

# CONSERVATION STATUS OF THE LARGER MAMMALS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper reports on the conservation status of the larger mammals of eight Southern African countries: Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Rhodesia, South Africa, South-West Africa and Swaziland. The survey is based on the opinions of senior conservationists in each country and indicates that 60 mammal taxa are rare, threatened with extinction, or actually became extinct in recent history in Southern Africa. Eight tables showing the conservation status of these mammals in Southern Africa are given.*

## INTRODUCTION

Conservation in the modern context is a dynamic concept which continually takes note of, and adapts to changes in, especially the status of the various plant and animal communities with which it is concerned. In such a reappraisal and adaptation attention is automatically focused on rare species and on those threatened with extinction.

The idea of conserving existing life forms meets with little opposition when presented abstractedly. However, implementing these ideas and ideals requires detailed facts on the life of the plant and animal taxa concerned. The need for sound scientific knowledge of Southern African wildlife has prompted this report which reviews those taxa of larger mammals most urgently requiring conservation action and therefore scientific study.

## METHODS

This report was compiled for the S.A. Nature Foundation from a survey of the opinions of senior staff members of various conservation agencies in Southern

Africa. Of the countries in Southern Africa, only Lesotho was excluded from the survey mainly because little is known about the status of wildlife in that country.

The countries included in this survey are: Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Rhodesia, South Africa, South-West Africa and Swaziland. Apart from the surveys, information was also obtained from a report by Dr W. von Richter (pers. comm.) on the status of rare and endangered mammal species in South Africa—a contribution to the IBP(CT).

A particular problem was encountered when an attempt was made to assign priorities for research to the various taxa listed in Tables 1–8. It was eventually decided to avoid assigning specific priorities, but to consider all the mammals requiring urgent research and/or protection in Southern Africa as a whole. Some taxa are rare in all the countries covered by this survey, while others are limited to one small area of a single country. It is my personal opinion that the latter group more urgently needs attention than the former, but it is not the intention of this report to debate this issue. Instead, lists of rare and endangered taxa are presented (Tables 1–8) in a step-by-step breakdown arranged according to the extent of their distribution and degree of rareness.

At best this report is intended to stimulate interest in the mammal taxa listed here, and to promote projects intended to study and clarify the situation as it appears to exist today. Certainly, changes in status may occur and differences of opinion exist on the classification of certain taxa and should this disagreement lead to investigation and ultimate conservation of the taxon concerned, then the aims of this report will have been reached.

#### DEFINITIONS

Five categories, based on those in the IUCN Red Data Book (Fisher *et al.*, 1969) are used in the tables of the survey. They are:

*Extinct*: Taxa occurring in the area in recent times but no longer found there.

*Threatened with extinction*: Corresponds with the terms endangered and vulnerable as used in Fisher *et al.* (1969).

*Rare*: Taxa with small populations which are not at present threatened with extinction but which are at risk due to being localised within a restricted geographical area or habitat or thinly scattered over a more extensive range.

*Safe*: Taxa apparently safe from extinction because of conservation measures and population status. Includes the 'out of danger' category in Fisher *et al.* (1969).

*Never present*: Taxa which never occurred in the given area since recent times.

#### TAXA NOT LISTED

A few taxa were not listed for all countries where they occur and their status as indicated for individual countries is given below:

TABLE 1  
STATUS OF MAMMAL TAXA OCCURRING SINCE RECENT HISTORY IN ALL EIGHT SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED, AND NOW EXTINCT (E), THREATENED (T) OR RARE (R) IN AT LEAST ONE OF THEM. THE CODE INDICATES THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IN WHICH A SPECIFIC TAXON IS EITHER EXTINCT, THREATENED OR RARE. WHERE STATUS IS INDICATED WITH A STROKE, TWO OPINIONS EXIST FOR THE SAME COUNTRY. S = APPARENTLY SAFE, N = NEVER OCCURRED IN THE AREA IN RECENT HISTORY

Serial number	Taxon	Common name	Status					South-West Africa	Swaziland	Code
			Angola	Botswana	Malawi	Mozambique	Rhodesia	South Africa		
1.	<i>Diceros bicornis</i>	Black rhinoceros	T	R	T	R	R/S	T/R	E	8
2.	<i>Hippotragus equinus</i>	Roan antelope	S	R	R	T	R	R	E	7
3.	<i>Lycan pictus</i>	Wild dog	R	S	T	R	T	R	E/R	7
4.	<i>Ourebia ourebi</i>	Oribi	S	R	R	S	R	R/S	T	6
5.	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>	Cheetah	T	S	T	T	T/S	T/R	E	6
6.	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>	Hippopotamus	T	S	R	S	T/S	S	T	5
7.	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>	Waterbuck	T	R	R	S	S	S	R	5
8.	<i>Hippotragus niger niger</i> & <i>kirkii</i>	Sable antelope	R	R	S	S	S	R	T	5
9.	<i>Panthera leo</i>	Lion	T	S	R	S	S	R/S	E	4
10.	<i>Felis serval</i>	Serval	R	S	S	S	S	R/S	R	4
11.	<i>Redunca arundinum</i>	Reedbuck	S	S	R/S	S	S	R	R	4
12.	<i>Taurotragus oryx</i>	Eland	R	S	S	S	S	S	T	3
13.	<i>Syncerus caffer</i>	Cape buffalo	S	S	R	S	S	S	T	3
14.	<i>Oreotragus oreotragus</i>	Klipspringer	S	R	S	S	S	R	E	3
15.	<i>Viverra civetta</i>	Civet	S	S	R	S	S	R	R	3
16.	<i>Orycteropus afer</i>	Aardvark	S	S	R	S	S	S	T	3
17.	<i>Manis temminckii</i>	Cape pangolin	S	S	R	S	S	T/R	T	3
18.	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>	Bushbuck	S	S	S	S	S	S	R	2
19.	<i>Raphicerus campestris</i>	Steenbok	S	S	R	S	S	S	R	2
20.	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>	Spotted hyaena	S	S	S	S	S	S	T	2
21.	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Leopard	S	S	S	S	S	T/R	T	2
22.	<i>Erinaceus frontalis</i>	Hedgehog	S	S	S	S	S	R	T	2
23.	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>	Kudu	S	S	R	S	S	S	S	1

TABLE 2  
STATUS OF MAMMAL TAXA OCCURRING SINCE RECENT HISTORY IN SEVEN OF EIGHT SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED. CODE AND ABBREVIATIONS  
AS IN TABLE 1

Serial number	Taxon	Common name	Status						Swaziland Code
			Angola	Botswana	Malawi	Mozambique	Rhodesia	South Africa	
24.	<i>Ceratotherium simum</i>	White rhinoceros	E	R	N	R	R/S	S	R
25.	<i>Hyaena brunnea</i>	Brown hyaena	R	S	N	R	R	T	E
26.	<i>Damaliscus lunatus</i>	Tsessebe	R	S	N	T	S	R	E
27.	<i>Proteles cristatus</i>	Aardwolf	S	S	N	R	S	R	T
28.	<i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i>	Giraffe	T	S	N	R	S	S	T
29.	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>	Blue wildebeest	S	S	N	S	S	S	S

TABLE 3  
STATUS OF MAMMAL TAXA OCCURRING SINCE RECENT HISTORY IN SIX OF EIGHT SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED. CODE AND ABBREVIATIONS  
AS IN TABLE 1

Serial number	Taxon	Common name	Status						Swaziland Code
			Angola	Botswana	Malawi	Mozambique	Rhodesia	South Africa	
30.	<i>Alcelaphus lichtensteini</i>	Lichtenstein's hartebeest	T	N	S	S	R	E	N
31.	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i>	Red hartebeest	T	S	N	N	R	R	S

TABLE 4  
STATUS OF MAMMAL TAXA OCCURRING SINCE RECENT HISTORY IN FIVE OF EIGHT SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED. CODE AND ABBREVIATIONS AS IN TABLE 1

Serial number	Taxon	Common name	Status							Swaziland Code	
			Angola	Botswana	Malawi	Mozambique	Rhodesia	South Africa	South-West Africa		
32.	<i>Neotragus moschatus</i>	Suni	N	N	S	S	R	S	N	E	2
33.	<i>Tragelaphus angasi</i>	Nyala	N	N	S	S	S	R/S	N	R	2
34.	<i>Cephalophus monticola</i>	Blue duiker	S	N	N	S	S	S	N	E/T	1
35.	<i>Oryx gazella</i>	Gemsbok	S	S	N	N	R	S	S	N	1

TABLE 5  
STATUS OF MAMMAL TAXA OCCURRING SINCE RECENT HISTORY IN FOUR OF EIGHT SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED. CODE AND ABBREVIATIONS AS IN TABLE 1

Serial number	Taxon	Common name	Status								Swaziland Code
			Angola	Botswana	Malawi	Mozambique	Rhodesia	South Africa	South-West Africa		
36.	<i>Redunca fulvorufula</i>	Mountain reedbuck	N	R	N	R	N	S	N	T	3
37.	<i>Tragelaphus spekei</i>	Sitatunga	R	S	N	N	T	N	T	N	3
38.	<i>Cephalophus natalensis</i>	Red forest duiker	N	N	R	S	N	S	N	R	2

