions of two [San] paintings of rhinoceros from the Eastern Cape, which may possibly have been intended to represent the White Species: (1) From a cave at Rietfontein, Mostert's Hoek, Tarka District. This

painting shows a rhinoceros with an elongated head and two slender horns, a giraffe is also shown alongside; (2) From rocks on the banks of the White Kei near St Mark's Mission Station. A painting of a rhinoceros with a single curved anterior horn, but with a head not specially elongated. There are many other [San] paintings and engravings of White Rhinoceros in caves north of the Orange River".

Examining Bleek's reproductions of these paintings more closely it is found that:

Plate 1. This site on 'Rietfontein' is the one mentioned by Barrow (1,1801:307) and is fully covered in the discussion on giraffe paintings under 'Giraffe'

in Chapter 3. The farm is 23 km north-west of Tarkastad. The painting is of the right side of a rhino, whose colour is strikingly white and touched with a slight wash of pink. The two horns look more like two thin upstanding sticks, the rear one longer than the anterior. The neck has a decided hump, a characteristic of the white rhino but the back line is rather straight. The mouth is certainly square in this side view.

Plate 9. Near St Mark's Mission just east of the White Kei River in the St Mark's (or Cofimvaba) district of the Transkei. A right side view of a rhino, in which, as in Plate 1 above, the animal is white. The single horn has a decided backward curve. The neck has a marked hump, and the back-line is straight. The mouth is not pointed. The whole effect is of a hippo with a horn on its nose!

While it is possible that these could be interpreted as white rhinos, the artwork is too indifferent to have any real significance. The fact that the animals are painted white is incidental, because, as will be seen below, paintings of rhinos not far distant from the above are shown in red, black and black and white.

Known paintings of rhinos are scarce in the Eastern Cape but Mr S Stretton of 'Buffelsfontein' (*in litt.* 27 November 1976) has one on this farm, which lies on the Dordrecht/Molteno boundary at 31°22'S; 26°42'E. This is only about 70 km north-east of the 'Rietfontein', Mostert's Hoek, Tarkastad, painting mentioned above, and about 100 km north-west of the rhino painting at St Mark's, also mentioned above. Further archaeological discovery may well reveal more such paintings, and indicate the work of a peripatetic rock-artist.

Following Shortridge's references to more paintings north of the Orange River we find in Bleek's book:

On 'Merino' at the Knoffelspruit, which flows into the Orange River 'a few miles above Diepkloof'. This farm, No. 559, is 18 km south-east of Rouxville district, south-east Orange Free State, and only 3 km from the Orange River". This rhino is jet black, its body lightly speckled with small pale rings. It has a weak horn, a weak hump, and a squared mouth.

Plate 47. On 'Elandskloof' farm on Vegkopspruit, which flows into the Orange River through the Zastron district south-eastern Orange Free State. The farm is 17 km south-east of Zastron. The rhino is wholly red. It has a weak hump, a single horn and a very pointed mouth.

Plate 63. 'Kareefontein' on the Caledon River, Ladybrand district, Orange Free State". This rhino's body is black with a white belly and chest. It has one horn, a square mouth, no hump, and a straight back.

The square mouth appears in two of the three above cases, while the one representation of an animal with a pointed mouth is painted wholly red. Colour as an identification factor can be ruled out in all instances, including cases 1 and 2 above. Whether the square mouth was painted with the intention of representing a white rhino we shall never know. At best, it can be said that, from what weak evidence we have of the southern range of the white rhino, these paintings come within its distribution, and also that of the black rhino, if less so.

Black rhinoceros (Fig. 3.9)

Earliest records

Although the rhino was known and recorded at the Cape before Van Riebeeck's arrival in 1652, and frequently thereafter, few descriptions reliable enough to identify the species are known. In the beginning, a rhino was merely a rhino; the knowledge that two species occurred in southern Africa was not then known to literate man. However, as will be seen, the white rhino's occurrence south of the Orange River had always been controversial, and what little evidence exists has never carried much conviction. However, the discovery, in 1974, that a partial jaw with teeth, sent to the Albany Museum, Grahamstown, in 1961 by Mr Keith Collett from his farm 'Grassridge' in the Cradock district of the East Cape Midlands, was that from a white rhino, threw a new light on the problem. At the same time, this discovery upset the previous assumption that all rhinos in text or as relics south of the Orange River would safely be black rhinos. The picture had to be seen in a more discerning light. All records assumed to be of black rhinos had either to be dropped to a lower indeterminate status or subjected to greater study and scrutiny in the hope that satisfactory clues could establish the species more exactly.

