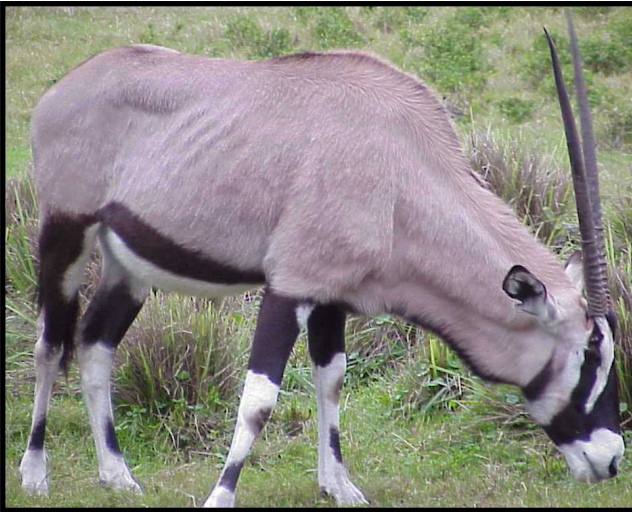


Sub-Saharan Oryx, *Oryx gazella*

Gemsbok (Oryx g. gazella)

Fringe-eared oryx (Oryx g. callotis)



Beisa (Oryx g. beisa)



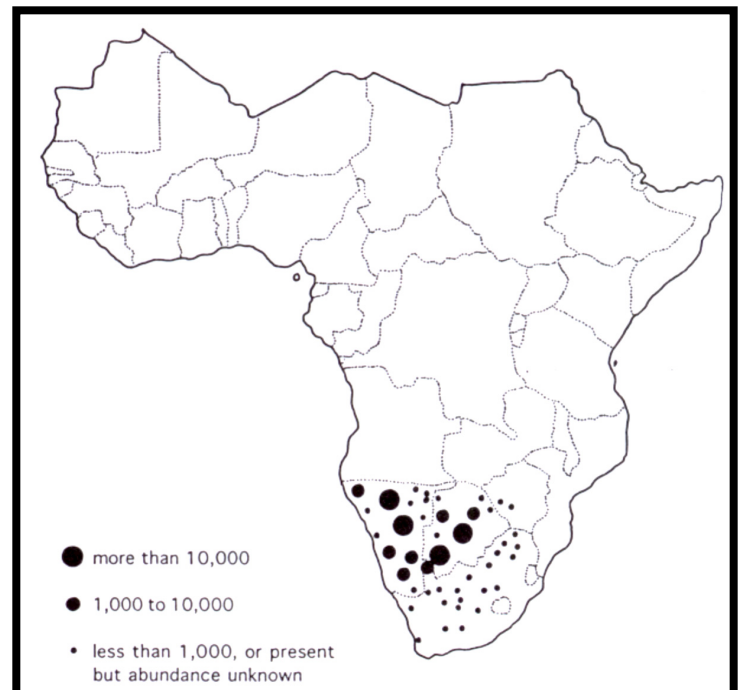
Legal Status: All three subspecies of Sub-Saharan oryx are considered to be Lower Risk (Conservation Dependent) by the IUCN Antelope Specialist Group. Gemsbok have an estimated wild population size of 373,000 of which 45% occurs on private land and 35% in and around protected areas. The estimated population size for beisa oryx is 25,000 and 8,000 for fringe-eared oryx.

Description: Sub-Saharan oryx are large antelopes with very long straight horns. They range in weight from 220 - 462 lb., the males being heavier than the females. The horns of the males are equal in length to those of the female but thicker and more massive. Oryx have compact bodies with sturdy limbs, a short neck mane, and a small dewlap at the intersection of the jaw and throat. Their markings consist of black flank stripes, black-and-white facial patterns, narrow black stripe on the spine, and a black stripe that extends from the chin to the chest. They also have black garters on their forelegs and long black tails. There are some phenotypical variations among the three subspecies. Gemsbok have a pale gray body color with large black patches on its rump and on the upper hindlegs. Beisa oryx have a grayish tan body color with very conspicuous black markings. Fringe-eared oryx have a browner body color with a tuft of black hair growing from the ear tips. The markings of fringe-eared oryx are similar to beisa oryx but less contrasting.

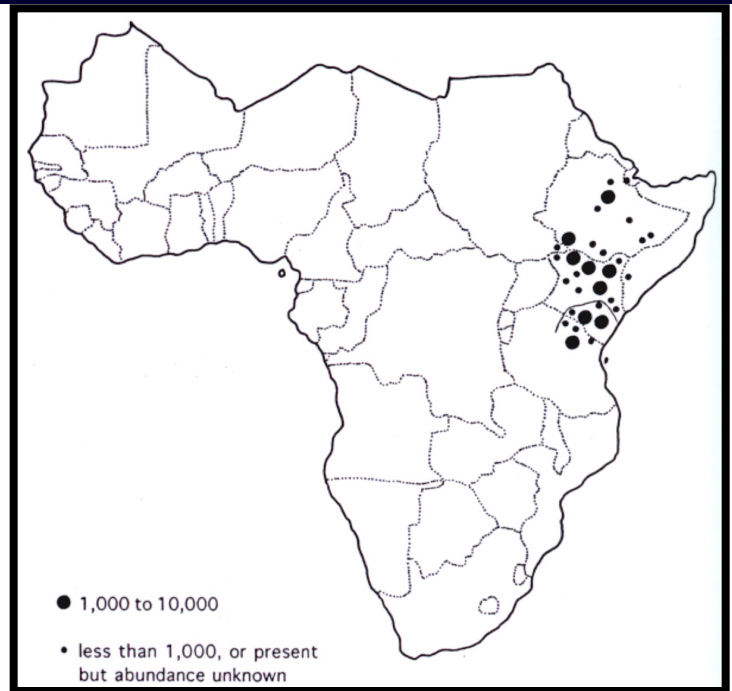
(Gemsbok)



Distribution: Gemsbok now occur in moderate to large numbers in its three main range states, Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa. The largest numbers occur on private land, especially in Namibia, and in protected areas such as Namib-Naukluft and Etosha (Namibia), Central Kgalagadi-Khutse Game Reserves and Gemsbok National Park and surrounds (Botswana) and Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (South Africa). All these populations are stable or increasing.



Beisa and fringe-eared oryx formerly occurred widely in the semi-arid and arid bushland and grasslands of Northeast and East Africa. Both have declined markedly in numbers and distribution, however, at the margins of its range, e.g., Uganda and Somalia, but still occur widely in areas of Ethiopia, northern and eastern Kenya and northeastern Tanzania where human and livestock densities are low. The largest populations occur in the Awash Valley and Omo-Mago-Murule-Chew Bahir (Ethiopia) and Sibiloi National Park and the unprotected northern rangelands (Kenya-beisa oryx), and Tsavo, Kajiado and Kilifi (Kenya) and Tarangire (Tanzania-fringe-eared oryx).



Habitat: Sub-Saharan oryx inhabit environments that include acacia savannas, stony plains, sand dunes, mountains, and deserts. Their ability to survive in waterless areas is second only to that of the addax among the African antelopes.

Diet: Oryx feed on grasses and shrubs, and go to streams and waterholes to drink. When free water is not available, they can obtain sufficient moisture for lengthy periods from such sources as melons and succulent bulbs.

Social Organization: Oryx are gregarious animals. It has been reported that a typical female group size in Kenya averages between 30-40 individuals however aggregations involving several hundred animals have been observed. Solitary males maintain territories in which they try to control and mate with females that are present. Oryx observed in the Serengeti form groups of up to 22 individuals. Some herds contained only males while other observed herds were harems controlled by a single dominant male. Considerable competition has been noted between males however it mainly involves ritualized, horn-to-horn sparring, with no serious injury.



(Fringe-eared Oryx Herd)

Threats To Survival: The gemsbok is still common in some parts of Africa. The natives sometimes have used the sharp tips of its horns for spear points and its thick, tough skin for shield coverings. Unprotected areas threaten future populations of beisa and fringe-eared oryx.

Zoo Programs: Currently there are approximately 100 gemsbok managed in 14 institutions in North America. There are about 40 beisa managed at 7 institutions and about 50 fringe-eared oryx managed at 4 institutions. The European region has management programs for both beisa and gemsbok. The AZA Antelope TAG's Regional Collection Plan calls for a target population of 80 gemsbok and 80 fringe-eared oryx; beisa are to be phased out to make room for the other two subspecies.

Conservation: The gemsbok's future is secure as long as it continues to occur in large numbers on private land and in protected areas in Southern Africa. The overall population trend for gemsbok is increasing on private farms and conservancies and protected areas. Its high value as a trophy animal should ensure further increases in its numbers on private land. Population trends for beisa and fringe-eared oryx are probably gradually heading downward over most of their range. If this trend continues their conservation status will eventually decline to Threatened. The beisa oryx is especially vulnerable due to most of the population occurring outside protected areas. More effective protection and management of remaining populations will greatly enhance its long-term survival.



(Beisa Oryx Herd)

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