

# MARCH MAMMAL MADNESS

Battle Summaries 2018-2021

Using a tournament bracket, players sequentially predict the outcomes of imaginary encounters between animal combatants in four divisions until they have chosen their bracket's champion. Over several weeks, story-telling scientists translate empirical evidence from the scientific literature into gripping "play-by-play" narrative on social media. The players learn how their favorites have fared and eventually a tournament champion is revealed. From 2013-2019, scientist-narrators cited ~1100 scholarly works and featured nearly 400 taxa, from charismatic megafauna, to backyard besties, to wild weirdos. Since 2018, these evidence-based stories have been provided to educators as "sports-style" summaries to describe outcomes to their students the day after the detailed play-by-play is live announced.

To read more about this Public Educational Program, see:

Hinde K, CEG. Amorim, AF Brokaw, N Burt, M Casillas, A Chen, T Chestnut, PK Connors, M Dasari, J Dietrick, CF Ditelberg, J Drew, L Durgavich, B Easterling, C Henning, A Hilborn, EK Karlsson, M Kissel, J Kobylecky, J Krell, DN Lee, KM Lesciotto, KL Lewton, JE Light, J Martin, A Murphy, W Nickley, A Núñez-de la Mora, O Pellicer, V Pellicer, AM Perry, SG Schuttler, AC Stone, B Tanis, J Weber, M Wilson, E Willcocks, CN Anderson. 2021. March Mammal Madness and the Power of Narrative in Science Outreach. eLife. 10:e65066. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.65066>

Amorim CEG, Dasari M, Durgavich L, Hinde K, Kissel M, Lewton KL, Loewen T. 2021. Integrative Approaches to Dispersing Science: A Case Study of March Mammal Madness. American Journal of Human Biology. e23659. DOI: 10.1002/ajhb.23659 Available to all here: <https://keep.lib.asu.edu/items/149253>

More Open Access Educational Resources are archived in the ASU March Mammal Madness KEEP Collection: <https://keep.lib.asu.edu/collections/248>

These March Mammal Madness Battle Summaries from Tournaments 2018-2021 were written by Kate M. Lesciotto, Jessica Martin, Jason Krell, and Katie Hinde based on primary research and creative story-telling by Chris Anderson, Alyson Brokaw, Tara Chestnut, Patrice Connors, Mauna Dasari, Josh Drew, Lara Durgavich, Anne Hilborn, Katie Hinde, Marc Kissel, Danielle Lee, Kristi Lewton, Jessica Light, Asia Murphy, Brian Tanis, Jo Varner, and Kwasi Wrenford. The materials are provided as an Open Educational Resource and are licensed **CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0**.

# WILD CARD

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

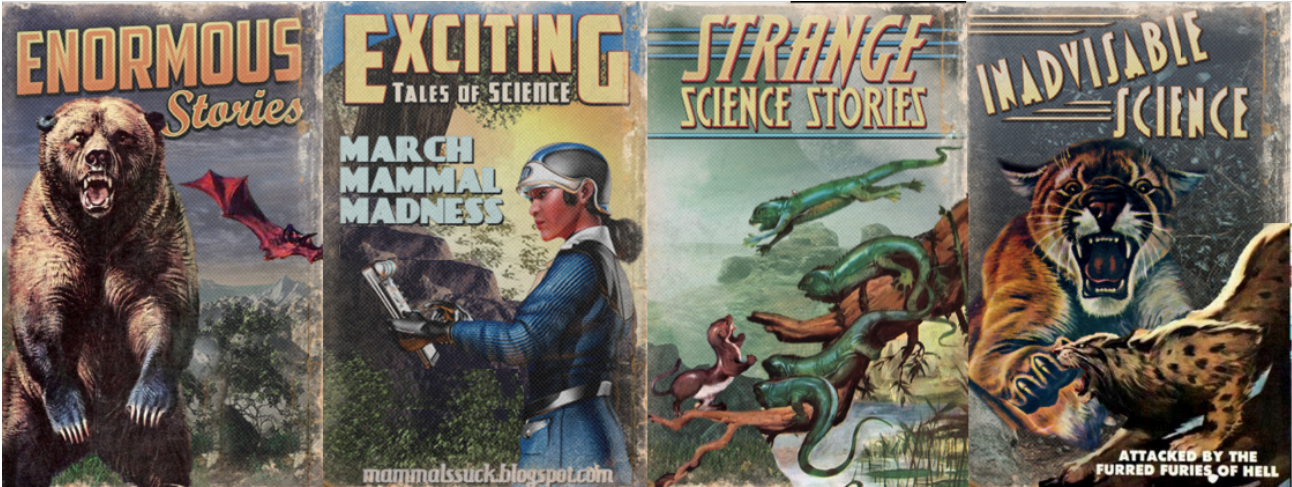
Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

**Wild Card Results: Southern Red-Backed Vole ADVANCES!!!!**

**Hopi Chipmunk v. Southern Red-Backed Vole** – Tonight’s Wild Card round sees two proud ginger members of #TeamRodent squaring off for the right to meet Red Kangaroo on the battlefield in Round 1, Red, in Fur Division. Although Hopi Chipmunk has a slight weight advantage (47-59g versus 20-42g for Southern Red-Backed Vole), Southern Red-Backed Vole wins the coinflip for home-habitat advantage along the North Inlet trail in Rocky Mountain National Park. Hopi Chipmunk is used to the forest life though and begins this battle by foraging for seeds on the forest floor. Suddenly, Hopi Chipmunk freezes, eyes scanning the environment, and sees Southern Red-Backed Vole raised in a crouching posture with one paw lifted – a behavior that suggests a potential escalation to aggression. That potential is realized as Southern Red-Backed Vole leaps in for an attack!! This happens to be a male Southern Red-Backed Vole, who is very defensive of his home range during the current breeding season, and who proceeds to use both paws to beat Hopi Chipmunk’s head. Without the advantage of being in its home turf or mates to defend, an unmotivated Hopi Chipmunk quickly retreats to a hidey-hole.

**SOUTHERN RED-BACKED VOLE** repels Hopi Chipmunk!!!!

Narrated by Prof Patrice Conners.



# ROUND 1: OF MYTHS & MONSTERS

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

**Round 1, OF MYTHS & MONSTERS Results: Harpy Eagle, Picado's Jumping Pitviper, Devil Frog, Cryptkeeper Wasp, Ghost Bat, Blue-Capped Ifrit, Sphinx Monkey, and Chimpanzee ADVANCE!!!!**

**Harpy Eagle (1) v. Goliath Beetle (16)** – Harpy Eagle is named after the harpies of Greek Mythology – winged women that represented a form of wind and were associated with storms and disaster. Female Harpy Eagles are the heaviest, most powerful eagle living on the planet today – a true apex predator that specializes in arboreal mammalian prey. Not to be outdone, Goliath Beetle is immensely large ... for a scarab beetle. At nearly 5 inches long, Goliath Beetle is still the heavy underdog in this battle. In the Kanuku Mountains Protected Area of Guyana, Goliath Beetle is transported by MMM magic to the edge of Harpy Eagle's nest. This nest is a massive construction, at 4 feet in diameter and 2 feet deep, and contains the rotting flesh of unfinished carcasses of previous Harpy Eagle meals. Goliath Beetle prefers high-sugar fruit or sap. As it opens its wings to take flight, strong air currents disrupt the attempt. Goliath Beetle scrambles out of the nest and pauses on the adjoining tree branch, just as Harpy Eagle lands. With no interest in invertebrate meals, Harpy Eagle doesn't even notice as her talons impale Goliath Beetle. HARPY EAGLE impales Goliath Beetle!! Narrated by Prof Katie Hinde.

**Picado's Jumping Pitviper (4) v. Flying Dragon Lizard (13)** – Named for a Costa Rican scientist who extensively researched venom (Clodomiro Picado Twilight), Picado's Jumping Pitviper also has an interesting genus name. The genus *Atroides* is named for one of the three Fates in Greek mythology. Clotho spun the 'thread' of human fate, Lachesis dispensed it, and Atropos cut the thread, thus determining the individual's moment of death. Flying Dragon Lizard's name is bit of a misnomer, as this lizard doesn't actually fly but uses its ribcage, expanded into wing-like structures, to glide an average of 8 meters between trees! In the Braulio Carrillo National Park in Costa Rica, Picado's Jumping Pitviper has curled up by a small log, a favored ambush spot, and is camouflaged by the leafy forest floor. Preferring not to be out and about at night in this cooler forest, Flying Dragon Lizard heads for the trees for safety. Picado's Jumping Pitviper picks up the vibrations of Flying Dragon Lizard's feet rustling in the fallen leaves and turns her head. Flying Dragon Lizard steps onto Picado's Jumping Pitviper, claws scratching at the snake's skin. Picado's Jumping Pitviper strikes! Claspings Flying Dragon Lizard in her jaws, Picado's Jumping Pitviper continues to pump venom as

Flying Dragon Lizard grows weaker. PICADO'S JUMPING PITVIPER cuts the thread of Flying Dragon Lizard's life!!! Narrated by Dr. Anne Hilborn & Prof Jessica Light

**Devil Frog (5) v. Fire Salamander (12)** – The battle of the amphibians begins! Both Devil Frog and Fire Salamander are predators but are “gape-limited,” meaning that they can only eat prey as big as their mouths open. Fire Salamanders are also sexually dimorphic, with females being up to 12% larger than males. The scientific name for Devil Frog, a large and heavily armored extinct frog, is *Beelzebufo ampinga*, with *Beelzebufo* being a portmanteau of Beelzebub (alter ego of the Christian Devil) and bufo (Latin for ‘toad’). The home court of Devil Frog for tonight’s battle is the northwest coast of Madagascar during the Late Cretaceous – a cooler and wetter climate than today, which Fire Salamander is quite comfortable with. Both amphibians find themselves on the edge of a pond, with Devil Frog burrowed comfortably in the sand to regulate body temperature and Fire Salamander trotting to find cover. Before Fire Salamander can react, Devil Frog extends its tongue, wraps it around Fire Salamander’s entire body, and rolls the tasty package into its mouth and belly. DEVIL FROG consumes Fire Salamander!!! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut

**Masrasetor nananubis (2) v. Crypt-Keeper Wasp (15)** – *Masrasetor nananubis*, with a species name meaning “little Anubis” after the jackal-headed Egyptian god of embalming, belongs to a group of extinct predators known as Hyaenodonts. This group got its name not because they looked like hyenas but because their teeth are similar to hyena teeth. The species name for Crypt-Keeper Wasp is *set*, after the Egyptian god Set, who locked his brother in a crypt. Crypt-Keeper Wasp lays its eggs on the larva of gall wasps, before it will eventually chew through the head of the other wasp and fly off. Our Crypt-Keeper Wasp finds itself in an Egyptian desert – except it’s 3.4 million years ago, and this desert is actually a swamp similar to the Everglades. Among the many animals in this swamp, *Masrasetor nananubis* is hunting a saghatherium – an herbivorous hyrax. Crypt-Keeper Wasp ignores everything, focused on finding a gall wasp larva to lay eggs in. Nearby are *Wadilemur elegans*, an early lemur ancestor, which watch as both *Masrasetor nananubis* and Crypt-Keeper Wasp converge on their tree. Wadilemur lets out a series of high-pitched alarm squeals, the cacophony of which causes saghatherium to bolt away, with *Masrasetor nananubis* in hot pursuit – both run off the field of battle! CRYPT-KEEPER WASP outlasts *Masrasetor nananubis*!!!

Narrated by Prof Marc Kissel & Prof Chris Anderson

**Ghost Bat (8) v. Thorny Devil (9)** – Although this is March Mammal Madness, Ghost Bat may very well be taking part in a Most Beautiful Mammal competition with its silky, pale white fur and sharp, pointy smile. Being primarily carnivorous, Ghost Bat is capable of lifting prey items up to 80% of their bodyweight, thanks to a half-meter wingspan. However, sometimes Ghost Bat can bite off more than it can chew – the invasive cane toad, which secretes toxins, may be playing a role in recent bat declines. Thorny Devil may not have the classic good looks of Ghost Bat, but that thorny skin readily absorbs water, making it quite handy for staying hydrated in its desert habitat. In Karijini National Park in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, Ghost Bat emerges from its cave roost. Thorny Devil, positioned next to an ant trail in the sandy soils just below, decides that it

is time to head to its nighttime burrow. PLOP!! Ghost Bat follows faint scuffling sounds to the source – Thorny Devil has gotten stuck in a large, PVC pipe pitfall trap! These traps are often used to survey small terrestrial fauna. Curling its head between its legs, Thorny Devil tries to fool Ghost Bat by exposing the soft “false head” at the base of its neck – but the tactic backfires as Ghost Bat pins down Thorny Devil and delivers a deep bite, severing the spinal cord. GHOST BAT decapitates Thorny Devil!!! Narrated by Dr. Alyson Brokaw

**Blue-Capped Ibrit (7) v. Brussels Griffon (10)** – With the name ‘ifrit’ having its origins in Arabic, the Blue-Capped Ibrit is named after an unseen djinn (spirit, angel, ghost, demon) that is tricky with typically malevolent intent. Quite a bit smaller than the mythical gryphon (beast with a body, tail, and hind legs of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle), Brussels Griffon is a domesticated dog breed that was originally bred to hunt rats and is now known for respiratory troubles due to its short snout and broad face (known as brachycephalic). In the high elevations of Lorentz National Park, the largest protected area in Southeast Asia, Brussels Griffon is already breathing more rapidly and loudly in the lower oxygen levels. But something bright catches Brussels Griffon’s eye – a Blue-Capped Ibrit nest just 3-6 ft off the ground. Brussels Griffon climbs the narrow trunk to the nest and snarfs on Blue-Capped Ibrit! But attempted predation barely lasts a moment, as Blue-Capped Ibrit’s feathers contain batrachotoxins, which can cause paralysis in small doses! As its muscles stiffen, Brussels Griffon loses balance, falling from the tree, still grasping Blue-Capped Ibrit in its mouth. The impact with the ground pops the uninjured Blue-Capped Ibrit from Brussels Griffon’s mouth, and Brussels Griffon’s eyeball from its brachycephalic eye socket!!! Doggo manages to run off the field of battle. BLUE-CAPPED IBRIT stuns Brussels Griffon!!! Narrated by Prof Patrice Connors & Katie Hinde

**Sphinx Monkey (6) v. Black & Red Bush Squirrel (11)** – Sphinx Monkey, also known as a mandrill, is named after the wise mythical creature with the body of a lion, wings of an eagle, and head of a person. The very real Sphinx Monkey is a very sexually dimorphic species, with males being over 3 times larger than females! The species name for Black & Red Bush Squirrel is ‘lucifer,’ which means ‘light bringer’ or ‘morning star’ in Latin but is often used in English as the original fallen angel in the Hebrew and Christian bibles (i.e., the Devil). This seems just a tad dramatic for a bush squirrel that is the size of a chunky stoat. In the tropical rainforest of Lopé National Park in central Gabon, Black & Red Bush Squirrel is confused but still comfortable in the trees. As it investigates a nest, Black & Red Bush Squirrel notices a rustling below – a horde of mandrills! Upon seeing over 700 foraging mandrills, Black & Red Bush Squirrel rockets away from the nest and draws the attention of a huge male Sphinx Monkey. Sphinx Monkey immediately chases after Black & Red Bush Squirrel, as several other male sphinx monkeys join the chase. Black & Red Bush Squirrel is sprinting as fast as it can, but Sphinx Monkey grabs it by the tail! (Warning – the following scene may be too intense for our younger viewers). Sphinx Monkey attacks, pulling at the hind limbs and skin of the abdomen, before eating the bulk of its prey. SPHINX MONKEY devours Black & Red Bush Squirrel!!! Narrated by Mauna Dasari

**Chimpanzee (3) v. White-Winged Vampire Bat (14)** – The genus name for Chimpanzee comes from Pan, the Greek god of the wild, who is often depicted carrying a flute or pipes. The familiar pant hoot of Chimpanzee vocalization is less melodic but equally recognizable. One of only three vampiric bat species, White-Winged Vampire Bat is 100% reliant on blood, drinking close to half of its body weight in blood at each meal. Feeding primarily on birds, the bite of the White-Winged Vampire Bat is silent and painless, allowing it to lap up seeping blood at its leisure, often completely unnoticed. In Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania, Chimpanzee has a belly full of figs and fruit and begins to build a new nest for the night. Reaching for leaves, Chimpanzee startles White-Winged Vampire Bat that has been resting underneath a nearby branch. White-Winged Vampire Bat defensively sinks its teeth into Chimpanzee’s finger and emits a fine spray of musky liquid from a pair of oral glands that project forward when the bat is agitated. White-Winged Vampire Bat takes the opportunity to flee, flying into the canopy of a nearby tree. Chimpanzee watches as White-Winged Vampire Bat is snatched out of the air and eaten by a blue monkey! Little does blue monkey know, White-Winged Vampire Bat can harbor and pass on infectious pathogens, including rabies and Chagas disease ... CHIMPANZEE spooks White-Winged Vampire Bat!!! Narrated by Dr. Lara Durgavich & Dr. Alyson Brokaw



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# ROUND 1: SEA BEASTIES

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** ANNOUNCEMENT! THIS Friday March 19th at 11AM EDT, join American Museum of Natural History scientists as they guide [a LIVE virtual tour of MAMMAL EXHIBITS at the AMNH!](#)

**Round 1, SEA BEASTIES Results: Saber-Toothed Anchovy, Midgardia Seastar, Pink Vent Fish, Yeti Crab, Vampire Squid, Ammonite, Platyzilla, and Black Dragonfish ADVANCE!!!!**

**Saber-Toothed Anchovy (1) v. Planktonic Copepod (16)** – Tonight's first battle features two very different Sea Beasties. Planktonic Copepod is one of ~13,000 species of copepods, although this particular species earned its name (*Cyclops bicuspidatus*) by having one eye. Coming in at 3 stoats in length, Saber-Toothed Anchovy is a far cry from modern anchovies. The species epithet for Saber-Toothed Anchovy (*chureloides*) refers to an Urdu mythological shapeshifting, vampire-like demon with large fangs or tusks. Tonight, Planktonic Copepod finds itself 50 million years in the past, in Saber-Toothed Anchovy's home of the shallow coastal waters of what is today's Punjab Province, Pakistan. Planktonic Copepod isn't too disturbed by this environment and might even survive since Saber-Toothed Anchovy hunts larger prey. Surging towards a school fish, Saber-Toothed Anchovy swims right past Planktonic Copepod! But the hydrodynamic wake causes Planktonic Copepod to drift off the field of battle. **SABER-TOOTHED ANCHOVY** defeats Planktonic Copepod!!! Narrated by Prof Marc Kissel & Prof Chris Anderson.

**Midgardia Seastar (2) v. Hydra (15)** – Named for the Norse mythological sea serpent of middle earth (Midgard), Midgardia Seastar has the longest arms of any known starfish – 12 arms, each up to 600 mm (1.76 stoats!) in length! The Hydra it is facing tonight is not the Greek mythological water serpent with multiple heads that famously battled Hercules, but is instead a small freshwater cnidarian that can pack quite a punch with the stinging cells in its tentacles. In the depths of the Southern Gulf of Mexico, Midgardia Seastar is stretched out on the ocean floor, and Hydra has anchored its foot right next to Midgardia Seastar. Tap, tap, tap ... Hydra's tentacles reach out, make contact with Midgardia Seastar, and sting! Hydra opens its mouth, but instead of a nourishing meal, salty sea water rushes in! Being completely enveloped in a hypertonic solution, water molecules are quickly leeching out of Hydra's cells. **AND** the toxins from

Hydra's tentacles are ineffective against Midgardia Seastar, who simply waits for the ocean current to wash away the cnidarian detritus. MIDGARDIA SEASTAR outlasts Hydra!!! Narrated by Prof Patrice Connors & Prof Jessica Light

**Pink Vent Fish (8) v. Lathe Acteon (Snail) (9)** – Two voracious predators meet in this battle. Pink Vent Fish (*Thermarces cerberus*), named for Cerberus, the 3-headed hound in Greek mythology that guards the entrance to the underworld, lives in areas of deep sea hydrothermal vents. Named for a priestly herdsman transformed into a stag by Artemis, Lathe Acteon hunts tubeworms by drilling into their protective sheaths and sucking their guts out (slimy, yet satisfying!). Pink Vent Fish has earned the home habitat advantage, with tonight's battle taking place in the East Pacific Rise in the vestimentiferan zone around the hydrothermal vents. As Lathe Acteon slides along the ocean floor towards the plethora of tubeworms, oxygen saturation decreases, and hydrogen sulfide saturation increases. Not adapted to these conditions, Lathe Acteon turns right to retreat – the predisposition to right-handed turns is a behavioral adaptation to keep it from washing out to sea or going too far upshore. Pink Vent Fish takes notice of this interesting snail turning in a right-handed circle. Calculating distance and speed, Pink Vent Fish strikes! PINK VENT FISH gulps down Lathe Acteon!!! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut

**Yeti Crab (7) v. Aphrodite Anthias (10)** – Upon its first discovery, scientists were so entranced by the beauty of Aphrodite Anthias, much like how Aphrodite's beauty enchanted the Greek gods, that they were unable to look away from the vividly colored fish with a neon yellow, pink, and red body and lime and pink dorsal fin. This beauty is out of place, in the home habitat of Yeti Crab at the deep-sea vent site of Annie's Anthill, 2228m deep. Yeti Crab's name reflects its white, hairy appearance, although its "hair" are actually stiff structures known as setae that provide surface area to cultivate bacteria that can be harvested for nutrition. Aphrodite Anthias is only adapted to reef life down to 260m, and in the deep of the hydrothermal vents, experiences intense underwater atmospheric pressure that quickly overcomes its cell membranes and bodily structures. The inwardly collapsing Aphrodite Anthias drifts down towards Yeti Crab, who pauses in its microbial episybiont farming. Despite a lack of visible light and greatly reduced eyes, Yeti Crab begins to consume the damaged remains of Aphrodite Anthias. YETI CRAB defeats Aphrodite Anthias!!!! Narrated by Prof Katie Hinde

**Vampire Squid (5) v. Basket Star (12)** – Vampire Squid, whose scientific name of *Vampyroteuthis infernalis* roughly translates to vampire squid from H-E-Double-Hockey-Sticks, is actually neither a vampire nor a squid. Instead, Vampire Squid feeds mainly on detritus and is more closely related to octopuses. Basket Star, of the genus *Gorgoncephalus*, has multiple arms and a twisting nature which evoked images of the ancient Gorgons. In the depths of the West Atlantic in the Gulf of Guinea about 300 miles off the Ivory Coast, Basket Star isn't bothered by the pressure due to its highly calcified internal structure. Movement, however, is another issue. Without ground to attach to, Basket Star feels lost and flounders as it tries to find its orientation. This thrashing draws the attention of Vampire Squid, who moves in to investigate. Basket Star reaches out, trying to find something of substances to orient itself, which is



misinterpreted by Vampire Squid as aggressive action. Vampire Squid releases a burst of bioluminescent mucus! The cloud of light gives an oddly beautiful point of reference as Basket Star drifts lower and lower, out of the field of battle and out of the tournament. VAMPIRE SQUID defeats Basket Star!!! Narrated by Prof Josh Drew

**Ammonite (6) v. Demon Earth eater Cichlid (11)** – Ammonites were named because of their resemblance to the horns of Ammon – the Greek/Roman version of Amun, the Egyptian God of life and reproduction. However, this specific Ammonite (and second fossil species of the night) is a heteromorph ammonite, whose shell doesn't follow the normal symmetrical pattern. Modern-day species (and popular aquarium fish) Demon Earth eater Cichlid gets its species name, *jujubari*, from a word meaning demon or malignant spirit from the Tupi people, an Indigenous group of the Amazon basin. Transported to the Western Interior Seaway of the late Cretaceous (an ancient sea that once stretched across the middle of North America, connecting the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean), Demon Earth eater Cichlid is feeling ... strange. Typically found in very dilute habitats, the Western Interior Seaway has a higher salinity than Demon Earth eater Cichlid is used to. With its aberrant shape, Ammonite is considered a poor swimmer and sticks to the sea floor for scavenging. As it eyes Ammonite with suspicion, Demon Earth eater Cichlid loses its body water in this salty environment and then loses consciousness – perhaps a mercy, as Ammonite shuffles by and slices through the dying Demon Earth eater Cichlid with sharp, beak-like mouth parts. AMMONITE consumes Demon Earth eater Cichlid!!! Narrated by Dr. Alyson Brokaw

**Platyzilla (3) v. Tube Anemone (14)** – Named after the ancient Mesopotamian mythology of “Lillith”, Tube Anemone (*Arachnanthus lilith*) is nocturnal, emerging from the ground to feed in the dark. Platyzilla (common name for *Obdurodon tharalkooschild*) is an extinct member of the platypus lineage. Being an egg-laying Monotreme, Platyzilla is the sole representative of #TeamMammal in this Sea Beasties division. Although this fossil species was initially described only from a single tooth, that tooth helped define the species as carnivorous, likely preying upon crustaceans and small vertebrates. With Platyzilla as the higher-seeded combatant, we are once again transported through the magic of MMM back in time – 10 million years ago to the late Miocene, in a lush rainforest with lots of freshwater pools (today, this would be a dry savannah in Riversleigh, Australia). Disoriented, Tube Anemone quickly finds a patch of soft sediment and buries itself in the muck for protection. Platyzilla uses its bill to prod around in the soil for food and comes upon this small, wriggling potential snack. Unlike the modern-day platypus that loses its teeth a few days after birth, Platyzilla has retained its chompers. PLATYZILLA masticates and eats Tube Anemone!!! Narrated by Dr. Brian Tanis

**Black Dragonfish (4) v. Blue Glaucus (13)** – With *Idiacanthus atlanticus* (Black Dragonfish) going up against *Glaucus atlanticus* (Blue Glaucus), it's a safe bet that this battle will be taking place in the Atlantic Ocean – specifically, about 1000km southwest of the Azores at a depth of 1000m. Blue Glaucus uses countershading to its advantage, with a dull grey top and vivid blue and white underside. Floating upside down, Blue Glaucus looks blue when looked down upon into the ocean and light grey when looking

up and seen against the sky. In the inky cold void of the deep ocean, Black Dragonfish has its own personal spotlight, with a row of bioluminescent photophores that line its jaws. An effective predator known to hunt Portuguese Man-o-War, Blue Glaucus usually keeps an air bubble in its stomach to keep it buoyant for feeding at the surface. Looking for the surface, Blue Glaucus spots a light and swims towards it ... but it is actually swimming towards the fang-filled jaws of Black Dragonfish. Black Dragonfish strikes and slashes at Blue Glaucus! In a tricky turn of events, Blue Glaucus is able to sequester the poison from its Portuguese Man-o-War prey and incorporate it into its own body. However, the slime in Black Dragonfish's stomach is protective & Dragonfish swallows Blue Glaucus whole. BLACK DRAGONFISH defeats Blue Glaucus!!!  
Narrated by Prof Josh Drew



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# ROUND 1: TRICKSY TAXONOMY

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

**Round 1, TRICKSY TAXONOMY Results: Dugong, Mountain Tapir, Tarsier, Red Wolf, Solenodon, Jaguarundi, Egyptian Fruit Bat, and Musk Deer ADVANCE!!!!**

**Dugong (1) v. Colo Colo Opossum (16)** – This Number 1 Seed could have been found in the Sea Beasts division but is part of Tricky Taxonomy because Dugongs are closely related to elephants! (pauses, checks notes...) Yup, that's right – elephants! The Colo Colo Opossum, a small South American terrestrial marsupial, earned its place in the division by being more closely related to Australian marsupials than other South American marsupial species. Those genetics, while interesting, might not help Colo Colo Opossum in tonight's battle off the shore of Talibong Island, Thailand. Colo Colo Opossum clings desperately to a floating piece of wood, while Dugong grazes along the shallow bed of seagrass. But wait! It's low tide! The retreating water exposes vegetation and floating debris, giving Colo Colo Opossum the perfect bridge to scramble back to solid ground, abandoning the field of battle. Dugong isn't the least bit bothered by the low tide, as there is still plenty of water for grazing. DUGONG outswims Colo Colo Opossum!! Narrated by Prof Jessica Light.

**Mountain Tapir (3) v. Common Treeshrew (14)** – Malaysian legend tells that Mountain Tapirs were made with leftover parts of other animals, accounting for the unusual mixture of traits that includes a pig- or elephant-like snout. Genetics tells us that Mountain Tapir is actually more closely related to rhinos and horses instead of elephants or pigs. Our other combatant – Common Treeshrew – has a name that conflicts with its genetics, which indicate that it is more closely related to colugos than shrews or squirrels (perhaps a good thing, given the fate of squirrels in yesterday's battles?). In the high Andes at Sangay National Park, Common Treeshrew tries to adjust to the lower partial pressure of oxygen at this higher elevation, while Mountain Tapir quietly munches on some aster and ferns with no problems, being adapted to the elevation with an increased concentration of red blood cells. As the sun sets, the temperatures starts to drop into the mid 40s°F. Mountain Tapir has a thick, curly coat of fur to help it stay warm, while Common Treeshrew is adapted to a hot tropical climate and having trouble staying warm. Out of breath due to the elevation and unable to forage for insects to fuel shivering or other heat generating behaviors, Common Treeshrew curls up in a clump of vegetation and slowly drifts off into a forever sleep. MOUNTAIN TAPIR defeats Common Treeshrew!!! Narrated by Dr. Brian Tanis.

**Tarsier (7) v. Mara (10)** – Although it may look like someone put a kangaroo’s head on a rabbit’s body, the Patagonian Mara is genetically a rodent. Facing off against one of the world’s largest living rodents is one of the smallest primate species – the Philippine Tarsier. It may look like a monkey, but Tarsier is actually part of a sister group to anthropoids. After being transported from the open Argentinian grassland, Mara suddenly finds himself on the forest floor on the Philippine island province of Bohol. Mara is disoriented in the dark forest, and Tarsier has just emerged from his hidey-hole in the trees above, ready to hunt for an evening meal. Separated from his mate, Mara produced a high-pitched whistle and begins to search the immediate surroundings. Tarsier times a precise leap to ambush a delicious moth against the tree bark in the forest canopy above Mara’s head. A distressed Mara increases the search radius to find his mate, moving further and further into the forest and eventually moving out of the field of battle! TARSIER outlasts Mara!!! Narrated by Dr. Lara Durgavich.

**Red Wolf (2) v. Giant Golden Mole (15)** – The tricky taxonomy in this battle is that Giant Golden Moles were previously classified by their morphological features with North American moles, but molecular biology shows that they are unique to Africa and more closely related to elephants (elephants are apparently a popular genetic relative for #2021MMM combatants). Interspecific gene flow among canids have led to debates about whether Red Wolf is a species or subspecies. Although tonight’s battle takes place in the home habitat of Red Wolf in the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in coastal North Carolina, Giant Golden Mole is used to a similar habitat, so doesn’t feel too out of place. Red Wolf trots along the perimeter of the pack’s territory, crossing under a bridge when something catches his eye ... Giant Golden Mole is burrowing into the rich organic soil of the streambed. Red Wolf gives an exploratory nose tap on the hind end of Giant Golden Mole sticking out the ground. Giant Golden Mole wriggles intensely, and Red Wolf pounces! Dragging Giant Golden Mole from its burrow, Red Wolf shakes its head vigorously, snapping Giant Golden Mole’s spine and tearing in with canines and shearing with carnassials. RED WOLF consumes Giant Golden Mole!!! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut.

**Malagasy Striped Civet (4) v. Solenodon (13)** – While it is Madagascar’s second largest carnivore, the Malagasy Striped Civet is still only the size of a house cat – but strangely enough is more closely related to mongooses & hyenas rather than cats! After a lackluster performance in #2018MMM, the largest extant venomous terrestrial mammal, Solenodon, is back for redemption ... that’s right, a venomous mammal. Transported to Makira Natural Park in Madagascar, Solenodon ignores some nearby noisy indri lemurs and captures a small shrew tenrec for a meal. Noticing that Solenodon is distracted, Malagasy Striped Civet quickly approaches, unaware of Solenodon’s venomous nature. However, Solenodon’s venom is more for subduing prey rather than defense, so avoidance might be the better option ... if it was even aware of Malagasy Striped Civet’s presence. Solenodon finishes its meal, remaining unaware of any danger. Malagasy Striped Civet LEAPS! At a millipede. Malagasy Striped Civet catches the tasty morsel and runs off the field of battle to enjoy its meal. SOLENODON outlasts Malagasy Striped Civet!!! Narrated by Prof Marc Kissel.

**Jaguarundi (6) v. Amami Rabbit (11)** – Although referred to early on as a “weasel cat” that resembled an otter, the Jaguarundi is neither weasel nor otter but nestled in (genetically speaking) with felid lineages, closely related to puma and cheetah. Amami Rabbit, although sometimes questioned whether rabbit or rodent, is squarely within the family Leporidae with hares and rabbits, and now in very unfamiliar territory in the lowland forests of the Manú National Park in Peru. Unfortunately for Amami Rabbit, this habitat plays host to a number of predators. Amami Rabbit tries to make the best of the situation and finds some veggies to nibble on, but a local pit viper slithers up and strikes! Leaping away, Amami Rabbit narrowly misses a venomous bite. Meanwhile, a hidden Jaguarundi has been observing Amami Rabbit. Just as Amami Rabbit settles back into its vegan meal of forest floor vegetation, Jaguarundi bares those beautiful carnassials and snatches up Amami Rabbit! JAGUARUNDI consumes Amami Rabbit!! Narrated by Prof Kristi Lewton & Prof Chris Anderson.

**Kinda Baboon (5) v. Egyptian Fruit Bat (12)** – Having only been recognized as a distinct species from other baboons in 2013 and with softer, silkier hair, the Kinda Baboon (kin-duh, not kind-a) enjoys home-habitat advantage tonight in the Kasanka National Park in Central Zambia. Egyptian Fruit Bat is part of Superorder Laurasiatheria with hedgehogs, pangolins, carnivores, horses, and hippos, but genetic data suggests they are more closely related to carnivores and horses within that group. Despite having an excellent spatial memory that helps it remember the locations of multiple fruiting trees, Egyptian Fruit Bat doesn't recognize its current surroundings, and at this time of year, the park is devoid of its usual massive, but seasonal, bat population. Feeling lonely, Egyptian Fruit Bat finds an acacia tree to escape the drizzling rain ... and lands right next to our male Kinda Baboon and his groupmates! Have we mentioned that Kinda Baboons are known to hunt for meat at times (being an opportunistic omnivore)? Kinda Baboon notices the out-of-place Egyptian Fruit Bat and yawns, revealing sharp canines. Egyptian Fruit Bat shifts uncomfortably as Kinda Baboon starts grooming a nearby female. After a few moments, the female moves away to a new patch of sunshine, and our male Kinda Baboon follows, leaving his spot by Egyptian Fruit Bat. EGYPTIAN FRUIT BAT outlasts Kinda Baboon!!!! Narrated by Dr. Alyson Brokaw & Mauna Dasari.

**Musk Deer (8) v. Aoudad (9)** – This taxonomically tricky battle is between #NotADeer and #NotASheep. Musk Deer is not a true deer, with a DNA profile that clusters next to the group with cattle and sheep. Aoudad, which is sometimes mistakenly classified as a sheep, is more closely related to goats. Tonight, our animal combatants find themselves in the Golden Mountains of Altai in southern Siberia, with Musk Deer (a male with saber-like tusks rather than antlers) comfortably enjoying a lichen foraging patch. Aoudad emerges from the mist, and Musk Deer stops to size up the newcomer. In order to signal his alpha status, Aoudad raises the fringe hair over his withers and then licks his own muzzle. In response, Musk Deer vibrates his lips and displays his tusks. The standoff escalates as Aoudad utters a low growl, and Musk Deer counters by aggressively wiggling his hindquarters while vocalizing. As Aoudad lowers his horns and prepares to charge, Musk Deer charges first, using his tusks to slash and tear Aoudad's hindlegs! Aoudad attempts to counter with a headbutt but is met by Musk Deer's hooves

driving into Aoudad's head. Even as Aoudad begins his retreat, Musk Deer continues to chase and slash with his tusks, until Aoudad takes off at top speed. MUSK DEER defeats Aoudad!!! Narrated by Prof Patrice Connors & Prof Katie Hinde.



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# ROUND 1: RED, IN FUR

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

**Round 1, Red, in Fur Results: Red Kangaroo, Red Hartebeest, Maroon Langur, Red Brocket, Red Fox, Red-Crested Tree Rat, Red Ruffed Lemur, and Bay Cat ADVANCE!!!!**

**Red Kangaroo (1) v. Southern Red-Backed Vole (16)** – Tonight the largest living marsupial faces off against the Wild Card Winner in the Charles Darwin Reserve in Western Australia. This battle features a male Red Kangaroo, as males are reddish in color, while females are bluish-gray, and this male Red Kangaroo is currently enjoying home-court advantage, while Southern Red-Backed Vole isn't enjoying the dry, dusty environs. In the prime foraging hours of dusk, Southern Red-Backed Vole finds itself smack dab in the middle of a kangaroo mob (official term for a group of 10 or more kangaroos) grazing on the dry, autumn grass. Southern Red-Back Vole settles in to nibble on a seed, when suddenly it's soaking wet! Could this be a sweet, refreshing rain? Sadly no – it's spit dribbling from the hungry, slobbering Red Kangaroo! Escaping this unwelcome downpour, Southern Red-Backed Vole scampers off to a nearby Acacia cerastes (a rare, wiry wattle) shrub. **RED KANGAROO** defeats Southern Red-Backed Vole!!!! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut.

**Red Hartebeest (2) v. Red Squirrel (15)** – This battle features the hulking specimen of Red Hartebeest versus the dainty adorableness of Red Squirrel (seriously, check out those ear tufts!). This male Red Hartebeest is in its prime, making his presence known on a termite mound under the hot Botswanan sun in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park to ensure that other males don't make a play for his territory while several female hartebeests enjoy a nap under the shade of a nearby thorn tree. Red Squirrel, used to forest life, is alarmed by the lack of cover and unfamiliar predators. Red Squirrel sees the thorn tree as potential cover from raptors and other predators. Assuming that the large, reddish herbivores there are as harmless as the red deer from his home forest, Red Squirrel barrels towards the thorn tree. Red Hartebeest sees the small ball of fur and also decides to run towards his females under the thorn tree. Red Squirrel gets tangled up in Red Hartebeest's hooves, with an unintentional kick sending Red Squirrel flying (note that this is not a usually a flying squirrel – that was a different battle). Quickly picking himself up, Red Squirrel resumes his track towards the tree, but this time instead of getting kicked, he is trodden and squished by Red Hartebeest. **RED HARTEBEEEST** tramples Red Squirrel!!!! Narrated by Dr. Anne Hilborn.

**Maroon Langur (4) v. Little Red Flying Fox (13)** – Maroon Langur (AKA Red Leaf Monkey) is in the Sebangau Forest of Central Kalimantan in Indonesian Borneo, enjoying the evening from the treetops surrounded by the females of his group. Hearing a rustling from the forest, Maroon Langur gives a territorial call, which is heard by the Little Red Flying

Fox who is flying nearby while looking for a meal of nectar. (“Little” Red Flying Fox may be small in weight but has a 3-foot wingspan!!) Maroon Langur continues to scan the canopy for interlopers, while Little Red Flying Fox veers towards a more open area ... and right into a net set up by local hunters!! These nets are often used to hunt Large Flying Foxes, particularly from February-April which has contributed to the decline of bat populations. As Little Red Flying Fox struggles in vain to free his wings, Maroon Langur decides that there is no further threat and resumes his evening activities. MAROON LANGUR outlasts Little Red Flying Fox!!! Narrated by Dr. Lara Durgavich and Dr. Alyson Brokaw.

**Red Brocket (5) v. Siberian Weasel (12)** – The Red Brocket is a smaller deer species, weighing in at approximately 136 stoats (#StoatsAsMeasurements) or 30 kg, compared to the 3.7 stoats, or 820 g, for the Siberian Weasel. Despite being a very #MightyMustelid, Siberian Weasel finds itself perhaps slightly overdressed, with a coat designed to survive a Siberian winter, in the unfamiliar Reserva Natural Vale in the Atlantic Forest of Brazil. Bounding loudly through the leaf litter in search of food, Siberian Weasel startles Red Brocket, who emits a sneeze-like snort in alarm and leaps up and lands ... back in the exact same spot. Siberian Weasel is unfazed by Red Brocket but decides that this confrontation is not worth his impressive carnassials or energy. Siberian Weasel bounds past Red Brocket and exits the battlefield to search for a tasty snack elsewhere. RED BROCKET outlasts Siberian Weasel!!! Narrated by Prof Jessica Light.

**Red Fox (6) v. Ring-Tailed Vontsira (11)** – Among the many species of foxes, Red Fox is the largest at 57 inches long and 14 kilograms. The Ring-Tailed Vontsira is a social creature and is Madagascar’s answer to bloodthirsty, carnivorous squirrels. However, this battle does not occur in Madagascar – instead, Red Fox is enjoying the familiar territory of Walnut Creek, California, outside of Diablo Foothills Park. Red Fox is comfortable in the woodlands, as well as more urban environments. This is a drier environment than Ring-Tailed Vontsira is used to, but no bother – something delicious is in the air, and Ring-Tailed Vontsira slinks its way to a plastic trash can near some park benches. Trotting along the trail, Red Fox stops at the same picnic area, knowing it might be able to pick up some discarded human food scraps or a rat that was attracted to the area by the food scraps ... in fact, Red Fox hears a big rat in the trash can right now! Climbing out of the trash can and licking mustard off its nose, Ring-Tailed Vontsira runs into Red Fox – a stare-down ensues. And Red Fox lunges!! Weighed down by its latest trashcan meal of a half-eaten hamburger, Ring-Tailed Vontsira only manages to let out one last squeak as Red Fox bites through its spine. RED FOX kills Ring-Tailed Vontsira!!! Narrated by Dr. Asia Murphy & Kwasi Wrensford, PhC.

**Red-Crested Tree Rat (8) v. Red & White Giant Flying Squirrel (9)** – Just like the Wild Card round, this battle sees another match-up between #TeamRodent, with the higher-seeded but endangered Red-Crested Tree Rat enjoying the at-home comfort of the Andean cloud forests of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta National Natural Park. Luckily, Red & White Giant Flying Squirrel is also used to a forest habitat and begins to forage on some nearby leaves without feeling too out of place. Suddenly, Red & White Giant Flying Squirrel stills, scanning the scene carefully, and squeaks with alarm! Red-Crested Tree Rat launches itself towards Red & White Giant Flying Squirrel to begin a boxing-style attack! Red & White Giant Flying squirrel is not adapted for this style of fighting and instead launches itself off the branch, with arms and legs precisely stretched out for gliding through the air. While glorious to watch, this maneuver does take Red & White Giant Flying Squirrel



out of the battlefield. RED-CRESTED TREE RAT beatboxes away Red & White Giant Flying Squirrel!!! Written by Prof Patrice Connors.

**Red Ruffed Lemur (7) v. Red-Necked Pademelon (10)** – While the higher-seeded Red Ruffed Lemur enjoys home-habitat advantage in the deciduous tropical forests of the Masoala Peninsula in Madagascar, the same trees favored by the lemurs are also favored by logging companies. Illegal logging, traps, cyclones, and fires make this a dangerous environment and have resulted in the Red Ruffed Lemur being one of the most endangered of all the lemurs. Much smaller than the Number 1 seeded Red Kangaroo, Red-Necked Pademelon (definitely not a thylacine) is also an Australian marsupial and, although confused by the tropical forest of tonight's battle, begins to graze in the undergrowth. From the forest canopy above, Red-Necked Pademelon hears multiple screeching, staccato jackhammer "uh-uh-uh-uhs"! Could this possibly be the growling of Tasmanian Devils?? Tasmanian Devils used to be a primary predator of Red-Necked Pademelon but were outcompeted by dingoes on mainland Australia thousands of years ago. Plus ... Tasmanian Devils aren't known for their tree-climbing prowess. No, this is Red Ruffed Lemur performing a "loud call" directly above Red-Necked Pademelon, who quickly hops off through the dense ground cover and flees the battlefield. RED RUFFED LEMUR terrifies Red-Necked Pademelon!!! Narrated by Prof Marc Kissel.

**Bay Cat (3) v. Red-Rumped Agouti (14)** – Perhaps the rarest species in the Red, in Fur Division, Bay Cat is an endangered species about the size of a domestic cat from the forests of Borneo. While not much is known about the predatory habits of Bay Cat, it's a good guess that small mammals are part of its diet (hmmm, that certainly doesn't sound good for Red-Rumped Agouti!). The Red-Rumped Agouti is a rodent species that has been described as having a "pig-like body and a rabbit-like head" and plays a crucial role in seed dispersal for large-seeded tropical plants. In the Wehea Forest in East Kalimantan, Borneo (not terribly unlike the forests that Red-Rumped Agouti is used to in northeast South America), the elusive Bay Cat is on the hunt. Red-Rumped Agouti has been lulled into relaxation by a tasty meal of palm fruits and is unaware as the ghost-like Bay Cat stealthily inches forward and pounces!! Even though Red-Rumped Agouti is almost the same size as Bay Cat, the ambush is quick, and the jaws of Bay Cat are powerful, providing a mercifully quick end to this battle. BAY CAT devours Red-Rumped Agouti!!! Narrated by Prof Kristi Lewton.



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## ROUND 2: OF MYTHS & MONSTERS & SEA BEASTIES

### 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotto,  
Sam Houston State University

**Round 2, Of Myths & Monsters & Sea Beasties Results: Saber-Toothed Anchovy, Devil Frog, Blue-Capped Ifrit, Midgardia Seastar, Ammonite, Vampire Squid, Harpy Eagle, and Sphinx Monkey ADVANCE!!!!**

**Saber-Toothed Anchovy (1) v. Pink Vent Fish (8)** – Round 1 saw Saber-Toothed Anchovy sending Planktonic Copepod adrift and Pink Vent Fish eating Lathe Acteon snail. Tonight's first marine battle takes place 47 million years ago (Eocene Epoch of Cenozoic Era) in an ancient sea over modern-day Pakistan. Even though oxygen levels at shallower depths are relatively low, Pink Vent Fish is breathing just fine with its amped up hemoglobin that has a super-high affinity for oxygen. But Pink Vent Fish is used to deep-sea hydrothermal vents and now finds itself out in the open ocean (pelagic) without any rocks or tube works to hide behind! Lacking a lateral line (sensory system found in most fish), Pink Vent Fish is unable to sense a subtle change in water movement and is blind-sided as Saber-Toothed Anchovy launches an ambush! SABER-TOOTHED ANCHOVY (def)eats Pink Vent Fish!!! Narrated by Prof Patrice Connors.

**Picado's Jumping Pitviper (4) v. Devil Frog (5)** – The namesake of the genus for Picado's Jumping Pitviper (*Atropoides*) is Atropos, featured in the poem Shield of Heracles, with fitting descriptions for a pitviper, such as "teeth are bright-white like those of Fear." This sit-and-wait predator does have a horrific method of killing its typically mammalian prey – injecting venom made of enzymes that break down proteins. However, Devil Frog is not a mammal. In the cloud forest of Parque Nacional Los Quetzales, a national park in Costa Rica, Devil Frog finds itself along a stream edge and sits in a depression next to an animal track. And waits – Devil Frog is a sit-and-wait predator. While waiting, Devil Frog takes in the many scents of unfamiliar prey, because in Devil Frog's time, mammals did not yet exist! Used to preying on tasty small mammals in modern times and the current habitat, Picado's Jumping Pitviper slowly slithers along the streambank and uses its tongue to 'smell' the environment and search for prey. Settling within striking distance of Devil Frog, Picado's Jumping Pitviper also follows a sit-and-wait strategy. As Devil Frog sizes up the snake and decides that it might be too much to handle, Picado's Jumping Pitviper picks up the scent of a mammal and follows the scent off the field of battle. DEVIL FROG out-sits Picado's Jumping Pitviper!!! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut.

**Blue-Capped Ifrit (7) v. Crypt-Keeper Wasp (15)** – Blue-Capped Ifrit may have some beetles to thank for its win over Brussels Griffon in Round 1 due to the batrachotoxins on its feathers. Blue-Capped Ifrit does not produce its own toxins, but rather acquires toxins through its diet, possibly from beetles in the genus *Choresine*. The battle with underdog Crypt-Keeper Wasp begins in the Madang Province of Papua New Guinea near the village of Simbai, where Blue-Capped Ifrit has camouflaged its nest with moss and liverworts, although the nest itself is made of plant fibers and feathers. Crypt-Keeper Wasp is looking for a gall to oviposit in and saunters along a liverwort until it starts to brush up against the outside of the Blue-Capped Ifrit nest. As it touches the batrachotoxin-laced feathers on the nest, Crypt-Keeper Wasp starts to not feel so great. Batrachotoxins can affect nearly every animal that contains voltage-dependent sodium channels, including distantly related arthropods. As the feeling of discomfort grows, Crypt-Keeper Wasp flees the field of battle. BLUE-CAPPED IFRIT repels Crypt-Keeper Wasp!!! Narrated by Prof Chris Anderson.

