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ODENDAAL, PAUL NIELEN

SEASONAL CHANGES IN THE OVARIAN STRUCTURE OF THE CAPE FUR SEAL *ARCTOCEPHALUS PUSILLUS PUSILLUS*

MSc UP 2000

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Seasonal changes in the ovarian structure of the Cape fur seal (*Arctocephalus pusillus pusillus*)

by

Paul Nielen Odendaal

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Magister Scientiae: Zoology

In the

Faculty of Science and Technology

School for Biological Sciences, Zoology & Entomology

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

January 2000

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Paul Nielen Odendaal

Supervisors: Prof M N Bester, Dr. M van der Merwe

School: Biological Sciences, Zoology & Entomology

Degree: MSc Zoology

Abstract

A detailed description of the morphology of the annual reproductive cycle of the female Cape fur seal was obtained by macroscopically examining the ovaries of 159 females and samples of the uterine horns of 119 of these. Ovaries from 46 of these were also processed histologically. Ages were known for 83 of the females, from which the average age at puberty and sexual maturity could be estimated, as well as age-specific and overall pregnancy rates. Overall pregnancy rates were estimated at 0.90, while the birth rate for the previous reproductive cycle was calculated as 0.85. The average age at puberty and age of sexual maturity were estimated at 4.3 and 5.02 years respectively. Certain shortcomings in the study, such as the lack of standardization in collecting material are discussed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisors, Prof. Marthán Bester and Dr. Mac van der Merwe, for support and friendship, both within and outside the academic context.

This study relied heavily on the support and participation of the former Sea Fisheries Research Institute, and I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to staff for sacrifices on my behalf, both in terms of time and effort, especially Dr. Jeremy David, Mike Meyer, Stephan Swanson and Deon Kotze.

An extra special word of thanks and appreciation to Herman Oosthuizen, without whom nothing could have been done.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to friends for support and understanding, especially Mariaan Solomon and Charles Glass.

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