

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo*

© R Portas



Namibian conservation status	Least Concern
Global IUCN status	Least Concern
Namibian range	North-eastern half of Namibia
Global range	Widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding tropical forests and deserts
Population estimate	Unknown
Population trend	Common within its range, trend probably stable
Habitat	Wooded and bushy savanna
Threats	No major threats

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

The banded mongoose is distinguished, as its name suggests, by a series of transverse, distinct black bands running across the back from the shoulders to the base of the tail. It is medium-sized, a grizzled grey colour and has a bushy tail with a slightly darker tip (Gilchrist *et al.* 2009). Populations in drier savanna regions tend to be lighter in colour than those from more vegetated habitats.

DISTRIBUTION

Banded mongooses are widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, but are absent from tropical forests, deserts and montane regions. In southern Africa the species is restricted to the eastern and northern parts, largely avoiding the dry southern and western parts of Namibia, the central Kalahari in Botswana, and most of South Africa and Zimbabwe (Gilchrist & Do Linh San 2016). Vegetation type (woodland or

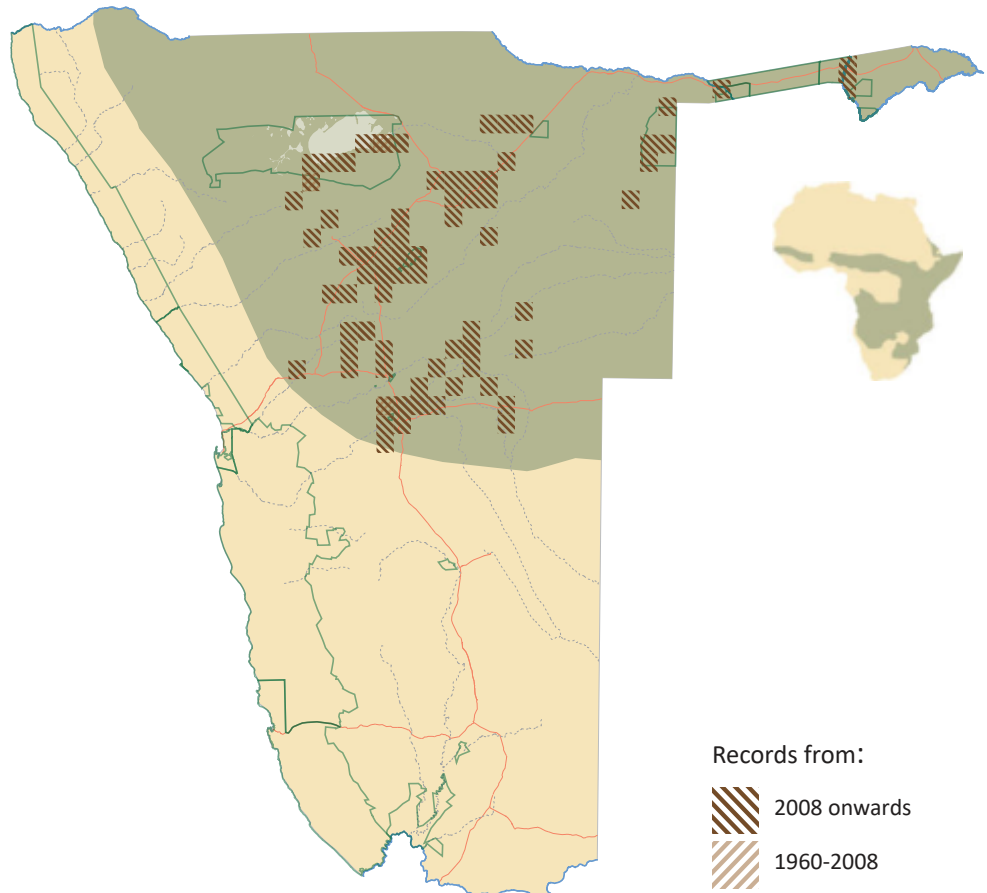
savanna preferred) and presence of termitaria, rather than water availability, appear to be the key habitat criteria for this species (Skinner & Chimimba 2005).

The recorded distribution in Namibia extends across the north-eastern half of the country, with the limit defined roughly by a line from just west of Ruacana in the north-west, to Karibib and Rehoboth in the central parts, and eastwards to Leonardville (Shortridge 1934). This is roughly the area of tree savanna and woodland in northern Namibia, and thorn and shrub savanna in the central parts of the country. This species prefers wooded habitat with adequate ground cover (Skinner & Chimimba 2005), and has possibly extended its range westwards into areas where trees and bushy growth have come to predominate from bush encroachment. The absence of Environmental Information Service (2021) records from northern Namibia (but excluding north-eastern Namibia) may be real or simply an absence of data, but possibly indicates that the species has disappeared

Distribution records of banded mongoose, and present estimated area of distribution in Namibia.

