

## The Caracal

*Caracal*

*Caracal* Gray, 1843, List Spec. Mamm. B.M., p. 46; genotype *C. caracal* Schreber, 1776, 3, Säugth, pl. 110; 1777, p. 413.<sup>1</sup> The Caracal from the Cape of Good Hope.

## Caracal or African Lynx—Rooikat

*Caracal caracal* Schreber

CARACAL CARACAL CARACAL.

*Felis caracal* Schreber, 1776, 3, Säugth. pl. 110; 1777, p. 413.

Type (not in existence) from the Cape of Good Hope.

CARACAL CARACAL DAMARENSIS.

*Lynx caracal damarensis* Roberts, 1926, Ann. Transvaal Mus., vol. xi (VII), p. 248.

Type (in the Transvaal Museum) from Quickborn, Okahandja, Damaraland.

## NATIVE NAMES:

## PERSONALLY COLLECTED

Herero: *Oroquinyári, Oroquinyarári.*

Ovambo: *Ayúku, Ehúku.*

Bechuana: *Thwánē, Túánē.*

Ovadirico, Ovacuangari: *Rugádi.*

Mambakushu: *Kóhgoh.*

Nama Hottentot: *!Hab*; (*Arvalhab*—Berseba village).

Berg Damara, Hei||kum Bushman: *!Hab.*

||K'au||en Bushman: *±Üi.*

Naron Bushman: *±Gami, |Kami.*

!Kung Bushman: *|Nōa:akuya.*

## OTHER SOURCES

Bechuana: *Thane* (Zukowsky).

Sikololo: *Tuane* or *Lubwabwa* (Lancaster); *Kaze* ?.

Chinkoya: *Luwowo* or *Lubwabwa* (Lancaster).

Chila: *Lubo* (Lancaster). Chilavale: *Bwakoko* (Lancaster).

Tonga: *Intobelabauya* (Lancaster).

Kaonde: *Mbwangongo* (Lancaster).

Nama Hottentot: *!Ha:b* (Krönlein).

||K'au||en Bushman: *±Wi* or *!Gau* (Bleek).

Naron Bushman: *!Kāūba* or *|Kameba* (Bleek).

<sup>1</sup> *Fide* Allen (1924, Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., vol. XLVII, Art. III, pp. 279-281). (In W. L. Sclater's Mamm. S. Africa, Vol. I, p. 44—*Felis caracal* Güeldenstaedt, Nov. Comm. Akad. Petrop. xx, p. 500—the date of Güeldenstaedt's publication is given as 1766—it should be 1776.)

!Kung Bushman: ||Ka||kaba or ≠Wi (Bleek); Ui (Zukowsky).

/Nu||en Bushman: /Ka≠wi (Bleek).

Masarwa (Kakia) Bushman: K<sup>11</sup> a ◎pwi (Bleek).

/Kam-ka!ke Bushman: /Ku-g!mwing (Bleek).

**DISTRIBUTION IN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA.**—The Caracal is widely distributed throughout South-West Africa. Its occurrence along the coastal part of the Namib was not ascertained. It appears to be somewhat scarce in the Kaokoveld, Ovamboland, the vicinity of the Orange River, and perhaps the south-western portions of Great Namaqualand.

This cat is particularly plentiful in Damaraland, and everywhere in the eastern sand-plain country—from the Karas Mountains in the south northwards to the Okavango. It also extends through the Caprivi.

“The Caracal is found in the Hukweveld.”—Wilhelm.

It has also been recorded from Little Namaqualand in the south, and Angola in the north.

In the eastern districts of South-West Africa the Caracal often appears to be as numerous as *Felis ocreata*; it is particularly abundant in Gobabis District.

**GENERAL DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE SOUTH-WEST AFRICA.**—The Caracal has an extensive range over Africa from the Cape to the Mediterranean Littoral.

In the north it has been recorded from Egypt (as far north as Cairo—Flower), Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

It appears to occur almost everywhere except perhaps in Equatorial West Africa and the Sahara.

In Southern Africa the Caracal is plentiful throughout Bechuanaland and in many parts of the Union. It is either rare or absent in the low-lying eastern coastal districts between Pondoland and Mozambique, although recorded by S. Hamilton from Muncha in Portuguese East Africa. According to W. Sclater there is no record of its occurrence in Zululand or Natal.

“Generally distributed and not uncommon in Northern Rhodesia, preferring open, and usually sandy country. Apparently absent from the Luangwa Valley.”—Pitman.

Outside Africa the Caracal extends into South-Western Asia, where it occurs in Syria, Arabia, Persia, etc., to as far east as North-West India.

**HISTORICAL.**—The first description of the Caracal was by Buffon in 1764 (Buffon's Nat. Hist., xii, pp. 442-449), who gave its range very accurately as Barbary, Arabia, and all the regions inhabited by the Lion.

**HABITS.**—Caracal inhabit practically all types of country except thick tropical, or evergreen coastal forest. In Southern Africa they are perhaps most plentiful in the open or scrub-covered sand-veld which is typical of Bechuanaland, and in rocky or mountainous localities.

