

The Cape Grey Mongoose, *Herpestes pulverulentus*

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The Cape grey mongoose (Kaapse grysmuishond), is a solitary, diurnal viverrid (carnivore) of approximately 1 000 g. Six subspecies (forms) have been recognized. These are: a reddish coloured form with a black tailtip (*shortridgei*) which is found in northern South West Africa; two nearly black forms (*nigratus* and *annulatus*) also distributed in northern South West Africa; a grizzled brown to grey form, (*ruddi*) which occurs in Namaqualand; the typical grizzled grey form (*pulverulentus*), hence the vernacular name grey mongoose, distributed in the south-western, eastern, and north-eastern Cape province, and the Orange Free State; and a lighter coloured grey form (*basuticus*) from Lesotho and south-western Natal.

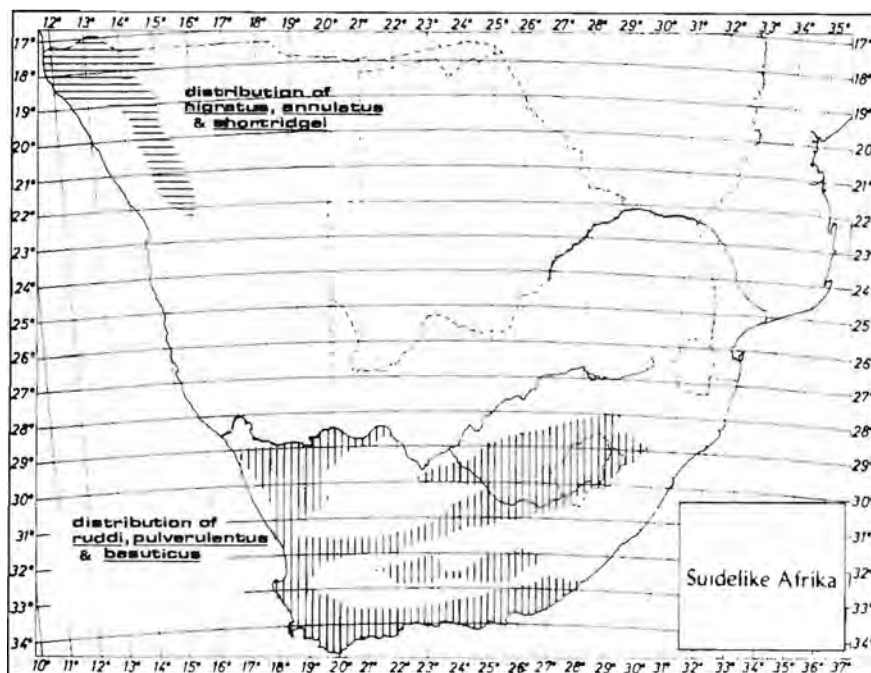
pulverulentus and *basuticus* and that each of these forms is not distinct but overlap in colour and distribution. The remaining forms, *nigratus*, *annulatus*, and *shortridgei* appear to belong to a different species, the slender mongooses (*Herpestes sanguineus*) which as a group are widely distributed over large parts of Africa, from south of the Sahara to the Cape Province.

The significance of these findings is that the Cape grey mongoose is not distributed as widely as was previously suggested (i.e. southern Africa south of the 17°S latitude); but is confined to the southern parts of southern Africa (i.e. South Africa approximately south of the 28°S latitude). Consequently the grey mongoose is possibly the only carnivore in the southern African Subregion with such a restricted southern range. ©

However, current research on the grey mongoose shows that of the six subspecies only three forms are valid, namely *ruddi*,



Grey mongoose
Grysmuishond



Distribution of the Cape grey mongoose (*Herpestes pulverulentus*); only *ruddi*, *pulverulentus* and *basuticus* are recognized.