TABLE 6  
STATUS OF MAMMAL TAXA OCCURRING SINCE RECENT HISTORY IN THREE OF EIGHT SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED, CODE AND ABBREVIATIONS  
AS IN TABLE 1

Serial number	Taxon	Common name	Status							Swaziland Code
			Angola	Botswana	Malawi	Mozambique	Rhodesia	South Africa	South-West Africa	
39.	<i>Kobus vardonii</i>	Puku	T	T	R	N	N	N	N	3
40.	<i>Kobus leche</i>	Lechwe	R	S	N	N	N	N	T	2
41.	<i>Felis nigripes</i>	Black-footed cat	N	S	N	N	N	R	S	1

TABLE 7  
STATUS OF MAMMAL TAXA OCCURRING SINCE RECENT HISTORY IN TWO OF EIGHT SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED, CODE AND ABBREVIATIONS  
AS IN TABLE 1

Serial number	Taxon	Common name	Status							
			Angola	Botswana	Malawi	Mozambique	Rhodesia	South Africa	South-West Africa	Swaziland
42.	<i>Connochaetes taurinus johnstoni</i>	Johnston's wildebeest	N	N	E	T	N	N	N	2
43.	<i>Aepyceros melampus petersi</i>	Black-faced impala	T	N	N	N	N	N	T/R	2
44.	<i>Equus zebra hartmannae</i>	Hartmann's zebra	R	N	N	N	N	N	S	1
45.	<i>Connochaetes gnou</i>	Black wildebeest	N	N	N	N	N	S	N	1
46.	<i>Madoqua kirkii</i>	Kirk's dik-dik	S	N	N	N	N	N	R	1
47.	<i>Pelea capreolus</i>	Vaalribbok	N	N	N	N	N	S	N	1

TABLE 8  
STATUS OF MAMMAL TAXA CONFINED DURING RECENT HISTORY TO ONE OF EIGHT SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED. CODE AND ABBREVIATIONS  
AS IN TABLE 1

Serial number	Taxon	Common name	Status							
			Angola	Botswana	Malawi	Mozambique	Rhodesia	South Africa	South-West Africa	Swaziland
48.	<i>Equus zebra zebra</i>	Cape mountain zebra	N	N	N	N	N	T/R	N	N
49.	<i>Damaliscus dorcas</i>	Bontebok	N	N	N	N	N	R	N	N
50.	<i>Cephalophus dorsalis</i>	Bay duiker	R	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
51.	<i>Cephalophus sylvicultor</i>	Yellow-backed duiker	R	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
52.	<i>Cephalophus nigrifrons</i>	Black-fronted duiker	R	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
53.	<i>Manis tricuspis</i>	Tree pangolin	R	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
54.	<i>Manis gigantea</i>	Giant pangolin	R	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
55.	<i>Perodicticus potto</i>	Bosman's potto	R	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
56.	<i>Arctocebus calabarensis</i>	Golden potto	R	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
57.	<i>Cercopithecus talapoin</i>	Talapoin	R	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
58.	<i>Colobus angolensis</i>	Angolan colobus	T	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
59.	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	Gorilla	T	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
60.	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	Chimpanzee	T	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

The royal or giant sable antelope (*Hippotragus niger variati*) and the red buffalo (*Syncerus caffer nanus*) are considered safe in Angola; the defassa waterbuck (*Kobus defassa*) is rare in Angola; the impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) is considered rare in Malawi, as is the side-striped jackal (*Canis adustus*) and the badger (*Mellivora capensis*); in Mozambique the lynx or caracal (*Felis caracal*), the bat-eared fox (*Otocyon megalotis*) and the dugong (*Dugong dugon*) are all considered rare. In South Africa no reference was made to the tree dassie (*Dendrohyrax arboreus*) or the Samango monkey (*Cercopithecus mitis*), the status of both of which species in my opinion needs to be investigated.

#### RESULTS

The results of the survey appear in Tables 1–8. Since these tables are self-explanatory, no further details will be given here.

#### CONCLUSIONS

A host of mammal taxa is in need of research and/or conservation attention. However, quite a few of the persons responding to this survey made it clear that their views were not to be considered as criticism of their governments concerned. It should be stressed that this condition equally applies to this whole report. Furthermore, as the survey was mostly made by eliciting the opinions of others and not by direct field study this report should be regarded as a conservation action guide rather than as absolute proof. The survey itself should also ideally be repeated and the facts updated preferably through field studies, every few years.

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#### REFERENCE

FISHER, JAMES, SIMON, NOEL & VINCENT, JACK (1969). *The red book. Wildlife in danger*. London, Collins.