

Wild Pigs

The Langebaanweg wild pigs (or suids as they are scientifically called as they belong to the family Suidae) from the Langeberg Quartzose Sand Member (which is the older of the main fossil-bearing horizons at Langebaanweg belong to a species called *Nyanzachoerus australis*. This is a name proposed by Cooke and Hendey, who did the first work on the pig species at Langebaanweg, quite a while ago. It is a species that probably migrated down to southern Africa from eastern Africa about 5.2 million years ago and which evolved from the older *Nyanzachoerus syrticus*, and preceded the species called *Nyanzachoerus kanamensis* in eastern Africa. This species is also found in the Middle Awash region in Ethiopia from a temporally tight time period (5.2 Million years ago).

The Langeberg Quartzose Sand Member has not been directly dated as yet, although attempts are currently underway to get a direct date from this horizon. The Langebaanweg Suidae enable us to infer a relative date however, as the abundance of *Nyanzachoerus australis* in the Langeberg Quartzose Sand Member and its presence in eastern Africa at 5.2 million years ago establishes this as the relative age for the Langeberg Quartzose Sand Member. *Nyanzachoerus australis* is therefore important for the biochronology of the Langeberg Quartzose Sand Member (see 'How old is it anyway?' for more information on how animals may be used to work out the age of deposits which cannot be directly dated).

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