

Mammals of the Cape West Coast Biosphere:

Springbok

Antidorcas marsupialis



Traits; Shoulder height 78 to 84 cm, mass between 36 and 50 kg. Both sexes have horns, which are lyre shaped and heavily ridged; the males' horns are heavier and longer than the females'. They are both browsers and grazers. Independent of water, but will drink regularly if water is available. When startled the members of a herd dash in all directions with leaps that can take them 2 meters of the ground and cover 6 meters. They can sprint away at 88 km/h.

Ecology: Springbok live in habitats ranging from dry areas of the Kalahari to the barren regions of Namibia.

Social structure: Springbok form herds of a few dozen animals but congregate in much larger groups in areas of good feeding. When females drop their lambs the lambs stay hidden in long grass under bushes. Within a week they can sprint away, but it takes them a month to stay with the herd.

Bontebok

Damaliscus dorcas dorcas



Traits: Shoulder height between 83 and 99 cm, mass between 59 and 95 kg. Both sexes have horns, but the females' are more slender than those of the males. Striking in appearance, showing a distinctive blaze on the face. Most active early in the morning and late in the afternoon. They are grazers, preferring short grass, and drink at least once a day.

Ecology: Bontebok is confined to the southwestern Cape.

Social structure: Adult males establish stable territories, through which female herds move. The territorial male often stands on a patch of higher ground with a proud stature.

Red Hartebeest (Rooihartbees)

Alcelaphus buselaphus



Traits: Medium-sized antelope. Shoulder height between 1.20 and 1.37m, mass between 150 and 159 kg. Horns in both sexes, which are ringed and complexly recurved. Coat short, glossy, plain tan to chestnut. As grazers and browsers they feed selectively, preferring freshly sprouted grass. Will drink regularly, although capable of going for long periods without water while deriving moisture from shrubs, succulents and melons.

Ecology: Prefer plains and transition zones between savanna and arid biomes.

Social structure: Live in herds to about 30.

Eland

Taurotragus oryx



Traits: Largest antelope. Shoulder height 1, 5 to 1, 75 m, and mass up to 900 kg. Both sexes have horns, which have one to two tight spirals. The males' horns are thicker but shorter than the females'. Small ears. Cow-like tail with black tuft. Tawny colour – darkening with age to reddish brown. Independent of water; they derive their moisture intake from plants. Mainly browsers but will also graze. Eat leaves, wild fruits, bulbs and the bark of certain trees.

Ecology: They are nomadic, inhabiting savannas and open plains, light woodland and grassland.

Social structure: Gregarious and non-territorial, they form small herds, whose compositions changes seasonally. During the winter bulls and cows herd separately but in the spring they form breeding herds. Cooperative defense of young against predators,

ORDER PERISSODACTYLA – Odd-toed ungulates

Family: Equidae

Mountain Zebra (Kaapse Bergsebra)

Equus zebra zebra



Traits: Shoulder height 1.2 to 1.4 m, mass between 227 and 272 kg. It has a short mane and a well-developed dewlap below the throat. It is capable of going without water for up to three days. When in search of water, it will dig down up to three meters. Its call is a low, plaintive neigh. As a grazer, it feeds on tufted grass. Active during the day.

Ecology: Lives in arid stony regions. Its black stripes are broader than those of Hartman's mountain zebra.

Social structure: Herds up to 6 mares and their foals are controlled by a dominant stallion. These herds are formed by stallions herding unattached females. Stallions are unable to breed until they have gained control over a herd. There is a dominance hierarchy among herds' females, which is established through fighting. A mare with a foal is very possessive of the foal and very aggressive towards outsiders. A foal can run beside its mother within hours of its birth.

ORDER CARNIVORA – Carnivores

Family Canidae – true dogs

Bad Eared Fox

Otocyon megalotos



Traits: A sizeable grizzled gray fox. Huge, cupped ears with black backs and a dark brown or black face mask. Lower limbs and upper tail are black. Forefeet equipped with 20-cm claws for efficient digging.

Ecology: Prefer arid regions. Eighty percent of food is insects with a preference for termites and succulent subterranean beetle larvae. Locate prey by lowering their heads, keeping ears close to the ground and listening above ground and underground. Also eat small rodents, reptiles and fruit.

Social structure: Monogamous (remain with one partner for life). Pairs forage and raise pups (2 to 5) together. Pairs live in burrows, which they dig themselves or adapt springhare or aardvark holes.

Cape Fox

Vulpes chama



Traits: The only true fox and the smallest canid found in South Africa. It is silver-grey in color with large pointed ears and a dark coloring around the mouth. Adults measure 350 mm at the shoulder and have a weight of 2.5 to 3 kg. They are remarkably agile, especially since the bushy tail serves as a counterbalance when dodging and weaving.

Ecology: The Cape fox is endemic to the Cape region and surrounding areas. These animals are active hunters and prey on insects, mice and other small animals. They occasionally feed on wild fruit. Excess food is cached in holes and covered with ground. Most of their activity is at night.

Social structure: The Cape fox appears to be monogamous. They are solitary animals (except females with cubs) and live in dens.

Family Mustelidae — badgers, otters, polecat and weasel

Honey Badger or Ratel

Mellivora capensis



Traits: Broadly and powerfully built carnivore with stout legs and broad feet, fore claws like curved knives with sharp edges, conspicuous white or grey upper parts and black lower parts. It has an almost impenetrable, thick, loose skin, which enables the animal to turn in its skin to attack an enemy that got hold of it.

