

A new species of Somali mammal dedicated to Italian journalist

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The scientific journal *Zootaxa* (www.mapress.com) published on 16 June 2011 the description of a new species of mammal from Somalia. The authors, Spartaco Gippoliti and Giovanni Amori (the latter of the CNR's Institute for the Study of Ecosystems), found an old specimens (mounted skin without skull) of mole-rat (a fossorial rodent of the family Bathyergidae) in the historical collections of the Museo Civico di Zoologia in Rome. It was collected at the beginning of the XX Century near Mogadiscio (Moquadisho) by military personnel of the then Italian colony, and sent to the University of Rome. The species has been named *Fukomys ilariae* to honour Italian journalist Ilaria Alpi, assassinated together with Miran Hovratin in Somalia in 1994 while they were investigating trade of toxic and hazardous wastes between Italy and Somalia.

The common name of the new species is Somali striped mole-rat (ratto-talpa striato somalo) because of two lateral white stripes departing from the dorsum. So far, the only species of Bathyergidae known to occurs in the arid Horn of Africa, east of the Rift Valley, was the really distinctive naked mole-rat *Heterocephalus glaber*. Additional specimens are needed to assess the true relationships of *ilariae* within the Bathyergidae.

It was more than forty years ago when the last Somali mammals (a golden mole) was described by Italian zoologists. The discovery of this new species highlight the biological richness of Somalia and the need of further detailed researches and conservation measures when allowed by the political situation.



Fukomys ilariae

References

Gippoliti S., Amori G. 2011. A new species of mole-rat (Rodentia, Bathyergidae) from the Horn of Africa. *Zootaxa* 2918: 39-46.