

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION IN LECHWE (*KOBUS LECHE* GRAY) IN ZAMBIA

by

G. W. HOWARD (1) and J. A. SIDOROWICZ (1-2)

On a mesuré des crânes de lechwe considérés comme typiques et provenant de trois régions de la Zambie. Ces crânes venaient de populations qui coïncident avec les trois sous-espèces de lechwes déjà décrites, mais une comparaison des dimensions a montré que le lechwe rouge *Kobus leche leche* ne diffère pas d'une manière significative du lechwe de Kafue *K. l. kafuensis*, tandis que le lechwe noir *K. l. smithemani* est sans contestation possible une sous-espèce différente. La différence de couleur entre ces trois populations est, dans cet article, prise en considération et l'on propose de considérer *K. l. leche* et *K. l. kafuensis* comme des races de la même sous-espèce dont les couleurs varient légèrement.

INTRODUCTION

Little has been reported of geographical variations within species of African ungulates apart from a few external features like coloration and size of horns. When new species and subspecies are described they are often based on these external characters. Many studies have shown, however, that such external features of mammals as coloration and size and shape of horns are greatly dependent on environmental and variable genetic factors (e.g. Cabon, 1958; Zawidzka, 1958; Mystkowska, 1966; Sidorowicz, 1958, 1960) and are not necessarily reliable taxonomic characters.

One of the accepted and best methods of studying geographical variation within mammal species is the analysis of measurements of a series of skulls. It was felt that this method should be used to investigate the status of the various populations (subspecies ?) of lechwe in Zambia. This is part of a wider series of studies on this antelope that are being carried out in Zambia.

Lechwe antelope comprise two distinct species in Africa. The lechwe *Kobus leche* Gray is found in Botswana, the Caprivi Strip, Angola, Zambia and Zaire (Benson, 1969; Dorst and Dandelot, 1970; Smithers, 1971).

(1) Department of Biology, University of Zambia, P.O. Box 2379, Lusaka, Zambia.

(2) Present address : 109 Deloraine Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada.