



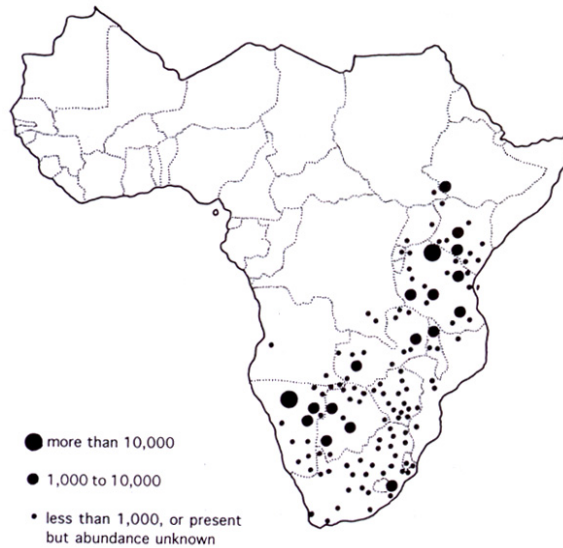
Common Eland, *Taurotragus oryx*

Legal Status: Eland are protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act, or regulated in international trade by CITES. The IUCN Antelope Specialist Group considers them to be Lower Risk, Conservation Dependent. Elands have a naturally low density, with fewer than 3 animals per square mile.

Description: Eland are massive animals and considered to be the largest and most heavily built of the African antelopes. They belong to the Bovidae tribe called Tragelaphini that includes the spiral-horned antelopes. Males and females are similar in color (though males darken with age), having tawny coats and 10-16 narrow, white, vertical stripes on their torso. Their tails are long and have a black terminal tuft. Members of this tribe also have bare, moist noses and a crest of (long) erect hair along the spine. Bulls develop extreme secondary sexual characteristics. Mature males have a thick tuft of brown hair on their foreheads, massive necks and shoulders and conspicuous black-tufted dewlap on lower throat. Bulls weigh up to twice as much (2,000 lbs.) and are somewhat taller (nearly 6' at the shoulder) than females, whose build more closely resembles other antelopes of their tribe. The horns are long (17-26 inches in males) and generally have one or two twists. Females' horns are longer (20-27 inches) but are much thinner than those of the males. Eland are also considered the slowest of the antelopes, top running speeds only reaching ~25 mph. However, they can maintain a quick trot for extended periods and are accomplished jumpers, with juveniles clearing a 10' fence from a standing position.



Distribution: Taxonomists divide common eland into three distinct subspecies, each of which is restricted to a distinct geographical region of Africa. These subspecies include the East African eland, *T.o. pattersonianus*), Livingston's eland, *T.o. livingstoni* and southern eland, *T.o. oryx*. According to East (1996) eland are found in Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, former Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They are extinct in



Burundi. In South African and Zimbabwe, eland have been widely introduced to private farms. They also occur commonly in national parks and preserves.

Habitat: Eland are considered to be one of the most adaptable ruminants. They are primarily found in arid zones and savannas from southern Sudan to South Africa and west to Namibia and Angola. In addition, they also inhabit woodland and woodland savanna, sub-desert, bush and grasslands. Eland may occur at altitudes as high as 15,000 feet but avoid swamps, forests and deserts.

Diet: Eland are primarily browsers, feeding primarily on foliage and a varied diet of flowers, seeds, tubers and succulent fruits. During the rainy season, however, they may switch to a grazing, taking in more than half of their diet in the form of newly sprouted grass. While not adapted to deserts, elands conserve water in similar ways as desert dwellers. Instead of using energy to cool their bodies, they allow their body temperatures to rise by as much as 13.5 degrees F. They also get sufficient moisture from their diet and can go for long periods without drinking.

Social Organization: Eland, unlike many of their closest relatives, are nomadic and extremely gregarious; on open grasslands, may form herds as large as 500 animals. Eland are non-territorial and herds contain interchangeable members of mostly of cows and their offspring. Numbers can vary however, with single sex adult groups containing as few as 3 animals. Calves form nursery groups where they often establish closer bonds with each other than they do with their mothers. These cohesive juveniles form the core of the large herds. Cows and juveniles have large home ranges that vary from 67-sq. mi. up to 200 square miles. Home ranges of bulls are much smaller, varying from 5-23 square miles.

Reproduction: Differing from all other antelopes of their tribe, eland have a non-territorial social mating system and male-dominance hierarchies (which

explains the great difference in the sizes of the sexes). Breeding occurs year round, but most commonly during the rainy season. Estrus lasts for three days. Birth peaks occur at the end of the dry season (August – October in southern Africa). Bulls reach sexual maturity at the age of 4 or 5, whereas females are capable of conceiving at 2.5 years of age. Cows usually give birth to a single calf that is weaned in 4-6 months.

Threats To Survival: Eland populations are greatly decreasing in numbers because of poaching for their tender meat and thick hides. They are easily captured for sale to private ranches. They are very susceptible to disease, especially rinderpest. Due to their large size, eland have few natural predators. Cows join together to cooperatively defend their calves against lions; bulls do not appear threatened by the presence of predators.

Zoo Programs: A North American Regional Studbook and Population Management Plan (PMP) is in production. Presently all common eland are being managed as a single population, although there are three subspecies (*T. o. pattersonainus*, *T. o. oryx*, *T. o. livingstoni*). Two of these subspecies will probably be phased out in favor of a single population whose ancestors may be traced back to nature.



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