PeerJ
Life & Environment

# New records of a lost species and a geographic range expansion for sengis in the Horn of Africa

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Published August 18

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https://peerj.com/articles/9652/


## Abstract

The Somali Sengi or Somali Elephant-shrew (*‘Elephantulus’ revoilii*, Macroscelidea, Mammalia) has been considered a “lost species” and is primarily known from about 39 museum specimens, with no new vouchered occurrence records since the early 1970s. The scientific literature contains no data concerning living Somali Sengi individuals and the species’ current Data Deficient conservation status is attributable to an absence of modern information. Almost everything that has been published about the species is derived from anatomical examinations of historic specimens, gleaned from museum collection notes, or inferred from the known habits and ecology of other sengi taxa. Here we report new evidence that the Somali Sengi *is currently extant*. These data include voucher specimens, georeferenced occurrence localities, body measurements, habitat parameters, and DNA sequences. While the species is historically documented as endemic to Somalia, these new records are from the neighboring Republic of Djibouti and thus expand the Somali Sengi’s known range in the Horn of Africa. Furthermore, Djiboutian locality data near international borders suggests that the Somali Sengi is also a current inhabitant of both Somalia and

Ethiopia. Criteria that inform conservation status assessments (e.g., suitable habitat contiguity and occurrence in wildlife protected areas) can be positively characterized in Djibouti and therefore bode well for the survival of the Somali Sengi species. New data also inform previously undocumented substrate and sheltering affiliations. DNA analyses indicate that the Somali Sengi is a descendant of the Macroscelidini lineage and therefore reveal that the species' referral to the genus *Elephantulus* is incompatible with sengi phylogeny. This taxonomic issue is resolved by recognizing a new genus replacement and recombinant binomial that redesignates the Somali Sengi as *Galegeeska revoilii* (gen. nov., nov. comb). An analysis of ancestral biogeography suggests that the Somali Sengi has inhabited the Horn of Africa for more than 5.4 million years—and the recognition of the species' phylogenetic ancestry appends the already remarkable biogeographic story of the Macroscelidini tribe.

## Press Coverage

Elephant shrew rediscovered in Africa after 50 years
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-53820395

Ritrovato il toporagno elefante. Si pensava estinto da 50 anni
https://www.gqitalia.it/news/article/ritrovato-toporagno-elefante-gibuti

Tiny elephant shrew species documented in Horn of Africa for first time in nearly 50 years
https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/18/world/somali-sengi-documented-africa-scli-intl-scn/index.html

The Case of the Missing Sengi
https://synapsida.blogspot.com/2020/08/the-case-of-missing-sengi.html?m=1

Tiny Elephant Shrew Resurfaces After More Than 50 Years On Lost Species List
https://www.npr.org/2020/08/24/905350284/researcher-identifies-tiny-mammal-last-documented-in-1968?t=1634056217765

Missing for over 50 years: Long-lost elephant shrew resurfaces in Africa
https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/08/25/elephant-shrew-found-africa-after-lost-over-50-years/5631450002/

An elephant-nosed creature 'lost to science' was living just next door
https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02468-1

Sida seynisyahannada ay magaca Somali Sengi ugu bixiyeen Walo-Sandheer
https://www.bbc.com/somali/war-53850946

Elusive Somali sengi documented in Djibouti by scientists after 50 years
https://www.pri.org/stories/2020-08-18/elusive-somali-sengi-documented-djibouti-scientists-after-50-years

Elephant shrew ‘lost’ to science for 52 years is ‘rediscovered’ in Africa
https://news.mongabay.com/2020/08/elephant-shrew-lost-to-science-for-52-years-is-rediscovered-in-africa/

FOUND: Romantically Monogamous, Mouse-sized Elephant-Shrew Rediscovered Dashing Around the Wilds of Djibouti
https://www.rewild.org/press/found-romantically-monogamous-mouse-sized-elephant-shrew-rediscovered-dashing-around-the-wilds-of-djibouti-2

Tiny elephant shrew species, missing for 50 years, rediscovered
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/18/tiny-elephant-shrew-species-missing-for-50-years-rediscovered

Long 'lost' elephant shrew found in Horn of Africa
https://www.ctvnews.ca/sci-tech/long-lost-elephant-shrew-found-in-horn-of-africa-1.5068543

## Subject Areas

Biogeography, Conservation Biology, Evolutionary Studies, Taxonomy, Zoology

## Keywords

Somali Sengi, Sengis, Elephant-shrews, Macroscelidea, Djibouti, Somalia, Conservation, Phylogenetic Systematics, Taxonomy, Biogeography

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## Cite this article

Heritage S, Rayaleh H, Awaleh DG, Rathbun GB. 2020. New records of a lost species and a geographic range expansion for sengis in the Horn of Africa. *PeerJ* 8:e9652 https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.9652

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