An annotated check list of the land mammal fauna of the West Coast National Park

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Some 4 000 Barn Owl pellets with small mammal remains have been collected over a period of nine years from two locations at the south end of the Langebaan lagoon. Two small samples of bones from archaeological sites on the Churchhaven peninsula provide evidence for past mammal occurrences. The remains of small mammals from the owl pellet collections provide an initial list of 18 species that occur within the West Coast National Park. Subsequent conventional censusing by means of trapping and observational techniques to assess the small and large mammal species diversity of the area were conducted during 1989. This study documents the definite occurrence of 63 mammal species in the park, seven of which are exotics. The presence of a further five species requires confirmation. Interesting insight is gained into how direct censusing and owl pellet analyses augment each other in establishing the presence of small mammal taxa of an area.

Key words: archaeological sites, Barn Owl, Tyto alba affinis, census, mammals, West Coast National Park.

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Introduction

Little has been published on the distribution of mammals in the southwestern coastal region of the Cape Province. Shortridge (1942) described the results of an expedition to the area between Lambert's Bay and Calvinia and as far south as Citrusdal; Stuart, Palmer & Munnik (1978) included Rocher Pan (32° 42'S; 18° 14'E) in their preliminary survey of Cape provincial nature reserves. Grindley, Siegfried & Vernon (1973) recorded the findings of an analysis of owl pellets collected during 1955 within the confines of the present park. Some of the published identifications in their sample are doubtful, given the ranges of the species concerned, but since the samples were not retained (C.J. Vernon, in litt. 1977) it was not possible to re-examine them. In view of the paucity of information from the area and of the fact that the West Coast National Park (WCNP) was recently proclaimed, it seems useful to place on record information gained from subsequent owl pellet analyses, augmented by direct censusing of the mammals from the area now covered by the park.

The WCNP (centred at 33° 10'S; 18° 05'E), is situated about 100 km north of Cape