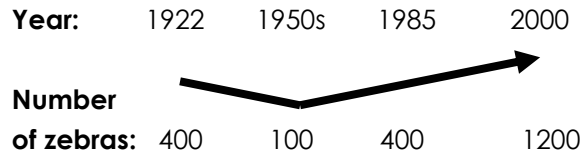


The need for conservation

Cape mountain zebra numbers were reduced to less than 100 in the 1950s as a result of hunting and competition for grazing with farm stock.

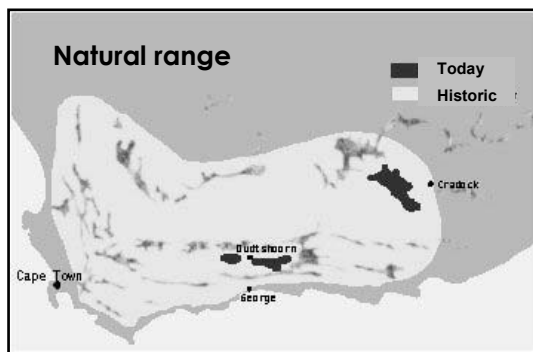
Conservation initiatives, including the establishment of Mountain Zebra National Park in 1937, led to a steady increase in numbers and by 2000 there were close to 1200 animals.



The Cape mountain zebra is still rare, however, and is classed as endangered (IUCN Endangered; CITES Appendix I). The priority is to build up numbers as quickly as possible to ensure their long-term survival.

Distribution

Cape mountain zebras once roamed over most of the Cape's mountainous areas. Today they are mainly confined to protected areas.



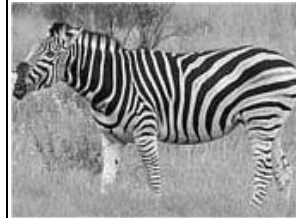
Can you tell the difference?

Cape mountain zebra
(*Equus zebra zebra*)



- stripes narrower
- no shadow stripes
- legs striped
- stomach white
- grid-iron pattern on rump
- mostly vertical stripes
- dewlap on throat

Burchell's zebra
(*Equus burchelli*)



- stripes broader
- shadow stripes on southern races
- legs not fully striped
- stomach striped
- no grid-iron pattern
- stripes angled ⇒ Y-shaped saddle
- no dewlap on throat

Social life

Cape mountain zebras live in two types of herds:

Breeding herds – one stallion with up to five females and their young. Females can foal every two years (pregnancy lasts about one year) and give birth at any time of year. Once in a breeding herd females will stay with the herd for life.

Bachelor herds – 2-15 animals that are too young or too old to breed. These herds tend to be mainly males, but may also contain young females. Animals regularly move between bachelor herds, and once old enough will form a breeding herd. Once a male loses his breeding herd to a stronger male he will join a bachelor herd again.

What can stripes tell us?

No two zebras have the same stripe pattern; in fact each side of a zebra is unique. Just like a fingerprint the stripes can be used to identify individuals. This means that animals can be monitored throughout their life, providing data such as the number of foals produced and life span.

Stripes help to camouflage the animals, and in their rocky mountain habitat the zebras become almost invisible.

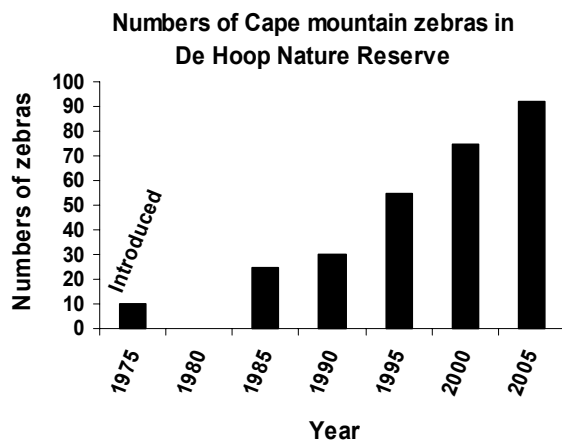


Can you see the difference between the patterns on these two front legs?



Ten Cape mountain zebras were released in De Hoop between 1963 and 1975. These animals came from the Kammanassie mountains and Mountain Zebra National Park, two of the five natural populations that existed at that time. This makes the De Hoop population the most genetically diverse as all other animals released in conservation areas have originated just from Mountain Zebra National Park. Therefore, the population is vital to the long-term survival of the zebras.

Since their introduction into De Hoop numbers have increased to over 90 zebras.



Researchers from Durham University (UK) are helping CapeNature to re-establish long-term monitoring of the Cape mountain zebra in:

- De Hoop Nature Reserve
- Kammanassie Nature Reserve
- Gamkaberg Nature Reserve

The project involves:

- Photographing and identifying individuals
- Updating population records
- Training field rangers to identify zebras and to collect regular population data

Long-term monitoring will enable managers to assess whether populations are increasing or decreasing. This information, and other data that will be collected during the project, is vital for the development of effective management strategies to ensure the long-term survival of the Cape mountain zebra.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

http://www.dur.ac.uk/r.a.hill/zebra_conservation.htm

The Darwin Initiative is a grants programme run by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that aims to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources around the world.

Cape Mountain Zebra

(*Equus zebra zebra*)

Status:
Endangered

Population decline:
To less than 100 animals

Conservation priority:
Increase numbers in order to ensure the long-term survival of these beautiful animals