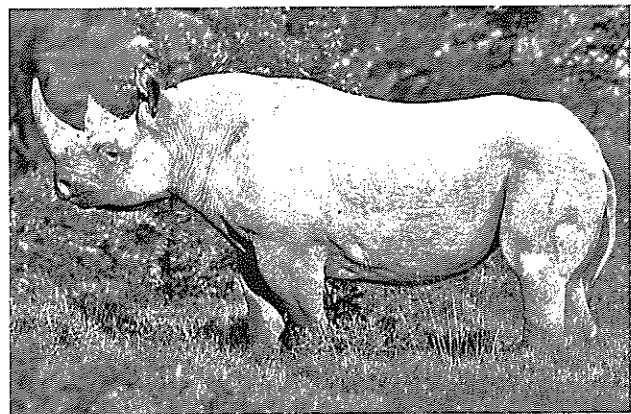


Photo: Piet Heymans

The necessity for this was greatest in the Eastern Cape where, according to Acocks (1953, Map No. 1) grassveld conditions in the central sector of the Midlands, and for a short way down on to the sub-coastal plain, would have favoured the white rhino's grazing preference. Indeed, the 'Grassridge' jawbone rather confirmed this, but much of the

Eastern Cape is covered by bushveld in various forms which favours the black rhino's browsing habits, and therefore the ecological background could be used as an aid in determining, up to a point, the probable rhino species referred to in a text.

Du Plessis (1969) gives instances of presumed black rhinos from earliest times at the Cape, but wisely says that no indication of exact species is given in the texts he consulted. "In none of these references is any distinction between species given, but in the revised version of Mentzel's description of the Cape of Good Hope in 1787 by Mandelbrote (1944), the rhinoceros found in the Cape is described as follows: 'the upper lip can be stretched half a foot, and ends in a pointed fleshy protuberance which it uses as a kind of hand and imperfect trunk for taking up its food and putting it into its mouth'.

Kolben (1731) writes of the Cape rhinoceros: 'His mouth is like that of a Hog, but somewhat more pointed...He is not fond of Feeding on Grass, chusing rather Shrubs, Broom, and Thistles. But the Delight of his Tooth is a shrub, ...the Rhinoceros-Bush'.

From the above descriptions, the characteristic prehensile upper lip and the preference for browsing can be deduced. These, together with the fact that no records of the square-lipped rhinoceros so far to the south could be found according to Sclater (1900) and others, lead to the assumption that the species recorded at the Cape was *D. bicornis*".

Based on these few examples, there can be no dissent from Du Plessis' conclusions for the Cape Peninsula and vicinity, but later explorations into Bushmanland and along the southern bank of the Orange River have left the impression that the white rhino might have been there in the later 18th century, a fact dealt with more fully under the heading of 'White rhinoceros'. This possibility is interpolated here to emphasise the need for cautious interpretations of traveller's tales. Indeed, on ecological grounds it is true to say that the white rhino could have found suitable grazing as far south as Cape Town. If elephants could live at Tiervlei, near Cape Town (Leibbrandt 1896:47), white rhinos could have done so, and if the grazing argument is to be adopted, white rhinos could have lived on the southern coastal belt from the Hottentot's Holland to Mossel Bay. There is no evidence to suggest that they did, but there is also very little evidence to show that black rhinos did, yet place-names containing 'Renoster' are known there.

Reasonably safe black rhino records

Of published material, with or without accompanying sketches, a few help towards safe determinations of the species. The one by Anders Sparrman (in Forbes 2,1977:81) is especially valuable in its description, backed by an illustration (Plate 3) of

a rhino dissected and examined carefully by him at Kommadagga in the eastern part of the Somerset East district in December 1775. Sparrman's reference to its "ash-colour" and of how "The muzzle or nose converges to a point, not only above and beneath, but likewise very visibly on the sides, nearly as it does in the tortoise" and "The upper lip is somewhat longer than the lower..." puts the issue beyond doubt, the more so as he had not heard of the existence of a white rhino, with its square mouth.

Another good record appears in Volume 2, Plate 101, of the Le Vaillant pictures lodged in the Library of Parliament, Cape Town, and published in 1973. Meester, writing the chapter on Le Vaillant's mammal paintings, in the book edited by Quinton *et al.* (1973), comments (p.7) as follows: "Le Vaillant encountered rhino for the first time north of the Orange River, during his second journey. Indeed, although he states in the narrative of his first journey that he found signs of a rhino along the Platte River (Le Vaillant 2,1790:331-332) and hunted fruitlessly for it, he later seems to have come to the conclusion that the rhinoceros had been exterminated in the Cape before his coming – in referring to Sparrman's travels (1772-6) in his second narrative he says that "If there were abundance of rhinoceroses in Quammedaka in the time of Dr Sparrman, there were none there in my time, any more than in the colony itself, which they deserted in proportion as it began to be better peopled" [Le Vaillant 3,1796: 54-57]. All his encounters with rhinos took place north of the Orange River, where both black and white rhinos are believed to have occurred, but he nowhere mentions the white rhino, nor indicates in any way that he is aware of the distinction between the two species. The animal he illustrates is quite clearly a black rhino, judging from the shape of the snout. Presumably, therefore, he did not encounter the white rhino in his travels".