Inset: African distribution of banded mongoose according to IUCN (Gilchrist & Do Linh San 2016).

The Namibian distribution in the main map is more up to date and does not necessarily agree with the distribution shown in the inset.



from this area due to the density of human settlement and livestock, with associated deforestation (Mendelsohn *et al.* 2002).

POPULATION ESTIMATE AND TREND

Fairly dense records in central Namibia north of Windhoek suggest that this species is relatively common within its range, and there is nothing to suggest that this is changing. No population estimate has been attempted for this species. The global population is considered stable (Gilchrist & Do Linh San 2016).

ECOLOGY

This gregarious, diurnal mongoose lives in social groups from 4 to 49 (average ~15) individuals, comprising roughly equal numbers of males and females (Rood 1975, Cant 2000, Skinner & Chimimba 2005, Gilchrist *et al.* 2009). Termite mounds are commonly used for burrows; they may also use erosion gullies, aardvark holes and even man-made structures (Rood 1975, Hiscocks & Perrin 1991). Groups maintain a territory in which they forage and move about together, individuals foraging for themselves, not cooperatively, covering a daily foraging distance from 2 to 10 km (Rood 1975, Skinner & Chimimba 2005). They

maintain contact with soft twittering calls. In relatively drier regions (South Africa), they occupy home ranges of >2 km² (Hiscocks & Perrin 1991), at a density of about 2.4 individuals/km² (Cant & Gilchrist 2013).

Banded mongooses breed cooperatively, with a number of females (up to 10) in the group giving birth at the same time (Gilchrist 2006). In the seasonal climate of Namibia, they are likely constrained in breeding season and number of births per year to the wet season, and likely 1–2 litters per year (as for Serengeti, Waser *et al.* 1995). Females suckle pups non-selectively, regardless of which ones are theirs. Adults in the group then help to feed and protect the offspring until independence at about 3 months (Hodge 2005, Nichols *et al.* 2012).

They feed primarily on invertebrates, particularly millipedes and beetles, while small vertebrates such as reptiles, amphibians, birds and their eggs, and small rodents are also eaten (Skinner & Chimimba 2005). They are known to feed from rubbish dumps (Gilchrist & Otali 2002, Otali & Gilchrist 2004), and have been seen picking dead insects off the grills of parked vehicles in Namutoni (G Thomson pers. obs. 2019).

Adult mongooses are preyed upon by raptors, large snakes

and large mammalian carnivores. Pups are taken by a wider diversity of predators, including monitor lizards, and marabou storks and warhogs at human waste dumps. They are recorded allogrooming and removing ectoparasites from warhogs. Banded mongooses do not pose any direct threat to humans, although they will steal food if accessible, and they can carry rabies. They can also carry human tuberculosis through a *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex pathogen, *M. mungi* sp. nov. (Alexander *et al.* 2002).

THREATS

There are no major threats from humans. They may be affected by fires via the burns themselves as well as habitat change. Tuberculosis infection rates in banded mongooses are likely increased by garbage feeding as shown by research in neighbouring Botswana (Fairbanks-Flint *et al.* 2016). Consumption of banded mongoose meat has been recorded in Botswana (Jobbins *et al.* 2013) and Mozambique (Fusari & Carpaneto 2006), but is not known within the assessment region.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Banded mongoose is listed as Least Concern internationally (Gilchrist & Do Linh San 2016), and it carries the same status in Namibia. There are no major threats to the species, it has a wide distribution, and adapts well to human habitation. The species is not included in CITES Appendices.

ACTIONS

Information on the ecosystem services provided by mongooses would help to raise awareness of their ecological role. This includes control of insects and other invertebrates, and the fact that they are harmless.

The capturing and keeping of baby mongooses as pets should be discouraged.



Assessors: John Pallett and Gail Thomson
Reviewer: Jason Gilchrist

Suggested citation: Pallett J & Thomson G 2022. A conservation assessment of Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo*. In: NCE, LCMAN, MEFT (eds) 2022. Conservation Status and Red List of the Terrestrial Carnivores of Namibia. Pp 125-127. MEFT, LCMAN & NCE, Windhoek, Namibia