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Find out more about the Group on our website at <http://afrotheria.net/ASG.html>

Guidelines for Authors

Articles, species profiles, reviews, research updates, personal perspectives, news items and announcements for the noticeboard are invited on topics relevant to the newsletter's focus.

Material for edition number 18 should be sent to Dr PJ Stephenson (StephensonPJ@gmail.com). Articles should be under 3,000 words and follow the format of this edition. Reference citations should be in APA format. The editor reserves the right to edit all contributions for style and content.

Message from the Chair

Andrew Taylor
Chair, IUCN SSC Afrotheria Specialist Group

Dear Afrotheria Specialist Group colleagues,
I hope you are all well and have managed to keep your heads above water during the last year. Hopefully you have been able to return to some semblance of normalcy over the last few months although, if your experience has been anything like mine, your ability to travel remains limited, and this will no doubt have impacted your work.

Although we are now into the next IUCN quadrennium, things have been slow to get going and we have not yet re-assembled the group members. Technically, all who were members during the last four years are still members, and the changeover is expected to start during October/November. So, I (or the section coordinators) will be getting in contact with you soon to follow up. This is an opportunity to bring in new members if you know of biologists and conservationists working on our taxa that you think will make a genuine contribution to the group.

As I mentioned last year, I anticipate us starting a process to reassess the conservation status of all our species during the next quadrennium, so please be ready to assist if you are able. This can be a slightly protracted process, especially for the section coordinators, but it is necessary for the ongoing conservation support of our species.

As always, the newsletter remains one of the few ways we have to keep our group relevant under the current difficult funding climate. It is one of the targets we set ourselves that is manageable without financial resources and helps us stay on the radar of the IUCN SSC. Please keep supporting the newsletter by submitting articles to

the next edition in 2022. Thanks again to PJ Stephenson for continuing as the newsletter editor and to those who submitted articles.

I wish you well for the coming year.
Andrew

Andrew Taylor, Gauteng, South Africa
1 December 2021

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More Somali Sengis in Djibouti

In September of 2021, a field survey of birds, bats, and terrestrial mammals in the Republic of Djibouti resulted in new observations and photographs of Somali sengis (*Galegeeska revoilii*). Compared to the closest sengi occurrence that was previously reported from Djibouti, one of these sightings is nearly 13 km to the east and the others are about 8 km to the south. These new sengi localities are in the Ali Sabieh Region, near the Djalelo Wildlife Protected Area but outside of its boundaries. These areas have been, to my knowledge, mostly unexplored by field biologists. The new occurrence data expands the documented range of *G. revoilii* within Djibouti.

Over a period of three consecutive days, nine individuals were sighted at six locations. On two occasions and at two different sites, pairs of sengis were quietly sheltering together under a short bush. They each emerged several times, roamed nearby, and then returned to their shared shelters. Presumably these were male-female pairs. At other localities, sengis were observed roaming or running. One individual was found dead but intact – this animal has been collected and preserved for future studies. Sightings 3-6 (see Table 1) were within a 0.1 square kilometer area and all nine animals were observed (or found) between 6:30 and 7:00 am.

Table 1. New occurrence data for Somali sengis in Djibouti.

| Site | No. sengis | Geocoordinates | Date/Time | No. photos |
|------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1 | 1 | 11.339225, 42.945944 | 2021/09/11 6:55am | 0 |
| 2 | 2 (1 dead) | 11.299381, 42.866964 | 2021/09/12 6:35am | 0 |
| 3 | 2 (paired) | 11.287625, 42.848650 | 2021/09/12 6:55am | 3 |
| 4 | 2 (paired) | 11.289875, 42.847208 | 2021/09/13 6:35am | 6 |
| 5 | 1 | 11.290122, 42.846764 | 2021/09/13 6:50am | 0 |
| 6 | 1 | 11.289939, 42.846514 | 2021/09/13 6:59am | 0 |



Figure 1. Somali sengi at site 4. This image depicts a relatively hairy tail-tip and a tail length that seems to considerably exceed head-body length. Photo: Houssein Rayaleh.



Figure 2. Somali Sengi at site 3. Note the grey hair on the dorsum of the hands and feet. Photo: Houssein Rayaleh.

Like other Somali sengi sites in Djibouti, the substrates at these new locations are predominantly rocky with scattered low thorny bushes (mainly *Acacia borrida*, *A. tortilis*, & *A. melifera*). Other mammals observed nearby included Salt's dik-diks, gerenuks, Soemmerring's gazelles, Dorcas gazelles, and abundant Speke's pectinators. Based on previous work, gerbils and spiny mice would also be expected to be present, but these nocturnal taxa were not observed. The habitat is essentially pristine and far enough away from Djibouti City that significant human disturbance seems unlikely. While hiking out to these areas, conversations with nearby goat-herders indicated that sengis are seen frequently and that all local people use the common name *wali sandbeer* to refer to sengis.