Meester's "Platte River" is the Plaatrivier, 20 km west of Pearston in the eastern Camdeboo of the East Cape Midlands. Le Vaillant himself says he found "traces of" rhinos there, without saying what the traces were. At this place he was 110 km north-west of 'Quammedakka', now Kommadagga, in the south-eastern part of the Somerset East district, where, in 1775, eight years earlier, Sparrman (2,1786:90,95), and Swellengrebel (in Forbes 1965:71) in 1776, had seen rhinos but who left no clue as to their possible species.

Of rhinos to the immediate west of our chosen area, a few need to be mentioned. In November 1778, Robert Jacob Gordon (in Barnard 1950:348) shot a rhino about 10 km north-east of Beaufort West in the Great Karoo. Gordon's sketch of the animal is No. 205 of the famous Gordon Collection of pictures in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Holland. That this was a black rhino is shown by the Keeper of the Rijksprentenkabinet at the

Rijksmuseum (M.D. Haga, *in litt.* 11 February 1975): "No. 205 was to all appearances a *Diceros bicornis* and shot at the source of the Gamka, or Leeuwenrivier. Though drawn in profile the upper lip is clearly pointed. On the other hand, the hump about the shoulders, peculiar to *C. simum*, is lacking, and the head is rather on the small side". On Gordon's map, published by Forbes (1965:Map 21), a small sketch of a rhino, with the upper lip protruding well beyond the lower, over the caption "Africaanse Rhinoster", is strongly suggestive of a black rhino.

The value of a sketch beside an author's text, as with Gordon's is proved by WJ Burchell (2,1824:72), an accomplished artist, whose party saw several rhinos, and shot one, at 'Kaabi's Kraal', somewhere west of De Aar, in March 1812. This was certainly a black rhino; his two illustrations leave no doubt of this and, as he says, they were drawn by himself. On p.46 is a front view, and on p.79 a side view of the head shows the prehensile lip very clearly. On p.75 he gives a short description: "On examining its mouth I found, agreeably to common opinion, no incisive, or fore, teeth in either jaw: in the upper jaw on each side, were five large grinders, and a smaller one at the back; but in the lower, there were six grinders besides the small back tooth". In a footnote to this page Burchell adds: "This Rhinoceros is of the species already described by Sparrman, under the name of *Rh. bicornis*. However, other species with two horns, having been since discovered, the name *Rh. africanus* has been substituted by Cuvier. And as I have subsequently discovered another species in Africa, also with two horns, this name would now, according to that principle of nomenclature, require again to be changed".

The new species he claims to have discovered is the white rhino *Ceratotherium simum*, which he took on 16 October 1812 at Chue Spring (Heuningvlei) 130 km north-north-west of Kuruman, 330 km and seven months after his experiences with the black rhinos at 'Kaabi's Kraal' in March. He refers to this in another footnote on p.75.

Supporting Burchell's sketch and deductions are comments made to Burchell by one of his party, a man named Speelman, who had shot the animal and who was obviously experienced in the habits of rhinos and in the fact of their poor eyesight, a well-known character of the black rhino (p.72). To Burchell, he said: "Their smell...is so keen and nice, that they know, even at a great distance, whether any man be coming towards them; and on the first suspicion of this, take to flight". A hunter, according to Speelman must approach them against the wind but even then caution is needed "so as not to make the least noise in the bushes...otherwise their hearing is so exceedingly quick, that they would instantly take alarm...". Either they run away, or else charge. The hunter must remain calm for "if he will quietly

wait till the enraged animal make a run at him, and will then spring suddenly on one side to let it pass, he may gain time enough for re-loading his gun, before the rhinoceros get sight of him again; which, fortunately, it does slowly and with difficulty. The knowledge of this imperfection of sight, which is occasioned perhaps by the excessive smallness of the aperture of the eye (its greatest length being only one inch) [25 mm] in proportion to the bulk of the animal, encourages the hunter to advance without taking much pains to conceal himself". The above animal was an adult male. Burchell did not take any measurements but he remarked (p.73): "No hair whatever was to be seen upon it, excepting at the edge of the ears, and on the extremity of the tail".

