ACOUSTIC COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF THE ROCK DASSIE, *PROCAVIA CAPENSIS* (PALLAS), IN CAPTIVITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Compared to the paucity of visual, olfactory and tactile signals, acoustic communication is the most important and widely used means of information transfer in Procavia capensis. The dassie's sound repertoire consists of 21 vocal, and four nonvocal, sounds. The vocal sounds form a continuum while the nonvocal sounds are discrete. All the sounds appear in more than one situation type although some are more characteristic of one type of situation than another. Elicitation and the type of sound emitted depend on the degree of interest attached to a stimulus and the level of excitement experienced by the animal. The social behaviour of dassies points to a mode of life adapted to cope with the limitations imposed on them by some morphological and physiological features as well as environmental and ecological conditions prevailing in their habitat. It is concluded that poor thermoregulation, diminished size and crevice dwelling probably were the main selective forces in operation during the evolution of the hyracoids, which might have led to the particular behaviour patterns present in Procavia capensis.

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