

The diet of Cape grey mongooses in a recovering semi-arid landscape in Namibia



Cape grey mongoose, *Herpestes pulverulenta*, an endemic mesocarnivore of southern Africa

The Nama-Karoo is a dry region on the central plateau of southern Africa, with extreme temperatures and unpredictable rainfall. It is threatened by over-grazing, mining and climate change (Mucina et al., 2006).

This habitat has a wide range of highly adapted plants and animals, (Woodgate, Distiller and O’Riain, 2018) but is largely unstudied due to the difficult terrain (Mucina et al., 2006). Small carnivores are abundant, and as opportunistic foragers, analysis of their diet could offer a simple way to collect occurrence data on a wide range of more difficult to survey prey species, like rodents (Torre, 2004).

Why?

- Discover what cape grey mongooses feed on in the study area.
- Evaluate whether small carnivore diet analysis can add to knowledge about desert biome communities.



The study site: a semi-arid, or xeric, conservancy in South-west Namibia



Cape grey mongoose scat

Method

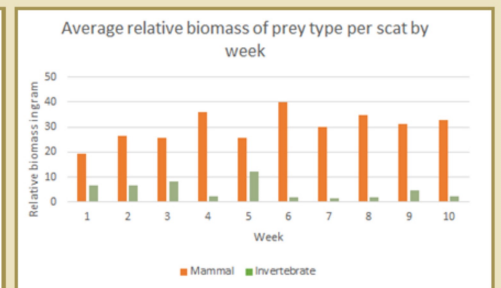
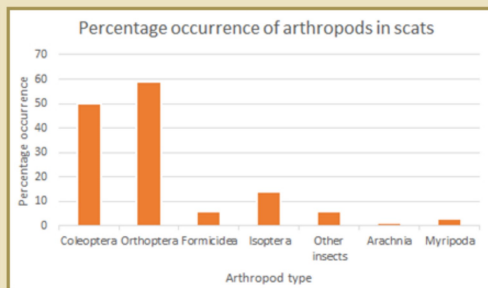
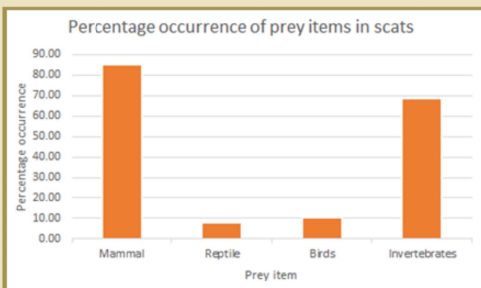
We collected 114 scat samples and used morphological and hair scale pattern analyses to identify prey species and assess their relative dietary importance.



Hair scale pattern from *G. paeba*

Results

We identified six small mammal species from jawbones and hair scale patterns, with a 75% successful identification rate. Mammals consistently made up the higher proportion of diet by biomass, but there were no discernible trends in consumption over time.



Conclusion

Cape grey mongooses make use of several food sources in this habitat, but appear to prefer mammals. Scat sampling may be useful in preliminary occurrence studies prior to more intensive trapping, but more research during different seasons would be needed to draw any firm conclusions over the use of this technique for monitoring populations over time.



Frequent prey species: four-striped grass mice *Rhabdomys pumilio*, and stone grasshopper *Trachypetrella* spp.

References

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