More recent confirmation of Speelman's comments on the animal's habit of trotting away, wheeling, and then charging wildly, comes from Astley Maberly (1963:18): "When suspicious it will stand perfectly still, ears cocked and grotesque head raised with widely distended nostrils as it searches the wind. If its fears are confirmed, it will either utter a few piercingly loud, blast-like snorts, loop its tail up over its rump and trot away through the scrub... until it presently wheels about to stare and snort once more before finally vanishing from view, or else it may elect to come at a limbering gallop straight for the cause of the alarm, such 'charges' in the majority of cases being merely impulsive and confused rather than deliberately aggressive. Provided there is time they can usually be dodged...".

That the dry Karoo area at Beaufort West, where Gordon shot his black rhino in 1778, and the country 200 km to the north-east, near De Aar, where Burchell shot his, was in fact suitable for black rhinos is shown by the skull found in 1954, by Dr M Courtenay-Latimer, at Van Wyk's Vlei, 240 km west of De Aar and in the Carnarvon district, and 160 km south-west of Prieska on the Orange River. This skull is in the East London Museum, its specific status having been confirmed by the British Museum, where it was sent for identification.

At this point, the First Edition of this book (Skead 1987) carries a discussion on the black rhino (?) north of the Orange River.

The black rhino in the Eastern Cape

From what has been said above it is obvious that the incidence of the black rhino can be assessed only by general inference, or by the more definite evidence of bone and tooth fragments. Some of the latter were collected in the Great Fish River near Grahamstown but seem to have perished in the fire that swept part of the Albany Museum in 1941 and destroyed most of the mammal collection. Fortunately, written evidence in monthly accession reports of the Director, Dr John Hewitt, have survived. For the Midlands, the absence of sight