In South-West Africa they maintain their numbers through the “dry-forest” plains of the north-east as far as the Okavango. Caracal may occasionally be put up by day either on the open plains or among rocks, away from trees or thick bush-cover; like *Felis ocreata* they appear to hunt by day in cool or

cloudy weather. They are good climbers, and if pursued by dogs readily take to trees. On the other hand they are so formidable as to require a good and experienced dog to tackle a large one singly. Having regard to their size, none of the other African cats habitually attacks such large game. Besides preying on the smaller antelope, hares, monkeys, guinea-fowl, etc., I have known instances of caracal killing an adult ewe springbok (in calf) and a young kudu. In rocky country they hunt dassies and klipspringer.

Stevenson-Hamilton records them hunting half-grown impala and reedbuck.

According to natives they occasionally spring on full-grown ostriches (sitting on eggs), which they kill by a quick bite through the neck. They also destroy snakes when opportunity offers: A captive individual in the Mysore Zoo once killed and partly devoured a large cobra which had entered its cage during the night. Caracal are notorious for their destructiveness to small stock; they kill full-grown sheep and goats as well as lambs, and raid poultry yards. Caracal are often accused of being more persistently destructive of small stock than leopard, but allowance must be made for their greater abundance. They are fairly easy to trap so long as fresh bait is used, but do not as a rule seem to be attracted by carrion.

"The Caracal is more dog-like in its movements than any other cat except the Cheetah."—Millais.

Unlike the Domestic Cat, none of the wild *Felidæ* seems to have the habit of sometimes carrying the tail in an erect position.<sup>1</sup>

Although caracal are as a rule difficult to tame even when reared as small kittens, there was recently in the Windhoek Zoo an unusually tame and friendly specimen which would come to the bars of its cage to be stroked. Two young caracal kept in captivity some years ago became quite fearless, although they always disliked being handled. In India and Persia caracal are said to be trained occasionally to hunt; but I imagine such cases must be rare as, unlike cheetah, they are not normally docile.

Caracal skins wear particularly well, and are much sought after in Bechuanaland for making into karrosses.

"Two caracal lived in the Dublin Zoo for just over 16, and nearly 17 years respectively."—Flower.

**BREEDING HABITS.**—Caracal rear their young in antbear or porcupine burrows, in hollow trees, crevices among rocks, etc., the average number in a litter being from two to four; Cloete records as many as five.

Wilhelm trapped a female caracal in Grootfontein District (S.W.A.) in September which contained two fully-developed fetuses.

"July–August seems to be the usual time of the year for kittens to be born, although, like most of the other *Felidæ*, they probably have no very definite breeding season."—S. Hamilton.

**DESCRIPTIVE NOTES.**—Caracal skins often vary in intensity of colour in the same district. Steinhardt noted the occurrence of both light and dark-coloured

<sup>1</sup> But this is possibly only indulged in by friendly individuals and therefore not observed in wild species.

individuals in the Kaokoveld, on the strength of which Zukowsky has suggested the possibility of there being two distinguishable races in that region. A caracal somewhat recalls a Siamese Cat in general appearance.

Its fine eyes and conspicuously tufted ears render the Caracal the most handsome of the smaller African Cats: although lighter in build than a true Lynx, it is more strongly-built than the similar-sized but slender and cheetah-like Serval, which, in spite of its fine spotted coat, has, in my opinion, a less attractive appearance.

Pale rufous mottlings are usually present on the undersurface of the body, these being particularly noticeable in kittens and half-grown animals. Iris amber-yellow; owing to the brilliant lustre of the enlarged pupils the eyes often appear bright emerald in colour.

Melzenbach (King William's Town) informs me that he shot a coal-black caracal some years ago near the Chalumna Mouth, Kaffraria. This appears to be the only record of melanism.

Weight, 40 lb. approx. Shoulder height, 16-18 in. (Bryden and Ward).

### The Serval Cats

#### *Leptailurus*

*Leptailurus* Severtzow, 1858, Rev. Mag. Zool. (2), X, pp. 389-390; genotype *L. serval* Schreber, 1776, Säugthiere, Pl. CVIII; op. cit., 1777, Theil III, p. 407. The Serval Cat from the Cape.

### Serval—Tierboskat

#### *Leptailurus serval* Schreber

##### LEPTAILURUS SERVAL SERVAL.

*Felis serval* Schreber, 1776, Säugthiere, Pl. CVIII; op. cit., 1777, Theil III, p. 407.

Type (not in existence) from near Cape Town.

##### LEPTAILURUS SERVAL LÖNNBERGI.<sup>1</sup>

*Felis serval lönnbergi* Cabrera, 1910, Bol. Soc. Española, Hist. Nat., X, p. 427.

Type (in the Upsala Museum) from the Upper Cunene, Angola.

##### LEPTAILURUS SERVAL MABABIENSIS.

*Leptailurus serval mababiensis* Roberts, 1932, Ann. Transvaal Mus., vol. XV (1), p. 7.

Type (in the Transvaal Museum) from the Mababe Flats, Northern Bechuanaland.

<sup>1</sup> = *Felis (Serval) togoensis niger* Lönnberg, 1898, Zool. Jahrb. Abt. Syst., X, p. 571. Name preoccupied by *Felis nigra* Erxleben. (Based on a melanistic specimen.)