

Eland (*Tragelaphus oryx*)



Eland



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SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Taurotragus oryx*

ORDER: Artiodactyla

FAMILY: Bovidae

RANGE: southern Sudan to South Africa

HABITAT: grasslands and forested savanna to altitudes over 9,000 feet

DIET: foliage, fruits, seed pods, flowers, bark and tubers

ENEMIES: hyenas and lions

STATUS: common

Afrikaans:

Eland

German:

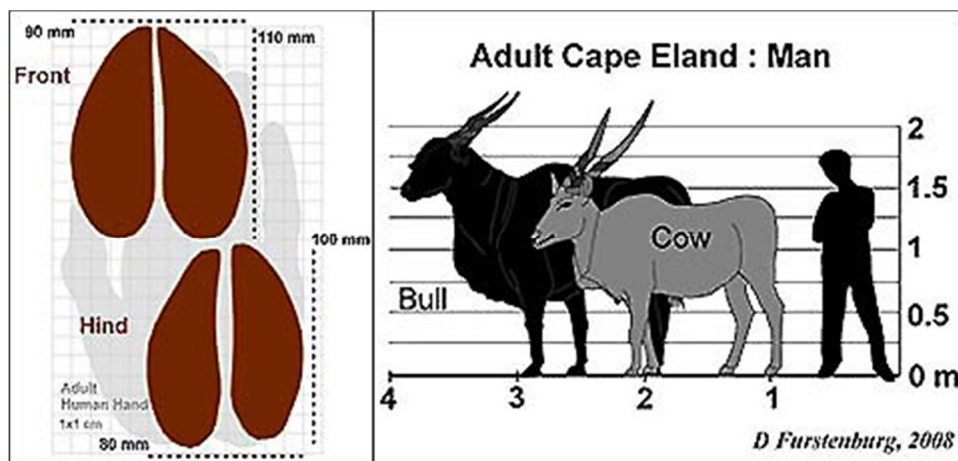
Elantilope

Description

A large ox-like animal, heavily built with relative thick legs. Adult males are 30-35% heavier than females and easily recognisable at a distance. The forequarters

are notably larger and heavier than the hind and as a result, the front feet are larger. The most representative form is the southern Cape eland which are tan-coloured, dull fawn, without body stripes and a dark brown mark down the back of the forelegs above the knees. In northern Botswana, Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique, hybrids and crossbreeds between the southern Cape and Livingstone's eland have between 1-5 vertical body stripes. Livingstone's eland have 6-7 vertical white stripes 9-12 mm wide on the flanks but lack the prominent, dark brown marking on the forelegs. East African eland are a rufous-fawn with 8-12 narrow stripes 4-8 mm wide down the flank and a white chevron above the eyes on the forehead. Hybrids of the southern Cape eland and the east African eland which have the same rufous colouring but are without stripes are common where distributions overlap. Lord Derby's eland have a rich terracotta, reddish-brown to chestnut colour with 8-12 narrow stripes, a distinct dark brown to black blaze around the bottom half of the neck and a short black mane stretching down the neck to the middle of the back. Aging adults tend to lose their hair resulting in the overall colour becoming bluish-grey due to the skin reflecting through the coat. A large dewlap descends from the throat of adult bulls. The dewlap of Lord Derby's eland is longer and starts from the chin. Numerous translocations throughout southern Africa have probably caused a dispersal of genetically impure forms. The lack of stripes on eland in central east Africa may be due to the hybridisation accompanying overlapping distributions.

Comparison To Man



Trophy

The horns are 10 mm above the coat at birth. Both sexes carry slightly diverging, straight horns that are smooth and lie in a flat triangle when viewed in cross section. They have a keel-like ridge on the anterior and posterior edges that turn like the thread of a screw towards the tip, forming two tight twists of a spiral. The horns of cows are longer and thinner than those of the males. Rowland Ward minimum trophy quality may be reached after 3.5 years for cows and for bulls after 10 years.

The eland is the largest living antelope, standing 70 inches at the shoulder and weighing up to 2,000 pounds; the female is considerably smaller than the male. The coat is light tan-to-reddish-fawn, which darkens to gray in older males. Faint stripes on the forequarters, a stripe along the back merging into a short mane, black and white leg markings, long tail with black tufted tip and prominent dewlap all characterize the eland. The adult male develops a tuft of frizzy hair on his forehead. Both sexes have long, spiraled horns.

The eland travels long distances throughout the year. As it moves, it makes a clicking noise caused by the two halves of each hoof striking together. The sound carries a long way and is a good indication of an approaching herd. Some eland migrate, but not in large conspicuous herds.

Shy and generally silent, the eland is always alert and barks a gruff alarm call when detecting a predator. Hearing and smell are the most developed senses. Surprisingly, the eland can leap up to eight feet, and, in the wild, has even been seen leaping over the backs of other eland to escape danger.

Births have no strict season. Gestation lasts eight-to-nine months, followed by a single birth. The new born stays hidden for two, or more, weeks and the mother returns several times a day to suckle it. When retrieving the concealed calf, the mother calls to it with a sound much like a creaking door. Faint bleating calls are used when mother and calf are together.

Size

Male head-body length: 240 – 345 cm ⁽²⁾

Female head-body length: 200 – 280 cm ⁽²⁾

Tail length: 50 – 90 cm ⁽²⁾

Male weight: 400 – 942 kg ⁽²⁾

Female weight: 300 – 600 kg ⁽²⁾