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Book review — Boekresensie

The mammal guide of southern Africa

B Cillié

1997. Briza Publications, Arcadia, Pretoria, 223 pp., paperback. Price not stated. ISBN 1 875093 10 9.

This is an attractive, well-designed, lavishly illustrated, user-friendly field guide to virtually all of the larger mammals (down to the size of a bush-baby) that visitors to southern African conservation areas are likely to encounter. Two pages are devoted to each species. The lefthand page contains a description of the animal and a brief account of its habitat, habits, vocalisation and breeding. Relative size (compared to a human), mass, horn or tusk length (where applicable), food, life expectancy, enemies, spoor, droppings and distribution map are given in a series of boxes.

An innovation is a detailed map showing the location of 120 conservation areas in southern Africa, as well as an easy-to-use checklist of the mammals likely to be encountered in each area.

Inevitably, some errors have crept in. The eland distribution map on page 30 does not show the

Drakensberg population. On page 48 the food of the grey rhebok is stated to be exclusively grass. Two definitive studies (in the Bontebok National Park and in the Free State) have shown clearly that grey rhebok feed virtually exclusively on dicotyledonous shrubs and forbs. These studies, which dispelled the myth that grey rhebok are grazers, were published in a readily accessible journal, the *South African Journal of Wildlife Research* (17: 123–127; 18: 11–14). The comparative size diagram of the hook-lipped rhinoceros (page 104) shows the silhouette of the square-lipped rhinoceros.

This is probably the best mammal field guide on the market at present, and should enjoy steady sales.

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