

# Rock Hyrax

*Procavia capensis*



**Class:** *Mammalia*

**Order:** *Hyracoidea*

**Family:** *Procaviidae*

## Characteristics:

While it may look like a rodent, it's not! In fact, the hyrax is such a unique mammal it is put in an order all by itself. It is a small, compact, tailless animal that some think resembles the guinea pig in body shape. It has brown fur with a lighter underbelly, fleshy, rubbery feet good for gripping rocks and a gland on its back that may be a different color than the rest of the fur and secretes a characteristic odor, which they use to mark rocks ([Arkive](#)). They are also known as rock dassies.

## Behavior:

As the name implies, rock hyrax live on rock outcroppings and are excellent climbers. They do not dig burrows and are very adaptable to their habitats and can live at altitudes up to 14,000 feet. They live in colonies that usually consist of a breeding male, several females, and their offspring. They have a variety of loud vocalizations which they emit to establish territory, warn of predators, etc. In the morning, hyrax will sit on the rocks and warm themselves in the sun before becoming quite active. They have a third eyelid which protects the eye from the sun and dust ([San Diego Zoo](#)).

## Reproduction:

While groups may live in the same vicinity, a single male defends a territory containing a "harem" of females and their young. The female gives birth to 1 -3 young following a 7-8 month gestation period, which is extremely long for a small mammal.

## Diet:

Wild: Mainly plant material, but will also eat bird eggs, insects and lizards  
Zoo: Leaf-eater biscuits, carrot, greens, sweet potato, herbivore diet

## Conservation:

Widespread in Africa, their numbers appear stable.

## FYI:

The hyrax's closest living relatives are believed to be the elephant, dugong and manatee, meaning at some point they may have shared a common ancestor, and the fossil record indicates there was at one time a hyrax the size of an ox ([African Wildlife Foundation](#)).



## **Range & Habitat:**

Rocky areas and outcroppings



**Lifespan:** up to 15 years in captivity, 10 years in the wild.

**Special Adaptations:** Moist, rubbery feet allow them to grip on to the rocks they climb.

## **IUCN Conservation Status:**

Least Concern

