

ORDER TUBULIDENTATA**Family ORYCTEROPODIDAE**

(Aardvark)

The common name, aardvark (Afrikaans for "earth-pig"), and the ordinal name, Tubulidentata (referring to "tubule-teeth"), identify two of the most distinguishing features of these mammals. Superficial features include a slender head and snout, large closable ears, and muscular tail and limbs. The digits are partially syndactylous. The structure of the teeth is unique (see below and Fig.8). The permanent cheekteeth are ever-growing; since they do not erupt at the same time, they are seldom present simultaneously. Weighing as much as 80 kg (about 200 lbs), aardvarks are the most massive termite-eaters.

Aardvarks have a highly developed sense of smell. The peculiar shape of the cranium (Fig. 64) is due to an enlargement of the anterior portion of the brain cavity and an elongation and expansion of the nasal cavities, which house, respectively, the large olfactory lobes of the brain and the elongate curled turbinal bones which are covered by the olfactory mucosa. The blunt end of the snout is soft and mobile, and the nostrils are surrounded by dense hairs and sensory tentacle-like vibrissae.

In habits, aardvarks are primarily nocturnal and solitary, and are most common in open grasslands and savannahs where termites and ants are abundant. Aardvarks excavate their own elaborate burrows, termite mounds, and anthills. Females generally bear one young.

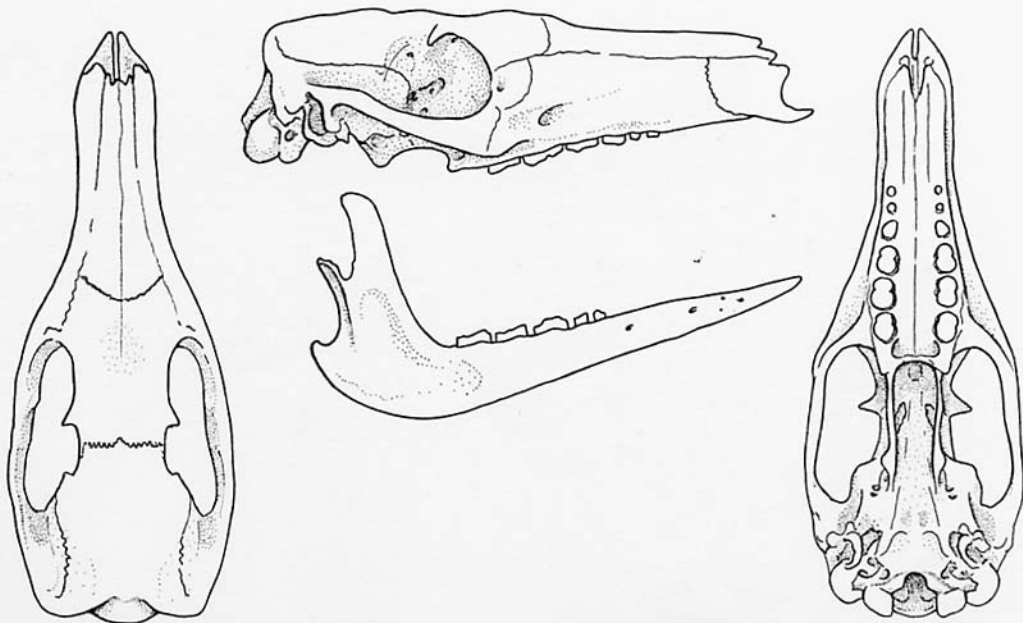


Figure 64. Skull of an orycteropodid (*Orycteropus*, x 1/3).

One genus, 1 species; Africa south of the Sahara.

Recognition Characters:

- **cheekteeth homodont, columnar, consisting of numerous vertical tubes of dentine in a matrix of pulp (Figs. 8, 64).**
- 1. **size medium-large (145-220 cm), piglike.**
- 2. **body covered with bristly hairs.**
- 3. **digits 4-5, with shovel-shaped nails.**
- 4. no incisors or canines.
- 5. cheekteeth as described above.
- 6. zygomatic arch complete (Fig. 64).
- 7. **jugal and lacrimal present; no interparietal.**
- 8. pterygoid bones separate, not forming part of palate (Fig. 64).
- 9. no extra zygapophyses on vertebrae.

Dental formula: $\frac{0\ 0\ 2\ 3}{0\ 0\ 2\ 3} = 20$

Genus:

Orycteropus (1) - *O. afer* is the aardvark.

Remarks: Reviews of the biology of aardvarks were provided by Kingdon (1971a) and Melton (1976). Morphological features and anatomy were described by Sonntag (1925), Sonntag and Woollard (1925), and Clark and Sonntag (1926).