sand. This provides a suitable location for the entrance to gerbil burrows which can then be extended into the more cohesive subsurface sands (Figure 1). Gemsbok occur widely and regularly throughout the dunes thus providing numerous suitable burrow sites.

In one sandy interdune valley 16 km south of Natab on the Kuiseb River in the Namib Desert Park a one-hectare plot was surveyed for gerbil holes and patches of sand solidified by gemsbok urine. Multiple entrances at one gemsbok urine patch were counted as one burrow. Of 134 gemsbok urine patches, 106 (79 per cent) were used for gerbil burrow entrances with from one to three entrances each. In this area there were 17 other gerbil burrow entrances. Thus of all burrow entrances in this area 86 per cent were situated at gemsbok urine patches. The surface area solidified by gemsbok urine totalled 13,4 m^2 or $1{,}34 \times 10^{-5}$ per cent of the total area surveyed. Using the chi-square test a non-random distribution of burrow sites was demonstrated ($p < 0{,}001$).

This valley supports a sparse cover of dried annual *Stipagrostis gonatostachys*, *Monsonia ignorata* and *Asthenatherum glaucum*, none of which is suitable for gerbil burrow entrances. Gerbils are highly mobile, crossing high dunes (Coetzee 1969) and are sometimes found far from their burrows (Laycock 1975). At such times they are subject to predation, primarily by jackals (*Canis mesomelas*). Access to escape provided by foraging in the vicinity of burrow systems probably reduces the possibility of being preyed upon. Thus the advantage gained by a more even distribution of burrows relative to food sources is facilitated by the use of solidified gemsbok urine sand patches as burrow sites.

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BABOONS AS DISPERSAL AGENTS FOR ACACIA CYCLOPS

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Baboons, many birds and a few rodents in the south-west Cape include significant proportions of seeds of the Australian wattle (*Acacia cyclops* – 'rooikranz') in their diets (Middlemiss 1963, 1974). These animals may, therefore, act as dispersal agents for *A. cyclops* by distributing undigested seeds in their droppings. A one-year study (March 1975–February 1976) of a troop of chacma baboons, *Papio ursinus*, in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve provided oppor-

tunities for gathering information on the part played by baboons in the spread of *A. cyclops* in the reserve.

Adult and juvenile baboons were observed eating *A. cyclops* seeds throughout the year. Greatest utilization of the seeds, however, occurred in April and May when, on average, an adult male baboon consumed daily about 19 000 *A. cyclops* seeds (Davidge 1976). Adult female and juvenile baboons appeared to take similar amounts of the seeds. The 85 baboons of the troop studied therefore consume large quantities of *A. cyclops* seeds each year.

Not all seeds ingested by baboons are cracked during mastication. Undamaged seeds are not digested during passage through the gut, but the seed tests are chemically and mechanically abraded. To determine the effect of passage through the gut on the rate of germination of *A. cyclops* seeds, one hundred intact seeds were collected from several dry baboon droppings found near Olifantsbos in the reserve. A further one hundred fully-developed seeds were collected from pods still attached to trees. These seeds were used as a control, since they were unlikely to have been mechanically abraded. The two sets of seeds ('ingested' and 'control') were arranged in rows on sandy soil 10 cm deep in a glass tank. The seeds were covered with a uniform layer of soil 5 cm deep; a surface partition separated the two sets of seeds. The soil was kept damp by frequent watering. The first 'ingested' seeds germinated seven days earlier than did the first 'control' seeds, and at a faster rate: 25 'ingested' and five 'control' seeds had germinated after three weeks. Roughly equal numbers of 'control' and 'ingested' seeds (43 and 39 respectively) had, however, germinated 13 weeks after planting. It appears, therefore, that passage through the gut of a baboon does not significantly affect the amount of germination over three months, although the rate of germination was probably increased.

The baboons usually defaecated on top of rocks and on tarred roads, environments unfavourable for germination of seeds. Thirty baboon droppings, examined in February, each contained an average of 20 (range 1–200) undigested *A. cyclops* seeds. The undigested seeds appeared (from the remains of finely divided arils and tests also in the droppings) to be only a small proportion of all ingested seeds. Thus it seems unlikely that baboons are important agents in the dispersal of *A. cyclops* seeds in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve.

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FOOD, BREEDING AND COAT COLOUR OF FERAL CATS ON DASSEN ISLAND

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Observations of food, breeding and coat colour of feral cats *Felis domesticus* were made from December 1971 to November 1972 on Dassen Island, South Africa (33°26'S/18°05'E). Five species of birds were recorded as prey, either by observation of cats feeding or by finding tooth