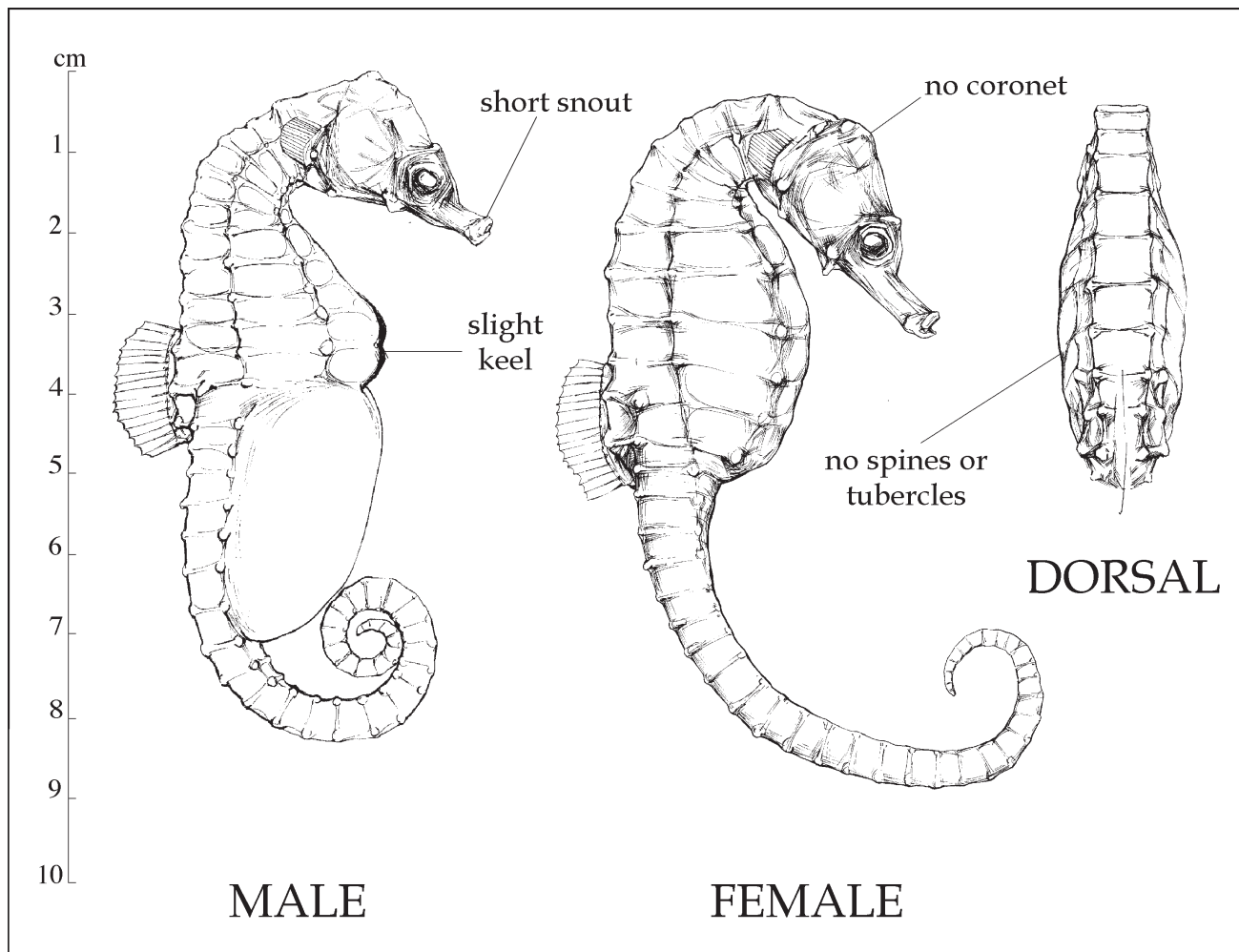


Hippocampus capensis**Boulenger 1900****Common names**Knysna seahorse; Cape seahorse; *Knysna-seeperdjie* (Afrikaans; South Africa)**Synonyms**

None known

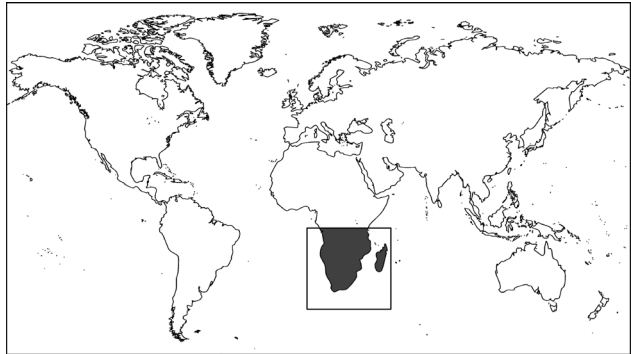
**Description***Maximum recorded adult height:* 12 cm⁵⁵*Trunk rings:* 11*Tail rings:* 34 (32–37)*HL/SnL:* 3.0*Rings supporting dorsal fin:* 2 trunk rings and 1 tail ring*Dorsal fin rays:* 17 (16–18)*Pectoral fin rays:* 15 (14–17)*Coronet:* None: arch of neck is a smooth curve. Juveniles may have a small coronet but this disappears as they mature*Spines:* None on body; short and blunt on tail*Other distinctive characteristics:* Short snout; male has slight keel*Colour/pattern:* Usually mottled greenish or brownish; can have scattered dark spots on body

Confirmed distribution

South Africa

Suspected distribution

No other locations suspected

**Habitat**

Typically found at 0.5–20 m depth⁵⁵; estuarine, submerged vegetation, tolerates salinity from 1–59 parts per thousand⁵⁶

Life history

Maximum reported height at onset of sexual maturity 5 cm⁵⁶; breeding season September to April⁵⁵; found in pairs in the wild⁵⁷; sexually monogamous⁵⁷; gestation duration averages 4 weeks¹⁵; length at birth averages 11 mm¹⁵; maximum reported brood size 120⁵⁶; planktonic immediately after birth⁵⁶

Trade

Not known in international trade

Conservation status

The entire genus *Hippocampus* is listed in Appendix II of CITES, effective May 2004¹. *H. capensis* is listed as Endangered by IUCN¹³. *H. capensis* is protected by the Cape Nature Conservation Ordinance 19 (1974) and the CNC Proclamation 109 (1988), which prohibits harvesting without a permit; the species is listed in the South African Red Book of Fishes. It has the smallest known range of any seahorse; development and tourism are putting heavy pressure on the Knysna Estuary and freshwater floods have caused heavy seahorse mortality^{56, 58}

Similar species

- *H. hippocampus*, found in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic, has more tail rings, a higher, ridge-like or wedge-shaped coronet, and prominent eye spine

Other notes

- Males are longer and heavier than females and have proportionally longer tails^{55, 58}
- Genetic data suggest that *H. capensis* is closely related to species in the *H. kuda* complex (see Appendix D)⁴⁰