



SITATUNGA, *Tragelaphus spekeii*

Legal Status: Sitatungas were first listed in Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1976. Currently international trade in this the species is regulated by CITES as an Appendix III, as requested by Ghana. Further, IUCN classifies the sitatunga as Threatened; it may already be extinct in Ghana, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo. The U.S. Endangered Species Act does not protect the species.

Description: Sitatungas are sexually dimorphic and only the males have spiraling horns. Males average 154 - 275 lb. (338 - 605 kg.), are 35 - 50 in. (89 - 127 cm.) tall at the shoulder, and brown to chestnut in color with faint shadow stripes. Females are smaller (110 - 125 lb. (242 - 275 kg.) and 29 - 36 in. (74 - 91 cm.), gray-brown to dark chocolate in color with black dorsal stripes, white transverse stripes and white spots on haunches.

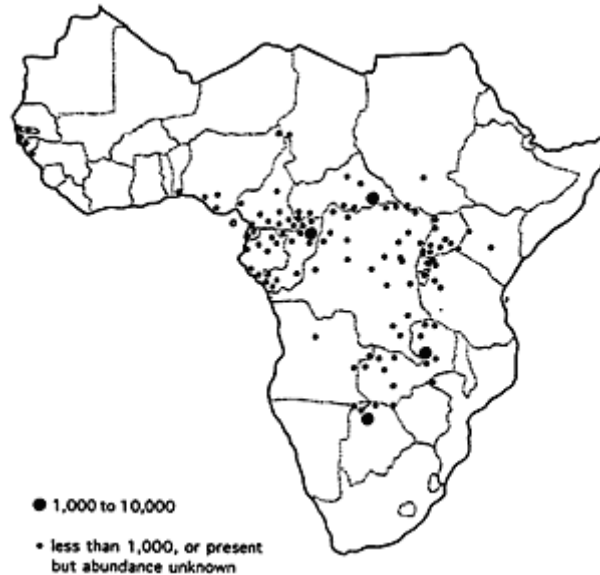


This medium sized antelope is highly specialized for a semi-aquatic lifestyle and spend the greater part of their lives in swamps and permanent marshes of Africa. The most obvious structural adaptation is their hooves that are elongated and splayed with pad-like adjacent skin. This modification allows them to evenly distribute their weight on all aspects of their hooves in order to walk through mud without sinking. On solid ground, sitatungas move rather clumsily and tend to be pyramidal when walking on solid ground. Additionally, the

shaggy hair coat is not only patterned for concealment, but contains sufficient oil to

make it water repellent.

Range: The largest populations of sitatunga are found throughout the swamps and swamp margins of Tanzania, Botswana and Rwanda. The expansion of settlements and resultant poaching pressure has, however, reduced their numbers in recent years. The major portion of the species' total population is found in the perennial and seasonal swamps of the Okavango Delta in Botswana where it seeks refuge from the pressures inflicted by man.

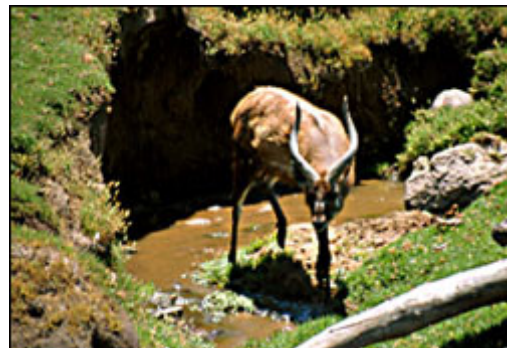


Habitat: Sitatunga are commonly found in wetter parts of the southern savanna, swamps and permanent marshes of West African rainforest, and dense papyrus and reed beds south of the Sahara.

Diet: Sitatungas are classified as both a browsing and grazing herbivores. The animal has been observed feeding on swamp vegetation, woody forest vegetation and in pastures. Generally the animals are solitary, but may be seen in loose associations while feeding.

Social Organization: Sitatungas do not form large herds but a few individuals may remain together. Adult males establish home ranges and avoid close proximity with other males. To avoid direct confrontation with other males, adult males advertise their presence by "barking"

Threats To Survival: The most common natural predators of this antelope are lions, wild dogs and leopards. When threatened, sitatungas head for swamps or deep water where they can swim away or remain submerged with only their nostrils visible above the water.



By far, the greatest threat to this species survival is man. This antelope's habit of using paths created through the dense cover of the swamp and marshes makes them susceptible to snares and hunting pressure. In many parts of Africa they are a major source of protein as bushmeat. In addition to meat and trophy hunting, habitat destruction is reducing its distribution and abundance in many parts of its former range. A large portion of the wild population faces dire consequences if the

Okavango Delta is further altered patterns of cattle grazing, uncontrolled burning and hydrological schemes that effect the water level in this swamp.

Zoo Programs: A Regional Studbook for this species exists in North America to manage the captive animals held by cooperating collections. The TAG's target population for this species is 100 animals, divided among participating North American zoos, a population which will secure the species a role in education and conservation while providing zoos with a unique species for exhibit purposes.

Conservation: Sitatungas are rare and localized in West Africa, and survival may be dependent on the existence of protected areas of natural habitat. Elsewhere, however, this species remains widespread and common in the Central African rainforests and in swamp systems within the savannas of Central, East and Southern Africa.



Contacts:

North American Regional Studbook Keeper:

Gil Myers

The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

Ph. 443-552-5247 x8054

Fax: 410-396-6685

gmyers@marylandzoo.org

Wild Status: