

## Humboldt's Hog-nosed Skunk

*Conepatus humboldtii*

Unfortunately lists of endangered fleas are not easily found. So, when entertaining the idea of such a flea, Bintley contacted the Natural History Museum. They confirmed that they couldn't give him any information about endangered fleas, but they could provide a list of endangered animals which have fleas found only on them. Looking through the list, he decided upon the animal with the oddest name – Humboldt's Hog-Nosed Skunk, or the Patagonian Hog-Nosed Skunk, which is most commonly known as the Patagonian Skunk. If the animal is endangered, it follows that its fleas will also be endangered!

Found in Argentina, Chile and Paraguay, the Patagonian Skunk lives in many different terrains, but prefers a more rugged

environment, making its den in rocky crevices and burrows. It can grow to 60cm in length and normally weighs from 1.5 to 2kg.

Skunk pelts used to be highly prized by fur traders. This, combined with man's expansion and domestic activities, led to skunk numbers dropping rapidly during the 19th century. However, skunks are also very good at catching mice and rats. Consequently, the first legislation protecting any skunk species was passed in New York in 1893, at the request of hop growers. They found them useful as a form of free pest control!

Today, although numbers have increased, they are still listed as an endangered species.



Photo: Robert Erwin / Photoshot



Photo: Martin Harvey / Photoshot

## Southern Cape Zebra

*Equus zebra zebra*

The Cape Mountain Zebra, found in western and southern South Africa, is a sub-species of the Mountain Zebra. Once found over large areas of the country, their numbers are now severely reduced.

Like all zebras, it is boldly striped in black and white and no two individuals look exactly alike. Adult Cape Mountain Zebras have a body length of 2.2m and shoulder height ranges from 1 to 1.4m. They typically weigh between 240 and 370 kg, with females larger than males.

Once again man's influence has been the deciding factor in their survival. They were

hunted almost to extinction for their hide, often used for making grain bags. By the 1920s, approximately 400 zebras made up the complete wild population and, in 1950, as few as 91 individuals were recorded.

However, the Cape Zebra is now considered one of South Africa's great conservation success stories. Since the 1950s, conservation efforts have raised the population to 400 recorded in 1984, to 700 during the early 90s and over 1200 in 1998. Despite this success, it is still listed as threatened and is protected by law.