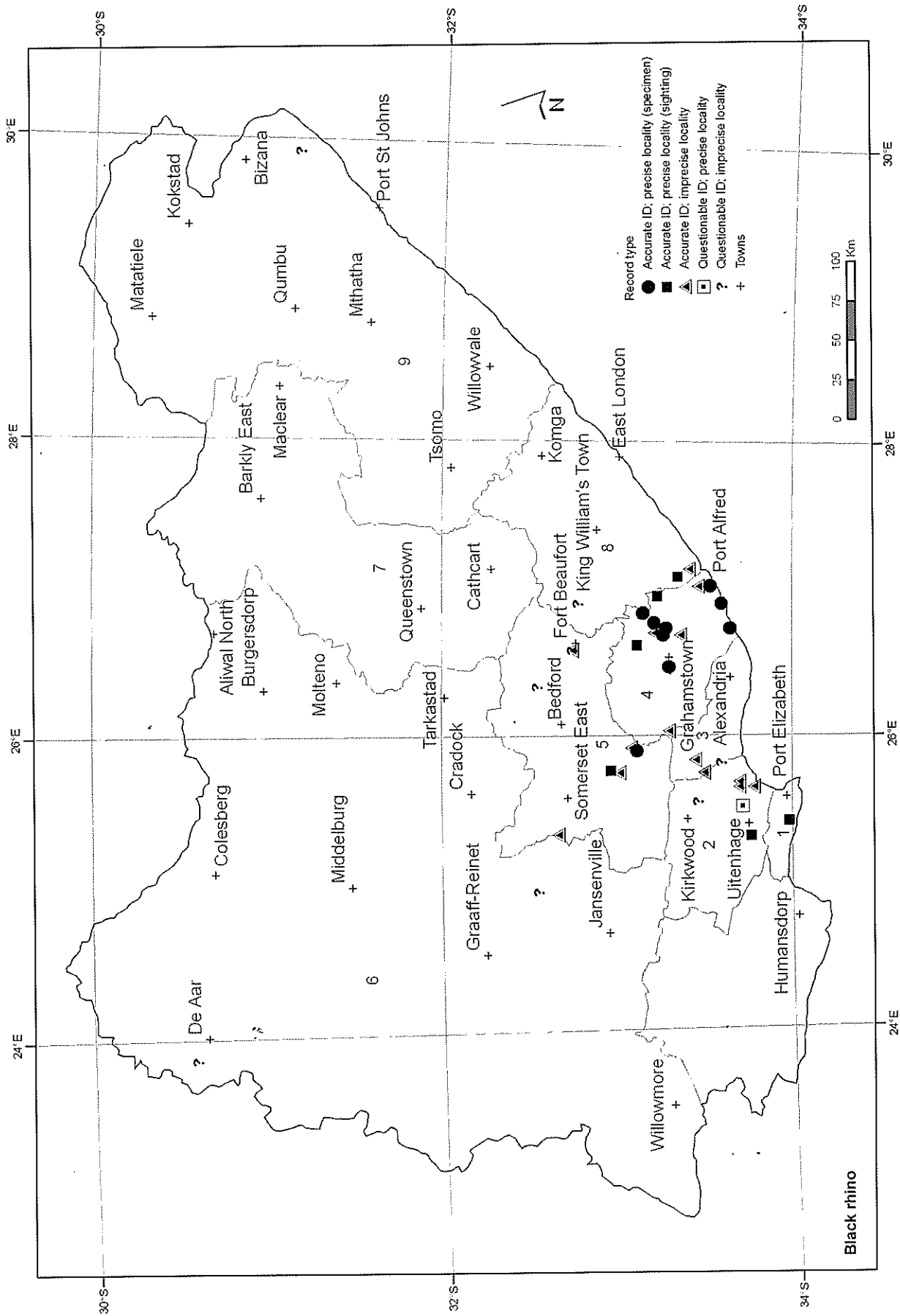


Figure 3.9 The historical distribution of the black rhinoceros. The sector numbers (1-9) and boundaries are shown.

records and relic material has left a great gap in our knowledge, a fact dealt with more fully in Chapter 6.

The black rhino distribution pattern, as plotted on the map from the historical extracts, is odd and leaves little scope for a safe estimate of its overall distribution. The earliest record is that of the cow and calf seen and shot by Ensign Schrijver (in Mossop 1931:229) in 1689 near the present town of Aberdeen in the western Camdeboo. The rhino may have occurred eastwards through the Camdeboo to Somerset East and southwards to Addo and Uitenhage. It was known in the Valley Bushveld country of Fort Brown in the Albany district and up the Kat River towards Fort Beaufort, but there its eastward range seems to have ceased.

Rochlin (1961:259), quotes Henry Hall, a surveyor, as follows: "The last rhinoceros killed in the Cape Colony was an old male which was shot in 1853 on the Coega, or Grassridge, near Port Elizabeth". In fact, Grassridge plain is an open grassveld area surrounded by Sunday's River Valley Bushveld between the Coega and Sunday's Rivers, 13 km south-west of Addo, 20 km north-east of Uitenhage and 35 km north-north-east of Port Elizabeth. This Grassridge rhino survived another 'last' rhino by only five years, an animal killed just west of Uitenhage in 1849 (EHLS 1926) (= Prof. EHL Schwarz). No support for the idea that these 'last' rhinos were in fact black rhinos is given, but, on ecological grounds, they should have been. There is, however, a record of the shooting of a black rhino in the Fort Beaufort district in 1885.

Only one record has been found for the Keiskamma River system and that near Alice, yet the Keiskamma should have provided the black rhino with all the food and cover needed. It does not seem to have been common anywhere. For instance, although Sparrman and others mention rhinos at Kommadagga and elsewhere in the Somerset East district, Thomas Pringle (in AMLR 1951:55) said in a letter to Sir Walter Scott, his friend the famous novelist, that they were not in the Baviaans River Valley of the Bedford district in 1820.

This rhino seems to have avoided the Suurveld of the Alexandria, Albany and Bathurst districts. The few Bathurst records do not seem conclusive, and a single rhino record from Toleni south of Butterworth in the southern Transkei has resisted all attempts to find any corroboratory specimens, and thereby to establish the provenance satisfactorily. The bones ascribed to the rhino might have come from a buffalo, a hippo or an elephant, all of which occurred there in good numbers.

To the north-west of Port Elizabeth it is more than possible that the black rhino occurred in the Jansenville Noorsveld, which would have suited it as much as the similar country in the Great Fish River Valley north and east of Grahamstown.

Cape mountain zebra (Fig. 3.10)