**Midgardia Seastar (2) v. Yeti Crab (15)** – This battle's top-seed – Midgardia Seastar – is an elusive species of the deep sea, with only 20 specimens in natural history collections. Yeti Crab is another deep-sea resident, preferring the dark but warm waters that surround hydrothermal vents. Midgardia Seastar is sitting along the seafloor, about 512 m deep off the coast of Texas in the Gulf Coast, where an actual specimen has been collected. With a small mouth and a lack of food in the digestive track of collected specimens, scientists have hypothesized that Midgardia Seastar does not feed directly, but instead absorbs nutrients through its general body tissues. Yeti Crab is approximately 7300 km away in the Annie's Anthill vent site in the Pacific Ocean, waving her claws through the water near a vent to circulate more of the methane and hydrogen sulfide gasses to help the bacteria growing on her setae. A magic MMM portal opens up next to Yeti Crab ... through the portal in the Gulf of Mexico, Midgardia Seastar waves its arms in the current, each thin arm ending in a plate armed with small spines that looks like a tiny cat's paw with extended claws. Deciding that its own bacteria farming activities are just too important, Yeti Crab steps away from the portal and elects not to enter the field of battle. MIDGARDIA SEASTAR outlasts Yeti Crab!!! Narrated by Prof Jessica Light.

**Platyzilla (3) v. Ammonite (6)** – Platyzilla's scientific name (*O. tharalkooschild*) pays homage to the Indigenous Australian dreamtime origin story about a duck named Tharalkoo. Ignoring the advice of elders, Tharalkoo explored upriver and #YadaYadaYada which lead to the origin of the first platypus being the offspring of a male water rat and a female duck. Ammonite is another extinct combatant in #2021MMM, belonging to a group of shelled cephalods. However, Ammonite is only found in its last chamber – the other chambers are filled with liquid and gas to control buoyancy and maintain orientation in the water. These extinct Sea Beasties find themselves 10 million years ago in what is now Riversleigh, Australia, as Platyzilla uses electric receptors on its bill to sense prey in the water. Ammonite notices a large animal swimming right towards it and spins vertically! The adult orientation of its shell spirals is not suited to horizontal movement. CRUNCH!! Platyzilla bites Ammonite! But Platyzilla bites the wrong end and ends up with a mouth full of the hard calcium carbonate shell

and a broken tooth. Platyzilla's teeth are adapted for crushing, but mostly for softer foods like insect larvae and small vertebrates like frogs. Knowing the value of its teeth and not wanting to risk them further, Platyzilla swims off to find more easily masticated prey. AMMONITE survives Platyzilla!!! Narrated by Dr. Brian Tanis.

**Black Dragonfish (4) v. Vampire Squid (5)** – Both adapted to the cold, deep waters of the ocean, home habitat advantage might not actually give Vampire Squid much of an advantage tonight. Each combatant enters the field of battle with hungry bellies. While Vampire Squid eats mostly detritus, Black Dragonfish craves living flesh. As Vampire Squid floats horizontally using eyes and tentacles to find its next meal, Black Dragonfish fires up its photophores to bathe Vampire Squid in near infra-red light. Researchers aren't sure whether Vampire Squid can actually see this light, but most of Black Dragonfish's usual prey can't see this wavelength, which is rare at this depth, rendering them unaware of the dangers it brings. As Vampire Squid's tentacles brush up against something, Black Dragonfish strikes, and Vampire Squid flips out! Literally – Vampire Squid is able to turn inside out, exposing a black inner mantle lined with sharp cirri in a 'spiky pineapple' form. Although this has become a super-sized meal, Black Dragonfish is not deterred and has its own morphological malarky. Like other members of its phylogenetic family, Black Dragonfish has a bit of free-floating spinal column that allows it to crank its head back and open its mouth even wider. The gaping maw of Black Dragonfish aims toward Vampire Squid, but Vampire Squid has one last trick – it fires a series of photophores on the tips of its arms! The sudden flaring of light distracts Black Dragonfish, who is only able to get a mouthful of tentacles but leaves the vital bits of Vampire Squid intact. Black Dragonfish swims back to the depths with a belly full of calamari, leaving Vampire Squid victorious ... but damaged. VAMPIRE SQUID defeats Black Dragonfish!!! Narrated by Prof Josh Drew.

**Harpy Eagle (1) v. Ghost Bat (8)** – Harpy Eagle may be the “QUEEN of the jungle” avian predator, but they take a more hands-off approach to teaching their young about hunting. Rather than directly teaching their young, Harpy Eagles slowly stop provisioning them with food, forcing juveniles to figure it out on their own. Ghost Bat isn't typically on the menu – although Ghost Bat has no known natural predators, their populations are still on the decline, likely due to roost disturbance, habitat loss, and invasive species. Still enjoying home-habitat advantage, Harpy Eagle makes its way through the forest in Tambopata National Reserve in southeastern Peru and spies a tayra (solitary omnivorous animal from the weasel family). The tayra has found a ripe hog plum tree. In an unfamiliar environment, Ghost Bat has been searching for a cave to rest in but now settles for the pointy green leaves of the very same hog plum tree. The tayra catches the new scent of Ghost Bat and deftly climbs the tree. Ghost Bat stretches its wings to take off, but the tayra closes the distance with a quick horizontal bound across the tree branch. Before Ghost Bat can extend its wings, the tayra swipes and pins Ghost Bat, snapping wing bones. Just as the tayra is about to make the final, death-dealing bite – THRUNK!! Harpy Eagle's talons sink into the tayra's torso! The trio struggles and slips from the branch, but Harpy Eagle's massive wings quickly catch flight as her talons sink deeper into the tayra. As Harpy Eagle gains altitude, the tayra's eyes dim and jaw goes slack, and the broken-winged Ghost Bat tumbles back

through the canopy to the forest floor. HARPY EAGLE defeats Ghost Bat!!! Narrated by Dr. Alyson Brokaw.

**Chimpanzee (3) v. Mandrill (6)** – In our final battle of the evening, two primates in their prime are set to do battle. Both Chimpanzee and Mandrill are social primates. Male chimpanzees spend their entire lives in the community to which they are born, while male sphinx monkeys are more likely to be peripheral to groups or even live alone. No home-court advantage, as tonight's primate showdown takes place in Lopé National Park in central Gabon in a 9-ha 'island' of forest in which Chimpanzee and Mandrill are sympatric! A lone male Mandrill is foraging on the forest floor, while our adult male Chimpanzee arrives accompanied by a subadult male. Chimpanzees routinely hunt monkeys and are known to crush the skull and go for the brain – a large, nutrient dense source of energy. However, this type of hunting would require multiple adult males in order to be successful. Our two primates engage in an aggressive staring contest that is broken when Chimpanzee coughs. After being bitten by White-Winged Vampire Bat in Round 1, has there been zoonotic disease transmission?? Chimpanzee coughs up a fig chunk – no sign of disease. Recognizing Mandrill has larger and sharper canines, Chimpanzee decides to instead climb a tree into the nest of a crowned hawk-eagle, perhaps to steal fledglings or eggs. Crowned hawk-eagle fights back, striking the back of Chimpanzee's head with its beak, and Chimpanzee quickly descends to the ground. Chimpanzee and his subadult friend move away from the eagle tree and away from the field of battle as Mandrill calmly watches. MANDRILL outlasts Chimpanzee!!! Narrated by Prof Katie Hinde.



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# ROUND 2: TRICKSY TAXONOMY & RED, IN FUR

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** TOMORROW March 19th at 11AM EDT, join American Museum of Natural History scientists as they guide [a LIVE virtual tour of MAMMAL EXHIBITS at the AMNH!](#)

**Round 2, Tricky Taxonomy & Red, in Fur Results: Red Kangaroo, Mountain Tapir, Egyptian Fruit Bat, Red Hartebeest, Red Wolf, Dugong, Bay Cat, and Red Brocket ADVANCE!!!!**

**Red Kangaroo (1) v. Red Crested Tree Rat (8)** – After winning their respective battles by slobbering and boxing, Red Kangaroo and Red Crested Tree Rat find themselves in Judbarra National Park in Australia's Northern Territory. Red Kangaroo is again enjoying home-habitat advantage and begins grazing on the desert shrubbery as the sun sets and temperatures begin to cool. Red Crested Tree Rat is not a fan of this semi-arid desert but is enticed by some nearby *Calomymex* ants to begin foraging. Feeling something brush against its tail, Red Kangaroo looks down to see the much smaller Red Crested Tree Rat. Red Crested Tree Rat brings itself up to its full standing height, chest puffed and ready to defend its foraging ground... until it sees Red Kangaroo glaring down at it from 4 ft above. Red Crested Tree Rat channels its inner rodent and runs away from the larger threat. RED KANGAROO intimidates Red Crested Tree Rat!!! Narrated by Prof Patrice Connors

**Mountain Tapir (3) v. Jaguarundi (6)** – Both Mountain Tapir and Jaguarundi have interesting activity patterns, with Mountain Tapir being active any time of day, unlike other tapir species that are mostly nocturnal, and Jaguarundi being diurnal and therefore easier to see than other felid species. Our combatants meet in the Sangay National Park in Ecuador. Although not its preferred habitat, Jaguarundi is a habitat generalist and is not disturbed by the unfamiliar location. As Mountain Tapir uses its bristly proboscis to find some tasty greens, its keen sense of smell picks up the scent of a feline predator. Jaguars are frequent predators, and Mountain Tapir is on guard. Nearby, Jaguarundi is also sniffing the air – he detects the rich base notes of tapir but is more interested in the ocelot latrine at the base of a tree. The strong scent indicates that an ocelot has been here very recently. Knowing the ocelots are twice his size and known for intraspecific competition, Jaguarundi decides it would be better to exit the field of battle. Satisfied that there are no jaguars around, Mountain Tapir continues to munch away at the local plants. MOUNTAIN TAPIR ignores Jaguarundi!!!

Narrated by Dr. Anne Hilborn & Dr. Brian Tanis

**Egyptian Fruit Bat (12) v. Solenodon (13)** – Two underdog titans meet in this battle – Solenodon avoided being a treat for Malagasy Striped Civet, and Egyptian Fruit Bat outlasted the socially-motivated Kinda Baboon. Egyptian Fruit Bat most likely reacquired the ability to echolocate that was lost at some point in its ancestry, but instead of using pulses from their larynx, they use tongue clicks for lingual echolocation to locate land and detect large objects. Not to be outdone, Solenodon is also able to echolocate! Solenodon also uses a click form of echolocation for orientation in the dark. In tonight's battle, Egyptian Fruit Bat emerges from his cave to forage in the Mount Carmel Biosphere Reserve in Israel to feed on a variety of fruits, while Solenodon finds itself beneath some fig trees on the slopes of Mt Carmel. Egyptian Fruit Bat lands in the tree and plucks some nearby figs. Eyeing his haul, a female Egyptian fruit bat snatches one away as they scramble over this delicious meal. Their scrambling dislodges ripe figs from the branches, which start to rain down on Solenodon, who is not pleased by the resulting squishy, sticky mess. Combined with the high-pitched squabbling of the bats above, Solenodon decides to find a more peaceful place to hunt and zigzags away from the field of battle. EGYPTIAN FRUIT BAT drives away Solenodon!!! Narrated by Dr. Alyson Brokaw

**Red Hartebeest (2) v. Red Ruffed Lemur (7)** – The fully terrestrial Red Hartebeest, found in grazing herds of up to 300, faces off against the primarily arboreal Red Ruffed Lemur in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, in Mkambati Nature Reserve. Lemurs were outcompeted by monkeys on the mainland of Africa, which is why they are only found in Madagascar. Finding herself on the outskirts of the hartebeest herd, Red Ruffed Lemur keeps her eyes on the large horns of Red Hartebeest and begins to sidle towards a nearby stand of trees. Red Hartebeest doesn't view Red Ruffed Lemur as a threat, but nevertheless pauses to mark his territory with a fresh pile of dung. Red Ruff Lemur deposits her own stinky secretions by using her glands to deposit scent-marks on a tree to mark territorial boundaries and convey information about biological sex and age. Hearing unexpected calls from above, Red Ruffed Lemur looks up to see a troop of vervet monkeys, grunting and giving alarm calls. Realizing these trees are already occupied, Red Ruffed Lemur quickly departs, moving further away from Red Hartebeest and his herd as evolutionary history repeats itself! RED HARTEBEEEST displaces Red Ruffed Lemur!! Narrated by Dr. Lara Durgavich

**Red Wolf (2) v. Tarsier (7)** – Although tricky to determine whether Red Wolf is an ancient species or more recent hybrid with coyotes, mitochondrial DNA analyses show that the red wolf haplotype clusters among coyote haplotypes rather than grey wolf, but the sample size was small. Tarsier's tricky taxonomy has been investigated through nuclear DNA, which shows that tarsiers group with monkeys and apes and is therefore part of Haplorrhinii (monkeys & apes) rather than Prosimians (lemurs & lorises). Deep in the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge of southeast Louisiana, Tarsier is feeling a bit cold but is more perturbed by the lack of large trees to provide cover among the canopy. Scurrying in the tall grasses, Tarsier finds a nutria (aka swamp rat) burrow and hunkers down to wait for nightfall. Red Wolf and its pack are on a usual patrol when the scent of

an unfamiliar animal causes them to deviate and approach the burrow to investigate. As Red Wolf approaches, Tarsier's fight-or-flight instinct kicks in! Using all of its energy, Tarsier takes off in a leaping movement to relocate to another nutria burrow away from the field of battle. RED WOLF defeats Tarsier!!! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut & Prof Anne Stone

**Dugong (1) v. Musk Deer (8)** – Both combatants enter tonight's battle with one thing in common – tusks! Dugong tusks are elongated second incisors, similar to elephant tusks, and are found in all adult males and mature females. Musk Deer's vampire-like tusks are found in males and range from 7-10 cm in length! Despite these fearsome tusks, Musk Deer populations have declined, partially due to high demand for the musk produced by males to attract mates. As these tusked combatants meet on the field of battle in the Great Barrier Reef along an inner reef not too far from shore, Dugong happily uses his tusks to scrape vegetation off the sea floor. Feeding is the main activity for dugongs, which need to eat up to 70 lbs of sea grass a day. Musk Deer, with hooves adapted for walking on steep ground and climbing slanted trees, is much less happy in this marine environment. Dugong angles his tusks upward, spotting the swimming artiodactyl just above him, and Musk Deer directs his head and tusks downward to notice the dark shape moving in the waters beneath. Deciding that it would be the better part of valor to avoid a fight, Musk Deer swims towards land through the salty, SALTY (crocodile) infested waters to the mainland. DUGONG outlasts Musk Deer!!!  
Narrated by Prof Jessica Light & Prof Marc Kisse!

**Bay Cat (3) v. Red Fox (6)** – It's a cat versus dog(ish) battle tonight! Bay Cat shares its rainforest home with four other cat species, which may be reason why it is so elusive and rarely seen. Red Fox is no stranger to coming up against cats – across the world, Red Foxes are killed by bobcats and two species of lynx. In tonight's battle, Bay Cat has home habitat advantage in the Batang Ai-Lanjak-Entimau complex in the Bornean rainforest, but Red Fox has a 3kg (~14 stoat) weight advantage. Both combatants dealt some serious carnage in Round 1 and are looking for a place to sleep off even more recent meals. Bay Cat is resting in a cool, shady den under a tree root embankment, while Red Fox snuffles its way to Bay Cat's doorstep. Red Fox isn't particularly interested in this cat but does like the look of this nice resting spot. Bay Cat stands up, arches his back, and growls at Red Fox. This Red Fox is from Walnut Creek, California, and knows that even the bravest of its home turf cats would rather run than fight him. Bolstered with confidence, Red Fox creeps forward to press his size advantage ... and receives a slash from Bay Cat's claws across the nose! Red Fox jumps back but quickly rushes in again, baring his gleaming teeth. Bay Cat refuses to back down and delivers a lightning fast one-two-three strike to Red Fox's muzzle! Bay Cat charges and strikes again, and Red Fox runs off the field of battle. BAY CAT runs off Red Fox!!!  
Narrated by Dr. Asia Murphy & Kwasi Wrensford, PhD

**Maroon Langur (4) v. Red Brocket (5)** – These two combatants could each deal some serious #PlantCarnage – Red Brocket is a true ruminant with a four-chambered stomach that allows fluid washing and microbial fermentation for plant matter digestion, and Maroon Langur is a foregut fermenter with adaptations to digest a fiber-heavy



herbivorous diet. However, they are not fighting plants tonight. In the peat swamp Sebangau Forest, Central Kalimantan of Indonesian Borneo, a uni-male, multi-female group of langurs with several infants and juveniles has come to the area to forage. Two female langurs have found a delicious patch of mushrooms, and our male Maroon Langur has gorged on ripe fruit and is resting nearby. Red Brocket enters the arena, at first going completely unnoticed by the langur group. However, Red Brocket is a fan of fungi and takes a shortcut to mushrooms directly through the group of playing primates. A cacophony of alarm calls erupts as the young langurs rush towards their mothers. Maroon Langur rouses from his rest to lead the group a short distance away from Red Brocket before looking back. However, this “short distance away” is officially off the field of battle. RED BROCKET rousts Maroon Langur!! Narrated by Prof Katie Hinde



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# ROUND 3: SWEET SIXTEEN

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

**Round 3, Sweet Sixteen Results: Midgardia Seastar, Dugong, Red Kangaroo, Red Hartebeest, Saber-Toothed Anchovy, Mountain Tapir, Sphinx Monkey, and Harpy Eagle ADVANCE!!!!**

**Midgardia Seastar (2) v. Ammonite (6)** – We spend the first part of this battle just trying to figure out what exactly these two combatants are! Seastars are also known as starfish but are not fish. They are echinoderms, and Midgardia Seastar belongs to an order of primarily deep-sea animals. Ammonite is a type of cephalopod, like squid, octopus, and nautilus, with a very distinctive shell. Ammonites are also called snakestone because their fossilized remains resemble a coiled snake turned to stone. In the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, around 760 m below the surface, Midgardia Seastar is raising her arms up for suspension feeding, in which some species use the spines on their arms like velcro to catch prey. At this depth, Ammonite is cold ... but not too cold. Near the seafloor, Ammonite is floating just above the waving arms of Midgardia Seastar as it drops lower for a closer look. Midgardia Seastar remains unaware of the descending doom. Other shelled cephalopods, like nautiloids, spend their days between 200-800 m in depth, while internally shelled cephalopods like squid can go much deeper, up to 1900m! This field of battle at 700+ m below the surface is experiencing ~1041 pounds of pressure per square inch. Midgardia Seastar is adapted to this pressure, and Ammonite descends lower and lower. POP!!! Ammonite implodes! With a different shell than nautiloids, Ammonite's structural integrity maxed out and couldn't take the crushing pressure. MIDGARDIA SEASTAR outlasts Ammonite!!  
Narrated by Prof Jessica Light.

**Dugong (1) v. Egyptian Fruit Bat (12)** – Both Dugong and underdog of the season Egyptian Fruit Bat have sailed through the first two rounds with relative ease and without injury. However, neither experiences a life of 'relative ease' in relation to human interactions. Egyptian Fruit Bat populations are vulnerable to subsistence hunting and persecution due to fears of zoonotic disease, while Dugong is threatened by accidental entanglement in mesh fishing nets and pollution. But in the glistening waters of Wali El-Gemal National Park in Egypt, Dugong is busy enjoying another meal of seagrass and leaving a dusty plume of excavated sand in its wake. Flying overhead, Egyptian Fruit Bat is a few hundred kilometers from its home range and becomes disoriented by the bright sunlight and glistening waters of the Red Sea. Trying to dip down for a quick splash of cool water, Egyptian Fruit Bat is thrown off balance by a wave! Flapping his

wings in an awkward imitation of a butterfly stroke, Egyptian Fruit Bat tires and begins to sink as it is promptly engulfed in the jaws of a large, 4-meter tiger shark (#GarbageCanOfTheSea)! This tiger shark had been aiming for its preferred prey – Dugong. Dugong lifts its head from the sand just in time to see the gaping maw of the shark as it closes around Egyptian Fruit Bat's flailing body. With a surprising burst of speed, Dugong turns tail and heads for safer waters. DUGONG out-survives Egyptian Fruit Bat!!! Narrated by Dr. Alyson Brokaw.

**Red Kangaroo (1) v. Red Brocket (5)** – Red Kangaroo may be listed as of “least concern” in terms of conservation but was of great concern to Southern Red-Backed Vole and Red-Crested Tree Rat in previous battles. Peruvian hunters use Red Brocket as an important source of food and income, but this hunting is sustainable – deforestation that has caused habitat loss is more concerning. In the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan, Red Kangaroo is grazing with his ‘mob’ of other kangaroos in an area with few shrubs, which can pose a tripping hazard. Without these shrubs for cover, Red Kangaroo quickly spots Red Brocket and efficiently hops over to investigate. Red Brocket freezes, hoping to go unnoticed by this terrifying new creature. As Red Kangaroo continues his approach and stomps the ground, Red Brocket realizes that today is not the day to make a stand and leaps away towards an escape. RED KANGAROO chases off Red Brocket!!! Narrated by Prof Marc Kissel.

**Red Hartebeest (2) v. Bay Cat (3)** – Another set of animals has eased through the first two rounds, but both Red Hartebeest and Bay Cat have their own concerns. Endangered Bay Cat has to deal with the threat of their home habitat being converted to palm oil plantations, and Red Hartebeest is luckily rebounding after populations were driven down by hunting. But tonight, Red Hartebeest is relaxing in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in South Africa when he spots a hungry cheetah. This cheetah is young, though, and known for trying to take on inappropriately sized prey. As Red Hartebeest squares up and stares down the cheetah, the feline decides not to tangle with those horns and runs off. Red Hartebeest returns to his termite mound but is now being stalked by Bay Cat. Although Bay Cat takes the time for appropriate recon, he ultimately decides that maybe this wouldn't be a good battle. As Bay Cat tries to slink away, Red Hartebeest spots it! Thinking it might be the cheetah back for another round, Red Hartebeest starts snorting and tossing its horns in classic aggressive behavior. Bay Cat turns tail and quickly runs away from the field of battle (#CatScandal). RED HARTEBEEEST chases off Bay Cat!!! Narrated by Dr. Asia Murphy & Dr. Anne Hilborn.

**Saber-Toothed Anchovy (1) v. Vampire Squid (5)** – After escaping from Basket Star and Black Dragonfish, Vampire Squid finds itself in the warm, shallow waters off the coast of what will become Pakistan, as Saber-Toothed Anchovy is on patrol. Adapted to the cold and dark of the deep sea, Vampire Squid is in a horrifying (to it) new world of new smells and bright light. It's large eyes – 1 inch eyes on a 6 inch creature – make this light quite painful! However, the blinding light is only the beginning of Vampire Squid's problems, as it has a body adapted to the pressures of the deep sea, and these shallow waters are causing rapid depressurization. Murky waters from a recent rain are the only saving grace to help hide Vampire Squid. Saber-Toothed Anchovy isn't

bothered by murky waters. It has an air bladder for maintaining optimal buoyancy that extends into its skull where it is hypothesized to act as a subwoofer to collect and magnify low sounds ... including the ultrasound noises of thrashing prey. A blinded Vampire Squid is in the throes of pain as its organs expand with no support, and it comes as a mercy when Saber-Toothed Anchovy uses its eponymous dentition. The murky water takes on a sheen of red, and a silver flash of scales is the only evidence left. SABER-TOOTHED ANCHOVY defeats Vampire Squid!!! Narrated by Prof Josh Drew.

**Red Wolf (2) v. Mountain Tapir (3)** – The tricky taxonomy of Red Wolf will likely not be resolved until the genomes of ancient red wolves are analyzed – current populations show high proportions of coyote gene flow. Mountain Tapir has some of its own tricky taxonomy tucked up its odd-toed ungulate sleeve, with some unique trypanosome parasites that have mysterious intermediate hosts (Ticks? Leeches? Who knows!). Although not its actual habitat, Mountain Tapir is feeling right at home in the hilly grasslands and shrublands of the southeastern corner of North America during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when Red Wolf lived among the Cherokee people. Mountain Tapir starts nom-noming on some leafy greens, but this isn't gratuitous #PlantCarnage. The digestive tract aids in the germination of many plant seeds, and Mountain Tapir is thought to be an important seed disperser. A strange smell on the wind causes Mountain Tapir to raise its proboscis ... canid predators are somewhere nearby. Spring can be difficult, with new vegetation making it harder to track prey, but Red Wolf has caught the scent of something and moves in! Mountain Tapir tries to escape by sliding down a hill on its rump, a behavior that reportedly wears the fur away and leaves bare patches of skin on their behinds. Red Wolf is hungry and in hot pursuit! With nowhere left to go, Mountain Tapir falls back on its signature move against bush dogs: stomp the floor and make frequent loud whistles. Used to eating much smaller mammals than Mountain Tapir, Red Wolf decides that this loud and odd looking animal could actually do some damage in a fight and moves on in search of more familiar prey. MOUNTAIN TAPIR defeats Red Wolf!!! Narrated by Prof Patrice Connors & Dr. Brian Tanis.

