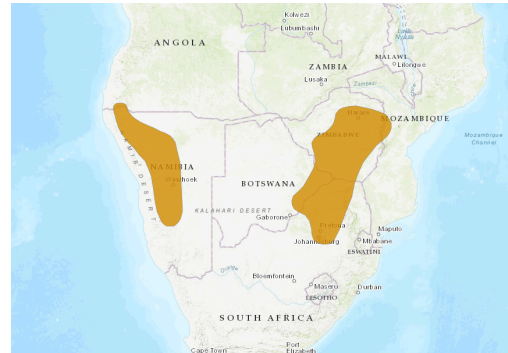




MEET ME IN THE TSWAPONG HILLS !



Jameson's Red Rock Hare, *Pronolagus randensis*, is found in Botswana, Limpopo and Mpumalanga, but it's not very common and most South Africans have never seen one. There is another, quite separate population in Namibia.

This is a large (up to 2.3 kg and 50 cm long) hare with a reddish brown coat of silky hair. The cheeks and lower jaw are light grey. The tail (and sometimes the ears) is tipped with black.

Most hares of the world are animals of open grassland, and they rely on speed to escape predators. *P. randensis* has a different strategy. It is an impressive climber, and relies on the inaccessibility of its rocky habitat for protection. It can jump from rock to rock, and can climb apparently sheer cliff faces with ease to reach protected crevices.

P. randensis is both solitary and nocturnal, and it spends hot days sheltering from the sun in caves or under shady overhangs. It almost always feeds at night, grazing on grass shoots. However, in the winter it will come out and sunbathe on the rocks during the day to warm up. The colouration of the animal is rather similar to that of the sandstone rocks of the cliffs, so unless they move they will be hard to spot. Natural enemies are leopards, eagles and owls.

Remarkably little is known about the biology, behavior and ecology of this animal. Its preference for living on rocky cliffs makes it a difficult animal to study. But here in the Tswapong Hills it lives within easy walking distance of a university, so sooner or later this may change.

Anyway, if you want to see a Jameson's red rock hare, the Borotelatshwene Cliffs in the Tswapong Hills probably offer the best opportunity during your travels. They are very common here, and never hunted as the BaTswapong people regard them as their totem. If you sit quietly for a time, scanning the sides of a rocky gorge on a winter's day, you may see the rocks begin to move.