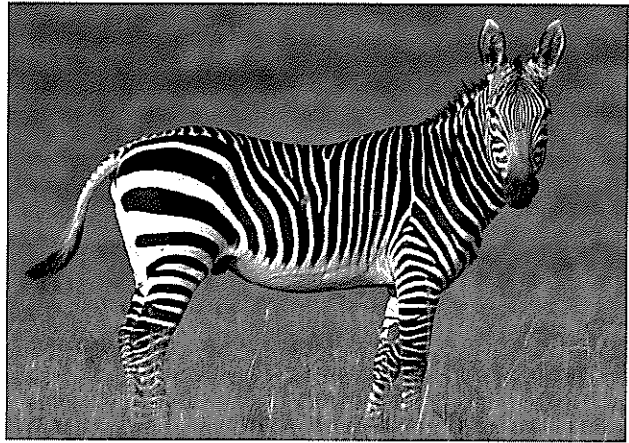


Photo: Piet Heymans

Unlike the true quagga, the Cape mountain zebra had a fairly limited distribution. The opinion has been heard that its affinity for mountains as known in recent times is the result of inroads by Whites into its numbers and that, while initially being as much a plains animal as the true quagga, it survived because it took to the hills, whereas the true quagga did not. This contention can now never be tested and proved. The fact remains that the few records of the Cape mountain zebra show it in mountainous regions and on only the main chains of the ranges. The very paucity of records suggests that it could never have been seen to any great extent, unlike the true quagga that received comment because of its open life on the flats. Most of the trek-routes avoided the mountains and kept to the flatter and more open parts. Whereas mountains had to be overcome, the routes went through passes or over convenient 'neks' where it is too much to expect so shy an animal as the mountain zebra to wait and watch the passing of a Caravanserai or even of a lone wagon rumbling through its grazing grounds. The approaching noise of wagon wheels, the shouting of drivers, and the cracking of whips would have seen the zebra take to its heels long before the travellers came anywhere near.

That the Cape mountain zebra went down to the flats from time to time is very probable; the grazing would have been better. However, the mountains seem to have been its 'zone of safety', that basic element in all animals which gives them the feeling of security they need in the harshness of the wild state. The remark by Thunberg in 1786 that he saw both zebras and quaggas on the flats west of Port Elizabeth is vague. Did he really see both? The possibility is certainly there because true quaggas would have been on the flats naturally, whereas the zebras could have come down from the Witklip mountains at the south-eastern end of the Winterhoek range adjacent to the flats. However, we can take the matter no further than this.

Studying the species' distribution pattern, we find it coming eastwards from the south-western

Grahamstown, and writes of the tawny colour of its rough shaggy mane. Hewitt (1,1931:44) records it for Riebeeck East, 42 km west of Grahamstown, in 1869 but adds that it was fast disappearing, and the 1903 annual report of the Albany Museum records the killing of one in 1899 on 'Olifantskloof', 10 km north-west of Carlisle Bridge and 35 km north-west of Grahamstown. Shortridge (1,1834:154) states that this skin was in the Albany Museum; it is not known there now. FitzSimons (2,1919:78) also reports on brown hyaenas in the Fish River bush but does not say whether they were still there immediately prior to the publication of his book, in 1919. No records for the Transkei have been found.

The absence of the brown hyaena in Natal, both in the past and recent present, would seem to be true. Sclater (1,1900:87) wrote that it "...never seems to have extended far to the east or to have reached Natal". Warren (1911:480), when Director of the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, stated that the "only true hyena in Natal is the Spotted Hyena, or Tiger Wolf". He made no mention of the brown hyaena. FitzSimons (2,1919:78) repeats this but may have been following the two above references.

Records of the brown hyaena in Zululand, *i.e.* north of the Tugela River, are vague. Shortridge (1,1934:155) quotes Austin Roberts as saying that "In Zululand (July 1922) the Brown Hyaena was plentiful in the Umfolosi Game Reserve". The term "plentiful" does not suggest a declining status, but whatever the position its subsequent incidence there seems to have been ignored in print. John Vincent (1970:32-33), writing of predators in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, mentions the brown hyaenas' disappearance from the reserve and adds: "Brown Hyenas are reported to exist still in some parts of Zululand but the last record for Umfolozi was in 1953".

An enquiry addressed to Col Jack Vincent, ex-Director of the Natal Parks Board, brought the reply from his store of vast experience (*in litt.* 17 July 1974): "I know of no records of the species south of the Tugela River". Of Zululand he knew of only one record – that of one killed on the western boundary of the Umfolozi Game Reserve in the 1950s. "A ranger no longer with us had the skin, and Mr HB Potter, our present Assistant Director, Administration, saw it and confirms the record". This must be the one mentioned above by Col Vincent's son, John, undoubtedly a vagrant from some further source of brown hyaenas on the lines of the vagrants that enter the Eastern Cape from time to time (see 7.3).

6.4.2 BLACK RHINO TO BLACK RHINO

The gap is from the Great Fish and Keiskamma rivers, Eastern Cape, to Zululand. From the Great Fish River to the Tugela River is a distance of 550 km, and from the Great Fish River to the Umfolozi River it is 700 km (Fig. 6.2).

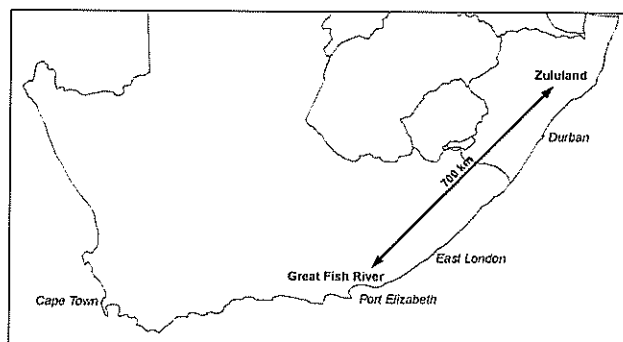


Figure 6.2 The black rhino to black rhino distribution gap.

