



# THE HYRAX

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*Shāphān* שָׁפָן



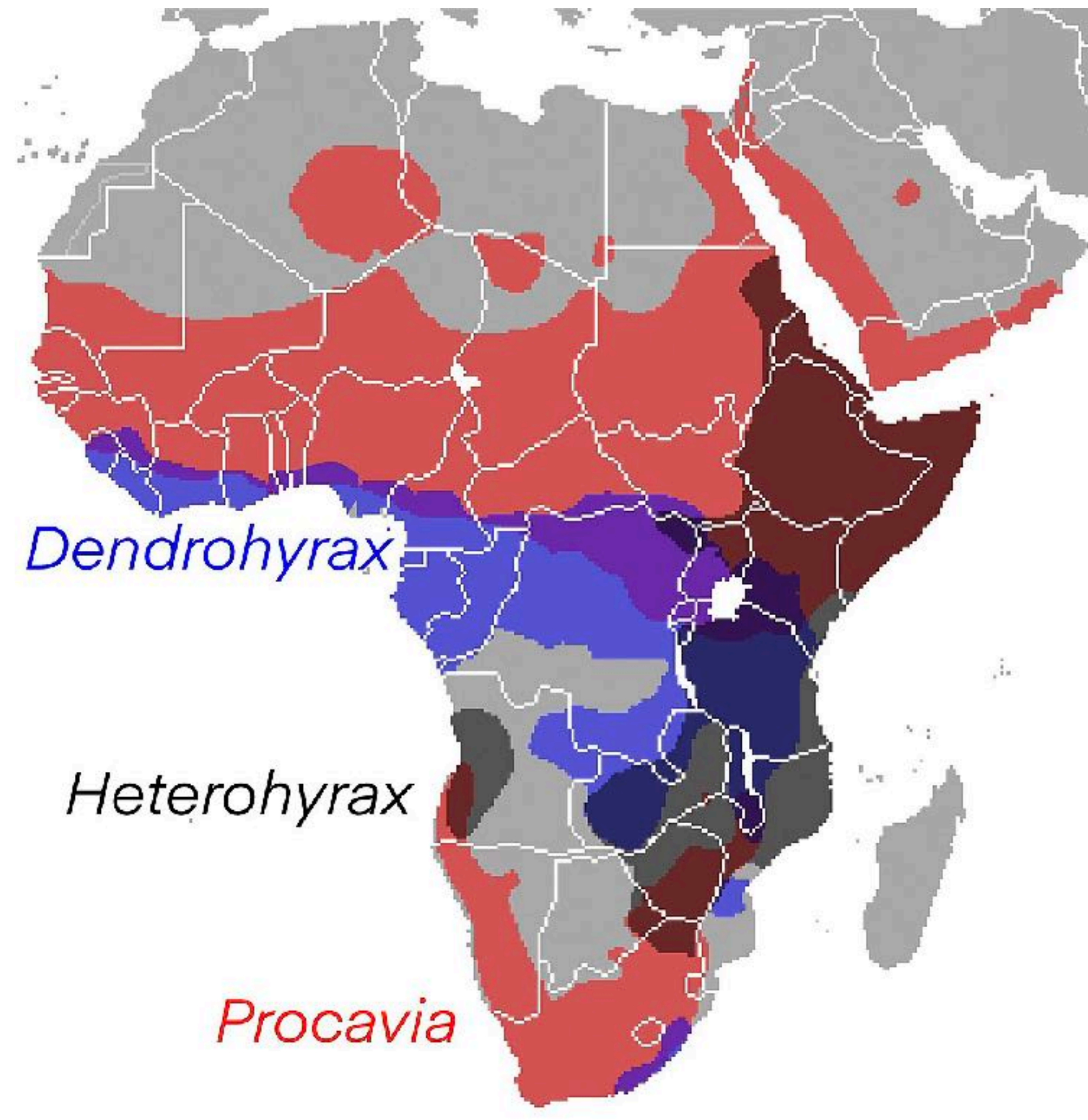
*Hyraxes are not classified as rodents as their **incisors are tusk-like**, not rodent-style gnawing teeth. They have rubbery, gripping foot pads (not claws like rodents). Internal anatomy lines up more with large mammals like elephants.*



from [Ancient Greek ὑράξ](#) *hýrax* 'shrew-mouse'

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- Hyraxes are small, stout, thickset, herbivorous [mammals](#). Hyraxes are well-furred, rotund animals with short tails.
- Modern hyraxes are typically between 30 and 70 cm (12 and 28 in) in length and weigh between 2 and 5 kg (4 and 11 lb).
- Hyraxes have a life span of 9 to 14 years.
- Rock hyraxes live on cliffs and rocky outcrops across Africa and the Middle East, including regions like Ethiopia and southern Africa.



*Dendrohyrax* are a tree dwelling genus while *Heterohyrax* live in bushy, sometimes rocky areas and *Procavia* in rocky areas.



# CUDDLING

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- Hyraxes have poorly developed [internal temperature regulation](#), for which they compensate by behavioral [thermoregulation](#), such as huddling together and basking in the sun.



Although not ruminants (chew cud), hyraxes have complex, multichambered stomachs that allow symbiotic bacteria to break down tough plant materials, but their overall ability to digest fibre is lower than that of the ungulates (hoofed animals).<sup>[11]</sup> Their mandibular motions are similar to chewing cud,<sup>[12][a]</sup> but the hyrax is physically incapable of regurgitation<sup>[13][14]</sup> as in the even-toed ungulates and some of the macropods (big footed/large hind legs). This chewing behaviour may be a form of agonistic behaviour when the animal feels threatened.

“The hyrax does not construct dens, but rather seeks shelter in existing holes of varying size and configuration.”<sup>[16]</sup>

Hyraxes urinate in a designated, communal area. The viscous urine quickly dries and, over generations, accretes to form massive middens.<sup>[17][18]</sup> These structures can date back thousands of years. The petrified urine itself is known as hyraceum and serves as a record of the environment, as well as being used medicinally and in perfumes.



## HYRAX FEET

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- Hyraxes inhabit rocky terrain across [sub-Saharan Africa](#) and the Middle East. Their feet have rubbery pads with numerous sweat glands, which may help the animal maintain its grip when quickly moving up steep, rocky surfaces. Hyraxes have stumpy toes with hoof-like nails; four toes are on each front foot and three are on each back foot.





➤ They also have efficient [kidneys](#), retaining water so that they can better survive in arid environments.



## REPRODUCTION & TERRITORY

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- ▶ Female hyraxes give birth to up to four young after a [gestation](#) period of seven to eight months, depending on the species. The young are [weaned](#) at 1–5 months of age, and reach sexual maturity at 16–17 months.
- ▶ Hyraxes live in small family groups, with a single male that aggressively defends the territory from rivals. Where living space is abundant, the male may have sole access to multiple groups of females, each with its own range. The remaining males live solitary lives, often on the periphery of areas controlled by larger males, and mate only with younger females.

# HYRAXES IN THE BIBLE

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*The 'Rock Dweller'*



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The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their  
houses in the rocks;

*-Proverbs 30:26*

“

And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

*-Leviticus 11:5*



Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; therefore they are unclean unto you.

*-Deuteronomy 14:7*

“

The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

*-Psalms 104:18*



The LORD is my rock, and  
my fortress, and my deliverer;  
my God, my strength, in  
whom I will trust; my buckler,  
and the horn of my salvation,  
and my high tower.

-Psalms 18:2