**Sphinx Monkey (6) v. Blue-Capped Ifrit (7)** – These combatants enter the Sweet Sixteen with a few meals under their belts – Sphinx Monkey brutally devoured Bush Squirrel in Round 1, and Blue-Capped Ifrit got a snack of Crypt-Keeper Wasp in Round 2. Sometimes Sphinx Monkey (aka Mandrill) find itself being a meal for humans, meaning that conservationists must work with resident communities to find sustainable alternatives to game hunting. The batrachotoxins in Blue-Capped Ifrit's skin and feathers can cause numbness, tingling, and sneezing in humans, meaning that humans typically only interact indirectly with these birds. In Mandrill's home habitat of the Lékédi Park in Southern Gabon, Blue-Capped Ifrit spots a large congregation of unfamiliar creatures with resplendent colors, including a face of fine blue, with the ridge and tip of the nose a brilliant red. While Mandrill sits and forages with his troop, Blue-Capped Ifrit spies a beetle scrambling through the leaf litter and snatches it. Blue-Capped Ifrit's beak crushes the beetle's exoskeleton but drops the beetle in surprise as he is grabbed from behind! Trying to fly away is futile, as Mandrill has a firm grip and uses its great canines to deliver a craniocervical killing bite. PTHW-WHTTT! Mandrill spits out feathers and

pieces of skull as he feels the immediate effect of the batrachotoxins. Luckily, toxin levels are lower in the head feathers, but Mandrill still spits out the remainder of Blue-Capped Ifrit and returns to forage on safer fruits. SPHINX MONKEY dispatches Blue-Capped Ifrit!!! Narrated by Dr. Lara Durgavich.

**Harpy Eagle (1) v. Devil Frog (5)** – Although listed as “Near Threatened,” Harpy Eagle populations have managed to maintain a high level of genetic diversity, suggesting a conservation strategy that focuses on multiple diverse local populations, rather than any single existing population. Devil Frog is about 65-70 million years away from its home habitat. Through comparisons with living relatives, such as South American horned frogs, scientists have inferred that the bite force of Devil Frog may overlap with the bite force range of hyenas and even exceeds that of coyotes! That bite force may not be the only trait on display in tonight’s battle in Tambopata National Reserve in Peru. As Devil Frog walks (having legs that were likely too short to hop), it snaps a twig and draws the attention of Harpy Eagle. Smaller gray feathers along a facial disk may focus sound waves and improve Harpy Eagle’s hearing. Mistaking Devil Frog for its more typical iguana prey, Harpy Eagle strikes but is repelled by Devil Frog’s spiked and armored back – no surprise, since beachball-sized Devil Frog’s armor-like plates are believed to have fended off crocodile and dinosaur attacks. Devil Frog snaps at Harpy Eagle in a counterattack but misses! The miss causes Devil Frog to get off-balance, and it trips over a log. With Devil Frog’s soft underbelly now exposed, Harpy Eagle uses its 5-inch talons to slice open the amphibian. HARPY EAGLE defeats Devil Frog!! Narrated by Prof Chris Anderson.



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# ROUND 4: ELITE TRAIT

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

### Round 4, Elite Trait Results: Saber-Toothed Anchovy, Mountain Tapir, Red Kangaroo, and Harpy Eagle ADVANCE!!!!

**Saber-Toothed Anchovy (1) v. Midgardia Seastar (2)** – Saber-Toothed Anchovy has had a relatively uneventful tournament thus far, but Midgardia Seastar has earned the title of #2021MMM #WorstBear by doing literally nothing but sitting on the ocean floor and waving its arms. Luckily for these two Sea Beasties, tonight's randomly chosen habitat is a seagrass meadow in the Florida Keys. Midgardia Seastar rests partially on the sandy seabed, still with arms waving, although now its arms are jutting above the waterline as the sun beats down. Saber-Toothed Anchovy is on the prowl, zipping through the seagrass in search of food, when it spots a baby nurse shark. The seagrass meadow acts as a nursery for newborn nurse sharks. In fact, many marine fish that spend most of their lives in coral reefs or the open ocean need mangroves or seagrasses for nurseries at the start of their lives. Baby nurse sharks are less than a foot long but are already well-developed and ready to hunt and fight. Seastars are a tasty snack that don't fight back. While Midgardia Seastar may have very long arms, they are weak and fragile. CRUNCH! Baby nurse shark amputates one of Midgardia Seastar's legs. SNAP! SNAP! SNAP! Saber-Toothed Anchovy attacks baby nurse shark, driving both of their bodies into the precariously tilted Midgardia Seastar and breaking multiple arms! The thrashing bodies of Saber-Toothed Anchovy and baby nurse shark roll over Midgardia Seastar and snap off even more arms. Saber-Toothed Anchovy uses its saber-tooth to drive into the shark's skull! Shattered, Midgardia Seastar is lost and down for the count. SABER-TOOTHED ANCHOVY defeats Midgardia Seastar!!! Narrated by Prof Katie Hinde and Prof Jessica Light.

**Dugong (1) v. Mountain Tapir (3)** – Both Dugong and Mountain Tapir play important roles in their ecosystems. As we learned in last night's battles, Mountain Tapir's vegetarian diet makes it a significant seed disperser (thanks to its digestive tract), and they may have coevolved and coadapted with Andean plants. Some of these plants have no other adaptations for seed dispersal, making Mountain Tapir a keystone species. Dugongs (which are related to, but not actually manatees) have a direct effect on the seagrass they eat and an indirect effect on the other organisms that use the seagrass beds as shelter. Tonight's randomly decided habitat is the Paramaribo swamp forest of Suriname, but this swamp is in the dry season, leaving shallower water and making animals more vulnerable to predators. Feeling skittish from all the unfamiliar

sounds, Mountain Tapir decides to go for a swim – water helps them escape predators, regulate temperatures, and offers some tasty plants to snack on. In this freshwater swamp, Dugong is having a hard time finding any seagrass and begins using the stiff bristles on its lip to feel out potential treats. Instead of treats, Dugong’s whiskers brush up against a strange, spiky log. But logs don’t usually move! This ‘log’ is a spectacled caiman, though luckily not big enough to pose a threat to Dugong. The startled caiman then startles Mountain Tapir, who has been using its proboscis as a snorkel. Now it uses its proboscis as a water canon and sprays water straight at the caiman! Nearby, but oblivious to the action, Dugong hears a noise – perhaps a squeaky wheel underwater? This chirp-squeak belongs to a manatee. Although manatee calls are slightly longer than those of Dugong, this Dugong wonders if another dugong has been transported to this foreign land through magic. Dugong is intrigued enough to swim off in search of a fellow sea cow and doesn’t see Mountain Tapir scramble to the muddy shore and pull itself up to its full height of 0.9 meters (3.6 stoats). At only 64 cm, the caiman is dwarfed and glides along to another resting spot. MOUNTAIN TAPIR outlasts Dugong!!! Narrated by Dr. Brian Tanis, Dr. Alyson Brokaw, and Prof Marc Kissel.

**Red Kangaroo (1) v. Red Hartebeest (2)** – Neither of the Red, In Fur combatants had much direct contact with competitors in previous rounds – aside from Red Kangaroo slobbering on Southern Red-Backed Vole and Red Hartebeest squashing Red Squirrel with his hooves – so both enter the arena of battle relatively fresh. This battle takes place in a dwarf forest in Southern California, full of stunted, gnarled trees and pyrophytic plants, which have adapted to tolerate or resist the effects of fire. Although the current fire forecast in this area is low, fire plays a critical role in shaping local environments. While global models suggest that we are currently in a period of reduced severity, some areas of the world, including Southern Africa, Eastern Russia, and the Western US, have been trending towards an increase in fire severity. The home habitats of both Red Kangaroo and Red Hartebeest were devastated by fire in 2020. After the magic of MMM transports our combatants to the field of battle with low fire risk, both Red Kangaroo and Red Hartebeest are parched and spot the same ephemeral pool from a recent rainstorm ... a staring contest ensues. Red Kangaroo is not aware that #SharingIsCaring and takes a hop towards Red Hartebeest with a snort. Not to be outdone, Red Hartebeest stomps his hooves and shakes his head. Red Kangaroo ups the ante by licking the fur on his upper chest to release a strong smelling and reddish secretion from scent glands, but Red Hartebeest decides that enough is enough and lunges, aiming his curved horns like twin rapiers to stab at his opponent’s chin and throat. Quickly side-stepping the attack, Red Kangaroo delivers a kick that sends Red Hartebeest tumbling to the forest floor! Regaining his footing, Red Hartebeest initiates another stare-down ... before turning and galloping away! Without females or home territory to defend, Red Hartebeest escapes the woodlands for the safety of open space. RED KANGAROO defeats Red Hartebeest!!! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut and Prof Patrice Connors.

**Harpy Eagle (1) v. Sphinx Monkey (6)** – The two titans of the Of Myths & Monsters division meet tonight, both having dealt out some serious carnage in previous rounds. Now, the most powerful rainforest raptor faces off against the largest and heaviest living

monkey – in a teeny, tiny forest. This randomly selected dwarf/elfin/pygmy forest is the pygmy forests of Mount Hamiguitan in Silangang Davao in the Philippines, which is home to cousins of both combatants – the Philippine tarsier and the Philippine eagle. Harpy Eagle is already agitated and having a difficult time here, as she is adapted more for moving from tree to tree in a dense rainforest than soaring. Mandrill is confused by all the weird pitcher plants and looks up to see the biggest crowned hawk-eagle he has ever seen! Or at least Mandrill would *think* it's a crowned hawk-eagle. Mandrill lets out a loud alarm bark at Harpy Eagle, who – having heard alarm calls of howler monkeys – is not impressed. Though Mandrill is bigger than her usual prey, Harpy Eagle is feeling peckish. Harpy Eagle takes flight as Mandrill charges with exposed canines, trying to take a chunk out of Harpy Eagle's leg! Pivoting in the air, Harpy Eagle uses her rudder-like tail to avoid the attack and slashes Mandrill's back with her talons. Mandrill stumbles but does not back down. This isn't fight or flight – this is Fight vs. Flight! Mandrill springs back up and lunges again, but Harpy Eagle is ready and dive-streaks with talons out. With a leap, Mandrill angles away from Harpy Eagle and into the dense cover of the short trees. The squat branches block Harpy Eagle ... but not for long. With a snap, the fragile branches crack, and Harpy Eagle finds a weakness in the canopy. Deciding that discretion is the better part of valor, Mandrill commando-crawls off the field of battle through a dry streambed. HARPY EAGLE terrifies Sphinx Monkey!!!  
Narrated by Mauna Dasari.

For Full SCIENTIFIC DETAILS for each battle, VISIT THE WAKELET!  
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# ROUND 5: FINAL ROAR

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

### Round 5, Final Roar Results: Red Kangaroo and Harpy Eagle ADVANCE!!!!

**Mountain Tapir (3) v. Red Kangaroo (1)** – Red Kangaroo sailed through the early rounds and revealed some fancy footwork to defeat Red Hartebeest. What other tricks will Red Kangaroo pull out of his pouch for this round? Actually, none – while male Red Kangaroos have incredibly well-developed shoulder and pectoral muscles, they do not have a pouch. Only females have a pouch, used to carry and protect their offspring which are born the size of jellybeans! With incredibly complicated anatomy (including 2 uteri and 3 vaginas) a female red kangaroo can have 3 dependent offspring of different ages at the same time. As the only non-#1 seed to make it to the Final Roar, Mountain Tapir is an underdog both in MMM and life. Increasing human pressures like road building, traditional medicine, and making room for cattle have put populations at-risk. Zoos are working on tapir conservation and even use trained dogs to support local conservation efforts.

Our two foes will do battle tonight in the dwarf forest! Along the Kuskokwin River, in southwestern Alaska in the Black Spruce dwarf tree peatland, climate change has affected the field of battle, causing an early ‘breakup,’ when the river and lake ice thaws. Red Kangaroo is not enjoying the 32° weather and blizzard warning and looks to forage to support the increased energy demands of staying warm. This doesn’t bother Mountain Tapir, who is used to below freezing temperatures at night and sweltering temperatures during the day. Munching on last year’s crowberries, Red Kangaroo spots a strange ungulate in his peripheral vision and raises himself to full height. Looking down upon the strange pig-like creature, Red Kangaroo is feeling twitchy, remembering that feral pigs have chased him away from water holes and eaten small joeys from his group. Red Kangaroo has no patience and begins bounding towards the interloper. Mountain Tapir raises his proboscis to sniff the air to try and identify this strangely locomoting animal. Maybe this creature is all bounce and no bark? Mountain Tapir charges! With the height difference, Red Kangaroo rejects using his short front legs to claw at his opponent’s eyes and instead goes for his signature move – he leans back on his tail, allowing him to use both legs for a double-barreled kick to the face. But Mountain Tapir’s charge was only a bluff, and he stops short! Connecting with nothing but air, Red Kangaroo is caught off-guard and topples, but rights himself quickly.

As they stare at each other, CRACK!!! from upstream, the anchor ice that has accumulated lifts, layers of frozen slush and stacked ice shear off, and the entire accumulation rapidly releases down river! Both combatants pivot their ears towards the sounds coming from upriver. As the ice jam climbs the riverbank 50 feet in less than 10 seconds, Red Kangaroo leaps uphill while Mountain Tapir instinctively runs towards the water to safety, where it is pushed and then crushed by thousands of pounds of ice and frigid water. RED KANGAROO survives Mountain Tapir!!!

Narrated by Dr. Anne Hilborn, Dr. Tara Chestnut, & Prof Marc Kissel.

**Harpy Eagle (1) v. Saber-Toothed Anchovy (1)** – The two #1 seeds from Of Myths & Monsters and Sea Beasties meet up in the last battle of the night. Saber-Toothed Anchovy was only just described in 2020! A far-cry from its small, plankton-eating modern day anchovy relatives, Saber-Toothed Anchovy is large and sports a set of pointy, curved teeth, accented with a single, massive fang. Harpy Eagle flies into this battle, having gotten a few tasty meals in earlier rounds. While many eagles specialize as predators of fish, Harpy Eagle specializes in hunting arboreal mammals – sloths make up about 80% of Harpy Eagle's diet, although they are also known to hunt primates.

Tonight's battle is set in the randomly selected habitat of a seagrass meadow! The Isla Escudo de Veraguas of Bocas del Toro, off the coast of Panama, has been separated from the mainland for nearly 9000 years, allowing for the divergent evolution of the pygmy sloth. Due to nutritional limitations and relaxation of predation, pygmy sloths are lighter and shorter due to insular dwarfism, but Harpy Eagle just sees one of her favorite food groups. Hanging on to a tree branch by its back legs and one hook hand and foraging in the red mangroves, the pygmy sloth sees Harpy Eagle heading right for it! Making a quick decision, the sloth releases from the branch and plummets into the ocean water below. Pygmy sloths routinely swim in the salt water between tree stands. Harpy Eagle dives, talons out ... and Saber-Toothed Anchovy surges towards the swimming sloth, mouth open wide!

SPLASH!!! THRASH!!! Saber-Toothed Anchovy has only shallowly caught the sloth's arm because he also caught one of Harpy Eagle's ankles! The smaller teeth of Saber-Toothed Anchovy's lower jaw do little damage, and Harpy Eagle uses her other foot to try and grasp both sloth and Saber-Toothed Anchovy. Harpy Eagle cannot generate enough lift to offset the combined weight of fish & sloth, so she attempts to drag them across the surface of the water. Even this is too much, and Harpy Eagle collapses into the water!! The sloth still has some fight left and uses its hook hand to scrape across Saber-Toothed Anchovy's face, causing him to flail. Saber-Toothed Anchovy is slipping from Harpy Eagle's grasp, but her 5 inch hallux talon fully pierces the chambers of Saber-Toothed Anchovy's heart! Saber-Toothed Anchovy's mouth goes slack, the sloth is able to slip away, and Harpy Eagle's other talons are freed – which she uses to immediately further impale the 3-foot fish. Though partially submerged, Harpy Eagle is triumphant and turns to paddle back to shore with her wings. HARPY EAGLE defeats Saber-Toothed Anchovy!!! Narrated by Prof Katie Hinde, Mauna Dasari, & Dr. Alyson Brokaw.



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# CHAMPIONSHIP

## 2021 March Mammal Madness

Sports Summaries by Prof Kate Lesciotta,  
Sam Houston State University

### Championship Results: Red Kangaroo WINS!!!!

**Red Kangaroo (1) v. Harpy Eagle (1)** – Tonight's epic championship battle features the #ThunderFromDownUnder Red Kangaroo versus #DeathFromAbove Harpy Eagle. At 85 kg, Red Kangaroo is the largest living marsupial, although the extinct macropod Procoptodon tipped the scales at ~240kg. Harpy Eagle is the largest living eagle with a 2 m wingspan, but also has a chonkier extinct cousin – Haast's eagle went extinct around 1400 years ago and was 1.5x larger.

The setting for tonight's battle is the semi-arid desert in Nitmiluk National Park in Australia near a seasonal water hole. Under the full moon, Red Kangaroo pauses near the water hole, sensing something is amiss. As he stands to his full 6-ft height, Harpy Eagle streaks down from above! Red Kangaroo quickly lifts his tiny T-rex arms to prepare a face-punch, but, after gauging the large size of Harpy Eagle, decides instead to lean back on his massive stabilizing tail to deliver a forceful kick. BATTLE ENSUES!!! THE NIGHT RUNS RED WITH BLOOD!!!



Just kidding! The full moon was three nights ago, and Harpy Eagles are diurnal hunters. Here's what really happened...

In mid-afternoon, Red Kangaroo rests in the shade of a Eucalyptus tree. Native Australian mammal species have seen catastrophic declines due to invasive species such as feral cats, cane toads, horses, and cattle. #MMMagic brings in a new invasive species tonight – Harpy Eagle arrives on the scene to hunt from a perch in another Eucalyptus tree just 30 feet from Red Kangaroo’s tree. Red Kangaroo prepares to ‘pentapedal crawl’ by using its tail as a crutch, when a <whoom whoomp> resonates from above followed by a wailing cry – a barking owl!

Red Kangaroo’s ancestors faced predation from marsupial lions and thylacines, but now in modern times Red Kangaroo’s only natural, endemic predators are dingoes ... and wedge-tailed eagles. From her perch, Harpy Eagle spies the movement of a dingo as it enters the field of battle. Harpy Eagle does occasionally target carnivores, but usually mesopredators like foxes, ocelots, tayras, and raccoons instead of apex canid predators. This dingo is also part of a pack, and Red Kangaroo prepares to hop – two more dingoes enter the field, and their presence is known to inhibit kangaroos from using open pastures even in the absence of overt predatory behavior.

Quietly pentapedal crawling to a dry, depressed streambed, Red Kangaroo manages not to get noticed by the dingoes. But Harpy Eagle’s eyes are watching! Her focus was on the dingoes and only caught sight of part of Red Kangaroo – hmm, maybe it’s a juvenile red brocket? Harpy Eagle takes flight! Red Kangaroo is picking up speed in the streambed and without shrubs and bushes in the way is able to locomote at almost 11 mph – but Harpy Eagle is streaking down at 50 mph, #TalonsOut, aiming for Red Kangaroo’s head & shoulders that are visible above the bank of the dry streambed! Almost... there...

Just before Harpy Eagle makes contact, Red Kangaroo leaps out of the streambed with arms thrown up! This key anti-predator response can create a moment of hesitation at the last moment and interfere with the completion of an attack in Harpy Eagles. Harpy Eagle is repelled, pivoting in the wind and circling to prepare for another attack! Since bird of prey have anatomical limitations that make head-turning difficult when attacking, if they miss they often have to circle around. But from this angle, Harpy Eagle can now see that this is no juvenile – this is full-size and on-the-defensive Red Kangaroo. Harpy Eagle decides that this is not the prey she seeks, wises up to the situation, and flies away to hunt another day. **RED KANGAROO defeats Harpy Eagle!!!!** Narrated by Prof Katie Hinde, Dr. Lara Durgavich, Dr. Tara Chestnut, Patrice Kurnath & Prof Marc Kissel.



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# WILD CARD 2020

## March Mammal Madness

*She was an itsy-bitsy, teeny-weenie black & beige-y spot stinkini...*

Tonight's Wild-Card Round featured Grandider's "Mongoose" #TeamCatsish vs. the Pygmy Spotted Skunk – #Team Dogsish.

Grandider's "Mongoose" won the coin-toss to gain home habitat advantage, landing the Pygmy Spotted Skunk far from Mexico in the dry, spiny tropical forest and shrubland of Tsimanampetsotsa Reserve in Madagascar, home to the iconic baobab tree.

Both combatants trotted about as they nocturnally foraged for small invertebrates. Insects and millipedes for Skunk, and cockroaches for Mongoose.

Grandider's "Mongoose" cornered a giant Hissing Madagascan Cockroach, chomping down with crushing teeth but not before the hissing so scared the skunk she stunk the scene up!

Eyes burning from the chemical defense of the skunk, Grandider's "Mongoose" darted away, quitting the field of battle!



*Pygmy Spotted Skunk*



*Grandider's "Mongoose"*

**PYGMY SPOTTED SKUNK TAKES ON 1-SEED SLOTH BEAR  
WEDNESDAY IN THE CATS-ISH vs DOGS-ISH DIVISION ROUND 1!**

# ROUND 1: ANTHROSCENE DIVISION

Sports Summaries by Kate Lesciotto, Penn State

## Round 1 AnthroSCENE Division Results - Florida Panther, Trumpeter Swan, Thylacine, Common Cuttlefish, Australian Feral Camel, California Condor, House Cat, and Gopher Tortoise ADVANCE!!!!

**Florida Panther (2) v. Chytrid (15)** - Panther, puma, cougar, or mountain lion - *Puma concolor* means lion-of-one-color, but their kittens have spots on their body and bands on their tail. For a non-mammal, the amphibian chytrid fungus packs quite a punch - chytrid has been implicated in the decline of hundreds of species of amphibians, including tree frogs, bullfrogs, toads, and salamanders. Florida Panthers (uekatcy), and their adorable floofy kittens, live on the traditional lands of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. This battle takes place in the Everglades National Park, home to both of our combatants. Carefully stalking a group of raccoons, Panther gives in the hunger and rushes the group, nabbing a raccoon that had nabbed a crayfish. The raccoon drops the crayfish, spilling its Chytrid infected guts. Panther ignores Chytrid to focus on its meaty raccoon meal. PANTHER leaves Chytrid to desiccate in the hot sun!! Narrated by Tara Chestnut.

**Trumpeter Swan (4) v. Honeybee (13)** - Tonight's battle at Wintergreen Lake at the WK Kellogg Biological Station Bird Sanctuary in Michigan brings together two scrappy fighters that are both used to being the underdog (under-bird? under-invertebrate? under-flyer?!) Trumpeter swans are one of the heavier birds capable of flight (definitely not a #TinyTerror), have already fought back from the brink of extinction in the 1930s due to over-hunting, and are still negatively impacted by humans. Honeybees have also been fighting against population decimation, primarily due to colony collapse disorder. Right now, Honeybee and its hive are fighting against a low honey supply to feed the new brood, so Honeybee leaves the warmth of the hollow tree cavity in search of pollen and nectar. Trumpeter Swan's white feathers don't signal the presence of potential Honeybee food, unlike the bright or contrasting colors of flowers, so Honeybee flies right past, vacating the battlefield. TRUMPETER SWAN defeats Honeybee!! Narrated by Jessica Light.

**Thylacine (3) v. Monarch Butterfly (14)** - This battle takes place in Drysdale River National Park, in Western Australia. Thylacine, though now extinct, was once one of Australia's largest marsupial carnivores, but is thought to have been driven to extinction on mainland Australia in part due to dingo predation and/or competition. Blown off course by a cyclone, Monarch Butterfly finds itself in the unfamiliar Australian landscape searching for milkweed on which to lay its eggs. Landing on a nearby Asclepias plant, Monarch hears a SWFARSHK as Thylacine ambushes a bandicoot. With the smell of death in the air, Monarch decides to make her nursery



somewhere with a little less action. THYLACINE displaces Monarch Butterfly!! Narrated by Marc Kissel.

