



Plains Zebra (*Equus quagga*)



Photo: Doug Lee

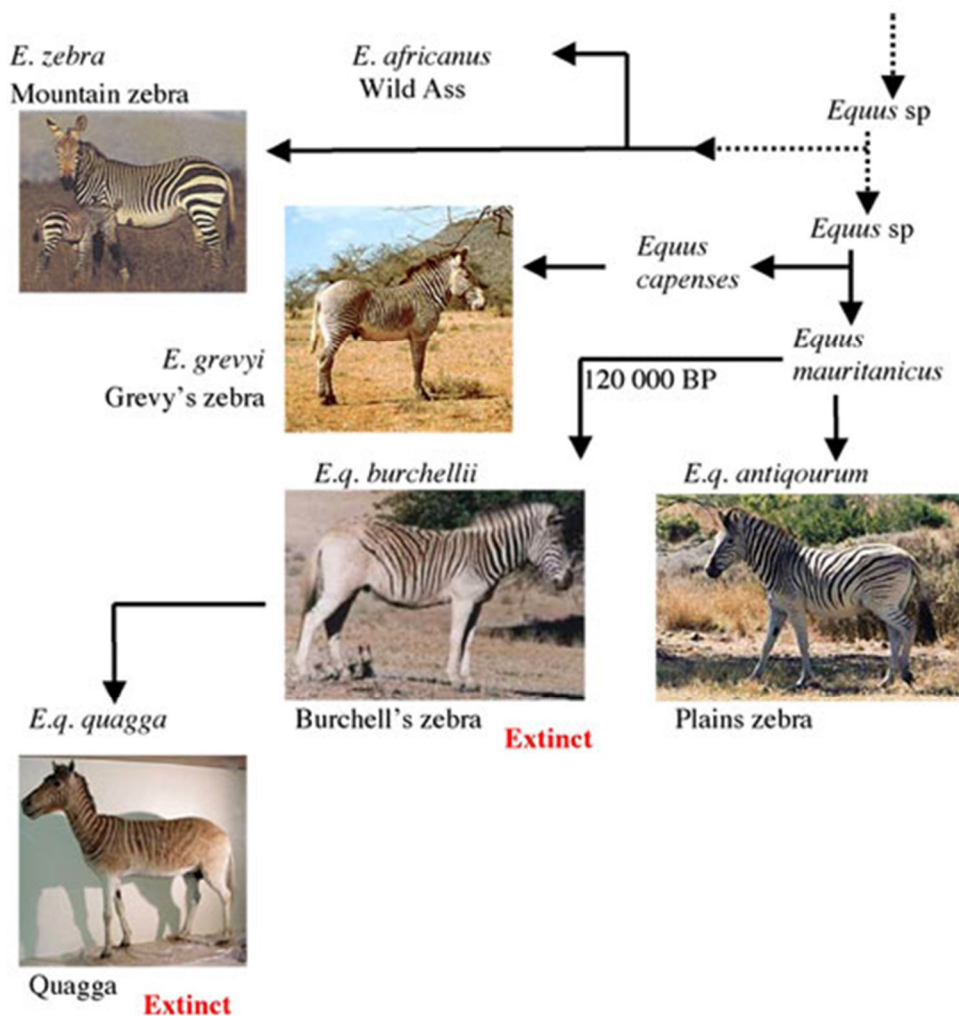
Afrikaans:	Vlakte sebra / Bont sebra
German:	Steppenzebra
French:	Zèbra de Burchell

“Pajama-donky” or “horse in a rugby-jersey”, as it is often referred to by children, and in the early 1800s, zebras were called the wild horses of Africa. Its popular

name refers to the animal's preference to inhabit plains environments. The extinct quagga and the plains zebra were successfully tamed during the 1800s and cross-bred with donkeys. The hybrids were called zeb-donks and were used to pull carts and wagons.

Some confusion might exist in the mind of readers caused by the recent name changes of the zebra species. The mountain zebra, together with the African wild ass evolved from an unidentified ancestor during the early Pleistocene (1-2 million years BP). Thereafter Grevy's zebra derived from another pre-ancestor *Equus capensis* during the middle Pleistocene. All of the sub-species of the plains zebra *E. quagga*, which include the recently extinct quagga and Burchell's zebra, evolved between 120 000-290 000 years BP and share in a common ancestor *E. mauritanicus* which was a much larger animal from northern Africa during the late Pleistocene. The plains zebra that are presently introduced, re-introduced, and spread across almost the entire of South Africa is predominantly the Chapman's zebra *E.q. antiquorum*, and not the Burchell's zebra as is still being referred to in the majority of literature and media.

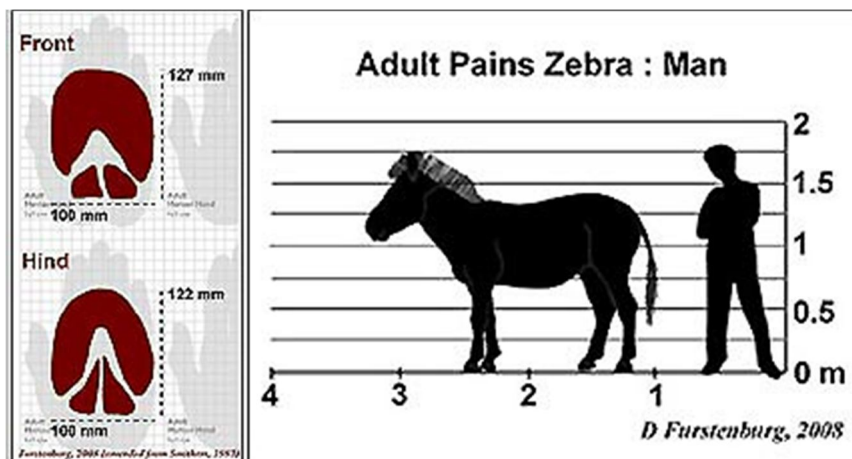
Evolution



Description

Descriptive Differences Between The Zebras					
Species	Size Mass/Height At Shoulder	Black Stripes			Dew-Lip
		Body	Legs	Belly	
Burchell's Plains Zebra	290-340 kg 130-136 cm	Wide stripes, far apart, end halfway down the flanks. Stripes are faded towards their ends. Shadow stripes on the back and the flanks. No stripes on the lower half of buttocks and shoulder.	No Stripes	None	None

Comparison to man



Social structure

Plains zebra are migrators by nature, moving between food and water sources and especially between burnt veld. Home ranges are thus large, unstable and temporary. Plains zebra are gregarious forming large herds of multiple closed family groups consisting of 4-12 individuals each. The herds moves through the home range as a temporary unit. In thick woodland or bushveld and on smaller land-units the larger aggregations are lost and the family groups are scattered across the habitat. Family bonding in the family groups are very tight and permanent and follow a strict hierarchy order of dominance. The family structure consists of a dominant stallion (8-12 years), a dominant alpha mare (older than 8 years), 2-3 beta mares (5-8 years), 2-5 chi mares (3-5 years) and several sub-adults (younger than 3 years) of both sexes. Young stallions leave the group at 3 years to join a bachelor group which roam the same home range than the herd. Young mares, 2-3 years, are being lured away by opportunistic non-dominant stallions.

Often these associations establish new families. Adult shoulderheight is reached at 3 years and adult bodymass after 5 years.