

ROCK HYRAX

RANGE:

Hyraxes can be found on isolated mountains and the plains and savannas of Africa and the Middle East. (Note: There are 3 different genera of Hyrax, which include the Rock Hyrax, Bush Hyrax and Tree Hyrax)

HABITAT:

Can be found from sea level to 14,000 ft. Habitats range from dry savanna to dense rainforest to cold alpine tundra. The Rock Hyrax generally is found along rocky outcrops in bald areas and along mountain slopes.

SIZE:

Length: 12 – 23 inches. 55 cm.

Height: 8 –12 inches.

Weight: Males approximately 9 lb.(3.75 kg) Females approximately 8 lbs. (3.5 kg)

LIFE EXPECTANCY:

Average 7 years. Have lived in captivity as long as 12 years.

DIET:

Wild: Feed mainly on leaves, grasses, herbage, fruit, insects, lizards, and bird's eggs

Zoo: Variety of vegetables, fruit, crickets, mealworms.

REPRODUCTION:

- Gestation Period: 220 – 240 days
- Generally have from 2 to 4 young, which are capable of running and jumping about an hour after birth.
- Young are weaned between 3 to 6 months. Mothers have 6 nipples, 2 at her shoulders and 4 around her crotch. Individual young will have a particular nipple that they feed from and will not feed from another.
- Young of all the females in a group are generally kept together in a "nursery" group.
- Young will stay with family group until they reach sexual maturity at about 16 months.
- Different species of hyrax will often cohabitate, but do not interbreed.

BEHAVIOR:

- Rock Hyraxes are the only species of hyrax found outside of Africa.
- They live in colonies composed of family units which may number 50 individuals. Usually one adult male with about 15 –17 adult females and their young.
- They do not build burrows, however they do utilized rock crevasses and sheltered boulders for hiding places, which provide cover from their major predators, various birds of prey.
- They are diurnal and spend a lot of time sunning themselves. This activity is partially due to the fact they have poor thermo-regulation.
- Eating mainly vegetable matter, most of their water comes from their food. They seldom drink water directly.

theZOO

L O U I S V I L L E



photo by Robert Kemnitz

Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Hyracoidea
Family:	Procaviidae
Genus:	Procavia
Species:	capensis

ROCK HYRAX



POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Hyraxes are one of the closest living relatives to the elephant and manatee. A common ancestor can be traced between these 3 groups.
- The hyrax has sharp, tusk-like incisors which are used for protection from predators and not for eating. They can inflict a serious bite.
- The hyrax has very sharp eyesight, possibly related to the unusual shape of the eye. The iris bulges out above the pupil, cutting off light from directly above the head. This enables the hyrax to look almost directly into the sun and keep watch for birds of prey.
- The hyrax has a scent gland that runs along its back. The gland is narrow and bare and it is not well understood as to how it is used, however when the animal is excited or frightened the hair or fur along its back near the gland will stand erect.
- The hyrax has 4 toes on its front feet and 3 on each back foot. The soles of their feet are covered with rubbery pads that secrete a sticky sweat, giving the hyrax an excellent grip for the rocky surfaces on which they live. Has hoof-like nails at the end of stumpy toes. The longer, claw-like nails on the inside toes of each back foot are used for grooming and scratching.
- Hyraxes are very vocal. They are known to create approximately 21 different calls. The sounds are generally a variety of chattering and screaming. These sounds function for both keeping in contact with their group and to warn others of possible danger.
- Hyraxes use common latrine areas for defecating and urination.
- They also appear to be able to eat a number of species of plants that would be poisonous to other animals.
- Also known as Rock Dassie or Rock Rabbit. The name "Hyrax" comes from the Greek "hurax", meaning shrew mouse. The genus Procavia comes partially from the term cavie used in South America for the guinea pig. While not related, the hyrax remotely resembles the guinea pig.

STATUS:

Common

REFERENCES:

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