

## FISHES

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### Sources of information

The two most important data sources on freshwater fishes are the Albany Museum and the JLB Smith Institute of Ichthyology of Rhodes University. Various other museums, both nationally and internationally, universities, research institutions (e.g. in Skukuza) and the Department of Nature Conservation, Limpopo Province, house valuable collections and/or distribution data. This information is available on request. Data on fish distribution is available electronically from the JLB Smith Institute.

The Department of Biological Sciences of the University of Venda did a detailed distribution survey of the fishes of the Soutpansberg. The results of this survey can be obtained from the department.

The whole Soutpansberg is drained by the Limpopo River system. Forty four of the 50 species found in this system have been collected from the Soutpansberg. This represents ten families and 19 genera.

### Summary statistics

Due to climatic diversity and the abundance of perennial streams, the Soutpansberg presents a high diversity of aquatic biotopes for fish. The mountain also contains the only inland freshwater lake in Southern Africa, namely Lake Fundudzi. This explains the relatively high diversity of species, e.g. 88% of Limpopo River system species within a relatively small area. The Soutpansberg contains more fish species than the Pongola River system (40 species), The Tugela River system (12 species) and the Orange River system (16 species). Twenty eight percent of all Southern African fish species occur in the Soutpansberg.

The Soutpansberg contains no endemic fish species. However, it does share seven endemics with the adjacent Incomati and Limpopo River systems. It also contains the only known localities of lungfish (*Protopterus annectens*) and *Clarias theodorae* in the northern part of South Africa. Each of these species is only known from one single locality in this region. Three Soutpansberg species are listed in the SA Red Data Book on Fishes namely *Nothobranchius orthonotus* (rare), *N. furzeri* (endangered) and *Opsaridium peringueyi* (rare).

### Major studies and publications

ENGELBRECHT, J. 1998. *A checklist of Fish Species occurring in the Limpopo, Sabie and Incomati Rivers*. Appendix 2 of a Specialist report for the Sasol Natural gas Mozambique to South Africa Project

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SKELTON, P. H. 1987. South African Red Data Book — Fishes. *South African National Scientific Programmes Report* no. 137.

SKELTON, P. H. 1993. *A Complete Guide to the Freshwater Fishes of Southern Africa*. Southern Book Publishers, Halfway House.

### **Recommendations for priority studies**

The fishes is the only vertebrate group for which relatively detailed distribution data is available. Studies should concentrate on the ecology of rare species.

### **“Hot spots” of particular importance**

The hotspots will include those areas where rare species occur, namely the Nwanedi River, perennial streams and the Pafuri Floodplain area.



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