Cape Porcupine (*Hystrix africaeustralis*)

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern

The cape porcupine is a large, stout rodent. The most recognizable feature is its rigid black and white banded quills that cover its back, flanks, and crown. Quill length varies on different parts of the body, ranging from 1 inch to 1 foot on the back. They have an inconspicuous tail and an area of shorter, all-white quills on their rump and on the mid-back. Generally the quills lie flat against the body, but if there is a threat, the porcupine raises and spreads them.The body that is not covered with spines and quills is covered with coarse blackish-brown hair. The head is roundish and rather domed, with a blunt muzzle and small eyes and ears.

**Fun Facts**

1. The word porcupine means “quill pig” in Latin.
2. New quills grow to replace lost ones.
3. Their large intestine contains microorganisms that break down undigested plant fibers.

**Habitat**

The cape porcupine is most common in hilly and rocky areas, but they can adapt to most habitats as long as they have daytime shelter.

**Diet**

Roots, bulbs, tubers, bark and fallen fruit

**Predators**

Pythons, leopards, large owls

**Behavior**

Cape porcupines are primarily nocturnal. During the day, they will generally stay in modified natural shelters among rocks and roots, holes made by other animals, or burrows they dug themselves. For the most part, they are solitary creatures, but they also live in small family groups in which both parents offer long-term care to their young.

**Breeding**

Cape porcupines give birth to litters of one to three young during the wet season, after a gestation period of 3.7 months. Young are well-developed at birth and are born with open eyes. Their quills are still soft at birth but immediately begin to harden. At about two weeks of age, they leave the safety of their burrow for the first time. They are suckled until 6 to 8 weeks of age, after which point they begin to eat vegetation.

**Size**

Length: 63-73 cm

**Weight:** 8-23 kg

**Life Span:** 12-15 years

**Gestation Period:** 3.7 months

**Average number of offspring:** 1-3