

New Mammal Records for the Karoo National Park, with Notes on Several Other Species

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Five species of mammal are recorded for the first time in the Karoo National Park: *Suncus varilla*, *Nycteris thebaica*, *Aethomys granti*, *Petromyscus collinus* and *Desmodillus auricularis*. The presence of a golden mole, Chrysochloridae, is noted. Notes on three previously recorded species are presented.

Key words: Karoo National Park, rodents, mammals, additions to check list.

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Introduction

Few accounts have been published on the mammalian fauna of the Karoo (De Graaff 1981; Stuart 1981; Smithers 1983). De Graaff & Rautenbach (1983) published an annotated check list of the mammals of the Karoo National Park, in which they list 50 species. The surveys reported on here were undertaken in April and August 1984 and formed part of an ongoing investigation of the mammal fauna of the Cape Province (Stuart 1981, 1984; Stuart, Macdonald & Mills 1985).

Methods

The study area has been described by De Graaff *et al.* (1983). Principal habitats were identified and traplines laid accordingly. Live-capture and break-back traps were used for collecting small rodents and insectivores and cage-traps were set for small carnivores. Scats of the bat-eared fox *Otocyon megalotis* were analysed as described by Stuart (1976). Material was lodged in the Transvaal Museum (Pretoria) (TM) and Albany Museum (Grahamstown) (AMSA/M) collections.

Results

New records

Order Insectivora Family Soricidae

Suncus varilla (Thomas, 1895)

Lesser dwarf shrew
Kleiner dwergskeerbek

Two specimens of this shrew were caught in drift-fence traps set for snakes (HHB) on Middelplaat (1 200 m above sea level). This is a relatively flat, sandy area, sparsely vegetated by grass and sub-shrubs. Termite mounds and subsurface termite colonies are abundant. The small size of this shrew makes this species difficult to trap but it can be expected to occur more widely in the Karoo National Park. Records of Occurrence: Specimens examined, 2: TM 38717, 38718.

Family Chrysochloridae

Surface burrow systems, characteristic of this family, were observed on the escarpment in the vicinity of Ou Petrusvlei and at Mountain View, at approximately 1 700 metres. These surface tunnels were extensive. Attempts to trap the occupants were unsuccessful but it is likely that Sclater's golden mole, *Chlorotalpa sclateri* (Broom, 1907), is the species involved.

Order Chiroptera Family Nycteridae

Nycteris thebaica E. Geoffroy, 1813

Egyptian slit-faced bat
Egiptiese spleetneusvlermuis

A single dead specimen was picked up in the garden of the park headquarters at Stolshoek.

Record of Occurrence: Specimen examined, 1: AMSA/M 4561

Order Rodentia Family Cricetidae

Desmodillus auricularis (A. Smith, 1834)

Short-tailed gerbil
Kortstertnagmuis

A single specimen was collected in the garden of the dwelling at Doornhoek.

Record of Occurrence: Specimen examined, 1: AMSA/M 4682

Petromyscus collinus (Thomas & Hinton, 1925)

Pygmy rock mouse
Dwergklipmuis

Three pygmy rock mice were collected along the outer ridge of the Nuweveld Mountains in the vicinity of the radio masts at 1 900 metres. Previously recorded to the west of 21°E. It would seem likely that further collecting will reveal the presence of this species along the higher Karoo hills, with a more or less continuous distribution. Other species trapped in the same rock crevices and boulder structures were, *Aethomys namaquensis* (A. Smith, 1834), *Graphiurus ocellaris* (A. Smith, 1829) and *Elephantulus rupestris* (A. Smith, 1831). Two species of flea, *Listropsylla agrippinae* (Rothschild, 1904) and *Chiastopsylla quadrisetis* De Meillon, 1930, were identified from the pygmy rock mice collected in the reserve.

Records of Occurrence: Specimens examined, 3: AMSA/M 4492, 4517, 4518.

Family Muridae

Aethomys granti (Wroughton, 1908)

Grant's rock mouse
Grant-klipmuis

Three specimens of this rodent were collected approximately 800 m north of Wagenpad Dam, in association with a large number of *Aethomys namaquensis*. Davis (1974) has recorded that both *A. granti* and *A. namaquensis* have been trapped at the same locality. The animals were collected in an area of sandy substrate with low rock pile, in close proximity to a dry stream bed, flanked by low bushes. Scattered grass clumps formed the predominant vegetation type.

Records of Occurrence: Specimens examined, 3: TM 38730/31/32.

Additional notes on formerly recorded species

Order Carnivora Family Canidae

Otocyon megalotis (Desmarest, 1822)

Bat-eared fox
Bakoorjakkals

As recorded by De Graaff *et al.* (1983) this is a relatively common species in the Karoo National Park. Although the same authors mention that this canid exists almost entirely on invertebrate prey, it also takes wild fruits when these are available (Stuart 1981; Smithers 1983). In the current survey two samples of bat-eared fox scats were collected (April – 37; August – 20) and analysed. It was found that the seeds and fruit skins of *Diospyros lycioides* Desf. were present in all scats from the April sample and 80% of the August sample. Insect fragments were present in all scats.

Family Mustelidae

Aonyx capensis (Schinz, 1821)

Clawless otter
Groototter

De Graaff *et al.* (1983) stated that the presence of *Aonyx capensis* in the Karoo National Park requires confirmation, as Coetzee (1977) does not record this species as occurring in the Karoo. The presence of this otter in the Karoo has been documented by Stuart (1981) and Swanepoel, Stuart & Lloyd (*in prep.*). During the course of this survey the fresh, distinctive tracks of the clawless otter were recorded in mud along the stream bed at Mountain View.

Order Artiodactyla Family Bovidae

Tragelaphus strepsiceros (Pallas, 1766)

Kudu
Koedoe

De Graaff *et al.* (1983) recorded no sightings of kudu bulls. A single adult bull was observed at the head of the Bushmans Valley on Doornhoek. At least three separate herds of cows and calves were noted during the April survey and two herds in August. All herds were concentrated along the Doornhoek River.

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