
THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE GENETS, *GENETTA GENETTA*, *G. SERVALINA* and *G. TIGRINA* IN EAST AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

There are three species of genet in Kenya: *Genetta genetta* (Matschie), *G. servalina* (Thomas) and *G. tigrina* (Matschie). Of these *G. tigrina* is by far the commonest and is composed of two indistinct subspecies, *G. tigrina erlangeri* (Matschie) and *G. tigrina stuhlmanni* (Matschie). In this account the genets are treated at species level. *G. genetta* is a light coloured animal, the background colour being a dirty white, while *G. tigrina* has a much darker coloration; *G. servalina* has a yellowish-brown background colour with far more numerous markings. It is rare in Kenya, living in the remaining thick forests of western Kenya. The most recent record is from the Kakamega forest, collected in 1955. It is commoner in the forests of Uganda, several animals being caught in the Budongo forest in western Uganda in the last three years.

Records

Most of the data have been collected from trapping results, though additional information has been accumulated from road deaths and occasional sightings. The material in the National Museum, Nairobi, has been consulted and all the information to date includes about 200 records. There is virtually no information on the distribution of genets in the outlying districts of Kenya. The scatter of the collecting points reflects the road network, and also the number of collectors in the proximity of Nairobi. Fig. 1 shows the collecting results up to December 1968, with the approximate 63.5 cm.-162.5 cm. (25 and 65 in.) rainfall contours.

Most of the *G. genetta* records are from areas with less than 63.5 cm. (25 in.) of rain a year. They may be found in a few localities with a slightly higher rainfall, there being an overlap with *G. tigrina* in some places. Examples of this possibly sympatric association have been noted at Ulu, Sultan Hamud and Voi; these areas have high and low rainfall regions. *G. tigrina* occurs in the wetter areas though these genets are not found in thick forests or at altitudes over 3048 m. (10,000 ft.) *G. servalina* occurs in wet forests with a rainfall of over 162.5 cm. (65 in.) a year.

Walker (1964) refers to the frequency of melanistic genets, and they are certainly common in parts of Kenya. There are many records from the vicinity of Nairobi, though this reflects the number of collectors in the Nairobi region. Melanistic individuals are also recorded from parts of the Kinangop, Naivasha and the Mau Escarpment. All these

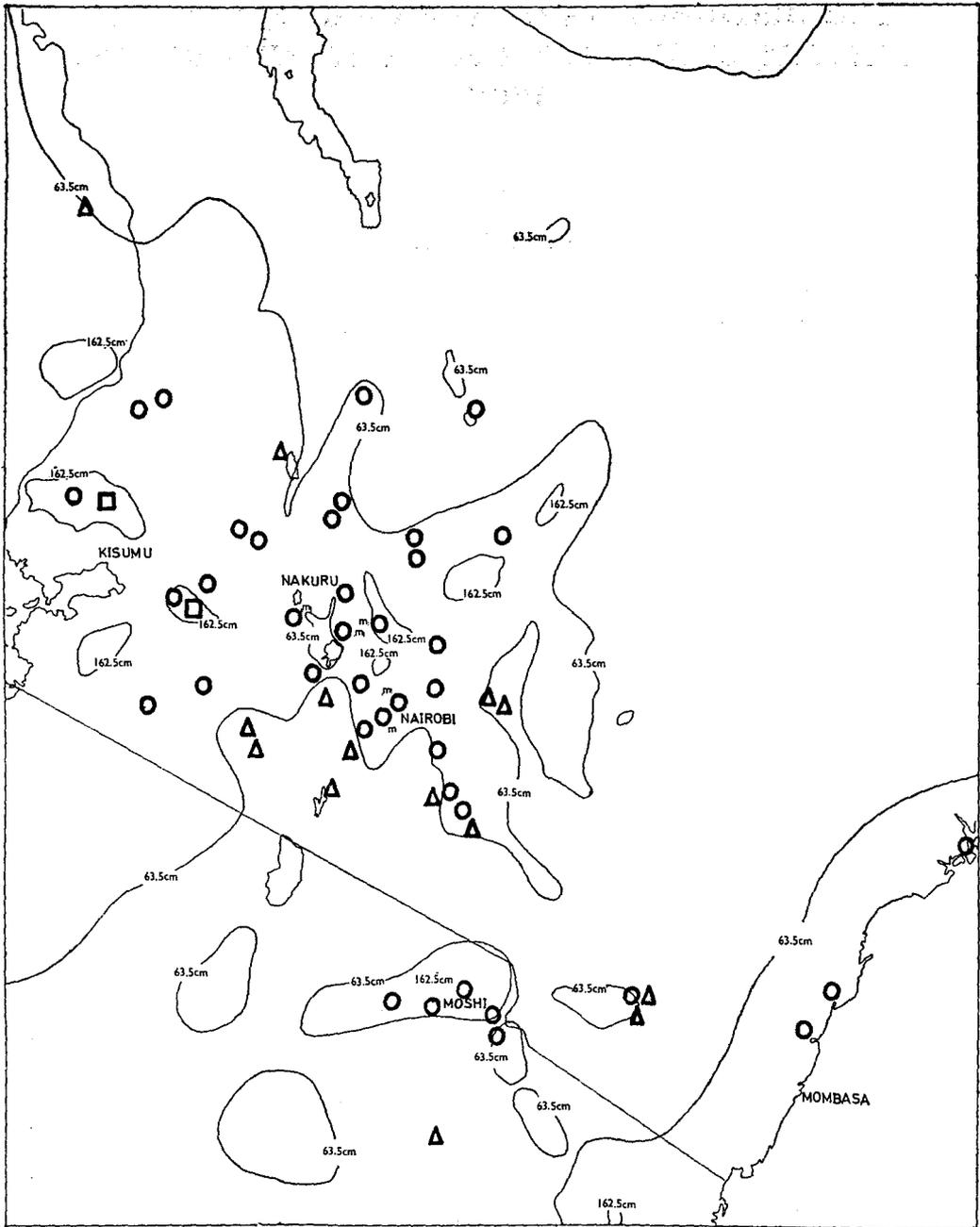


Fig. 1.—Distribution of the genets in East Africa. *G. genetta* Δ ; *G. servalina* \square and *G. tigrina* \circ . Melanistic animals are indicated (m). The symbols indicate one or more animals from an area. The approximate 63.5 cm (25 in.) and 165 cm. (65 in.) rainfall contours are estimated from the Mean Annual Rainfall Map for East Africa produced by the Overseas Survey, 1955.

animals are *G. tigrina* and are indicated (m) in Fig. 1. There are no records of melanistic *G. genetta*.

Summary

The distribution of the three species of genet is related to rainfall. *G. genetta* is essentially a dry country animal, occurring in regions with less than 63.5 cm. (25 in.) of rain a year. *G. tigrina* occurs in wetter regions, with a rainfall between 63.5 cm. and 162.5 cm. (25 and 65 in.) and *G. servalina* is found in regions with rainfall exceeding 162.5 cm. (65 in.) a year.

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REFERENCES

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