Ample documentary evidence proves the presence of the black rhino in the Fish River Valley, especially near Fort Brown, 22 km north-east of Grahamstown. Although no definite statement defines the animal as the black rhino without question, the habitat is all in favour of this species and not of the white rhino. Much rhino skeletal material from farms in the Great Kei Valley was identified as that of the black rhino by Dr John Hewitt, when Director of the Albany Museum, Grahamstown.

For the Ciskei, the records of rhino down the length of the Great Fish imply that the species would have been on the east bank in Peddie, and therefore in Ciskeian territory, but, despite visits there by various travellers, no mention of rhino deeper into the Ciskei has been found. One item from Mrs John Ross (1924:117), the wife of a missionary, suggests rhino on the Ncera River, 5 km east of Alice in 1825, and a small tributary of the Tyumie River which itself enters the Keiskamma River.

The black rhino must have been exterminated fairly early because WT Black (1901:23), writing of the years 1848-52, said: "...the rhinoceroses have years ago left the retreats of Fish River Bush". This means that they must have disappeared long before 1848, when he knew the area.

East of this, in the Transkei and Natal, the rhino has not figured adequately in the very extensive literature covered in the course of this research. Two vague suggestions for the Transkei have not been substantiated. Hunter (1936:95), quoting Kay (1833:248,325), gives a list of game animals in the Transkei before the advent of Whites to Pondoland, and among these are "rhinoceroses". Brownlee (1925:24) states that during the building of the railway bridge over the Toleni River in the southern part of the Butterworth district, rhino bones were found. According to the Curator of the Railway Museum in Johannesburg (*in litt.* 22 May 1973) this section of the line was built in 1905/06. This rhino record, if valid, is 150 km east of the Great Fish River rhinos, and 115 km east of the Ncera River rhino. However, by co-incidence (?) a small kloof near the Toleni River is called in isiXhosa the 'mKojana' or Little mKombe, with, nearby, a place

called 'mKombe', the isiXhosa word for 'rhinoceros'. The AmaXhosa could have brought the name with them from the north where the isiZulu word for a white rhino is 'mKhombe'.

Another vague reference comes from Steedman (1,1835:254), who wrote that the rhino lived in "thick bushy coverts". The rest of the context in that part of his book dealt with the Lusikisiki district of East Pondoland, the implication being that rhinos were there in 1831 when Steedman was there. If they were, he is the only person to have mentioned them and even he does not say he actually saw them, which leaves the problem still very much open.

If rhinos were in the Transkei, who exterminated them? All other big game animals, the elephants, buffaloes and hippos were still at full strength when the White chroniclers arrived. Why should the Xhosa have exterminated rhinos any more than the other large and dangerous animals? Indeed, could they have done so? This is possible, and if rhino numbers were low, as they seem to have been everywhere else in the Cape during historical times, certainly by comparison with numbers of the other large game animals, their disappearance could have come quickly. However, why did the Xhosa in the Ciskei not do the same to the rhinos in the Fish River Valley? Furthermore, the black rhino persisted in Zululand.

It is difficult to believe that the many early White travellers and elephant hunters who entered and passed through the Transkei would not have commented on rhinos had they been there. The very danger of, or threat from, these animals would have aroused comment.

As with the Transkei, no black rhino, or even white rhino, records exist for Natal proper, except that WC Holden (1855:39), referring to a report by three survivors of the wrecked ship *Stavenisse*, near Durban in 1686, mentions that "There are no sheep, but no want of elephants, rhinoceroses, lions, tigers, leopards, elands, harts...etc.". One cannot accept this statement unreservedly; it was uttered *ex cathedra*.

WC Baldwin (1863:102), when on the Hluhluwe River in Zululand, in 1855, commented that he "had many chances at black rhinoceros but they are not worth a shot". In the 1930s, according to Wearne (1965), Dr George Campbell found black rhinos around St Lucia Lake.

In more modern times, in the late 1940s, the story of how both the black rhino and the white rhino have been saved from extinction by the Natal Parks Board, under the direction and inspiration of Col Jack Vincent, is one of the great wild animal conservation sagas of our times.

6.4.3 KUDU TO KUDU

This gap is from the Keiskamma River in the Alice and Peddie districts, Eastern Cape, to Zululand. From the Keiskamma River to the Tugela River the distance is 600 km (Fig. 6.3), to the Mfolozi River it is 690 km, and to St Lucia Lake it is 730 km.