Ecology: It tolerates a wide range of conditions. It would eat almost any arthropods and small vertebrates, including rodents, reptiles, birds and bees' honey and larvae.

Social structure: They are usually solitary, but occasionally pairs or family groups can be seen.

Family Viverridae — genets, civet and mongooses

Small Grey Mongoose

Galerella pulverulenta



Traits: A small grey mongoose.

Ecology: They have a diet of invertebrates, reptiles, mice and small birds. Hunting by sound, sight and scent, they poke into vegetation and scratch in debris.

Social structure: Diurnal with peaks of activity during the mornings and afternoons. Solitary animals except during the mating season, when male and female pairs can be seen.

Family Felidae — true cats

Caracal (Rooikat)

Felis caracal



Traits: Long legs with hindquarters higher and more developed than forequarters. Strongly built with big feet, a short face and powerful jaws. A distinctive feature is their high upstanding ears with tassels of long hair on the top. Lips, the back of the ears and the tufts are black and there are dark facial markings on the cheeks and over the eyes, bordered with white fur.

Ecology: Most caracals live in arid bush country. They take a wide range of food from insects to small antelope but feed mostly on rodents. They catch prey by stalking, chasing and pouncing.

Social structure: They are nocturnal, solitary and secretive. Litters of up to four kittens are born.

African wildcat (Vaalboskat)

Felis silvestris lybica



Traits: Legs and tail are striped, sometimes pale stripes on body, black garters on legs and rufous ears. Longer legs than the domestic cat with exceptionally long front legs, which result in a more upright seated posture.

Ecology: The African wildcat occurs in virtually all places where rats and mice are plentiful. It feeds mainly on rodents but also on small birds, lizards, snakes, frogs and large insects.

Social structure: Although they are nocturnal, there is a good chance of spotting them during early mornings and afternoons. They are solitary animals (except a female with her kittens).

ORDER ARTIODACTYLA — Even-toed ungulates

Family Bovidae — buffalo and antelopes

Cape Grysbok (Kaapse Grysbok)

Raphicerus melanotis



Traits: Shoulder height is 54 cm, mass between 10 and 12 kg. Although reddish brown, the white hairs on the back and upper parts give the grysbok a grizzled effect. The coat appears quite rough. Ears are large, buff white inside and greyish on the back. Only the males have horns rising vertically from the head.

Ecology: Found along the eastern coastal belt of South Africa as well as the south-eastern Cape, westwards to the Cape Peninsula. They graze and browse and go without water for long periods.

Social structure: They begin their nocturnal activities at dusk. Most of the time they live alone, the females in overlapping home ranges and the males in territories. Mating occurs on the move and a single offspring is born usually in September or October. Both sexes urinate and defecate in middens. If alarmed they dash away, then suddenly drop and freeze.

Grey Rhebok (Vaalribbok)

Pelea capreolus



Traits: Shoulder height 70-76 cm, mass between 18 and 23 kg. They have good eyesight, hearing and sense of smell. When they run they show a distinctive white tail.

Ecology: Occur throughout the Cape, Lesotho, KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland and southern Mpumalanga. They are browsers, able to survive without drinking.

Social structure: They live in groups of one adult male with up to a dozen females and their offspring. Each group has a home range and the male defends it against other males. Territorial males are aggressive and their straight horns are deadly weapons. Occupied areas are marked with secretions from the pedal glands. Their alarm signal is a snort.

Common Duiker (Duiker)

Sylvicapra grimmia



Traits: Shoulder height 60 cm, mass between 12 and 16 kg. A uniform brown to reddish-brown with pale to white underparts. Ears are long and broad. Only males have horns, which are about 11 cm long. Tail fairly short, black above and white below. They are mainly browsers but also take a large range of other vegetable food including fruits, bark, flowers, gum, and roots but rarely grass. They rarely drink.

Ecology: This is a common species found throughout southern Africa.

Social structure: They are active in the early morning and from late afternoon until very late in the evening. The rest of the time they lie in the shade of dense vegetation. The common duiker is solitary

except when mating or a female with a lamb. They give birth to a single offspring at any time of the year. The female will drop her lamb in heavy cover and leave it there, returning two or three times a day to clean and suckle it. If the baby is disturbed it gives an alarm bleat, which brings its mother rushing to protect it.

Steenbok

Raphicerus campestris



Traits: Shoulder height 50 to 56 cm, mass between 12 and 14 kg. A small, graceful antelope with long slender legs and a slim body. The upper parts of the body vary in color from rufous brown to reddish while the underparts are pure white. The tail is also white underneath. Only males have horns, which rise vertically with a slight forward curve near the tips. The ears are outstandingly large, with the same colour as the body on the outside and light insides with black fringes at the centre. They are mainly browsers and prefer forbs to woody plants. They can live without water by eating melons and digging up juicy roots.

Ecology: Found throughout southern Africa in both arid and temperate regions. They are both grazers and browsers.

Social structure: They are solitary and territorial except for mating pairs and females with young. Mainly diurnal, they are most active in the cool of the early morning and in the late afternoon and evening. Near their territorial boundaries they defecate and urinate in middens, but elsewhere they have the unusual habit of digging a hole with their forefeet and burying their excrement. The lambs are born in dense vegetation, where they stay hidden while the mother feeds.

Reference

www.sanpark.co.za

www.africancapesafari.com

www.burrard-lucas.com

funmozar.com

<https://jonmarais.wordpress.com>

www.krugerpark.co.za

capegraf.com

<https://common.wikimedia.org>

www.southafrica.net

www.africancraftsmarket.com