

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF MINES AND ENERGY



**GEOLOGY AND PALAEOBIOLOGY OF THE CENTRAL AND
SOUTHERN NAMIB**

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NAMIBIA**

by

Martin Pickford and Brigitte Senut



Orangemeryx hendeyi

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PALAEOBIOLOGY OF THE ORANGE RIVER VALLEY,
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by

Dr Martin Pickford⁽¹⁾ & Dr Brigitte Senut⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾Chaire de Paléanthropologie et de Préhistoire, Collège de France, and Laboratoire de Paléontologie,
UMR 8569 du CNRS. 8, rue Buffon, F-75005 Paris, France

⁽²⁾Département Histoire de la Terre du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle et UMR 8569 CNRS,
8, rue Buffon 75005, Paris.

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References pertaining to the Terrestrial Miocene Palaeontology of the Namib Desert and the Sperrgebiet, Namibia

Martin Pickford

Chaire de Paléanthropologie et de Préhistoire, Collège de France and Département Histoire de la Terre, UMR 8569, 8, rue Buffon, 75005, Paris
e-mail : pickford@mnhn.fr

Introduction

Including the references published in this volume, just over 100 scientific articles have been published on the terrestrial Miocene palaeontology of the Namib Desert and the Sperrgebiet, Namibia. The first paper on the subject appeared during the second decade of the 20th Century, just prior to the First World War (Stromer, 1914). The war years effectively interrupted scientific research, and it wasn't until the 1920's that the pace of publication quickened with 8 papers appearing during the decade, all on the palaeontology of the northern Sperrgebiet. There followed a lengthy period from 1929 (Hopwood, 1929) until 1954 (Whitworth, 1954) when nothing at all was published, even of a general nature. The 1950's and 1960's saw two papers published each decade, not on new collections from Namibia, but as part of revisions of groups (Hyracoidea, Macroscelididae and Carnivora) undertaken at the level of the continent. The late 1970's saw an abrupt increase in the quantity of publications (10 papers), thanks to the discovery of the rich site at Arrisdrift on the northern bank of the Orange River. The momentum carried into the 1980's with 10 relevant papers being published during the decade. Following the independence of Namibia in the early 1990's there was a quantum leap in palaeontological activity in the country, and this was to a great extent aided by Namdeb's decision to carry out research into the biostratigraphy of the Orange River Valley and neighbouring areas of the Sperrgebiet. 36 papers appeared during the 1990's followed by 32 in the first two years of the 21st Century, almost all of them published by members of the Namibia Palaeontology Expedition, a collaborative project between the Geological Survey of Namibia, the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, and the Collège de France, Paris. Starting in 1991, when the NPE was launched, palaeontological field work was carried out for lengthy periods (3-4 months) each year. Prior to this, most fossil discoveries in Namibia were made on an *ad hoc* basis by mine workers or geologists carrying out non-palaeontological duties. The main exception was the excavation at Arrisdrift by G. Corvinus in 1976-1978. During the 1990's palaeontological research was also carried out on the aeolianites of the Namib Desert, and many fossils were discovered, the most interesting of which were struthious egg shells of various types, associated with mammals, spider's webs, gastropods and ichnofossils of a bewildering variety.

There is no doubt that further field work in the Sperrgebiet and the Namib Desert will yield additional fossils, and also lead to the discovery of new sites. In a very real sense, the Namibia Palaeontology Expedition has only scratched the surface of what is an immense palaeontological resource spanning most of the Miocene epoch and many thousands of

square kilometres.

The present bibliography of the Miocene terrestrial palaeontology of the Namib Desert and the Sperrgebiet provides access to the essential references on the subject, but does not include anecdotal references or works of a very general nature such as popularisation articles.

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