

A NOTE ON THE BUSHPIG, *POTAMOCHOERUS PORCUS*, IN THE CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

By C.T. STUART

The Bushpig, *Potamochoerus porcus*, a classified problem animal in the Cape Province, is restricted to the southern and eastern areas of the Province wherever there is suitable forest or bush cover. The only published work (Phillips 1926), dealing specifically with this wild pig in the Cape Province, covered populations occurring in the Knysna area.

Material obtained for this communication came from animals culled in routine control operations in the Smaldeel Divisional Council area of the Eastern Cape. The distribution of the Bushpig in the Province is presented in the figure. With the exception of possible localized extinctions due to human impact, the only area from which the Bushpig seems to have disappeared is along the coastal belt from Swellendam to Mossel Bay. J.P. Wilson (pers. comm.) maintains that Bushpig were still present in the Grootvadersbos (Heidelberg) until about 1940. The most westerly distribution at the present time is within the Outeniqua Division. In some areas (such as Alexandria, Diaz Divisional District) agricultural activity has resulted in the removal of considerable areas of bush in order to increase planting and grazing areas, with the result that Bushpig come more readily into conflict with farming interests. The large tracts of State and privately-owned forest in the southern, and to a lesser extent the Eastern Cape, act as reservoirs for Bushpig populations.

A total of 11 stomach contents were examined and the results are summarised in Table 1. Seven of the stomach contents examined contained the remains of animal prey.

There are no published reproduction records for Bushpig in the Cape Province. Information for the Cape Province on incidence of pregnancy and approximate birth dates is presented in Table 2, as are records from other regions of Southern Africa. Estimated back-dated births were established by using the criteria of Sowls and Phelps (1968).

Litter sizes and foetus mass established in the present study are as follows: April 470-560g (L.s.2); July 310-355g (L.s.3); August 345-560g (\bar{x} mass of 560g; L.s.2; 2; 2).

The mean mass four days after birth is given as 799g (Sowls and Phelps 1968) and a mean litter size of 4.4 was established by Smithers (1971). The mean litter size in the current study is somewhat lower than that found by Smithers (1971).

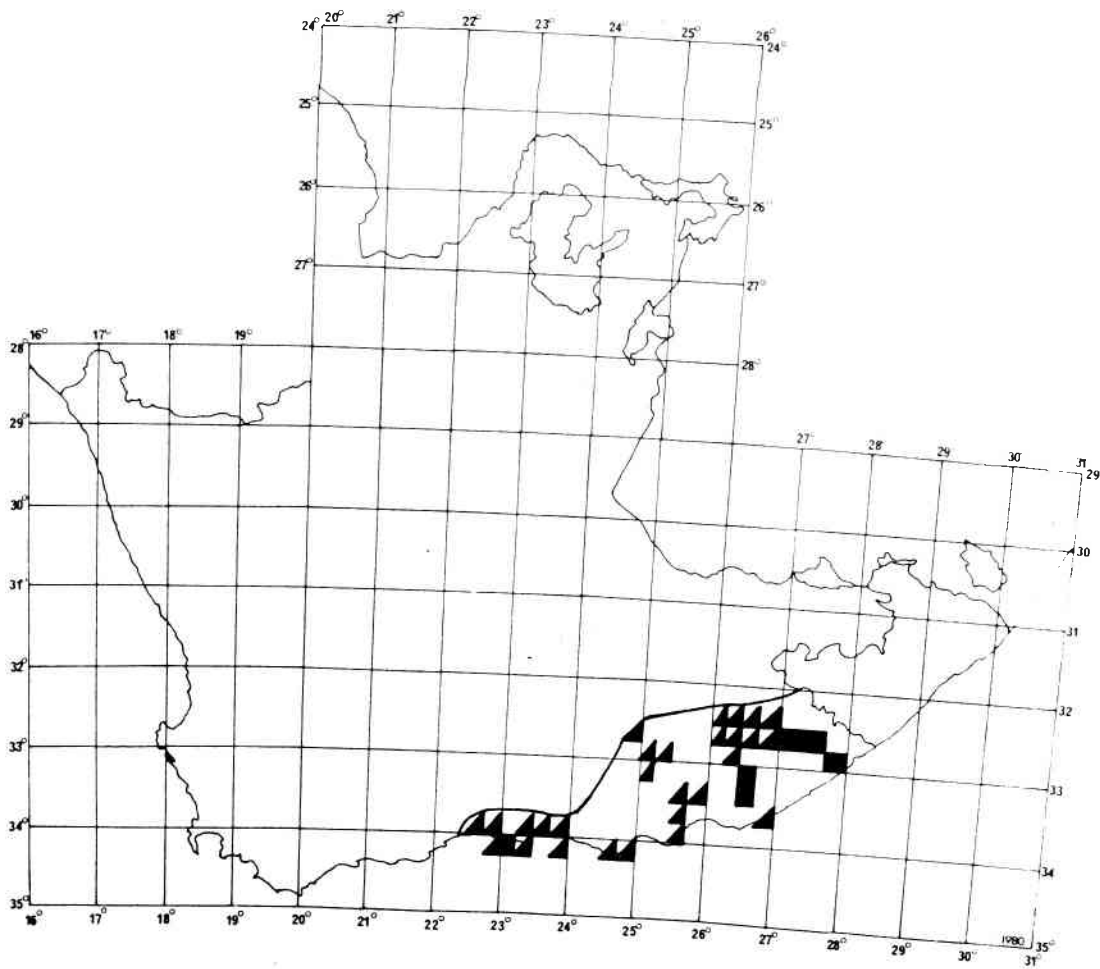
The body measurements and mass of adult bushpig killed in the Eastern Cape Province during control operations are presented in Table 3.

