

2021 Report

IUCN SSC Afrotheria Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS

17

Mission statement

The IUCN SSC Afrotheria Specialist Group (ASG) facilitates the conservation of hyraxes, the Aardvark, elephant-shrews or sengis, golden moles, tenrecs, and their habitats by: (1) providing sound scientific advice and guidance to conservationists, governments, and other interested groups; (2) raising public awareness; and (3) developing research and conservation programmes.

Projected impact 2021–2025

If the ASG achieved all its targets, it would be able to deliver more accurate, data-driven Red List assessments for more Afrotherian species and, therefore, be in a better position to move to conservation planning, especially for priority species.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-002 Reassess Red List categories for at least 50% of ASG species.

T-003 Conduct surveys to determine distribution and abundance of five hyrax species.

T-004 Revise taxonomy of five hyrax species.

T-005 Complete up to four reassessments of taxonomy of golden moles in species where this is necessary (e.g., *Amblysomus* and *Neamblysomus* species).

T-006 Develop a new non-invasive sampling method for golden moles, which would facilitate larger sample sizes and eventually lead to a better understanding of species distributions.

T-007 Collect basic data for three golden mole species, including geographic distributions and natural history data.

T-008 Integrate the monitoring of tenrecs in the management of key protected areas with threatened species in order to track their status and threats and identify key conservation concerns.

T-009 Conduct genomic and phenomic studies to clarify the taxonomy and species diversity within the genera *Microgale* and *Nesogale*.

T-010 Develop and assess field trials for standardised camera trapping methods to determine population estimates for giant sengis.

T-011 Conduct surveys to assess distribution, abundance, threats and taxonomic status of the Data Deficient sengi species (Somali Sengi, *Galegeeska revouillii*; Dusky Sengi, *Elephantulus fuscus*; Dusky-footed

Sengi, *E. fuscipes*; Karoo Rock Sengi, *E. pilicaudus*).

T-012 Assess trade of genera *Rhynchocyon* (giant sengis) and *Petrodromus* (Four-toed Sengi) in East Africa.

T-013 Develop a survey method to estimate Aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*) population densities and sizes.

T-014 Survey Aardvark populations to determine abundance, distribution and trends.

T-015 Conduct taxonomic studies to determine the systematics of Aardvarks, with a focus on contrasting Aardvarks from central African forests with southern African savanna Aardvarks.

COMMUNICATE

T-001 Update and maintain the Afrotheria.net website.

T-016 Produce one Afrotheria Specialist Group newsletter every year.

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Research activities

T-005 (KSR 5)

Number of taxonomic evaluations completed: 0

Somali Sengi (*Galegeeksa revoilii*) at a new locality in the Ali Sabieh Region of Djibouti, near the Djalelo Wildlife Protected Area
Photo: Houssein Rayaleh of Association Djibouti Nature



Result description: Bayesian phylogenetics and phylogeography (BPP) analysis provided support for nine *Amblysomus* species: *A. h. meesteri* ($P = 1.000$); *A. marleyi* ($P = 0.999$); *A. corrae* ($P = 0.998$); *A. h. hottentotus* ($P = 0.999$); *A. h. pondoliae* ($P = 0.999$); *A. h. longiceps* + Ermelo Dam ($P = 0.999$); *A. hottentotus* (Umtata) ($P = 0.998$); *A. h. iris* + samples from Durban coastal regions ($P = 0.967$); *A. septentrionalis* + *A. robustus* + Ngome Forest + Ermelo Dam ($P = 0.964$). This work should be published in 2022.

T-006 (KSR 5)

Non-invasive technique demonstrated to work: 1

Result description: eDNA extraction from soil has proven to be an extremely useful technique for sampling golden moles and assessing species distributions. All samples from Lambertsbay were identified as Grant's Golden Mole (*Eremitalpa granti*), and since this site falls within the known distribution of this species, its distribution will not be updated. eDNA samples were also collected from numerous sites in the Eastern Cape and along the west coast, and have provided insight on species distributions, extending the known distribution ranges for some species. The work on west coast species will be published early in 2022, and the work on Eastern Cape species shortly thereafter.

T-007 (KSR 5)

Number of species for which basic species information is increased: 1

Result description: We have found evidence of the Critically Endangered De Winton's Golden Mole (*Cryptochloris wintoni*) on the west coast, in and around Port Nolloth, but failed to find evidence of the Endangered Giant Golden Mole (*Chrysoxalax trevelyani*) in the Eastern Cape. However, we still believe it exists there, and will conduct further study in this area in 2022. The elusive Hottentot Golden Mole (*Amblysomus hottentotus*) lineage was found at the only site it is known to occur (Umtata) as well as additional sites. The distribution of this lineage will be updated once the taxonomy is resolved.

Grant's Golden Mole, Lambert's Bay Area, west coast of South Africa
Photo: Esther Matthew, Drylands Conservation Programme, Endangered Wildlife Trust



T-009 (KSR 5)

Number of published taxonomic descriptions and/or revisions: 0

Result description: Genomic and phenomic studies to clarify the taxonomy and species diversity within the genera *Microgale* and *Nesogale* are ongoing, but no new results are reported during 2021.

T-010 (KSR 5)

Field trials conducted: 0

Result description: Dr Markéta Antonínová of Friends of Arabuko-Sokoke Forest (Kenya) reported to the ASG that their team is trying to use camera traps and other methods to try to assess Golden-rumped Sengi (*Rhynchocyon chrysopygus*) population trends. Initial contact was in October 2020, but we have no recent communication from them. Otherwise, the most recent camera trap study of giant sengis was published in late 2020 (Amin, R., et al. 2021. Habitat use of the Endangered Golden-rumped Sengi, *Rhynchocyon chrysopygus*. *African Journal of Ecology* 59:108–116. doi.org/10.1111/aje.12804) but was focused on habitat use, not population numbers. So, there are no deliverables for this target yet.

T-011 (KSR 5)

Number of surveys conducted: 0

Result description: There is nothing substantial for this target yet. There is a little new data concerning additional localities of occurrence for Somali Sengi (*G. revoilii*) in Djibouti – see ASG newsletter for December 2021. We also saw a publication in early 2021 (Krásná, J., et al. 2021. The Rufous Sengi is not *Elephantulus*—Multilocus reconstruction of evolutionary history of sengis from the subfamily Macroscelidinae. *Journal of Zoological Systematics and Evolutionary Research* 59:918–932. doi.org/10.1111/jzs.12460) that seems to have sampled three Dusky Sengi (*E. fuscus*) specimens, but these are unvouchered occurrences and would tell us little other than a locality and that the species is still abundant enough to wander into a trap. Prior to this, the last work with *E. fuscus* was reported in the ASG newsletter in September 2018.

Microgale taiva, Parc National de Midongy Sud, Madagascar
Photo: L.E. Olson



Planning

T-008 (KSR 5)

Number of protected areas where monitoring is integrated into management plans: 0

Result description: This work is ongoing, but no new results are available.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-001 (KSR 13)

Number of taxonomic group web pages updated: 1

Result description: Updating and maintenance of the Afrotheria.net website is an ongoing process and was initiated during 2020 with funding from Global Wildlife Conservation. More work still needs to be done, however, so it is not completed yet.

T-016 (KSR 13)

Number of newsletters published: 1

Result description: The newsletter for 2021 was released in December 2021.

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Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 16

Geographic regions: 1 Global, 15 Africa

Actions during 2021:

Assess: 7 (KSR 5)

Communicate: 2 (KSR 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

