

A photograph of two men crouching in a field at night, with a porcupine lying on the ground in front of them. The man on the left is wearing a green shirt and shorts, and the man on the right is wearing a camouflage jacket and khaki pants. Both are holding binoculars. The porcupine is lying on its side, showing its long, dark quills with white tips. The background is dark with some foliage.

Porcupine

Ystervark
Hystrix africaeaustralis

Description The largest rodent in the region. The body is covered with quills, spines and flattened, black bristles. The quills are white with black rings and are about 30 cm long. On the neck and back the quills and spines are longer and thinner and can be raised, which makes the animal look larger and more fearsome. The rest of the body, the face and the short legs are covered with coarse, black hair.

Sexual dimorphism Females are usually larger than males.

Habitat They are very adaptable and are found in most types of habitat except in forests and deserts.

Habits Cape Porcupines are usually solitary, but three or more adults may make use of the same shelter. One often sees old bones lying outside their burrows, which they dragged there. Sometimes they move long distances at night in search of food. They can run fast when chased. They cause much damage to agricultural lands and vegetable gardens. Quills are not released, as is commonly believed, but the animal backs up to the attacker so that the quills stick into and remain in the attacker. Sometimes lions and leopards have trouble after an attack when broken-off quills cause festering sores.

Voice Growl, snuffle, teeth-chattering; rattling their tail quills when alarmed.

Breeding 1 to 3 young are born any time of the year (peaking in August to March in summer rainfall areas), after a gestation period of \pm 3 months.

Also known as Porcupine.