**Common Cuttlefish (6) v. Bogue (11)** - In another non-mammal match up, Bogue could have been a contender in the #DoubleTrouble division, as its scientific name is *Boops boops* ... wait, seriously? Okay *Boops boops* the Bogue has faced some serious human impacts due to over-fishing and microplastics. (Yelling off screen: Are we absolutely sure that Bogue is *Boops boops*? Cause that sounds made-up ... You're sure?) Bogue's opposition is the Common Cuttlefish - slightly more resilient to over fishing but still suffering from human impacts - in the temperate seas of the eastern Atlantic Ocean. As they find each other, both searching for a meal, Bogue notices that Cuttlefish is looking a bit worse for wear, with some flesh sloughing off in the water, but soon Bogue is shedding scales and flesh as Cuttlefish proves to be not so cuddly. Bogue darts in and out, taking quick bites but soon succumbs to the tornado of tentacles. COMMON CUTTLEFISH defeats Bogue!! Narrated by Josh Drew.

**Australian Feral Camel (1) v. Face Mite (16)** - One might ask, how does a camel become feral? After being transported from India, Afghanistan, Pakistan & KSA to explore the inner Australian desert and for use in establishing rail and telegraph lines, camels were untethered and told to make their own way in life, leading to over 1M feral camels by 2008. Face Mite also inhabits some strange land - human hair follicles! As the only human permanent ectoparasite, Face Mite (in colony of 1K-2K ON YOUR FACE) can keep you company during this time of social distancing. While you try to balance that thought with CDC instructions not to touch your face, this battle will begin at a cattle station in the Northern Territory of Australia. Some human camel jockeys are mustering up a sassy male Camel to train for the camel races, with one particular camel jockey carrying Face Mite into the field of battle in her eyelash follicle. Camel aims a well-timed spit into the face of the jockey as her goggles slip. While wiping away the spit, a small piece of bark in the camel's cud slashes the jockey's eyelid and impales Face Mite. AUSTRALIAN FERAL CAMEL defeats Face Mite!! Narrated by Katie Hinde.

**California Condor (5) v. Little Brown Bat (12)** - In another battle of the winged non-mammals, the Little Brown Bat is facing a dire future due to population collapses from white nose syndrome. But Bat will only have to face that future if he can survive facing California Condor - North America's largest and longest-lived bird. In Pinnacles National Park in California, Condor is soaring majestically near its cliffside cave nest, where his mate and nestling await his return to settle in for the night. As they settle, Condor hears a faint swoosh-swoosh and, in a startled defense, vomits his evening meal across the cave floor! Unfortunately for Bat, who had flown into the cave and then fallen to the floor, this Condor vomit is highly acidic. CALIFORNIA CONDOR's vomit burns Little Brown Bat out of the competition!! Narrated by Alyson Brokaw.

**House Cat (8) v. Chinchilla (9)** - Evenly matched in size and floof, House Cat and Chinchilla face off in the Women's Rights National Historic Site in Seneca Falls, New York, an urban site run by the National Park Service (and home of the 1848 first Women's Rights Convention!). Chinchilla is feeling a little exposed and looks for some cover ... POUNCE! Cat dives in, while Chinchilla tries to escape with its powerful hind legs. But its no use - Cat has a

powerful grip with its dentition & jaws behind Chinchilla's head. HOUSE CAT enjoys a dinner of CHINCHILLA tartar!! Narrated by Patrice K. Connors.

**Gopher Tortoise (7) v. Feral Pigeon (10)** - Feral Pigeons are the wild ancestors of domesticated doves and rock pigeons and are a symbol of urban ecosystems. Because they eat so much human trash, Feral Pigeons are often full of antibiotic resistant bacteria! While pigeons may be an ecosystem symbol, Gopher Tortoises are ecosystem engineers, digging large underground burrows that also provide habitat for insects, plants, and other vertebrates. Our final pair of combatants meets in the Conecuh National Forest of Alabama. Tortoise finds a nice sunny spot to forage, not realizing that this spot is sunny because its the side of a highway and a large truck is speeding towards it only 5 miles away. Oblivious to the oncoming traffic, Pigeon spots some tasty looking invertebrates near Tortoise and decides to head over and assert some dominance. Tortoise pays no attention to Pigeon, but does pay attention to the roar of the oncoming truck. Pigeon quickly flies away, while Tortoise can only amble slowly. WHAM-SPLAT!! A puff of feathers erupts from the truck's grill as Tortoise crosses safely to the other side of the road. GOPHER TORTOISE outlasts Feral Pigeon!! Narrated by Brian Tanis.

# Round 1: Cats-ish vs. Dogs-ish

Summary by Kate Lesciotto, PhD, Penn State

**Sloth Bear (1) v. Pygmy Spotted Skunk (16)** - The battles start off with both Sloth Bear and Skunk repping Team Dogs-ish. Set in the Hadagarh Wildlife Sanctuary in India, Sloth Bear uses its large forefeet to rip into a termite mound for an evening meal, while Skunk tries to find a tree in this unfamiliar landscape for a nap. Skunk is startled awake and uses its standard handstand threat display as Sloth Bear starts to tear into the tree looking for some more tasty niblets for this insect-eating (myrmecophagous) bear. Unfortunately, Skunk hasn't had sufficient time to recharge its spray after depleting its supply during the Wild Card battle! Sloth Bear is unimpressed by Skunk's handstands and continues foraging, while Skunk slinks off the battlefield to hopefully spray another day. SLOTH BEAR for the win!!

**Brown Hyena (3) v. Solongoi (14)** - The Cats-ish Hyena squares off the much smaller Dogs-ish Solongoi in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana. As Hyena steals a meal from some local cheetahs, Solongoi wakes up far from his Siberian home. The unfamiliar landscape and a belly rumbling with hunger draw Solongoi towards the smell of the fresh kill. Confused by this uninvited dinner guest, Hyena approaches. As a defense, Solongoi continues the legacy of the Pygmy Spotted Skunk by releasing a powerful odor from his anal glands - however, Hyena is unfazed and continues his approach. Out of options, Solongoi dives into a nearby termite mound and vacates the battlefield. BROWN HYENA for the win!! #SoLongGuy

**European Badger (5) v. Giant Forest Genet (12)** - This battle takes place in the Chaux d'Abel in the Swiss Jura Mountains - home of the Dogs-ish European Badger, who has claws designed for digging and isn't afraid to use them after dropping some winter weight becoming a lean mean thirteen kilograms. This Cats-ish "Giant" Forest Genet only weighs ~3 kg and is only a few inches longer than the common genet. Not designed for this environment, the Genet's surface-to-mass ratio is causing rapid heat loss - perhaps this chill caused a momentary lack of awareness as Genet stumbles directly into Badger's path! Sidebar - did you know that the Chaux d'Abel Badgers are notable for their high consumption of mammals? CHOMP!! EUROPEAN BADGER for the win!!!

**Caspian Seal (2) v. Common Kusimanse (15)** - Seal lounges on the shore of the Caspian Sea in Kazakhstan, sleeping off a recent meal of herring (and pollution that has collected in the landlocked Caspian Sea) with a bit of a cold. Seal's stuffy nose may be to blame for Seal not sniffing the approach of Kusimanse, as she trots along happily scent marking this new territory. Seal lumbers towards this invader, coughing up some blood as a result of potential heavy metal poisoning. Seizing the day, Kusimanse strikes by seizing a chunk of Seal's neck! The blow fails to deliver much immediate damage, but the Caspian Seal is actually deteriorating from canine distemper- disease transmission has caused thousands of seal deaths. The exertion of the battle is too much and the seal perishes. KUSIMANSE for the major upset win!!!

**African Civet (4) v. Kinkajou (13)** - In the Bateke Plateau National Park in Gabon, the African Civet feels right at home snacking on millipedes and centipedes. Drawn by the sweet smell of figs, Kinkajou forgets to be timid in this new environment and lands 10 feet in front of Civet! Civet was also drawn by the figs and instantly raises up in a bluff, which includes raising its hair into a 4 inch mohawk down its back. Intimidated, Kinkajou abandons the fig buffet and climbs into the canopy. AFRICAN CIVET for the win!!

**Fossa (6) v. Greater Grison (11)** - In the continuing representation of mammals that can totally bring the 'funk', the Dogs-ish Greater Grison is packing some serious anal glands and can spray a delightful yellowish/green musk. The battle occurs in Cats-ish Fossa's home turf in the Masoala-Makira protected area in Madagascar. Grison is happily scent-marking its new turf, blissfully unaware that it is being tracked by Fossa from above. The Grison is unfamiliar, but does resemble a tasty niblet that Fossa is very familiar with - the indri! Already tasting its next meal, Fossa strikes from above with a kill bite to Grison's skull. FOSSA for the win!!

**Tayra (7) v. Falanouc (10)** - The Dogs-ish Tayra (common throughout Central and South America) faces off against Cats-ish Falanouc (the rarer and shyer of the pair, found only in Madagascar) at the La Selva Biological Station in Northern Costa Rica. The Tayra has both looks and brains, at a hulky 30.7 stoats and with the smarts to have stashed some plantains while waiting for them to ripen. Still sleepy and disoriented, Falanouc is faced with the territorial growl of Tayra who will defend his plantains. Falanouc's fight-or-flight-response lands squarely in the flight column, and he cedes the battle to Tayra. TAYRA for the win!!

**Red Panda (8) v. Spotted Linsang (9)** - Tonight's final battle takes place in the shared habitat of both Red Panda and Spotted Linsang - the Potatoso National Park in the Yunnan province of China. Red Panda settles in for a bamboo salad, while Linsang stalks a nearby Tibetan dwarf hamster. The hamster makes a quick move, but Linsang gives chase ... right into Red Panda who strikes with semi-retractable claws! Linsang saves most of its tail but leaves Red Panda in peace. RED PANDA for the win!!!

# ROUND 1: DOUBLE TROUBLE DIVISION

Sports Summaries by Kate Lesciotta, Penn State

## Round 1 Double Trouble Division Results - Speartooth Shark, Indian Cobra, Largetooth Sawfish, Gorilla, Seahorse, Red-Footed Booby, Sarus Crane, and Wolverine ADVANCE!!!!

**Speartooth Shark (2) v. Amoeba (15)** - The first battle of the night takes place in the Fly River on the coast of Papua New Guinea. As Amoeba (*Chaos chaos*) slowly encases a piece of detritus off the foot of a foraging prawn, the carnivorous Speartooth Shark, a river shark, lurks nearby. Using its Ampullae of Lorenzini, Speartooth Shark senses the electrical impulses coming from the prawn and closes in, engulfing both the prawn and Amoeba. SPEARTOOTH SHARK for the win!! Narrated by Josh Drew.

**Indian Cobra (4) v. Long-Legged Bat (13)** - Unlike most other bats, the echolocation calls of the Long-Legged Bat are incredibly loud - roughly the same as being 3 feet away from a chainsaw. The Indian, or spectacled, Cobra, is an iconic species, having the well-recognized 'hood', created by the cobra by spreading out the ribs in its neck when threatened. In the Umred Pauni Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary in central India, the Long-Legged Bat finds a familiar looking road culvert, a welcome potential roosting site near water. However, this culvert is already occupied! Cobra raises itself up and hisses at the intruder, sending Bat flying safely away to find another sunny spot to rest. INDIAN COBRA ssssscaries Long-Legged Bat away!!! Narrated by Alyson Brokaw & Marc Kissel.

**Largetooth Sawfish (3) v. Acorn Barnacle (14)** - Our next aquatic battle of the evening takes place in the warm coastal waters of the Everglades National Park. As Sawfish swims through the sea grass, the mobile larval stage of an Acorn Barnacle is nearby. Acorn Barnacle is displeased by the warmth and salinity in these waters and decides to extend its larval stage until it senses its own kind again. Acorn Barnacle drifts over Sawfish and vacates the battlefield. LARGETOOTH SAWFISH defeats Acorn Barnacle!!! Narrated by Josh Drew.

**Gorilla (1) v. Filarial Nematode (16)** - This division's #1 seed is so nice, they named it thrice - *Gorilla gorilla gorilla!* Filarial Nematode may be small, but packs a powerful punch. *Loa loa* infects over 10 million people in Africa and can hang out in your subcutaneous tissues for up to 15 years! In Loango National Park in Gabon, Gorilla is living its best life, resting and eating with his social group of multiple females and young, and ignores a group of human ecotourists. One of the humans removes his glasses to rub his red inflamed eye (CDC: DON'T TOUCH YOUR FACE!!!), as a fly lands in his arm to take a blood meal that includes a number of young microfilariae. The infected fly now heads towards Gorilla, but this particular species of vector flies does not feed on non-human primates and reverses course back towards the ecotourists.

Bothered by their noisy fly-swatching, Gorilla makes some mild threats, and the ecotourist group ethically withdraws, luring the infected fly with them. GORILLA defeats Filarial Nematode!! Narrated by Lara Durgavich.

**Harbor Porpoise (5) v. Seahorse (12)** - Although one of the smallest oceanic whales, the Harbor Porpoise still weighs in at 50-90kg (227-409 stoats) and is adapted for thermoregulation in the cold waters of the Northern Hemisphere. In the other corner, the short-snouted Seahorse is one of the largest seahorses, yet still only enters the battlefield at half a stoat. In the shallow, coastal waters off of Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada, a female Porpoise surfaces for air, while Seahorse is drifting along with the currents, headed towards a suitable looking rock that would provide a nice anchor. However, Porpoise echolocates and senses some delicious fish near Seahorse; but as Porpoise rushes forward, she gets trapped in a gillnet!! Porpoise thrashes and thrashes, but the net simply becomes tighter and more entangled around her. As her body becomes bobbing bycatch, Seahorse takes no notice. SEAHORSE outlasts Harbor Porpoise!!! Narrated by Mauna Dasari and Patrice Connors.

**Red-Footed Booby (7) v. Green Iguana (10)** - While there are six booby species within the genus Sula for your juvenile entertainment, the Red-Footed Booby is the smallest at only 1 kg (no stoat conversion reported??!?!?). The Green Iguana is a bit heftier at 5 kg (still no stoat conversion??!?!?). In the Reserva Biologica Rio Platano in Honduras, the Red-Footed Booby returns to its treetop nest, surprised to find Iguana splayed out on a nearby branch. But Iguana is even more surprised and falls less than gracefully from the tree. RED FOOTED BOOBY defeats Green Iguana!! Narrated by Chris Anderson.

**Sarus Crane (6) v. Zokor (11)** – In the style of a Greek Tragedy, Sarus Crane, the tallest flying bird, faces off against Zokor, a smaller subterranean animal that uses shallow foraging tunnels to find roots, bulbs, and grasses. In the Anlung Pring Sarus Crane Conservation Area in south Cambodia, can you guess which combatant has home habitat advantage? As Zokor emerges from the ground in a strange land, Crane moves over to investigate the ruckus. Crane uses its bill to try and snatch a quick meal, as Zokor tries to dive back into its burrow ... but Zokor is not fast enough. SARUS CRANE stabs Zokor!!! Narrated by Asia Murphy.

**Wolverine (8) v. Lynx (9)** - The largest living terrestrial mustelid, Wolverine, faces the largest of the Lynx species in tonight's final battle in their common turf of the Sarek National Park in the Lapland region of Northern Sweden. Having brought down a reindeer, Lynx settles in for a meaty meal, when Wolverine awaits the opportunity to scavenge. Wolverine seems patient, perhaps waiting for Lynx to finish off the available muscle tissue, leaving the more inaccessible parts to Wolverine and its mighty dentition and skull. Research shows that these sympatric species avoid direct confrontation. Instead the outcome hinges on the third party interference from the Lynx's primary male rival! The two Lynx scream and howl at each other. Lynx decides to retreat but is pursued by his rival - the two fight, rolling over a snowy hill, until the rival's canines penetrate Lynx's skull. All lethal male aggression among lynx in Sarek occur in... MARCH! #Science. WOLVERINE lets another mammal do the dirty work and 'defeats' Lynx! Narrated by Katie Hinde.

# Round 1: TINY TERRORS

Summary by Kate Lesciotto, PhD, Penn State

Round 1 Tiny Terrors Division - Pygmy Hog, Pudu, Raccoon Dog, Tree Hyrax, Island Fox, Kodkod, Southern African Hedgehog, and Finlayson's Squirrel ADVANCE!!

**Pygmy Hog (1) v. Southern Ningai (16)** - In the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary in India, the Pygmy Hog, once thought to be extinct before being 'rediscovered' in 1971, faces the carnivorous marsupial Southern Ningai, whose status may be in question following the recent Australian bushfires. As dawn breaks, Pygmy Hog snuffles through the grass searching for grubs. Nearby, the Southern Ningai lunges at a centipede, carefully avoiding its venomous bite. Pygmy Hog's snuffles startle Ningai, causing Ningai to quickly grab its centipede meal and dart deeper into the grass. PYGMY HOG displaces Southern Ningai!!! Narration by Tara Chestnut.

**Pudu (2) v. Seba's Short-tailed Bat (15)** - Weighing in at only 1/10 of a stoat, Seba's Short-tailed Bat is a true Tiny Terror, using both intimidation and boxing to defend its territory. The Pudu is packing some junk in its trunk, with shapely haunches, complimented by snazzy antlers - but these antlers aren't just for decoration. The Pudu is known to aggressively defend its territory and kill unwelcome intruders. These aggressive #TinyTerrors square off in the Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi in the Patagonian Andes. In this colder environment, Short-tailed Bat needs to find some fast food in the trees. The Pudu has a similar idea, but instead prefers a tapas style meal with a little bit of everything. Bending a bamboo shoot to delicately balance on, the Pudu reaches for some taller foliage. Short-tailed Bat had decided to use the nicely horizontal bamboo to catch a few quick zzzz's and lower its body temperature to adjust for the cooler climate... not expecting to become a flying projectile when Pudu jumps off the bamboo, sending Short-tailed Bat shooting through the air! PUDU catapults Seba's Short-tailed Bat off the battlefield!! Narration by Alyson Brokaw & Anne Hilborn.

**Raccoon Dog (3) v. Northern Short-tailed Shrew (14)** - The Raccoon Dog may be tiny, but it bears a mighty floof - its fur providing more insulation than that of an arctic fox! The tiny size of the Northern Short-tailed Shrew means that it is always searching for its next meal in order to keep up with its high metabolic rate. This search is easier since the Short-tailed Shrew is one of the few "venomous" mammals - they secrete a toxic saliva from glands near their incisors to paralyze their prey. In the wet forests of Japan on the outskirts of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, the Raccoon Dog sniffs out the unfamiliar pungent odor of the Short-tailed Shrew. Lacking the manual dexterity of a true raccoon, Raccoon Dog instead probes the leaf litter with its snout ... CHOMP!! A momentary pause before Raccoon Dog emerges with the Short-tailed Shrew in its maw, both earning a meal and avoiding any damage. RACCOON DOG defeats Northern Short-tailed Shrew!! Narration by Brian Tanis.

**Tree Hyrax (4) v. Bank Vole (13)** - In this #TinyTerrors match-up of the chonky versus the smol, the Tree Hyrax is an absolute unit, tipping the scales at nearly 20 stoats (4.5 kg for non-stoat measures), while the Bank Vole is a mere 1/11 of a stoat (20 g). Bank Vole may be smol, but you have to respect a mammal that keeps a dedicated larder room in its burrow. This battle begins as many do - with foraging, this time in the Lama Forest Reserve in southern Benin in the early evening for these crepuscular (active at twilight) mammals. Bank Vole freezes in place hearing what "starts as a squeak...and then rises to a pig-like squeal and finally to a child-like scream." As the Tree Hyrax continues its call while descending from a nearby tree, Bank Vole quickly scurries away for a quieter meal. TREE HYRAX displaces Bank Vole!! Narration by Lara Durgavich

**Kodkod (5) v. Least Chipmunk (12)** - The smallest felid faces the smallest chipmunk in this battle in the Valdivian rainforest of southern Chile. Our kitty Kodkod is relaxing on a branch between nighttime activity bouts to see a smol climbing rodent. Least Chipmunk freezes on the nearby tree trunk, while Kodkod does the pre-attack kitty shimmy ... and then leaps as Least Chipmunk dives into a tree hollow. CURSES!! This tree hollow is too shallow and Kodkod manages to hook a claw into Least Chipmunk's hide. KODKOD scarfs down Least Chipmunk!!!  
Narration by Katie Hinde.

**Island Fox (6) v. Gray-bellied Caenolestid (11)** - The Caenolestid, or Shrew Opossum, finds itself on Santa Cruz Island, home of the Island Fox. While not lured there with a bait mix of peanut butter, oatmeal, raisins, and bacon, Shrew Opossum is delighted at all of the available insects to eat. While Shrew Opossum is tracking insects, Island Fox is tracking Shrew Opossum, and a raptor flies overhead tracking...something. Island Fox populations had nearly been eliminated by invasive Golden Eagles attacked to the Channel Islands invasive piglets. The raptor dives, talons out ... SPLASH! Ah, this is a bald eagle, not a golden eagle because after golden eagles were removed from the island, bald eagles returned are more interested in fish than fox. With the eagle occupied, Island Fox completes a caenolestid hunt. ISLAND FOX snacks on Gray-Bellied Caenolestid aka Shrew Opossum. Narration by Marc Kissel.

**Southern African Hedgehog (7) v. Collared Pika (10)** - Another floofy entry in the #TinyTerrors, the Collared Pika is an expert at conserving heat in cold environments, but less of an expert at producing lightning or fitting into Poke balls #PikaNotPokemon. The Southern African Hedgehog is less floofy and more spiny, with hair that has been modified to sharp spines. Hedgehog is at home in Sehlabathebe National Park in Lesotho, but Pika quickly overheats as it starts to gather a food cache. Desperate to get out of the sun and heat, Pika scampers towards shelter but stumbles over Hedgehog. Pika dives into a nearby burrow, but gets stuck in a too narrow burrow entry! Pika is eventually able to squeeze through, escaping the heat, hedgehog and MMM. HEDGEHOG for the win!! Narration by Jo Varner ad Patrice Conners.

**Finlayson's Squirrel (8) v. Kowari (9)** - Our final battle of the night takes place in Khao Yai National Park in Thailand, and the marsupial Kowari is out of sorts in this dense forest. High-tailing it into a nearby tree, Kowari remembers that it often eats rodents ... and squirrels are rodents ... but this Finlayson's Squirrel lets out an alarm call, giving Kowari pause as it ponders the edibility of this particular squirrel. Kowari decides to give it a go and jumps at Finlayson's Squirrel, but is intercepted by a raptor- the Shikra- and is rather unceremoniously carried off the battlefield. FINLAYSON'S SQUIRREL for the win!! Narration by Jessica Light.



# ROUND 2: DOUBLE TROUBLE AND ANTHROPOSCENE DIVISIONS

Sports Summaries by Kate Lesciotta, Penn State

**Round 2 Double Trouble and AnthroPOSCENE Division Results: Indian Cobra, Speartooth Shark, Largetooth Sawfish, Common Cuttlefish, Trumpeter Swan, Australian Feral Camel, Gorilla, and Gopher Tortoise ADVANCE!!!!**

**Indian Cobra (4) v. Short-snouted Seahorse (12) [Double Trouble]** - The Indian Cobra is a true heavy-hitter, as one of the "big four" responsible for snake-bite deaths in India. Short-snouted Seahorse is punching above its weight, having taken out the higher-seeded Harbor Porpoise (moment of the silence) in the first round. Location for this battle is carried over from Round 1 - the Umred Pauni Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary in central India - with Seahorse being transported from its usual marine habitat to a freshwater stream. Without the necessary sodium pumps to maintain an osmotic balance with the new freshwater environment, Seahorse is quickly feeling poorly as its tissues rapidly lose salt to the surrounding water. Seahorse's cells burst open as fresh water floods in - and Cobra swims past, barely noticing Seahorse's bloated corpse. INDIAN COBRA defeats Seahorse!! Narrated by Chris Anderson.

**Speartooth Shark (2) v. Red-Footed Booby (7) [Double Trouble]** - Unscathed by Round 1, both competitors enter tonight's battle in the Fly River off the coast of Papua New Guinea. Red-Footed Booby soars high overhead and spots a school of fish to dive bomb. Booby is used to deep waters, but is now met with the turbid waters of the Fly River, slamming its head on a submerged rock! Booby slowly rises to the surface, catching its breath and simultaneously presenting an interesting silhouette to something lurking below ... and this something is curious ... and hungry. In order to investigate the silhouette, Speartooth Shark uses the only tool available - its mouth. Booby struggles against the sudden onslaught of teeth, but is confused, concussed, and ultimately consumed. SPEARTOOTH SHARK consumes Red-Footed Booby!! Narrated by Josh Drew.

**Largetooth Sawfish (3) v. Sarus Crane (6) [Double Trouble]** - Returning to the Everglades National Park, Sarus Crane is in unfamiliar territory, but still feels comfortable enough to start poking around the marshes for food. Moving into the more open shallows, Crane's stabby-pokey food procurement method combined with a blinding angle of the sun leads to Crane stabbing the pectoral fin of Largetooth Sawfish! Sawfish's dermal denticles can't stop Crane's beak, and Sawfish lashes out with its toothy rostrum. The large teeth catch Crane in the ankle, rupturing the tendon and causing Crane to stumble. Deciding to leave these treacherous waters, Crane flies off, leaving Sawfish injured, but still victorious. LARGETOOTH SAWFISH defeats Sarus Crane!!! Narrated by Josh Drew and Anne Hilborn.

