

MAMMALS

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Sources of information

Collections and records are maintained in a number of Museums, the most important of which are the "Transvaal" Museum, the Kaffrarian Museum and the Albany Museum. Various other museums, universities, government departments, etc. also have collections and statistics. The biodiversity data set of the Department of Nature Conservation of the Limpopo Province in Polokwane is an important source of recent information. Due to a lack of funding, some collections may not be curated properly any more and it is necessary to obtain and catalogue all the information on the Soutpansberg as soon as possible.

A total of 145 species has been recorded in the Soutpansberg (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Number of species per order as recorded for the Soutpansberg in relation to South Africa.

Order	Number Species		%
	Sout.	S. A.	
INSECTIVORA	11	35	31
CHIROPTERA	36	55	65
PRIMATES	5	5	100
PHOLIDOTA	1	1	100
LAGOMORPHA	3	6	50
RODENTIA	31	64	48
CARNIVORA	26	34	76
TUBULIDENTATA	1	1	100
PROBOSCIDEA	1	1	100
HYRACOIDEA	2	3	66
PERISSODACTYLA	3	4	75
ARTIODACTYLA	25	33	76
TOTAL	145	242	60

Summary statistics

The Soutpansberg has a remarkable diversity of mammals making up 60% of the total number of species that occur in South Africa. There are more mammal species in the Soutpansberg than in the Cape Floristic Kingdom (127). The whole of the Kruger National Park only contains two more species of mammals than the Soutpansberg. It is particularly rich in bats, carnivores and larger hoofed animals. Six species are listed in the SA Red Data

Book on Mammals. One critically endangered (black rhino), two endangered (elephant and wild dog), and three vulnerable (cheetah, lion and springhare). The black rhino has been exterminated from the Soutpansberg. What about Lichtenstein hartebeest and Roan. Elephant, wild dog and lion only remain in the far eastern part within the Kruger National Park. Elephant do occasionally move to the northern foothills from the Limpopo region. What about the few remaining Hippopotami in the Levhuvhu? Cheetah is not found on the mountain plateau any more but it is still amazingly common on the plains north of the mountain. Springhare is still relatively common in areas with suitable habitat.

Compared internationally, the mammal diversity of the Soutpansberg is impressive. It has more mammal species than 11 of the 27 recognized biodiversity hotspots of the world. For example, there are more mammal species in the Soutpansberg than in places like Central Chile (56) or Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands combined (112). The Soutpansberg has more mammal species per unit area than seven of the eight hottest biodiversity hotspots of the world.

Major studies and publications

No detailed work has been done on mammal diversity in the Soutpansberg. General publications on South African mammals are:

- DE GRAAFF, G. 1981. *The rodents of southern Africa*. Butterworth, Pretoria
- DORST, J. & DANDELLOT, P. 1983. *A field guide to the larger mammals of Africa*. Macmillan. Johannesburg.
- RAUTENBACH, I. L. 1978. *The mammals of the Transvaal*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal.
- SKINNER, J. D. & SMITHERS, R. H. N. 1990. *The mammals of the Southern African subregion*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- STUART, C. & STUART T. 2001. *Field guide to the mammals of Southern Africa*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town.

Recommendations for priority studies required to fill any gaps identified

It is necessary to summarise all the existing information on historical and present distribution of mammals in the Soutpansberg. A proper data base should be set up and be updated from time to time to determine trends.

“Hotspots” of particular importance

The approximately twenty species of mammals that are dependent on or associated with forests probably require the most attention because this biotope has been under a lot of pressure. This includes some musk shrews, several

bat species, the thick tailed bush baby, the samango monkey, the giant rat and red duiker. Biotopes that provide surface water and wet or marshy areas also require attention. Some shrews, bats, rodents, Cape clawless otter, and reedbuck are examples. The status of the grey rhebok needs to be determined.



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