

CHAPTER 16
CRYPTOMYS BOCAGEI (DE WINTON) 1896

This species, vernacularly known as Bocage's mole-rat, was first described by de Winton (1897, 323) naming it Georychus Bocagei, in honour of the distinguished Portuguese naturalist, Prof. Barboza du Bocage of the Lisbon Museum. Bocage has done much to advance knowledge of the fauna of Angola and de Winton was entrusted with describing a number of rodents from Angola, which ultimately would have been presented to the British Museum in London.

As far as distribution of this species is concerned, it seems to be fairly widely spread in the western parts of Angola, ranging southwards across the Cunene river into the northernmost portion of South West Africa. It is for this reason that this species is considered in greater detail, although its main area of distribution lies extralimitally as far as the present work is concerned. Unfortunately this species is poorly represented in Southern African collections.

Cryptomys bocagei (de Winton)

Georychus Bocagei de Winton, Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.,

20: 6: 323, 1897. Type locality:

Hanha, Angola.

Type specimen:

Old, aged ♂, in alcohol, B.M. no. 97.8.6.22, British Museum, London.

Type locality:

Hanha, Angola.

Distribution/...

Distribution: (Fig. 16.1).

This species seems to be widely spread in western Angola, spreading southwards across the Cunene river to a number of localities in South West Africa. To what extent its range extends eastwards in Angola, is not known.

Diagnostic characters:

A large species, H.B. M = 151 mm., C.B. M = 31.9 mm., (♂♂) more or less intermediate in size between C. damarensis and C. darlingi.

Colour:

The colour has been described as a pale drab-grey, almost silver grey (de Winton, 1897, 323). I am not inclined to agree with the description of the colour as silver grey - at least not when the specimens available for study are considered. The Transvaal Museum specimens all create a drab-grey, dirtyish impression with an overall brownish tinge. The occurrence of a white frontal spot is variable.

Size: Adult ♂♂:

H.B.	141-165 mm., M = 151 mm.
T.	7-12 mm., M = 10 mm., (6% of H.B.)
H.F.	19-22 mm., M = 20 mm., (13% of H.B.)
C.B.	29.9-34.4 mm., M = 31.9 mm.
B.C.	13.6-14.7 mm., M = 14.3 mm., (44.8% of C.B.)
I.W.	7.5-7.9 mm., M = 7.7 mm., (24.1% of C.B.)
Z.W.	21.0-24.6 mm., M = 22.5 mm., (70.5% of C.B.)
M.W.	6.0-6.9 mm., M = 6.4 mm., (20.0% of C.B.)
U.T.R.	5.0-5.7 mm., M = 5.3 mm., (16.4 % of C.B.)
L.J.	19.8-23.0 mm., M = 20.9 mm., (65.5% of C.B.)
L.T.R.	5.5 mm., M = 5.5 mm., (17.2% of C.B.)

Adult/...

Adult ♀♀:

H.B.	150-165 mm., M = 155 mm.
T.	6-15 mm., M = 11 mm., (7% of H.B.)
H.F.	20-24 mm., M = 24 mm., (13% of H.B.)
C.B.	32.5-35.0 mm., M = 33.5 mm.
B.C.	13.7-15.6 mm., M = 14.5 mm., (43.2% of C.B.)
I.W.	7.3-8.4 mm., M = 7.7 mm., (22.9% of C.B.)
Z.W.	23.3-24.4 mm., M = 23.6 mm., (70.4% of C.B.)
M.W.	6.2-6.9 mm., M = 6.6 mm., (19.7% of C.B.)
U.T.R.	4.8-5.3 mm., M = 5.1 mm., (15.2% of C.B.)
L.J.	21.2-22.9 mm., M = 21.8 mm., (65.0% of C.B.)
L.T.R.	4.9-5.6 mm., M = 5.3 mm., (15.8% of C.B.)

Skull and dentition:

The skull is broader and stronger than that encountered in C. hottentotus but the zygomata are not bowed outwardly in their anterior portion so much as in that species or in C. damarensis. The infraorbital foramen is long and narrow, broadest in its lower portions, the outer walls being thin or moderately thick. On the other hand, Roberts (1951, 385) has stated that the outer wall of the infraorbital foramen is thickened.

The dentition seems to offer no diagnostic features.

Discussion:

The taxonomic position of C. bocagei is not clear, partly due to the fact that very little material is available for study. I feel that this is probably not a good species, and its relationship to C. darlingi (resembling it phenotypically and morphologically rather closely) is obscure. It may eventually be shown to be a synonym of C. darlingi.

It/...

It is however very different from C. damarensis, occurring to the south of its range. Until such time when a more complete series of study skins and skulls is obtained, the possibility of the presence of subspecies can not be demonstrated. Such series of adult specimens from the different localities are still wanting, and de Winton did not find it possible to distinguish between the different forms from different localities. It may thus tentatively be interpreted as a monotypic species.

It must be pointed out that a similar species was described as Georhychus (sic) kubangensis by Monard in 1932 (see Roberts, 1951, 389) from Kuvango in Angola. This species is smaller than C. bocagei and Roberts has suggested that this difference in size may be due to difference in age. It must be stressed that the type specimen was never designated and according to Hill and Carter (1941) (in Ellerman et.al. 1953, 232) the specimen probably came from Rio Mbalé in Southern Angola.

Biological:

Virtually nothing is known about biological aspects relating to this species. It can only tentatively be assumed that its overall life cycle corresponds to that found in other Cryptomys.

Phylogenetic:

In view of the uncertain taxonomic status of this species, facts pertaining to the phylogeny of these animals are obscure. In material that I have seen, a relationship to C. darlingi is suggested when aspects of cranial morphology, size, colouration and overall appearance are taken into consideration.

List/...

List of localities:

Hanha (de Winton, 1897), Mombola, Angola,
10 (TM), Ondjeva, South West Africa, 1 (TM), Ongha,
South West Africa, 1 (SA), and between Ondongera and
Ukuambi, Ovamboland (Shortridge, 1934, 327).