**Thylacine (3) v. Common Cuttlefish (6) [AnthropoSCENE]** - Thylacine enters the battlefield after enjoying a nice meal of bandicoot in Round 1. In March 1926, it is the twilight of Thylacine's existence in seaside Hobart, Tasmania. The waters here are cooler than Cuttlefish is used to, but wait ... where's Thylacine? Trapped in the Hobart Zoo! In its enclosure, Thylacine is agitated, sensing the drastic drop to record low temperatures. As the temperature plummets to the low 20s (F), the zookeeper appears and opens the gate to Thylacine's warmer den box (UNLIKE on Sept. 7, 1936, when the very last Thylacine was left to perish exposed to the cold at Hobart Zoo). While Thylacine does get to enjoy a warm dinner, Thylacine does not get to enjoy another MMM battle, having never even entered the battlefield. And why we recognize Extinction Day of Sept 7<sup>th</sup> every year. COMMON CUTTLEFISH outlasts Thylacine!!! Narrated by Patrice Connors, Marc Kissel, and Katie Hinde.

**Trumpeter Swan (4) v. California Condor (5) [AnthropoSCENE]** - Our two avian adversaries enter tonight's battle in the Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge in Wyoming relatively unscathed by Round 1. Surprised by the cooler temperatures, Condor is still on the hunt and finds a familiar mule deer carcass to investigate. Upon landing, Condor hears the bugling of the nearby foraging Swan. While Condor might normally gorge himself on the deer carcass, his crop (enlarged part of the esophagus used for temporary food storage) is distended due to lead poisoning, the result of ingesting the remnants of lead ammunition during scavenging. Unable to move any food from his crop to his stomach, Condor eventually gives up on the mule deer carcass and weakly flies off. TRUMPETER SWAN vanquishes California Condor!! Narrated by Lara Durgavich.

**Australian Feral Camel (1) v. House Cat (8) [AnthropoSCENE]** - The Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, is home to the world's largest cat-proof fence. Domesticated cats kill millions of birds, reptiles, and mammals each year, and are responsible for the extinction of dozens of small mammals in Australia. As Camel grazes, the sound of a helicopter echoes in the distance. Having escaped a recent camel culling, our Camel tears through a fence, allowing an entry for House Cat into the battlefield. Cat sniffs out a sausage, using carnassials to shear off large chunks ... which means that Cat doesn't even notice the hard pellet embedded in the sausage. The pellet dissolves in Cat's stomach, releasing para-aminopropiophenone, a secondary line of defense in case of cat-proof fencing failure. A cat bait designed to eradicate the invasive domesticated cat that goes by the brand name "Curiosity." AUSTRALIAN FERAL CAMEL outlasts House Cat!! Narrated by Katie Hinde.

**Gorilla (1) v. Wolverine (8) [Double Trouble]** - Both Gorilla and Wolverine got off easy in Round 1, and they now face off in the humid Ntokou-Pikounda National Park in the Republic of Congo. Wolverine is not having any of this heat, but goes to investigate a rustling in a nearby bush and finds a duiker caught in a snare. As Wolverine delivers death to the duiker, it freezes as it notices Gorilla. Cranky with heat, Wolverine sizes up Gorilla ... and decides to make this duiker meal a to-go order. GORILLA defeats Wolverine!!! Narrated by Mauna Desari and Katie Hinde.

**Florida Panther (2) v. Gopher Tortoise (7) [AnthropoSCENE]** - Both animals are found in the Big Cypress National Preserve, so no one gets a home habitat advantage in tonight's final battle. Gopher Tortoise is heading back to its burrow after an active day as Florida Panther

flashes by chasing down a rabbit. This rabbit was also heading towards Tortoise's burrow, which provides habitat for many species. Panther tries to start digging out the burrow to retrieve that rascally rabbit. Tortoise does not take kindly to this blockage, and bites Panther's tail and then charges! And then realizes that he made a huge mistake and retreats back into his shell. This Grumpy Gopher Tortoise lives to fight another day as Panther can't break through his shell because panther doesn't have the same tortoise and turtle carapace breaking skills as jaguar #science. Panther loses interest and becomes distracted by rabbit who has vacated the burrow through an alternate exit. GOPHER TORTOISE survives Florida Panther!! Narrated by Jessica Light.

# ROUND 2: TINY TERRORS AND CATS-ISH v. DOGS-ISH DIVISIONS

Sports Summaries by Kate Lesciotta, Penn State

## **Round 2 Tiny Terrors and Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish Division Results: Pygmy Hog, Tayra, Pudu, Raccoon Dog, Sloth Bear, Civet, Tree Hyrax, and Brown Hyena ADVANCE!!!**

**Pygmy Hog (1) v. Finalyson's Squirrel (8) [Tiny Terrors]**- Both competitors enter tonight's battle unscathed in the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary in India, where the last remaining populations of pygmy hog reside. Waking up in his preferred nest of tall grasses, Pygmy Hog starts thinking about breakfast ... roots? Insects? Mmmm, maybe some rodent will be on the menu today. Finalyson's Squirrel is less at home in the tall grass and sounds out with an alarm call to voice his displeasure at Pygmy Hog's rustling of the grass. Pygmy Hog runs straight at Squirrel, tusks glinting in the sun, and shows no mercy. PYGMY HOG eviscerates Finalyson's Squirrel!!! Narrated by Jessica Light.

**Tayra (7) v. Common Kusimanse (15) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish Division]** - The Common Kusimanse is #TeamCatsish, while the Tayra is repping #TeamDogsish. This battle takes place in the Santa Rosa National Park in Costa Rica. Exploring this new environment, Kusimanse trots up to a Maniklara zapota tree, right near the den of the Tayra! From inside the den, Tayra keeps a watchful eye on Kusimanse, who is at the top end of Tayra's prey size options. Kusimanse starts stalking a spider, giving Tayra the opportunity to slink out from its den unnoticed. Tayra is stealthy, but not stealthy enough - Kusimanse bolts, and Tayra gives chase. They face off, with Kusimanse puffing out hair and Tayra slashing with claws. Kusimanse loses its balance and falls off a branch into a small pool of water. Unhurt, Kusimanse takes the time to snarf down a freshwater crab before vacating the battlefield. TAYRA defeats Common Kusimanse!! Narrated by Katie Hinde.

**Pudu (2) v. Southern African Hedgehog (7) [Tiny Terrors]** - These two #TinyTerrors face off in the Nacional Chiloe in Chile, as Pudu is gearing up for mating season. Instead of sniffing out a mate, Pudu smells Hedgehog wearing eau de la Pika from the previous battle. Pudu is not a fan and scratches at the ground, signaling his displeasure. Before he can reach Hedgehog, another male pudu enters the ring, as mating season aggression runs high. As the Pudu squares off against this potential rival, Hedgehog takes the opportunity to make his escape ... straight into the jaws of a dog. PUDU outlives Hedgehog!! Narrated by Alyson Brokaw.

**Raccoon Dog (3) v. Island Fox (6) [Tiny Terrors]** - Both Raccoon Dog and Island Fox are rare amongst canids, possessing claws with enough curve and strength to climb trees. Even though both already had meals with their Round 1 victories, these smaller mammals require high energy budgets to keep going. In the Udegeyshaya Legenda National Park in southeastern Russia, an

unexpected cold front has moved in and Raccoon Dog is struggling to hunt. Island Fox is hungry, but more concerned with finding a warm place to curl up - this shallow burrow seems good enough. Raccoon Dog, the only canid to undergo winter hibernation, decides that a nap sounds good as well. Finding a tree hollow already occupied by another raccoon dog, our Raccoon Dog decides to get his snuggle on and joins the conspecific. Island Fox is alone, and its meal from Round 1 is insufficient to keep its metabolism going ... Island Fox drifts off into a cold, forever sleep. RACCOON DOG outlasts Island Fox!! Narrated by Brian Tanis.

**Sloth Bear (1) v. Red Panda (8) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish Division]** - Despite its name, Red Panda is definitely #TeamDogsish and is not closely related to the giant panda. Sloth Bears, on the other hand, do live up to their name, resting and sleeping for nearly half the day, spending the other half of the day foraging and eating. In Chitwanna National Park in Nepal, Red Panda is feeling the heat in this lower elevation and climbs a nearby tree to find some shade. Sloth Bear climbs a Sal tree in hopes of finding some tasty fruit, but instead finds a resting Red Panda. Both animals lift paws to show their intention to strike. Seeing Sloth Bear's massive paw AND massive claws, Red Panda quickly turns a floofy tail and runs away to nap another day. SLOTH BEAR unseats Red Panda!! Narrated by Patrice Connors.

**African Civet (4) v. European Badger (5) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish Division]** - In the Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe, Civet is sniffing for an evening meal when he hears an unfamiliar sound ... Badger is digging out a new burrow at the base of a tree. Civet doesn't usually go for prey this size, but Badger is ... badgering him so Civet approaches cautiously. Civet directs the first bite towards the skull, holding Badger down with a forepaw and using incisors to pull off tasty morsels. AFRICAN CIVET defeats European Badger!!! Narrated by Marc Kissel.

**Tree Hyrax (4) v. Kodkod (5) [Tiny Terrors]** - Small mammals make up 75% of Kodkod's diet, and Kodkod has a weak spot (gastronomically speaking) for arboreal mammals. Will Tree Hyrax be tonight's dinner special? Tree Hyrax gets home-habitat advantage tonight in the Kakum National Park in Ghana. Kodkod gets down to business in the new forest and begins hunting for its next meal. That Least Chipmunk from Round 1 didn't last very long. In a nearby Velvet Tamarind tree, Kodkod spots a Tree Hyrax. Although the Tree Hyrax outweighs Kodkod, this kitty is getting hungry and goes in for a closer look. Tree Hyrax notices and elects direct confrontation, getting face-to-face with Kodkod (CDC: STAY AT LEAST 6 FEET AWAY!) and shrieking. Realizing this will not be an easy meal (and heeding the CDC's recommendations), Kodkod turns tail to hunt elsewhere. TREE HYRAX intimidates Kodkod!! Narrated by Jo Varner.

**Brown Hyena (3) v. Fossa (6) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish Division]** - The Fossa might be outmatched in tonight's final battle at Wolf Bay, Namibia - without the trees that its used to and being outweighed (Hyena's 182 stoats to Fossa's mere 32 stoats!!). Hyena joins some friends, who have been raining down death on seal pups at the bay for several months. Fossa decides to make the best of its new location and is tracking the same seal pup as Hyena. Fossa strikes first, going for a strangling bite to the neck of the seal pup as Hyena watches in interest and then joins the fray. Fossa elects self-preservation and decides to abandon its meal. BROWN HYENA runs Fossa off!! Narrated by Anne Hilborn and Asia Murphy.

# SWEET SIXTEEN!!!

Sports Summaries by Kate Lesciotto, Penn State

**Sweet Sixteen Results: Sloth Bear, Pygmy Hog, Brown Hyena, Raccoon Dog, Trumpeter Swan, Gopher Tortoise, Largetooth Sawfish, and Gorilla ADVANCE!!!!**

**Sloth Bear (1) v. African Civet (4) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish]** - Sloth Bear arrives to the Sweet 16 relatively unscathed, having been able to scare off both Pygmy Spotted Skunk in the Wild Card and Red Panda in Round 2. Sloth Bear faces off against African Civet, which has been described as a "low-slung animal which shares the affinities of a dog, cat, and a genet at the same time" [and yes, I did insert the Oxford comma because I am not a grammar heathen!]. Having finished off Badger in Round 1 and a nice meal of figs in Round 2, Civet is looking more for a place to nap than a battle in the Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary in India. Sloth Bear sniffs out the musky Civet, who awakens from its nap to see a grouchy Sloth Bear unwilling to move. Despite deploying Civet's defense of a taller-than-a-stoat mohawk of raised hair, Sloth Bear is not impressed. With massive claws and surprising canines, Sloth Bear chomps down on Civet's neck. SLOTH BEAR defeats African Civet!!! Narrated by Patrice Connors and Jo Varner.

**Pygmy Hog (1) v. Tree Hyrax (4) [Tiny Terrors]** - Both of these fresh-faced competitors face off in the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, one of the most threatened habitat types in the world. Happy about the current social distancing mandates, Tree Hyrax is busy lamenting the lack of trees, when both Hyrax and Pygmy Hog are startled by an elephant rustling in the grass. Perhaps this elephant is part of the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme, which uses elephant drives to flush out wild hogs. Our Pygmy Hog takes off like greased lightning and runs straight into the elephant, slashing at its front hoof with sharp tusks. Elephant cries out in pain, raises up on hind limbs, and then stamps down hard ... right on to Tree Hyrax who was trying to hide in the commotion. Pygmy Hog evades capture and lives to see the #EliteTrait. PYGMY HOG outlasts Tree Hyrax!!! Narrated by Jessica Light and Marc Kissel.

**Brown Hyena (3) v. Tayra (7) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish]** - Will elephants may make another appearance? Our next battle takes place in Addo Elephant National Park. Brown Hyena is busy scavenging a road-killed antelope, one of the many unlucky victims of high speed traffic and inattentive drivers. Tayra, unfamiliar with this costal environment, is also looking for a meal. As it searches, Tayra suddenly feels an unfamiliar texture under its feet ... black and hot to the touch. Hyena looks up at the approaching Tayra and is witness to ... SPLAT!!! Tayra is crushed by a passing motorist. BROWN HYENA defeats Tayra!!! Narrated Tara Chestnut.

**Raccoon Dog (3) v. Pudu (2) [Tiny Terrors]** - Back in Chiloe National Park, Chile, Pudu is back on the hunt for a mate, and Raccoon Dog is on the hunt for a meal. Pudu has found a mate whose prior offspring is frolicking nearby, and although the narrators have drawn a tasteful veil

over this scene, you can be assured that they are violating all of the CDC's social distancing recommendations right now. This plump pair draws the focus of a predator ... who creeps closer ... and closer... until Kodkod pounces at the female pudu's frolicking fawn!! That's right, previously eliminated Kodkod calls this habitat home as well. As both Pudu call out in alarm, Raccoon Dog finishes slurping up an earthworm. Pudu crashes through the undergrowth and leaps away from the battlefield, while Raccoon Dog takes this easy victory. RACCOON DOG defeats Pudu!!! Narrated by Anne Hilborn.

**Australian Feral Camel (1) v. Trumpeter Swan (4) [AnthropoSCENE]** - We start another battle with competitors entering the field entirely unscathed by the previous battles. Tonight's battle takes place in the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia, giving home habitat advantage once again to Australian Feral Camel. The warm fall weather is all wrong, and Swan is irritable, while Camel saunters in, foraging on the desert foliage. Nonplussed by Camel's non-reaction, Swan spreads its wings and HISSES!!! Camel continues browsing, unintimidated by Swan's display. Used to repelling moose, Swan continues its display, trumpeting its signature honk. Camel is startled by the continued, rising aggression and flees into the bush!! TRUMPETER SWAN scares off Australian Feral Swan!!! Narrated by Katie Hinde.

**Common Cuttlefish (6) v. Gopher Tortoise (7) [AnthropoSCENE]** - Cuttlefish remains wounded from Round 1, but soared through an easy battle against a caged Thylacine in Round 2. Gopher Tortoise arrives tonight after having SHELL-tered in place to a victory against Florida Panther. Tortoise is enjoying its victory, taking a little vacay in St. Augustine, Florida, with a burrow only 20 ft away from Cuttlefish who has arrived in warm waters from its previous battle in Tasmania. Tortoise wakes up and makes its way to the beach ... only to encounter a spring breaker, who decides to "help out" and bring Tortoise to the water ... except this Tortoise can't swim!! A local jogger recognizes the problem and brings a gasping Tortoise back to the safety of the solid sand. After a serious spawning session, Cuttlefish remembers that it is semelparous (characterized by a single reproductive episode before death)! GOPHER TORTOISE outlives Common Cuttlefish!!! Narrated by Asia Murphy.

**Largetooth Sawfish (3) v. Speartooth Shark (2) [Double Trouble]** - To preserve reality, this battle takes place in the languid freshwater regions of Kakadu National Park of Australia. As the Speartooth Shark is searching out more fresh water, we travel to the upper reaches of the South Alligator river. Both species use this portion of the upper river, but Largetooth Sawfish has blunt crushing jaws, while Speartooth Shark has a mouth FULL of teeth. Speartooth Shark is also pregnant and ready to pup but also senses prey in the area ... and clamps down on Largetooth Sawfish's second dorsal fin!! Sawfish reels back, using its toothy rostrum to rake across Speartooth Shark's face and gills. Not expecting this level of retaliation, pregnant Speartooth Shark decides to avoid further injury and swims away. LARGETOOTH SAWFISH chases off Speartooth Shark!! Narrated by Josh Drew.

**Gorilla (1) v. Indian Cobra (4) [Double Trouble]** - Indian Cobra literally glided past the competition in the last round, while Gorilla watched as Wolverine exited stage left to avoid a fight. Let's see if Gorilla has ophidiophobia (fear of snakes) ... In a swampy clearing of Bai Hokou in Dzanga-Ndoki National Park, Central African Republic, a gaggle of young gorillas play, occasionally falling upon our silverback Gorilla. Although many African countries are

temporarily shutting down gorilla tourism to protect these primates against the potential danger of Covid-19, our Gorilla is currently bothered by a group of humans that is getting a bit too close. Cobra is also getting a bit too close, but is quickly spotted by one of the younger gorillas who sounds off the alarm. Cobra begins to slither away as Gorilla bashes at it with massive hands! Unable to prepare its signature defense, Cobra is on the sad receiving end of a Gorilla slam. GORILLA crushes Indian Cobra!!! Narrated by Mauna Desari and Alyson Brokaw.



# ELITE TRAIT!!!

Sports Summaries by Kate Lesciotta, Penn State

## **Elite Trait Results: Raccoon Dog, Gopher Tortoise, Brown Hyena, and Gorilla ADVANCE!!!!**

**Pygmy Hog (1) v. Raccoon Dog (3) [Tiny Terrors]** - Tonight's first combatants are Pygmy Hog and Raccoon Dog, who last shared a common ancestor about 76-82 million years ago. Raccoon Dog is used to eating a diet high in small mammals and birds, so a baby hog would be a tasty treat. Raccoon Dog may be hoping that its distinctive facial mask will do its job and signal ferocity and aggressive defense to would-be predators. In the freshwater Ratargul Swamp Forest in Bangladesh, at least it is the dry season in March, so Pygmy Hog can get down to its usual business of foraging snout-to-ground for roots, bulbs, and insects. Snuffling along a game trail, Pygmy Hog comes across an Indian civet! Pygmy Hog turns tail and runs, not realizing that this civet is already dead, having been caught in a snare the previous night. Coming to a safer place that only smells slightly of humans, Pygmy Hog goes back to foraging, while Raccoon Dog is shuffling closer along the same game trail. Suddenly, a squeal pierces the air! Raccoon Dog freezes, sheltering in place, while 20 feet away Pygmy Hog struggles as the steel snare tightens around its neck ... slowly suffocating .... **RACCOON DOG** outlives Pygmy Hog!! Narrated by Tara Chestnut, Marc Kissel, Asia Murphy, and Brian Tanis.

**Trumpeter Swan (4) v. Gopher Tortoise (7) [AnthropoSCENE]** - Trumpeter Swan is preening and proud, having scared off the big, bad Australian Feral Camel, while Gopher Tortoise is a bit water-logged but still hanging on. However, both competitors are out of place in tonight's randomly selected environment - a subtropical coniferous forest in the Cumbres del Ajusco National Park near Mexico City. With its nesting grounds so far off, Trumpeter Swan decides to refuel and starts looking for food. Gopher Tortoise's body plan is optimized for burrowing, and he starts getting busy digging out a new burrow to get out of the cold. Gopher Tortoise flings a flipper-full of soil towards the back - straight in to the face of a foraging Trumpeter Swan! Swan honks and charges, but can't strike with enough force to deter Gopher Tortoise. Having had enough of this nonsense, Trumpeter Swan flies away towards Mexico City. In the congested and polluted air, Trumpeter Swan can't see well and flies directly into some electrical wires! In an explosion of feathers, Trumpeter Swan falls to the ground dead, while Gopher Tortoise continues to dig out its burrow. **GOPHER TORTOISE** outlasts Trumpeter Swan!! Narrated by Alyson Brokaw and Jessica Light.

**Sloth Bear (1) v. Brown Hyena (3) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish]** - This division has lived up to its name, with the Dogs-ish Sloth Bear up against the Cats-ish Brown Hyena. Alarming, bear bile (sourced from Asiatic Black Bears and sometimes Sloth Bears) is currently listed as a potential treatment for COVID-19 by China's National Health Commission, a dangerous claim without

any evidence. This randomly selected battleground is a Desert Grassland, giving serious advantage to Brown Hyena. Sloth Bear is used to taller grasses and isn't enjoying the start of this visit to the Metemma Woreda of the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. At the outskirts of a local village, Brown Hyena is sniffing out a goat carcass, butchered several days ago, while Sloth Bear is drawn more to the garden plots ... but also on the outer edge of the village a local is keeping an eye out for raiders and brings a rifle to his shoulder. Finding only empty garden plots, Sloth Bear turns back to the grasslands but runs straight into Brown Hyena! But Sloth Bear don't care, thinking this is just a non-threatening striped hyena. POP! POP! Sloth Bear perishes instantly, collapsing from a precision shot from the villager's rifle as Brown Hyena darts into the darkness. BROWN HYENA outlasts Sloth Bear!! Narrated by Katie Hinde, Jo Varner, and Anne Hilborn.

**Gorilla (1) v. Largetooth Sawfish (3) [Double Trouble]** – The final battle of the #EliteTrait takes place in the tropical pine forest habitat on the western slopes of the Barisan Mountain Range in southern Sumatra. Gorilla spies some nice-looking vegetation, but those greens are on the other side of a stream. Luckily, Largetooth Sawfish can tolerate freshwater and is taking a rest in this particular stream. Gorilla approaches warily, tests the depths of the stream with a stick, and ends up jabbing Largetooth Sawfish's already damaged dorsal fin! Thrashing in pain, Sawfish ends up in a sandy channel without sufficient water to maneuver. Gorilla engages in a spectacular splash display, which actually helps Sawfish swim away. GORILLA outlasts Largetooth Sawfish!!! Narrated by Lara Durgavich, Mauna Desari, and Josh Drew.

# FINAL ROAR!!!

Sports Summaries by Kate Lesciotto, Penn State

## Final Roar Results: Brown Hyena and Gorilla ADVANCE!!!!

**Raccoon Dog (3) [Tiny Terrors] v. Brown Hyena (3) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish]** - Brown Hyena enters the ring having previously scared off Solongoi and Fossa. Last week, Hyena may have found a species that wouldn't run away - Sloth Bear - but, due to human interference Hyena survived to enter the #FinalRoar. In the other corner, Raccoon Dog may be the floofiest mammal to have entered the #FinalRoar, after having eaten Shrew, survived the cold that froze Island Fox, and outlasted Pudu. Although these two both enter as #3 seeds in their respective divisions, Hyena outweighs Raccoon Dog 182 to 35 stoats, respectively, as they face off in Sri Lanka's Wathurana swamp forest. The sweltering heat means that Raccoon Dog is in immediate danger of overheating with its floofiest of floof. Thankfully the swamp is beginning to flood, allowing the Raccoon Dog to somewhat beat the heat in the belly-deep water. The water doesn't stop Hyena from sniffing out a water buffalo carcass. The carcass doesn't do much for Raccoon Dog, but the carrion beetles and their noise is an attractant. Without getting too close to Hyena, Raccoon Dog settles over the carcass to snarf some beetles ... but the tastiest beetles are right where Hyena is scavenging. Raccoon Dog inches closer ... and closer... TOO CLOSE. Hyena snarls and leaps!! Raccoon Dog quickly retreats to find less guarded beetles. BROWN HYENA discourages Raccoon Dog!! Narrated by Asia Murphy, Anne Hilborn, Katie Hinde, and Tara Chestnut.