For the most part, distinguishing the Somali sengi from other sengis that might occur in the Horn of Africa requires close examination of a few key anatomical traits (e.g., relative tail length and size of second upper incisor). However, some of the new photographs (Figures 1 and 2) clearly depict a hairy tail-tip which (given our study of sengis in Djibouti in 2019) almost certainly indicates the species is *G. revoilii*. Also, the dorsum of the hands and feet are grey rather than pure white, a trait that supports this diagnosis. To date, there are no verifiable records of the Somali rufous sengi in Djibouti, and it has been several decades since that taxon was last documented in the Horn of Africa.

Houssein Rayaleh

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Recent Publications

Aardvarks

- Epps, C. W., Weldy, M. J., Crowhurst, R. S., & Spaan, R. S. (2021). Estimating the distribution and habitat suitability for aardvarks (*Orycteropus afer*) in Kruger National Park, South Africa. *African Journal of Ecology*, 59(4), 854-865.
- Roussiakis, S., Kargopoulos, N., Kampouridis, P., Svorligkou, G., & Theodorou, G. (2021). The fossil aardvark *Amphiorcyteropus gaudryi* (Forsyth Major, 1888) from the late Miocene of Kerassia (Euboea, Greece). *Historical Biology*, 1-14.
- Weyer, N. M., Fuller, A., Haw, A. J., Meyer, L. C. R., Mitchell, D., Picker, M., ... & Hetem, R. S. (2020). Increased diurnal activity is indicative of energy deficit in a nocturnal mammal, the aardvark. *Frontiers in Physiology*, 11, 637.

Golden moles

- Cowan, O. S., Henry, D. A., & Little, I. T. (2021). A big leap forward for Afrotheria conservation in South Africa: A new environmental screening tool ensures cryptic species of conservation concern are not overlooked during the environmental impact assessment process. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 63, 126044.
- Lockley, M. G., Helm, C. W., Cawthra, H. C., De Vynck, J. C., & Perrin, M. R. (2021). Pleistocene golden mole and sand-swimming trace fossils from the Cape coast of South Africa. *Quaternary Research*, 101, 169-186.
- Mynhardt, S., Bennett, N. C., & Bloomer, P. (2020). New insights from RADseq data on differentiation in the Hottentot golden mole species complex from South Africa. *Molecular phylogenetics and evolution*, 143, 106667.

Hyraxes

- Ivory, S. J., Cole, K. L., Anderson, R. S., Anderson, A., & McCriston, J. (2021). Human landscape modification and expansion of tropical woodland in southern Arabia during the mid-Holocene from rock hyrax middens. *Journal of Biogeography*, 48(10), 2588-2603.
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- Oates, J. F., Woodman, N., Gaubert, P., Sargis, E. J., Wiafe, E. D., Lecompte, E., ... & Bearder, S. K. (2021). A new species of tree hyrax (Procaviidae: *Dendrohyrax*) from West Africa and the significance of the Niger–Volta interfluvium in mammalian biogeography. *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*. DOI: 10.1093/zoolinnean/zlab029.
- Visser, J. H., Robinson, T. J., & Jansen van Vuuren, B. (2020). Spatial genetic structure in the rock hyrax (*Procavia capensis*) across the Namaqualand and western Fynbos areas of South Africa—a mitochondrial and microsatellite perspective. *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, 98(8), 557-571.

Otter shrews

- Mamba, M. L., Dalton, D. L., Themb'alilahlwa, A. M., Kropff, A. S., & Monadjem, A. (2021). Small mammals of a West African hotspot, the Ziama-Wonegizi-Wologizi transfrontier forest landscape. *Mammalia*, 85(2), 127-144.
- Teutloff, N., Meller, P., Finckh, M., Cabalo, A. S., Ramiro, G. J., Neinhuis, C., & Lautenschläger, T. (2021). Hunting techniques and their harvest as indicators of mammal diversity and threat in Northern Angola. *European Journal of Wildlife Research*, 67(6), 1-16.

Sengis

- Agwanda, B. R., Rovero, F., Lawson, L. P., Vernesi, C. R. I. S. T. I. A. N. O., & Amin, R. (2021). A new subspecies of giant sengi (*Macroscelidea: Rhynchocyon*) from coastal Kenya. *Zootaxa*, 4948(2).

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- Heritage, S., Rayaleh, H., Awaleh, D. G., & Rathbun, G. B. (2020). New records of a lost species and a geographic range expansion for sengis in the Horn of Africa. *PeerJ*, 8, e9652.
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Tenrecs

- Annappagada, A., Brook, C. E., Luskin, M. S., Rahariniaina, R. P., Helin, M., Razafinarivo, O., ... & Golden, C. D. (2021). Evaluation of tenrec population viability and potential sustainable management under hunting pressure in northeastern Madagascar. *Animal Conservation*.
- Houck, E., & Harrison, T. (2021). Breeding and neonatal rearing practices and challenges in lesser hedgehog tenrecs (*echinops telfairi*) in north american zoos. *Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine*, 52(1), 315-319.
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