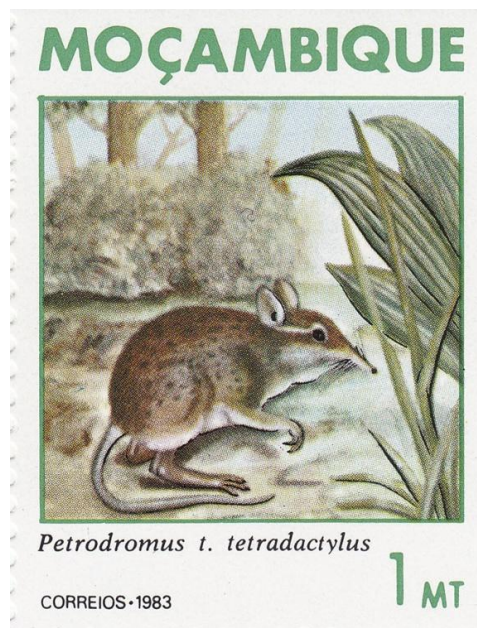


## Sengi Biology According to Postage Stamps

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The objectives of our specialist group include education and increasing public awareness of the smaller afrotheres. We have done this through this newsletter; back issues and other information can be found at [www.afrotheria.net](http://www.afrotheria.net). Recently, I discovered that five African countries (are there others?) featured sengis on their postage stamps, which is a novel way of raising public awareness of these little-known mammals. But what is disturbing to me is that the species identification does not match the illustration on some stamps. Also, with little personal philatelic knowledge, it seems to me that the featured sengis should be found in the country that issued the stamp. The only stamp that appears flawless in these regards is the one issued in Mozambique with *Petrodromus tetradactylus* (Four-toed Sengi).



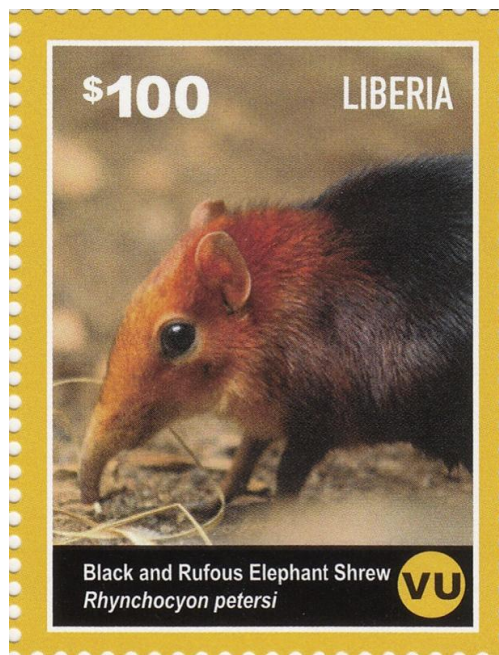
*Rhynchocyon cirnei* (Checkered Sengi, spelled as on stamp!) is found in Uganda ([www.sengis.org/distribution-table.php](http://www.sengis.org/distribution-table.php)), but unfortunately the stamp image is of *Rhynchocyon petersi* (Black-and-rufous Sengi), which is only found in southeastern Kenya and eastern Tanzania!



Zanzibar (Tanzania) has a stamp that claims *Petrodromus tetradactylus* is shown, and although this sengi does occur on Zanzibar, the image is clearly one of the three *Macroscelides* species (Round-eared Sengis), all of which are only found in the Southwestern Arid Zone of Africa.

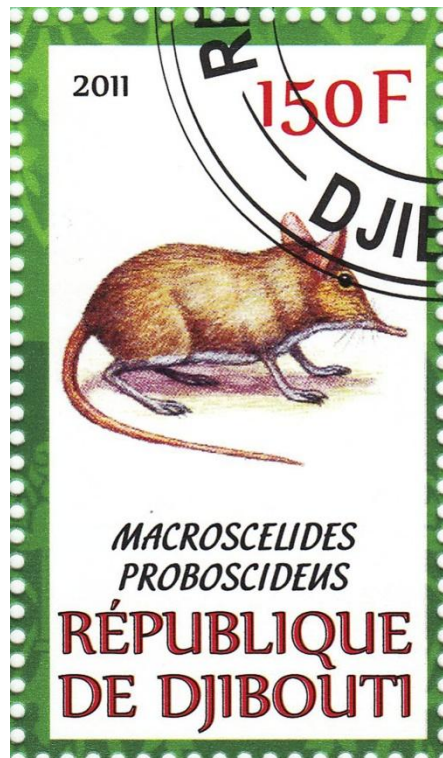


There are no sengis found in far western Africa, but Liberia features an image of *Rhynchocyon petersi* on one of its stamps.



The Djibouti stamp features the Karoo Round-eared Sengi (*Macroscelides proboscideus*) that is found in southern Namibia and western South Africa – a loooong way from the Horn of Africa. Indeed, there are no records of any sengis in Djibouti, although the Somali Sengi

(*Elephantulus revoilii*) and Rufous Sengi (*Elephantulus rufescens*) are possible (see 2014 issue of this newsletter). To my eye, the stamp image is an *Elephantulus*, (ears are much too tall for a round-eared sengi), but the image lacks the very distinctive facial pattern found on the two most likely *Elephantulus* for Djibouti.



Despite these oddities, it was a pleasant surprise that sengis found their way onto so many postal stamps! Indeed, three of the five sengi genera landed on stamps – the most species rich genus (*Elephantulus*) being left out! I wonder if other afrotheres, other than the relatively common elephants and sea cows, have found their way onto postage stamps, and also defy our understanding of biogeography and taxonomy!?