**Gorilla (1) [Double Trouble] v. Gopher Tortoise (7) [AnthropoSCENE]** - Gorilla and Gopher Tortoise enter the battlefield having defeated all previous opponents with absolutely zero controversy or fan disgruntlement [insert fake studio audience laugh track]. Gopher Tortoise, as the #7 seed from AnthropoSCENE, is the lowest seeded combatant to ever make it to the MMM Final Roar! See everyone - SHELL-tering in place leads to good things ... like survival. Give your local Gopher Tortoise an extra tip-o-the-hat on April 10th for Gopher Tortoise Day, which recognizes this important keystone species. Tonight, Gopher Tortoise squares off against Gorilla in a desert grassland - specifically, the Jornada Biosphere Reserve of the Chihuahuan Desert in Mexico. Running low on energy reserves in this novel environment, Gorilla resorts to coprophagy (the consumption of solid waste that has already passed through the digestive tract - fancy talk for eating poop). While eating his... meal, Gorilla notices that, while digging yet another burrow, Gopher Tortoise has disturbed a termite mound. Seeing a preferred food item, Gorilla abruptly pushes Gopher Tortoise out of the way. Gorilla settles in for another meal, while Gopher Tortoise starts digging out yet another burrow, this time located outside of the battlefield. GORILLA displaces Gopher Tortoise!! Narrated by Alyson Brokaw, Lara Durgavich, Jessica Light, Marc Kissel, and Katie Hinde.

# CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND!!!

Sports Summaries by Kate Lesciotto, Penn State

## Championship Results: Gorilla wins #2020MMM!!!!

**Gorilla (1) [Double Trouble] v. Brown Hyena (3) [Cats-ish v. Dogs-ish]** - Tonight's randomly selected battleground - COASTAL! This particular coastal area is in Northern Queensland Australia, where two World Heritage Ecosystems meet - the Daintree Rainforest & the Great Barrier Reef. Brown Hyena is pretty happy with this pick, as he is adapted to Namibian coastal living and scavenging in inter-tidal zones. However, Gorilla is also used to the coastal scrub areas of Gabon and is currently sitting at the water's edge, enjoying the gentle lap of water against his hands and feet. In the distance, Brown Hyena trots along the shore, scattering several dozen grey plovers. Brown Hyena would prefer a spot for a nap, but instead is being lured by the glorious scent of a rotting carcass. As Gorilla goes for a leafy appetizer in the tree line, Gorilla and Brown Hyena find themselves a mere 10 feet apart on the same side of a stream. Gorilla stands tall, while Brown Hyena raises its hair to appear larger, at the same time slinking deeper in to the forest to put some more distance between the two. The lure of the rotting carcass is too much, and Brown Hyena looks for a way to cross the stream. Looking sideways, Brown Hyena starts to cross, as Gorilla prepares to charge if necessary. Brown Hyena's back paws start to sink in the mud ... Gorilla grows impatient and SCREAMS ... at the 25 ft saltwater crocodile across the stream! Annoyed at the screams due to sensitive hearing, crocodile moves, slipping into the water. Luckily, this croc is more interested in digesting the cow carcass than either of the combatants and moves to a billabong to submerge and digest. But Brown Hyena has already moved out of the battlefield. GORILLA outlasts Brown Hyena!!! Narrated by Katie Hinde.

# SPORTS SUMMARIES FROM THE 2019 March Mammal Madness

## ANTLION WINS THE WILD CARD BOUT!!!

In an exciting tournament open, the incredibly fast tiger beetle had to pause for visual acuity toward an ant. Tiger beetle rushed the ant, just as an antlion larva ambush erupted from leaf litter! Antlion mandibles ripped off tiger beetle's leg and tiger beetle bolted, departing the field of battle more slowly than it arrived.

**Round 1 JUMP JUMP: TIGER, TENREC, ROCK-WALLABY, ARMADILLO, IMPALA, BHARAL, SPRINGHARE, & SPINNER DOLPHIN ADVANCE!!!!** (summaries by Katie Hinde)

Tiger as an optimal forager, wasn't going to waste energy going for the bite-sized ringtail, not when the preferred hog deer was on the scene, but the tiger's charge through ringtail to ambush hog deer sent the ringtail running!

Serval, a lethal killing machine of half pound rodents, hear scratching in the tall grass... launching from 12 feet away, serval came down on #CrouchingMarsupialHiddenWallaby! The Serval paw punch caused wallaby to spring kick in the air, sending the serval packing!

Spinner dolphins love to play, tossing around sea sponges and kelp among the pod... when a flash flood washed a raft of vegetation from mainland Australia into the ocean with the clinging Spinnifex hopping mouse, trying to stay afloat. A dolphin's spinning splash capsized the mouse and we last saw it in a dolphin game of catch!

Springhare don't care... for jackrabbit showing up in his territory. The two males squared off in a jump-punch-pow, jackrabbit had greater reach, but springhare had greater motivation to defend his home turf!

A large male sifaka vertical leaping and clinging through the forest lands near the forest floor where the armadillo was foraging on all these new bugs it had never seen before. When a juvenile sifaka mistook the armadillo for a fossa, it set up the fosa "tchi-faks" alarm call. And the male sifaka made for the canopy, while looking down to double check out if the armadillo was dangerous... a HARRIER HAWK took the sifaka out of the competition!

In the battle of twinkle-toes (klipspringer) vs. dancy-prance (impala), the much smaller klipspringer quickly got out of the way of the impala.

Similarly, the mighty mustelid stoat bravely turned his tail and ran when confronted by a fully functional battle bharal!

And in the biggest upset of the night, perched on a cliff crag, the poor-eyesight of the streaked tenrec mistook the approaching head of the markhor for a predatory fossa and pointed its detachable spines 180 degrees forward, spiking them into the nasal cavity of the markhor. Eyes watering and launching a big sneeze of snot onto the mighty tenrec, markhor leapt away to forage in a less stabby locale.

### **ROUND 1 WATERFALLS DIVISION #2019MMM**

**Beaver, Moose, Flat-Headed Cat, Manatee, Rakali, Lowland Tapir, Aquatic Genet, & Moonrat ADVANCE!!!** (summaries by Katie Hinde)

The ecological engineering of dams & bonds by the beaver creates a habitat for muskrats that in turn attract predatory mink with a taste for muskrat. AKA: Beaver brings all the Mink to the yard, because their Muskrat, it's better than yours. Dam right, it's better than yours. The hunting mink got a bit too close to beaver who signaled for the mink to stay away by slapping his thick beaver tail against the water. Mink changed course to avoid the beaver!

While resting on an intertidal rock, marine otter was flushed into the water and killed by marauding orcas allowing the aquatic genet to persist into the 2nd round.

The snowscape of Colorado was no place for a tropical bat, a gust of wind sent the bat careening into a snowbank. Moose investigate the bat, exhaling moist air onto the bat that hastened his demise in a frozen tomb. Farewell batsicle.

Vontsira swiped the snoot of the manatee, but quickly beat a retreat from the large herbivore.

An encroaching logger keen for some forest bacon spelled the doom of the white lipped peccary, rakali advances into round 2.

Moonrat defenses come in twos: their personal eau de onion et amonia and defensive aggression of puff-hissing & growling! Crab-eating fox wanted no part of any of it.

The water possum (females can swim with young in their pouch bc their muscles hold the pouch closed!) could get out of the way or get squashed by tapir. Water possum chose to scamper away, like all prudent unmatched animals.

On the bank of a stream, the water chevrotain became trapped and pinned by a flat-headed cat defending his fish dinner. As adrenaline surged through the chevrotain, her heart beat rapidly, her breathing became erratic and labored, and potassium in her blood stream rose until it was all TOO MUCH. A stress-induced heart attack felled the tiny mouse deer.

### **CAT-e-GORY DIVISION #2019MMM:**

**Sea Lion, Tiger Quoll, Lion-Tailed Macaque, Bear Cat, Shark, Fisher, Tiger Owl, &**

## **Nimravid ADVANCE!!!**

Sportsball-Style Summary by Penn State Grad Student [Kate Lesciotto](#)

Sea Lion (1) v. Antlion (16) - First up is fake lion versus even faker lion! As Sea Lion basks in the setting California sun, it doesn't notice the larval Antlion creeping up with its large mandibles...and continues to not notice Antlion as Sea Lion yawns, rolls over, and smooshes Antlion to a pulp. SEA LION for the win!!

Bearcat (3) v. Leopard Frog (14) - A returning competitor, you may remember Bearcat from 2014MMM and 2017MMM. Bearcat lounges in a tree, while Leopard Frog hops along the forest floor snapping up taste invertebrate treats. SNAP! As the branch breaks loose, Bearcat takes a tumble to the forest floor, luckily unharmed. After taking a moment to gather its senses, Bearcat stands back up and heads towards more snacks.... with the squished remains of Leopard Frog on its rump. BEARCAT for the win!!!

Lion-Tailed Macaque (6) v. Cat Snake (11) - Though primarily fruit-eaters, the Macaque decides to make itself a squirrel appetizer. Halfway through it's meal, Macaque spots Cat Snake on the ground. Mistaking it for a pit viper, Macaque starts the troop's alarm call, prompting a primate-snake standoff - who will cede the battlefield first? While that standoff continues....

Fisher Cat (4) v. Tiger Salamander (13) - Fun fact, not only is Fisher Cat not actually a cat (like everything in this division), but it also isn't known to prey on fish! Although Fisher Cat gets the home court advantage, Tiger Salamander feels right at home, looking for proper burrows and heading towards the breeding pond. Fisher Cat sniffs out a mouse burrow and starts digging for its breakfast. On the way to the mice, Fisher Cat's claws impale Tiger Salamander and toss it out of the way. FISHER CAT for the win!!! But...wait...Fisher Cat smells the alluring scent of a dead deer in a felled log and investigates - only to be caught in a trap and taken to Calgary Zoo!!!! #CliffHanger

We return to the Macaque v. Cat Snake standoff ... where both parties continue to stand their ground .... and so back to another battle ...

Tiger Quoll (7) v. Green Catbird (10) - With a shared environmental range, Tiger Quoll gets no home-field advantage tonight. Tiger Quoll is not having any luck finding its favorite greater glider chicken wings, when a loud cry from below startles Tiger Quoll. It's the cry of the male Catbird, guarding its nest, who is settling down for the night, unaware of the Tiger Quoll now stalking it from above. In a stunning strike, Tiger Quoll pounces, and with a flurry of feathers, this battle is over. TIGER QUOLL for the win!!!

Small Spotted Cat Shark (8) v. Stonecat (9) - It's the classic mammal battle between ... 2 fish. Stonecat may not have the intimidation factor of a shark, but it does sport some venom glands at the base of its pectoral fins. Cat Shark is resting quietly between two rocks, waiting for its next meal to swim by, as Stonecat is also surveying the sandy

bottom to find its own burrow. Stonecat finds two nice looking rocks and tries to nestle in, only to get a lashing from Cat Shark. Stonecat responds with an attack with its venomous spines!! But female Cat Sharks have thick skin to survive brutal mating behavior, and Cat Shark uses its teeth to take a chunk out of Stonecat for a tasty treat. CAT SHARK for the win!!!

Back to the Macaque v. Cat Snake stand off - the macaque's troop starts to wander off, but our Macaque stands his ground as Cat Snake slithers closer. Macaque tenses for potential battle, but Cat Snake changes direction and vacates the battlefield. MACAQUE wins (finally)!!!

Tiger Owl (5) v. Panther Chameleon (12) - The Panther Chameleon has green camouflaged coloration. Tiger Owl has talons that could palm a basketball. Let's see how this very evenly-matched battle goes. Transported to the cold Canadian winter turf of Tiger Owl, Panther Chameleon heads out to try and find some warmth. Tiger Owl's eyes focus in on the movement, and soon Panther Chameleon's green camo is tinged with red as it is skewered by talons. TIGER OWL for the win!!!

Nimravid (2) v. Dandelion (15) - In perhaps the most highly anticipated battle of this division, a fossil saber-toothed not-quite-cat faces off against the invasive Dandelion...wait...what's that hiding in the Dandelion's tufts? Is it the return of the TARDIGRADE???? It is not. Nimravid is on the prowl, coming across a tasty carcass it would be happy to scavenge, but this kill is protected by larger predators. Angry at its poor luck, Nimravid lunges at a nearby Dandelion, which instigates a sneezing fit. The sneezing causes Nimravid to bite down and decapitate Dandelion. And then rolls around and stretches on the ground, crushing Dandelion's leaves and stalks. NIMRAVID for the win!!

**TAG TEAM DIVISION: Zebra & Oxpecker, Aardvark & Aardvark Cucumber, #WarGoose, Loggerhead & Crab, Capybara & Jacana, Wrasse & Eel, #DoubleTroubleMonkeys, #BadYote ADVANCE!**

Sports Summaries by Penn State Grad Student Kate Lesciotto!

**Zebra & Oxpecker (1) v. Batfly & Gammaproteobacteria (16)** - Tonight's first battle features Zebra getting free spa-treatments (aka tick removal) from Oxpecker, and the ectoparasite Batfly that hosts Gammaproteobacteria that facilitates full nutrition from blood meals. Batfly internally hatches the larva and then the uterus produces milk for vertical transmission of bacterial buddies! Batfly, having moved off bat host to give live birth, attempts this on a dark Zebra stripe, Oxpecker snags a tasty Batfly treat. ZEBRA & OXPECKER advance! Narration by Mauna Dasari.

**Wrasse & Moray Eel (4) v. Fire Coral & Algae (13)** – A spa combo makes an appearance, with Wrasse removing Eel's ectoparasites, while Algae provides an extra food source for Fire Coral in plankton free waters. Enjoying its spa treatment a little too much, Eel forgets where it is for just a moment and rubs against Fire Coral. Eel jerks



away quickly, making room for a visiting parrotfish to take a few nibbles on Fire Coral. WRASSE & MORAY EEL for the win!!! Wrasse helps take the sting out of Eel's fire coral burn, but will this injury carry through to Round 2? Narration by Josh Drew.

**Banded Mongoose & Warthog (3) v. Burying Beetles & Phoretic Mites (14)** - Team WarGoose continues the spa-themed mutualistic relationships featured in the Tag Team division. Beetles and Mites seeking out a nice carcass to provide life for their young. As Warthog lays down for the snooze under the hot Kenyan sun, Mongoose sets to work grooming. Beetle searches for a cool place to hide - perhaps in the shadow of that Wart-CRUNCH!! Mongoose's sharp teeth pierce Beetle's exoskeleton, sending the Mites scattering. Mongoose snaps mites like skittles #TasteThePainFoe! BANDED MONGOOSE & WARTHOG advance. Narration by Anne Hilborn.

**Wattled Jacana & Capybara (7) v. Fork-tailed Drongos & Sociable Weaver (10)** - This battle features the unusual spa-like mutualism (shocking, right?) between the Jacana that picks ectoparasites off rodent-of-unusual-size (ROUS) Capybara. Drongos have a much more antagonistic relationship with Sociable Weavers, with Drongos mimicking the Weaver's alarm call, causing them to drop their food and flee so the Drongos can scoop that food up. But Weavers will put up with this childish behavior, because sometimes the Drongos do give a legit warning for bigger, badder predators. Already feeling out of place in the Brazilian swamp, Drongo and Weaver find a perch and keep an eye on Warthog and spy a green anaconda in the water. The water, warthog, and snake are just too much for these birds to handle. Drongo gives an alarm call, and off they fly. WATTLED JACANA & CAPYBARA for the win!! Narration by Jessica Light.

**Crab & Sea Turtle (5) v. Clown Fish & Sea Anemone (12)** - In the mid-North Atlantic, Crab enjoys the free housing provided by Turtle, and of course the free meals consisting of things growing on the Turtle and ... "food particles expelled from host turtles". Anemone also provides housing for Clown Fish, who returns the courtesy of much needed nitrogen and phosphorus to Anemone through its own, uhhhh, excretions. But at the surface of the open ocean, the Anemone isn't doing well and immediately starts to sink as Turtle investigates. Now Clown Fish must decide its fate - swim towards the surface and live or stay with its lifelong companion and embrace icy death. Clown Fish accepts its fate and swims down towards its sinking companion. CRAB & SEA TURTLE for the win!! Narration by Josh Drew.

**Aardvark & Aardvark Cucumber (8) v. Goeldi's Monkey & Saddleback Tamarin & White-Lipped Tamarin (9)** - Aardvark's secret life as a foodie is the reason for teaming up with the Aardvark Cucumber. The fruit of the Aardvark Cucumber is underground, requiring the Aardvark to dig it up, eat it, and disperse the seeds. Our Triple Threat Monkeys practice vertical segregation, foraging at different levels of the canopy. The arboreal, rainforest #TripleTrouble Monkeys run around the semi-arid desert thirsty & terrestrial, find Aardvark digging up his salad fixing. The bold monkeys attempts to thief the cucumber get them into trouble as Aardvark takes down the #CallitrichineCrew AARDVARK & AARDVARK CUCUMBER for the win! Narration by

Katie Hinde

**Diana Monkey & Red Colobus (6) v. Bornean Bat & Pitcher Plant (11)** - These monkeys team up for extra vigilance, while Bat uses the Pitcher Plant as a toilet. In this short battle, the #SimianSquad monkeys evade chimpanzees and in their rush, another MMM victim gets squished! Pitcher Plant dies a lonely death waiting for its Bat companion to find its way home. DIANA MONKEY & RED COLOBUS advance.  
Narration by Lara Durgavich & Marc Kissel

**Coyote & Badger (2) v. Ants & Aphids (15)** - In the Colorado desert, Coyote & Badger find they more effectively succeed on hunting squirrels when combing their respective chase & dig abilities. Waiting as Badger gets fossorial, Coyote flops down by some fireweed, but spots some movement in its peripheral vision - hundreds of Aphids! These Aphids are feeding on the fireweed under the watchful gaze of their ant shepherds. Aphids excrete "delicious honeydew from the end of its gastrointestinal tract", which is quickly harvested by the Ants. Coyote, always the practical opportunist, starts scarfing insects and the Ants quickly mobilize to move their Aphids to the safety of an underground nest. But Badger has clawed its way underground as well in pursuit of squirrel. As Badger disrupts the Ant/Aphid underground nest, they flood back to the surface, only to be lapped up by Coyote. COYOTE & BADGER for the win!!! Narration by Brian Tanis & Patrice Connors.

**ROUND 2 WATERFALLS & JUMP JUMP: TIGER, DOLPHIN, MANATEE, MOOSE, ARMADILLO, RAKALI, BHARAL & TAPIR ADVANCE to the SWEET 16!!!!**

Sporting Summary by Penn State grad student Kate Lesciotto

**Bengal Tiger (1) v. Springhare (8)** - Tiger and Springhare both enter the battlefield unscathed after Round 1. Darkness falls in the Tiger's home turf in India, but both combatants are nocturnal so neither fears the darkness. Springhare tries in vane to sense any ground vibrations from approaching animals, but Tiger is stealthy and moves undetected. Springhare catches the scent of an unfamiliar felid, tenses, and leaps off into the surrounding forest ... right into Tiger's waiting jaws! TIGER for the win!!!  
Narration by Lara Durgavich.

**Impala (6) v. Spinner Dolphin (3)** - After using the Spinifex Hopping Mouse as a water-logged cat toy in Round 1, Dolphin is resting in the shallows. As ecotourists watch, they catch the unusual sight of Impala swimming along the bay! While capable of swimming up to a quarter mile, this is not Impala's preferred method of locomotion from an anatomical/biomechanical perspective. Curious Dolphin gives a gentle investigatory bump from below...and then another bump...and then a bite. Impala sees blood in the water and starts thrashing about and choking on the water until it can take no more. DOLPHIN for the win!!! Narration by Josh Drew & Chris Anderson.

**Bharal (4) v. Rock Wallaby (12)** - Rock Wallaby earned its Round 1 victory with a wicked kick that took out Serval, but now it's up against Bharal on Bharal's home turf.

Interestingly, wallabies and hoofed eutherians represent convergent evolution in terms of niche and skull & tooth anatomy- but have wildly different body plans because of the #NeonatalMarsupialCommandoPouch crawl, requiring grippy front limbs #TheBetterToCrawlMomWith. Hence no hoofed marsupials. While Rock Wallaby is comfortable on a mountainside, it isn't digging the colder weather. Bharal easily spots intruder, and Rock Wallaby makes a hasty escape to some rocky cover. BHARAL for the win!!! Narration by Patrice Connors.

**Manatee (2) v. Aquatic Genet (10)** - In a calm salt marsh, Genet taps its pawpads against the water to try and startle up some fish to reveal their location. Genet tries this tactic again and again, making its way down the bank until it is startled by the lumbering shape of Manatee. With a jump, a tumble, and a scramble, Genet flees the battlefield. MANATEE for the win!!! Narration by Mauna Dasani.

**Moose (1) v. Flat-Headed Cat (8)** - As Flat-Headed Cat splashes around in the mud flats and encounters a Moose clambering about. Taking Moose's size into consideration, a stress myopathy that took down the chevrotain in round 1 is clearly not an option. Flat-headed cat bravely turns his tail and runs. MOOSE for the win!! Narration by Marc Kissell.

**Lowland Tapir (3) v. Moonrat (11)** - In Round 1, Moonrat eked out a win by utilizing its secret power of stench to defeat Crab-Eating Fox, while Tapir took the easy road of squishing its opponent. This battle of the boop-able snoots takes place in Ecuador, with Tapir browsing near a forest stream in which Moonrat swims, seeking out snacks. Tapir lifts out a hefty, "multi-hoofed" foot, churning up the mud, which narrowly misses Moonrat ... the first time. Moonrat tries to swim away, but runs into Tapir's other leg, and meets another MMM squishy end. TAPIR for the win!!! Narration by Anne Hilborn

**9-Banded Armadillo (10) v. Streaked Tenrec (15)** - Both combatants enter Round 2 in top shape. Tenrec is transported to the scrublands of Texas. Armadillo exits its burrow to be faced with a strange smol spikey boi Tenrec, who immediately bum-rushes Armadillo and jumps at its face! But what worked so effectively against Markhor, has no effect against Armadillo's natural armor. Armadillo digs its heels in and refuses to leave - but Tenrec has lost interest and wanders off to find a mate. ARMADILLO for the win!!! Narration by Asia Murphy

**Beaver (5) v. Rakali (13)** - It's battle of the rodents in the final match-up of the night. In western Washington state, this Beaver has recently been reintroduced to the ecosystem where Rakali has just caught a juvenile salmon. As Rakali settles in for a nice meal of fish heads, Beaver gets to work gnawing on a nearby aspen. The aspen starts to lean and then WHOMP crashes down inches away from Rakali. Beaver focuses on getting that tree out of the field of battle and back towards its lodge, not giving a second glance as it leaves the battlefield. RAKALI for the win!!! Narration by Jessica Light.

**ROUND 2 CAT-e-GORY & TAG TEAM: Sea Lion, Zebra & Oxpecker, Crab & Sea Turtle, Tiger Owl, Mongoose & Warthog #WarGoose, Bear Cat, Coyote & Badger**

## #BadYote, AND Tiger Quoll ADVANCE to the Sweet 16!

Sporting Summary by Penn State Grad Student Kate Lesciotto

**Sealion (1) v. Small Spotted Cat Shark (8)** - We join Sealion on the shores of San Francisco as he enjoys some late afternoon sunning. Cat Shark has evolved the ability to be semi-terrestrial - as long as its gills stay moist, it can spend short amounts of time out of the water. Cat Shark spies some tourist leftovers on the beach and saunters over. Sealion is hungry too, but Cat Shark reaches that tasty treat first - Victory! Well, victory in that Cat Shark won the snack, but another 2019MMM squishy defeat as Sealion's lumbering bulk crushes Cat Shark. SEALION for the win!!! Sealion grabs the Cat Shark carcass to use against kayakers invading his territory. Narration by Josh Drew.

**Zebra & Oxpecker (1) v. Aardvark & Aardvark Cucumber (8)** - Amid dozens of termite mounds in Namibia, Aardvark is busy lapping up termites, while Zebra stands guard while the females graze. Zebra is more concerned with an interloper bachelor zebra, hoping to find a mate. Battle of the Zebras ensues - on top of the termite mound where Aardvark was snacking! Zebra gets a nasty bite to the neck before he can deliver a swift kick to the intervening interloper. As the interloper flees in pain, Zebra rears back, kicking his hooves in victory and coming down hard with the full weight of his body ... right on top of Aardvark's head, cracking its skull. Without Aardvark to spread its seeds, Aardvark Cucumber remains forever entombed underground. As blood trickles down Zebra's neck, attracting a horsefly, but Oxpecker picks them off quickly. ZEBRA & OXPECKER for the win!!! Hmmm, does that neck wound look like it's starting to fester? Narration by Jessica Light.

**Wrasse & Moray Eel (4) v. Crab & Sea Turtle (5)** - In a warm Fijian sea, Crab gently picks off algae growing on Sea Turtle, making Turtle even more hydrodynamically efficient for the upcoming battle. Wrasse and Eel leave their coral hidey-hole and spy a potential meal - Crab looks like a tasty treat for Eel, while Wrasse would love to nibble on whatever is growing on Turtle's shell. Both go in for the kill, and soon the water is green with shattered algal bodies. Turtle turns to see what the ruckus is and strikes true with his sharp beak, severing Eel's spine! Turtle swims on, and now its up to Crab to reclaim its territory from Wrasse. Crab's claws eviscerate Wrasse! CRAB & SEA TURTLE for the win!!! Narration by Josh Drew.

