

(GDACEL) to classify the Bronberg Ridge as a Class 2 Ridge with a “no-go” development policy. Our support for this decision is based on the best scientific evidence available, which clearly identifies the importance of protecting habitat for the Critically Endangered Juliana Golden Mole. Environmental change occurs against a backdrop of other human-created stresses on biodiversity. Foremost among these are the loss and fragmentation of natural ecosystems. Thus, habitat protection is one of the most effective tools in conservation management for endangered species as small isolated populations resulting from habitat fragmentation are highly vulnerable to demographic and environmental stochastic related extinction events. In the presence of physical barriers such as roads, paving, swimming pools, etc, population isolation is enforced and a lack of migration serves to exacerbate the vulnerability to population extinction, leading to an increased risk of species extinction. Species that occupy specialist niches within ecosystems are often the first to be severely affected by anthropogenic-induced alteration of natural habitats. However, large charismatic species such as the African Elephant or Black Rhino readily receive attention when their existence is questioned. Smaller species, such as the Juliana Golden Mole, that are less appealing to the public in general and difficult to study, are frequently overlooked even when the risk of extinction is faced.

References

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Juliana Golden Mole, *Neamblysomus julianae*
Photo: Gary Bronner

Afrotheria News

Does the Golden-rumped Sengi (*Rhynchocyon chrysopygus*) occur in coastal Tanzania?

In 2002 Jonathan Walz, an archeologist working south of Tanga in northeastern Tanzania, contacted us about a Golden-rumped Sengi sighting in a patch of forest near the mouth of the Pangani River. This created considerable interest because *R. chrysopygus* is known only from small and fragmented coastal forests north of Mombasa in Kenya. South of Mombasa, the Black and Rufous Sengi (*Rhynchocyon petersi*) occurs in coastal forests and also forests in the northern Eastern Arc Mountains. Golden-rumped Sengis at Pangani, about 200 km south of Mombasa, would therefore be of great interest in terms of biogeography and, because both species are listed as endangered by the IUCN, their conservation.

We undertook a survey for *Rhynchocyon* from 8-11 July 2003 in the Pangani area with the considerable assistance of Andrew Perkin, who works on galagos in Tanzania. With GPS (Global Positioning System) co-ordinates and contacts provided by Jonathan Walz, the three of us interviewed local residents and searched suitable habitats in the Pangani area. The forest patch near the village of Msambeni, where Jonathan had made his sighting, recently had been reduced to less than a hectare by clearing for new maize crops; an area too small to support *Rhynchocyon*. We searched for larger forest patches in the area, but due to clearing for subsistence crops we only found small fragments of forest along the small escarpment dropping down to the Pangani River flood plain. We failed to make any sengi sightings in these forest patches, although there were still Blue Monkeys present in the largest patch on the steep slope of the escarpment near the village of Boza.

During the interviews, we asked local residents to identify from photographs which of the two sengis occur locally. Most people were not familiar with either sengi, but those that were identified were *R. petersi*. We visited the Msumbgwe Forest, about 20 km south of Pangani, and made a good sighting of *R. petersi* there. The colour pattern of the two *Rhynchocyon* species is distinctive, but in a brief sighting of an animal darting across a forest path we believe it is quite possible to confuse the two. We found no evidence of *R. chrysopygus* in the Pangani area.

We were shocked at the lack of coastal forest remaining around Pangani and the high rate of forest clearing that continues there. We believe that any *R. petersi* that remain in the area will soon disappear along with their forest habitat.

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