

Checklist and status of the terrestrial mammals from the United Arab Emirates

by Peter Low Cunningham

Abstract. This paper presents the terrestrial mammals occurring (past & present) or expected to occur in the United Arab Emirates. The terrestrial mammal fauna of the UAE consist of at least 10 species of rodents, 8 species of bats, 2 species of hedgehog, 1 shrew, 1 hyrax (albeit introduced into the wild), 1 hare, 7 species of ungulates and 12 carnivores. At least 3 rodent, 6 bats, 1 hedgehog, 1 shrew, 1 ungulate and 3 carnivores could possibly have occurred or are expected to occur in the UAE although no tangible evidence yet exists thereof. The status and references for the various mammals are also included to assist further mammalian research in the UAE.

Kurzfassung. In dieser Arbeit wird einer Liste der terrestrischen Säuger gegeben, die in den Vereinigten Arabischen Emiraten ehemals oder rezent vorkommen bzw. von denen angenommen werden kann, dass sie dort vorkommen. Die Säugerfauna besteht aus mindestens 10 Arten von Nagern, 8 Arten von Fledermäusen, zwei Igelarten, eine Spitzmausart, eine Klippschieferart (eingeführt), eine Hasenart, 7 Arten von Huftieren und 12 Arten von Carnivoren. Möglicherweise kommen mindestens weitere 3 Nager, 6 Fledermäuse, 1 Igel, 1 Spitzmaus, 1 Huftier und 3 Carnivoren vor bzw. sind früher vorgekommen, doch fehlen zweifelsfreie Nachweise. Für jede Art wird neben der Statusbeschreibung die relevante Literatur erschlossen.

Key words. Faunistics, conservation, status, Red Data Book, Persian Gulf, United Arab Emirates, Middle East.

Introduction

This paper presents a checklist of the terrestrial mammals known to occur, to have occurred in the recent past or expected to occur in the United Arab Emirates. Compared to insects and reptiles, mammals are generally not well represented in desert environments – including the UAE – due to a number of factors. Firstly, the carrying capacity of deserts is generally low and is highly dependent on rainfall. Food and water resources are scarce and the number of animals that any given area can support, especially animals with high metabolisms like mammals, is correspondingly small. Secondly, the majority of desert mammals are nocturnal in order to avoid high daytime temperature and conserve water, making sightings difficult and rare. Thirdly, humans have had an adverse affect on wild mammal numbers, especially with the aid of mechanised vehicles and modern weapons. A quotation by an early researcher to the UAE sums it up quite well: “only those animals not worthy of the pot, not worthy of a shot, or too difficult to exterminate, such as the hare and the fox, have not been killed off or driven into the big sands or the mountains” (GASPERETTI 1967).

Unfortunately, published literature on the terrestrial mammals of the UAE is still scant although a few recent contributions by various authors have increased the information for a