

Short Note

Range extension of the African civet in South West Africa/Namibia

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The African civet *Civettictis civetta* Schreber, 1776 is regarded as "being confined to the northeastern and eastern parts of the country south to about 21° S" (Smithers, 1983). Furthermore, a single specimen was found far outside this known limit on Florine Farm 499 (2419Dd) in 1974 (Fig. 1), for which no explanation could be given (Coetzee as quoted by Smithers, 1983). Moreover, Coetzee (*in litt.*) stated that either an endemic population exists, with a normal range extending southwards, or that the above average rainfall during that period provided suitable conditions for range extension.

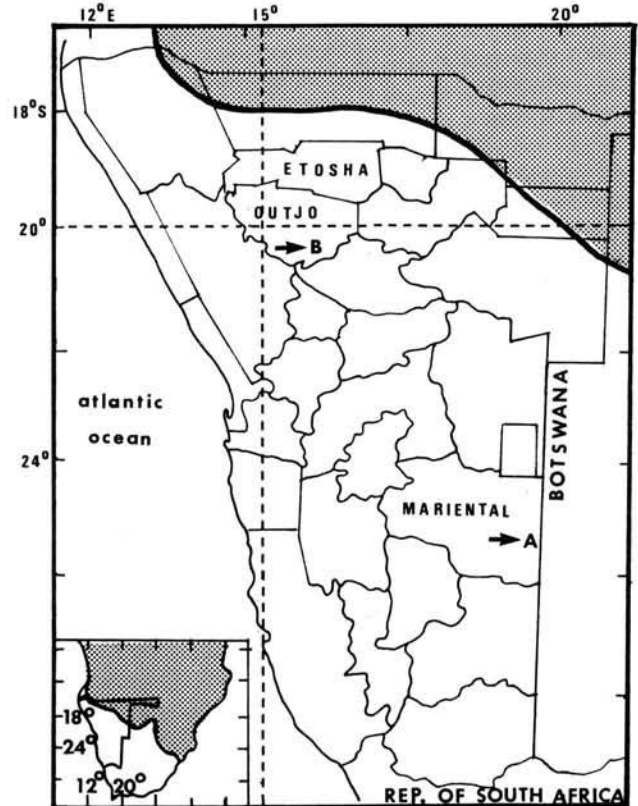


FIGURE 1. Range extension of the African civet in South West Africa/Namibia.

"A" = Florine Farm (1974 record).

"B" = Deurslag Farm (1987) record.

The shaded area represents the distribution given by Smithers (1983).

On 2 June 1987 a civet was found in a tributary of the Ugab River on Deurslag Farm 136 (2015Bd), District Outjo (Fig. 1), where it was killed near the farmstead at about 06h00 by dogs. The specimen was an old male with a noticeable layer of subcutaneous fat. Age estimation was based on advanced tooth attrition, namely exposed pulp cavities on the canines and loss of the left upper canine and right upper premolar 3. The skin and skull have been deposited at Etosha Ecological Institute (Catalogue No. VCc 1/87/06/02/HB). Stomach contents were not recorded.

According to Mrs J.J. Pieterse (pers. comm.) who has farmed there since 1948, this is the first record of the

species on the property. Mrs Pieterse, however, referred to two episodic events which may have been related to the animal's presence: in 1985 the highest rainfall yet recorded on Deurslag, which lies between the 300 mm and 400 mm isohyets, was 554 mm. This fell within 3 months (January - March), resulting in the Omatjene dam-burst upstream and inundation of large areas of the farm. Subsequently, in 1986 a total precipitation of 313mm was measured and 288mm in 1987. The second event was on 13 May 1987, when the area experienced a violent earth tremor which caused a cement dam wall on the farm to collapse, followed by a further, less severe tremor on 19 May. The initial tremor was sufficiently strong to result in a troop of Chacma baboons *Papio ursinus* evacuating their traditional residence in the mountains on the farm, to which they have to date not returned.

Environmental conditions in this area may periodically or permanently be suitable for civets, since perennial fountains are common in the Ugab terraces. In addition the riverine underbush favours fruit and insect proliferation, which are essential habitat requirements for the species.

The following unpublished records for the species were also traced. They lend weight to the theory that civets may occur more commonly in arid and semi-arid areas than was previously supposed:

On 14 April 1985, civet spoor was found at the water's edge of the junction of the Kunene river

and the Hartmann's valley (1712Aa): M. Griffin, pers. comm.

A pair of civets have been regularly seen during 1987 in the Khumib river, near the boundary of the Sekelton Coast Park (1812Da): D. Bartlett, pers. comm.

A civet was sighted approximately 15 minutes before sunset on 8 July 1984, about 5 km west of Aroe waterhole on the Fischer's Pan road near Namutoni, Etosha National Park (1816Db): J. Steyn, unpubl. data.

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REFERENCES

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