J. Bruwer, A. de Villiers and S.V. Phillips (Adelaide Nature Conservation Station) are thanked for supplying material.

References

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- Smithers, R.H.N. 1971. The mammals of Botswana. *Mus.Mem.* 4:1-340 (Trustees of the National Museums of Rhodesia, Salisbury).
- Sowls, L.K. and Phelps, R.J. 1968. Observations on the African bushpig *Potamochoerus porcus* Linn. in Rhodesia. *Zoologica N.Y.* 53(3):75-84.

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The distribution of the Bushpig in the Cape Province. Squares indicate specimen records and triangles sight records.

| FOOD ITEM | NO OF STOMACHS |
|---|----------------|
| PLANT -Unidentified green plant material | 9 |
| Green grass | 7 |
| Seed | 3 |
| Maize | 2 |
| Prickly pear (<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i>) | 2 |
| ANIMAL -Invertebrates - (crickets 1; maggots 1; grasshopper 1; unidentified) | 4 |
| Vertebrates - Bird | 2 |
| Domestic stock - sheep and goat - (maggots in the latter suggest scavenging) | 2 |
| Rodent (unidentified) | 1 |
| Grey Mongoose (<i>Herpestes pulverulentus</i>) | 1 |

Table 1. The contents of 11 *P. porcus* stomachs collected in the Smaldeel District, Cape Province.

| | J | F | M | A | MONTH | | | | S | O | N | D |
|--|---|---|---|---|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | M | J | J | A | | | | |
| TOTAL | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| PREGNANT | - | - | - | 2 | - | - | 1 | 3 | - | 1 | - | - |
| NON-PREGNANT | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 3 | - | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| LACTATING | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Estimated back-dated births | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| CAPE | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ansell (1960) (Zambia) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Skinner, Breytenbach Maberly (1976) (Trasvaal) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Smithers (1971) (Zimbabwe) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sowls and Phelps (1968) (Zimbabwe) | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 2. The details of pregnant, non-pregnant and lactating, adult Bushpig sows are given, as well as estimated back-dated births (after Sowls & Phelps 1968) for young animals taken during control programmes in the Eastern Cape Province. Births in other regions are also presented.

| | \bar{x} | n | range |
|-------------------------|-----------|----|------------|
| Head + Body | 1183 | 9 | 970 - 1290 |
| Tail | 319 | 9 | 280 - 365 |
| Hind Foot (c.u.) | 238 | 9 | 180 - 260 |
| Ear | 157 | 9 | 140 - 200 |
| Mass | 65 | 18 | 44 - 88 |

FEMALES

| | \bar{x} | n | range |
|-------------------------|-----------|----|-------------|
| Head + Body | 1077 | 6 | 1000 - 1200 |
| Tail | 286 | 5 | 250 - 320 |
| Hind Foot (c.u.) | 214 | 5 | 180 - 240 |
| Ear | 128 | 5 | 100 - 180 |
| Mass | 55 | 13 | 38 - 68 |

Table 3. Body measurements (mm) and mass (kg) of adult Bushpig killed in the Eastern Cape Province.