
Natural History Notes

Confirmation of the occurrence of *Mus neavei* in South Africa

C.H. NEWBERY and G.N. BRONNER

Neave's mouse, *Mus neavei* (Thomas, 1910), occurs in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa (Petter 1981; Musser & Carleton 1993), with the latter record based on material from owl pellets taken at Makapansgat (Pocock 1974). Pocock's record was disputed by Swanepoel *et al.* (1980), and in the absence of complete voucher specimens, the occurrence of this species in South Africa was regarded as doubtful. However, it was supported by Meester *et al.* (1986) and accepted by Musser & Carleton (1993).

As part of a small mammal survey of the former Transvaal Provincial Administration Nature Reserves, the Wolkberg Wilderness Area was visited in June 1992. PVC live-traps (Willan 1992) were used with bait consisting of a mixture of peanut butter, rolled oats, golden syrup and sunflower oil. Twenty transects were laid out covering different habitat types, with 20 traps spaced 10 m apart in each transect. Voucher specimens collected were accessioned into the Transvaal Museum mammal collection.

A *Mus* specimen (TM43399) collected by the first author on 9 June 1992 was identified by

the second author as *Mus sorella neavei*, now *Mus neavei* (Musser & Carleton, 1993) on the basis of mandibular and dental characters (Table 1). This identification was confirmed by both T. Pocock and N. Dippenaar. A second specimen of *Mus neavei* (TM44218) was subsequently collected in the same area (± 3 km away) on 12 May 1993 and identified by the same suite of characters.

Both specimens were caught on the farm Klipdraai 3KT, Wolkberg Wilderness Area, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The latitude and longitude for specimen TM43399 was 24°04'22"S and 30°00'52"E; 1402 m above sea level. The latitude for specimen TM44218 was 24°02'49"S and the longitude 30°00'10"E; 1540 m above sea level.

The habitat can be classified as Acocks (1988) Veldtype 8: North Eastern Mountain Sourveld. TM43399—Rocky (quartzite), montane grassland on sandy loam soil, with *Pteridium aquilinum* (bracken fern) along the drainage line and Protea woodland on the north-eastern slope. TM44218—in a building in the camping site.

Table 1
Diagnostic characters distinguishing Mus neavei from Mus minutoides
(Meester *et al.* 1986)

Character	<i>Mus minutoides</i>	<i>Mus neavei</i>	Specimen TM 43399
Upper incisors	Opisthodont	Proodont	Proodont
Mandible length	≤ 12 mm	≥ 12 mm	13.2 mm
Roots of M ₂	Three	Two	Two

These new distribution records confirm the occurrence of *Mus neavei* in South Africa, and extend the known range of this species in the subregion southwards and westwards, from Kyle Reserve (Zimbabwe) and Maputo (Mozambique) respectively. This finding supports Pocock's (1974) owl pellet record from Makapansgat (ca. 85 km away), and suggests that this species may be more widespread in the Limpopo Province than presently known.

Acknowledgements

We were assisted in various ways by Debbie Bellars, Dr. Chris Chimimba, Dr. Nico Dippenaar, Aaron Matebane, Piet Muller, Richard Newbery, T. Pocock and Sam Rantlhakgwa.

References

ACOCKS, J.P.H. 1988. Veld types of South Africa. *Memoirs of the botanical Survey of South Africa* 57: 1–146.

MEESTER, J.A.J., I.L. RAUTENBACH, N.J. DIPPENAAR & C.M. BAKER. 1986. Classification of Southern

African Mammals. *Transvaal Museum Monograph* 5: 1–359.

MUSSER, G.G. & M.D. CARLETON. 1993. Family Muridae. Pp 501–755. In: WILSON, D.E. & D.M. REEDER (eds.). *Mammal Species of the World: A Taxonomic and Geographic reference*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

PETTER, F. 1981. Les souris africaines du groupe sorella (Rongeurs, Murides). *Mammalia* 45: 313–320.

POCOCK, T.N. 1974. New mammal record for genus *Mus* for Southern Africa. *South African Journal of Science* 70: 315.

SWANEOEL, P., R.H.N. SMITHERS & I.L. RAUTENBACH. 1980. Checklist and numbering system of the extant mammals of the Southern African Subregion. *Annals of the Transvaal Museum* 32: 155–196.

WILLAN, K. 1992. *Problem rodents and their control*. Pietermaritzburg: Natal Witness.

WILSON, D.E. & F.R. COLE. 2000. *Common names of Mammals of the World*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

C.H. NEWBERY

Kgaswane Mountain Reserve, P.O. Box 20382, Protea Park, 0305, South Africa;

G.N. BRONNER

Department of Zoology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, 7700, Republic of South Africa.