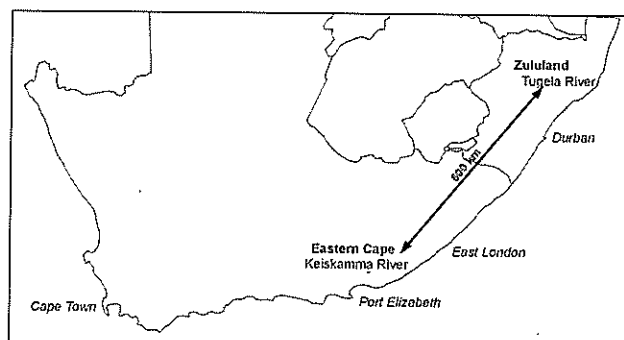


Figure 6.3 The kudu to kudu distribution gap.

The strength of the kudu in the 1960s and 1970s at the Great Fish River, and in the middle and upper reaches of the Keiskamma River, in the Eastern Cape, emphasises the rather inexplicable absence of the species between those regions and Zululand, where it occurs in the large game reserves of Umfolozi and Hluhluwe, some 690 km to the north-east. No firm historical references have been found to show that they ever came south of the Tugela River, the arbitrary boundary between Natal and Zululand.

In the south, three indeterminate references cloud rather than clarify the issue. When JE Alexander (1,1840:383) was on the Thomas River in the Cathcart district, which borders on the south-west Transkei, he wrote (in 1835): "...on the Bontebok Flats, a part of the Amakosa hunting ground near the Doorn river...the magnificent koodoo browsing close to cover with its sweeping spiral horns...". At first impression the sweeping spiral horns identify fully the kudu. The locality of the thorn country running down into the valley of the Great Kei River would seem ideal kudu country, but the absence of any other kudu record for the area brings an element of doubt. Might not his "kudu" have been an eland, whose straight horns lie backwards and have coarse outer spirals of horn cork-screwing up their length. The eland's horns are not as elegant as the open spirals of the kudu but whorls are conspicuous in older animals.

Although Alexander's observation cannot be overruled entirely it does seem strange that no other kudu records are known for the Great Kei River Valley. The river's deep, steep, well-bushed, dry, and winding course should have been ideal for the kudu. If it be argued that the kudu might have been exterminated or driven away from the Kei by the Xhosa, why was it not similarly affected by Xhosa in the Ciskei, in the bush of the Keiskamma and

Table 7.3 cont.

Sector		Species									
	Rhinoceros (indet.; probably Black)	Cape mountain zebra	True quagga	Warthog	Hippo- potamus	Buffalo	Eland	Black wildebeest	Red hartebeest		
1	Gamtoos River to Port Eliza- beth	? 1779 ? Van Stadens	1779 Van Stadens (1870: "several" shipped from Port Elizabeth to Antwerp Zoo)	nd	1779 Loerie	1820 Van Stadens	1779 Van Stadens	-	1779 Van Stadens		
2	Port Elizabeth to Sundays River	1910 Nr Uitenhage	1773 Port Eliza- beth area	nd	nd	1910 Nr Uitenhage	1779 Swartkops River	-	nd		
3	Sundays River to Bushmans River	1821 Suurberg, above Coerney, Addo	1841 Quaggasv- lakte	1816 Witte River, Coerney, Addo	nd	1897 Langebos, Alexandria	1775 Quaggasvlakte	-	1821 Suurberg, above Coerney, Addo		
4	Bushmans River to Great Fish River	-	1844 Bathurst	1852 'Hounslow', Fish River	c. 1860 Bathurst	c. 1918 Bathurst	1819 Bathurst	-	1844 Bathurst		
5	Sub-coastal Interior	1892 Swarshoek, Ⓞ Somerset East	1839 Somerset East	1821 Baviaans River, Bedford	1830 Baviaans River, Bedford	1820 Baviaans River, Bedford	1821 Baviaans Valley, Bedford	1821 Baviaans Valley, Bedford	1824 Adelaide to Bedford		

6 East Cape Midlands	1812 Nr De Aar	1970s Still present, Cradock	1873 Colesberg	1834 Tarkastad	nd	nd	1803 Rooiberg, Middelburg	1854 'Grass- ridge', Cradock	1854 'Grassridge', Cradock
7 Border Interior and North- eastern Cape	nd	-	1863 Shiloh, Whittlesea, Queenstown	nd	1848 Indwe River, Indwe	nd	1848 Bontebok Flats, Cathcart	1838 Swart Kei River to Stormberg	1860s Bontebok Flats, Cath- cart (Possibly as late as 1930s)
8 Ciskei	1849, Peddie	-	? 1861 King Wil- liam's Town	1806	1820	1862 Buffalo River, East London	1867 Tyityaba, Komga	nd	1835
9 Transkei and East Griqualand	-	-	1848	1863 Matatiele	1890	1895 Mthatha River	1891	1869	Pre-1903

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