**Fisher Cat (4) v. Tiger Owl (5)** - At the end of Round 1, we saw Fisher Cat getting caught in a trap and being transported to Calgary Zoo - this was actually part of the Washington Cascades Reintroduction Project! Now outfitted with a radio tracker collar that can monitor Fisher's status, tonight's battle takes place in Mount Rainier National Park, and after Fisher has enjoyed a meal in its new home, Fisher climbs a tree to find a suitable resting place. Tiger Owl is guarding her nest and chicks - her mate is out on patrol, so Tiger Owl gives a vocal outburst and takes to flight herself. As Fisher creeps to the edge of the owl next, Tiger Owl strikes with her talons! Fisher falls hard to the ground, with Tiger Owl following and delivering another talon strike. Fisher's eyes close as the signal from his radio tracker changes. The relocation scientists find Fisher's body

the next day, bearing the fatal wounds of an owl attack. TIGER OWL for the win!!!  
Narration by Tara Chestnut.

**Banded Mongoose & Warthog (3) v. Diana Monkey & Red Colobus (6)** - In Senegal, WarGoose feels at ease, while DM & RC give distress calls at finding themselves without trees for refuge. As a savannah chimpanzee arrives on scene, DM & RC spring towards the nearest shrubby trees but there is no safety. RC falls first, succumbing to the chimpanzee as DM races away, hoping only to save itself. WarGoose looks on, happy they are not a chimpanzee preferred food. BANDED MONGOOSE & WARTHOG for the win!! Narration by Lara Durgavich and Katie Hinde.

**Bearcat (3) v. Lion-Tailed Macaque (6)** - Transported to Thailand, Lion-Tailed Macaque is confused by its new surroundings, and Bearcat is startled awake from its catnap by the newcomer. Macaque is curious about this potential novel interaction buddy and leaps over to Bearcat's tree. Bearcat is not happy about this as Macaque invades her personal space, and Bearcat chases Macaque away. BEARCAT for the win!!! Narration by Mauna Dasari.

**Coyote & Badger (2) v. Wattled Jacana & Capybara (7)** - In a Mexican desert, Coyote & Badger feel right at home, while Jacana & Capybara miss their watering hole and try to find some shade as the sun begins to set. Coyote catches an unusual scent and lopes over to investigate Capybara, while Badger finds an ephemeral pond more interesting. Capybara is unaware, but Jacana sounds the alarm before taking flight. Capybara's usual escape tactic of running for open water isn't working today, as Badger cuts off the escape path to the pond. Badger's claws savagely open an artery, and Coyote soon joins the rodent feast as we say goodbye to our rodent-of-unusual-size. COYOTE & BADGER for the win!! Narration by Brian Tanis & Marc Kissel.

**Nimavid (2) v. Tiger Quoll (7)** - Coming off of an exciting, heart-pounded win over Dandelion in Round 1, Nimavid (aka the sabre-toothed badger) is comfortable in ancient South Dakota scrub/woodland. But Nimavid is still suffering the ill-effects of Dandelion's savage attack, with a seed having embedded itself in Nimavid's nasal cavity! Incessant wheezing gives Nimavid's position away, as Tiger Quoll takes down an ancient hare for a meal. Nimavid considers stealing a meal, when THWONK!!! Another nimavid, Nimavid's main predator, attacks! Carnage reigns as Nimavid feels its skull being pierced behind the right eye. Another bite and Nimavid feels its scapula being punctured, as the two nimavids become stuck together in battle [FOR WHICH THERE IS FOSSIL EVIDENCE!](#) As Nimavid can't extract itself from the other nimavid's jaws, they both face slow death. TIGER QUOLL for the win!!! Narration by Patrice Kurnath & Katie Hinde. [Check out poem about this fossil find.](#)

**Sweet Sixteen Outcomes: Sea Lion, Tiger Quoll, Zebra & Oxpecker, Mongoose & Warthog, Moose, Manatee, Tiger, and Spinner Dolphin ADVANCE!!!**

Sporting Summary by Penn State grad student Kate Lesciotto

**Zebra & Oxpecker (1) v. Crab & Sea Turtle (5)** - Zebra & Oxpecker still enjoy homecourt advantage, leaving Crab & Sea Turtle feeling out of sorts in the Nechisar Plains of Ethiopia. Crab & Sea Turtle hunker down in the unfamiliar grass, as Zebra trots through looking for its next snack. CRUNCH! Crab bites the dust underneath Zebra's hoof, and Sea Turtle lashes out, snapping at Zebra's leg while Oxpecker calls the alarm. Zebra avoids the bite and now slams down its hoof with purpose this time, on top of Turtle's shell. Injured and inconsolable at the loss of its friend, Turtle vacates the battlefield. ZEBRA & OXPECKER for the win!!!

**Spinner Dolphin (3) v. 9-Banded Armadillo (10)** - While the higher-seeded Dolphin is back in its home Bahamian waters, Armadillo is actually fairly adept at swimming. Armadillo's peaceful water yoga is rudely interrupted by nearby ships using compressed gas to create mini-seismic booms to find gas and oil. Underwater, another BOOM sends shockwaves through Dolphin's body, causing intense pain and nausea. As Dolphin reaches the surface effectively paralyzed from the pain, Armadillo spots its chance to go for the kill with a claw strike! The pain revives Dolphin who lands a powerful tail strike. Armadillo attempts to keep up, but ultimately is no match for Dolphin who bites down. DOLPHIN for the win!!!

**Sea lion (1) v. Tiger Owl (5)** - Sea Lion is relaxing on a homey Alaskan beach, when he begins to feel a big peckish. However, these hunting grounds are also currently the fishing ground for a bunch of pesky humans. Diving down towards a flash of silver, Sea Lion realizes this is a fishing lure and diverts. Thankfully, the humans decide to leave the wildlife alone, leaving Sea Lion to catch his fish, which is quickly brought to land near a fishing camp and pit toilet for snacking. Above head, Tiger Owl spies what it \*thinks\* might be a good nesting sight and makes it way down the ventilation pipe in the toilet shack. Landing in foul goop, Tiger Owl tries to escape but quickly becomes mired in the goo. Sea Lion enjoys his snack, while Tiger Owl meets her sludgy end. SEA LION for the win!!!

**Bengal Tiger (1) v. Bharal (4)** - Tiger comes in to battle tonight hungry for a win and squares off against Bharal in a Bangladesh mangrove forest, with Tiger still enjoying the advantage of a home-court meeting. Alone and out of place, Bharal puts his worries aside and stops for a leafy snack. Bharal keeps a sharp eye above, used to snow leopards on the prowl, but fails to see the even larger cat crouched behind the leaves. Tiger pounces, but Bharal makes a quick get away - or would have but Bharal's footing isn't quite so sure off the mountains and Bharal trips on a mangrove foot! Tiger moves in for the kill, grasping Bharal's belly with sharp claws and delivers the killing blow to the neck. TIGER for the win!!!

**Manatee (2) v. Lowland Tapir (3)** - This battle of the herbivores takes place in the Florida Everglades, and both combatants are at risk for human activity related fatalities (e.g., boat strikes and habitat loss). Tapir quickly takes to the water in this new environment, desperate to avoid potential dangers on land. Spying some tasty looking seagrass at the bottom, Tapir goes in for a closer look, but thanks to poor eyesight

bumps boop-able snoots with Manatee! Both stare at the other in shock as they rise to the surface for a breath of fresh air. BUMP! The foreshadowed boat strikes Tapir first with a critical hit. MANATEE for the win!!

Coyote & Badger (2) v. Banded Mongoose & Warthog (3) - In a Colorado prairie, Team Badyote watches with little interest as WarGoose approaches - yesterday's Capybara meal (RIP) has slowed Badyote down. Without the shared motivation to hunt, Coyote and Badger have little motivation to associate with each other. Warthog investigates a nearby depression as a potential place to crash for the night, but is rudely rebuffed by Badger. Warthog gives Badger a shove with his tusks, and Badger takes a harsh tumble down a rocky embankment! Coyote warily approaches the strange Mongoose, who makes a surprise rush at Coyote with teeth bared. Honing their skills in predatory-heavy Africa, has given WarGoose strong anti-predator skills, while full bellies leaves Team Badyote with little motivation to waste energy. BANDED MONGOOSE & WARTHOG for the win!!!

Bearcat (3) v. Tiger Quoll (7) - In a fractured forest fragment in Malaysia, Tiger Quoll sniffs the unfamiliar air, looking for the quoll communal latrine, while Bearcat prowls the ground for a meal. Tiger Quoll has the high ground, as he goes in to investigate Bearcat and pounces! Quoll gets the first attack, but Bearcat is larger and she shakes him off. Blood rolls down Bearcat's back as they face off ... until Bearcat starts climbing a tree, and keeps climbing away from the battle. In a stunning repeat from 2017, Bearcat elects to go after a figgy treat rather than battle. TIGER QUOLL for the win!!

Moose (1) v. Rakali (13) - In Isle Royale National Park, the persevering underdog Rakali runs for the cover of the forest just as Moose is heading out towards an islet. But our MMM competitors are not alone - one of the newly translocated Isle Royale wolves is on the prowl and heads towards the water. Moose takes off and passes Rakali, making it to the safety of the water, and Rakali isn't far behind, making it to the water before the wolf. And yet Rakali victory is short-lived, as he can only swim half as fast as he runs and wolf's jaws quickly approach from behind. MOOSE for the win!!

**ELITE TRAIT: TIGER, MOOSE, SEA LION, AND...  
WARGOOOOOSE!!!! ADVANCE!**

Sports summary by Penn State Grad Student Kate Lesciotto

Sea Lion (1) v. Tiger Quoll (7) - The randomly chosen environment - LAKE!! Sea Lion must be happy with this luck of the draw. The scene: Lake Tahoe, Nevada. The players: a desperately paddling Tiger Quoll and a thicc Sea Lion honing in. Sea Lion is feeling a bit cool in these cooler waters, but his thicc blubber is keeping him warm. Tiger Quoll tries to bare his teeth but only ends up with a mouth full of water. Sea Lion goes in and take Quoll's hind leg in its mouth and drags its new chew tow down to the depths. As the chew toy stops moving, Sea Lion quickly loses interest and let's go... and Tiger Quoll sinks slowly to the depths. SEA LION for the win!!!

Bengal Tiger (1) v. Spinner Dolphin (3) - Tonight's battle takes place in the Sandhills!!! Bad luck for dolphin. In an open stand of old pines, Dolphin is not terribly happy in this moment. Tiger approaches the motionless Dolphin and takes an investigatory lick to the blowhole. After its previous meals, Tiger isn't even hungry anymore, but watches contently as Spinner Dolphin takes one more spin, rolling down the steep sandhill. **BENGAL TIGER** for the win!!!

Moose (1) v. Manatee (2) - This battle takes place in the Mangrove!!! Manatee has a chance in this aquatic environment, since this is basically Manatee's home-turf anyway. Moose also love the water, although this environment is bit warmer than preferred for our Canadian friend (yes, I fully realize moose aren't actually Canadian, this Moose is). Craving salt after a long winter, Moose is enjoying the mangrove, rooting around some tasty aquatic plant bits. Moose feels a bump against its leg - Manatee is investigating the strange creature in the water. Moose feels, but does not see, Manatee, but ignores this and continues its foraging. Manatee starts to head in the opposite direction to find a less crowded feeding ground, only get caught up in a net! The strands of the net get caught in one of Manatee's previous propeller wounds. But a nice human eco-patrol is on the lookout and quickly spots the struggling Manatee and remove it from the net... and from the battlefield. **MOOSE** for the win!!!!

Zebra & Oxpecker (1) v. Banded Mongoose & Warthog (3) - This battle takes place in the Thorn Forest! This southeastern Indian thorn forest is home to a variety of predators. Both of our TagTeams move out into the open, where they will have a better chance of spotting the predators. Warthogs & Zebras often forage in close proximity, so they settle in to old, although slightly uneasy, habits. The previous neck wound is beginning to fester on Zebra, so Oxpecker digs in to help cleanse of parasites. **THWACK!!! CRACK!!!!** Zebra's kick has broken Warthog's tusk! Another kick and Warthog collapses!! But Zebra also feels the pain as it realizes that the broken tusk has sliced through the pad of its hoof and stumble trots off the battlefield! Oxpecker goes for nummies on fallen warthog but is chased away by mongoose. **SUDDENLY** Warthog arises, shaking his thick noggin. **BANDED MONGOOSE & WARTHOG** for the win!!!

**FINAL ROAR: TIGER & #WARGOOSE are headed to Wednesday's CHAMPIONSHIP!!!!**

**(no sports summary)**

**CHAMPION IS TIGER!!!!**

**(no sports summary)**



# SPORTS SUMMARIES FROM THE 2018 March Mammal Madness

written by Jessica Martin, Jason Krell, & Katie Hinde based on narrator's stories

## **WILD CARD "The early bird gets ambushed as Praying Mantis defeats Goldcrest"**

In a showing of stealth over swoop, the praying mantis caught the goldcrest by surprise in the wildcard match of the 2018 March Mammal Madness tournament. The mantis, which feeds on everything from rodents to insects to birds, ambushed the goldcrest, biting into his bird brain while the gold crest pursued another insect. Maybe they should call it the PREYING mantis!

## **Round 1 Great Adaptations Summaries by Katie Hinde**

What an exciting night of GREAT ADAPTATIONS going head-to-head in March Mammal Madness.

Deputy Editor Chris Anderson let us know that the poor vision of the Star-Nosed Mole left it unaware of the crushing Hippo tusk headed its way.

Giving us a cheetah girth guide to know if they are hungry enough to hunt, expert Anne Hilborn let us know Cheetah was suitably motivated to devour a Fat-Tailed Dunnart in the middle of devouring a dung beetle- you are what what you eat eats!

Edible Dormouse, whose hibernation is sustained by its fatted tail, was no match for Crabeater Seal's wild teeth, explained by marine biologist Josh Drew.

Marc Kissel roused himself in the middle of the night in Cape Town, South Africa where he is doing research to explain that the venom of the critically endangered Solenodon couldn't stack up to the splashing, lashing water deer and it wisely ran away. The Water Deer didn't even have to use his saber-sharp canines.

As largely predicted Jaguarundi, a felid that looks more like a weasel snarfed the snorkel nosed Desman and the marsupial Tasmanian Devil with the amazing bite force crunched the Ghost Bat with the sensitive hearing. Hat tip to Jessica Light and Patrice K. Connors for narrating these battles.

In the first upset of the tournament, Lara Durgavich let us know how the Madagascan Aye-Aye was too novel and unsettled Coatimundi in a highly-discussed displacement.

And many MMM fans felt a great disturbance in the tournament, as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror and were suddenly silenced when they discovered from Katie Hinde that the spurs of the Platypus were all out of venom in March so long after the mating season. Indeed Platypus's wicked spurs skated harmlessly across the

thick skin on the flanks of the Maned Rat who didn't even need to use his bark poison paste on his specialized hairs to deflect the platypus.

### **Round 1 Antecessor:**

"Upsets absent from round one of Antecessors division"

In a battle across epochs, the winner is often the animal suited to the environment.

Ambelodon (2) v Deinogalerix (15)

Despite the gusto demonstrated by Deinogalerix in charging the Ambelodon, the smaller insectivore was swept away by its mammoth-sized opponent. The Ambelodon's shovel-like lower jaw was the real star of the match. While they normally help strip bark from trees, they helped the Ambelodon launch the Deinogalerix out of bounds.

Deodicurus (1) v Jugulator (16)

The Deodicurus claimed home-turf as the number one seed, forcing the Jugulator to duke it out in a cold environment that didn't suit its large surface area to volume ratio. The #TankMammal Deodicurus provided the boulder-like launch pad for Jugulator to leap out of the tournament.

Dimetrodon (3) v Aegyptopithecus (14)

While Dimetrodon is neither a mammal nor a dinosaur, it did manage to win its bout against Aegyptopithecus. The primate ancestor. Without any route of retreat, Aegyptopithecus was shredded.

Andrewsarchus (4) v Nuralagus rex (13)

Without any natural predators on its island home, Nuralagus rex's relatively tiny eyes and ears meant it missed the 1,000 kg, 5 ft Andrewsarchus while foraging for food on the forest floor. And by the time the two did make eye contact, Nuralagus rex never expected that Andrewsarchus would take a taste-test with a crushing chomp.

Thylacoleo (5) v Procoptodon (12)

Suited to the shrublands of southeastern Sahul, marsupial "lion" Thylacoleo simply snuck up on the grazing Procoptodon. Ambushing the ancient kangaroo from a crouching position like a modern-day feline, it destroyed the competition with its powerful jaw muscles.

Pseudaelurus (6) v Archaeoindris (11)

The ability to stage a comeback is crucial in March Mammal Madness since the unexpected can strike at any time. And in last night's match against Archaeoindris, Pseudaelurus' lost its element of surprise when it snapped a twig while stalking its opponent from a tree. Despite the slip up, Archaeoindris' lack of predator awareness meant Pseudaelurus had lucked out and could attack the giant lemur face-to-face for the win.

Thalassocnus (8) v Cynognathus (9)

Swimming isn't Cynognathus' strong-suit, which cost it dearly while it tried to battle the #WaterSloth Thalassocnus. The two hardly had a chance to interact before the #DinoDog got caught in a #RIP tide.

Homo floresiensis (7) v Paleoloxodon (10)

When it comes to a battle between mammals, big brains rock and rocks can cause big problems. Both Homo floresiensis and Paleoloxodon were smaller versions of their modern relatives, the elephant still had the relative size advantage. However, the ability to overcome its fears helped Homo floresiensis dodge a costly charge, while its opponent's tournament chances came crashing down.

### **URBAN JUNGLE DIVISION Round 1:**

**Hyena, Boar, Baboon, Coyote, Sewer Rat, Porcupine, Fox & Bobcat ADVANCE!**

#### **1st seed Harar Hyena against 16th seed Belo Horizonte Marmoset: CAN I GET A HAR(H)AR?**

The marmoset found himself alone and far from his home north of Rio de Janeiro. The hyena, a powerful predator but sometimes scavenger, woke just in time from a nap to spy the lonely marmoset on a tree branch. Accustomed to snagging meat off sticks, the hyena lunged; without his family members to warn him, the marmoset noticed the danger too late and was devoured. Narration by Anne Hilborn

#### **15th seed Common Hedgehog against 2nd seeded Cape Town Chacma Baboon: NO MONKEYING AROUND HERE!**

The baboon was on his way to take advantage of a tipped trash can when the hedgehog spied his approach. In true defensive fashion, the hedgehog self-anointed with some fish skin and saliva to make his spines more effective. Though the hedgehog curled up to provide maximum defense, the baboon was not deterred and used his superior manual dexterity to simply flip the hedgehog over and go straight for the soft underbelly. Narration by Chris Anderson

#### **14th seed Eastern Grey Squirrel against 3rd seed Berlin Boar: BEWARE THE SNACK STEALERS!**

The migration of boars to urban areas brought these two contestants head to head. The boar and squirrel both like to eat nuts, and the boar found her way into one of the squirrel's hidden caches. The squirrel protested such blatant stealing and, goaded by his friends (but not helped), made the courageous but perhaps ill-advised attempt to claw the boar's eyes out. Undeterred, the boar met the attack with her tusks and the squirrel wisely chose to flee to another cache. Boar advances. Narration by Josh Drew

#### **4th seed coyote against 13th seed Virginia Opossum: MOMMA KNOWS BEST**

Coyote and opossum found themselves looking for roadkill in the same wildlife corridor. The opossum has a reputation for playing dead when surprised, but the momma opossum was carrying precious cargo and on guard. She heard the coyote's approach

and after a brief encounter escaped the battlefield with an empty stomach - but a full (of babies) pouch. Coyote advances. Narration by Tara Chestnut

**5th seed Moscow Dog against 12th seed Sewer Rat: DID SOMEONE SAY "UPSET"?**

The sewer rat took a break from trolling the underground to spend some time on a Moscow city street. The rat gave up dumpster diving and ended up face to face with a lone Moscow Dog. Recognizing its bigger opponent, the rat hid under the dumpster and the Moscow Dog left the battlefield in favor of human handouts. Sewer Rat advances! Narration by Patrice K. Connors

**7th seed Porcupine against 10th seed Delhi Rhesus (rhesus macaque): RHESUS GOT LIT UP**

Aggressive and overconfident, the macaque spied a porcupine girdling a pine tree for bark. As an animal that eats bark as part of its diet, the macaque dismissed the porcupine's warning chatter and went for the bark. The porcupine made a stink about the situation and hit the macaque with its tail, and in its haste to get away the Rhesus missed the branches of the tree it tried to jump on and instead grabbed an electrical wire for a shocking finish. Porcupine advances. Narration by Jessica Light

**9th seed Bristol Fox against 8th seed Raccoon: #TRASHTALKING**

As a new dad, the fox took his duty of scavenging for food and patrolling the territory seriously. The fox was on alert as soon as he discovered the raccoon's presence and bared his teeth in a "threat gape". The raccoon and fox squared off over a nearby trash can, but the raccoon quickly realized that the fox was nearly twice his size at 14 kg and wisely backed off. Fox advances. Narration by Mauna Dasari & Marc Kissel

**6th seed Bobcat against 11th seed Striped Skunk: SMELL YA LATER**

These contestants are generally separated by temporal preferences: bobcats are active in the daytime and skunks are active at night. Bobcat encountered the skunk on his way home, and though the bobcat is a potential predator of the skunk, in 1846 Audobon and Bachman also characterized this cat as "inclined to beat a retreat." Spying the bobcat, the skunk raised his tail but couldn't be sure the signal was seen through the tall grass, so upped the "back off" ante by stomping. Stuffed and ready for bed, the bobcat was not motivated to attack and simply waited until the skunk moved along a minute later. Bobcat advances. Narration by Katie Hinde

**WHEN THE KAT'S AWAY DIVISION Round 1:**

**1st seed Orinoco crocodile vs. 16th seed praying mantis: MANTIS OUT OF ITS DEPTH!**

While the praying mantis fought hard to make it out of the wildcard battle, it came into its first-round battle as a deep underdog. In fact, the crocodile completely snubbed its nose at the mantis, catching it with a squirt of water from its nose while fighting for territory. Stuck between two crocs and a wet place, the only thing that sunk faster than mantis were its chances for victory. Crocodile advances. Narration by Asia Murphy.

**3rd seed Komodo Dragon vs. 14th seed Hellbender: SCOOP, SHAKE, SNACK!**

In a match as open and shut as the Komodo Dragon's mouth, the Hellbender was spotted out from under a rock along a stream. The Snot Otter's inability to recognize the scent of the Dragon as a predator was the cause of its undoing, as it was knocked to the shore and gulped down. Komodo Dragon advances. Narration by Tara Chestnut.

**4th seed Alligator Snapping Turtle vs 13th seed Mantis Shrimp: DOUBLE**

**KNOCKOUT!** It seemed like the Alligator Snapping Turtle had the Mantis Shrimp right where it wanted when the latter confused its vermiform appendage for a juicy worm. But thanks to a crucial missed bite from the turtle, the Mantis Shrimp struck with its punch that created a shock wave. The force cracked the turtle's beak. Mantis Shrimp Advances. Narration by Joshua Drew.

**2nd seed Green Anaconda vs. 15th seed Tardigrade: I WILL SURVIVE!**

Two hunters stalk their prey, each unaware that their true battle is against each other. And while the Anaconda strikes at a juvenile capybara, the tardigrade is knocked away in the swirling waters. Anaconda Advances. BUT water bear clings to a snake scale... & #AltAdvances?!?!? What does that mean... find out NEXT WEEK! Narration by Mauna Dasari.

**5th seed Secretary Bird vs. 12th seed Horseshoe Crab: CRACK THAT CARAPACE**

**UP!** Horseshoe Crabs have hardy carapaces that keep them safe, but the kick of a Secretary Bird can hit with the force of six-times its body weight. There's no way a crab creeping in the dirt could stay composed while on the wrong end of a wild strike! Its shell is shattered with ease. Secretary Bird advances. Narration by Chris Anderson.

**7th seed Cookie Cutter Shark vs. 10th seed Common Octopus: SMELL YA**

**LATER, SHARK!** The best offense is a good defense & the Octopus lashed out two tentacles from its coral cave hiding place to snatch the shark. Cookie cutter shark couldn't get a flesh scoop of the octopus. Size doesn't scare the shark under most circumstances, but it could not escape the suffocating clutches of its opponent. Octopus advances. Narration by Joshua Drew.

**6th seed Eurasian Eagle Owl vs. 11th seed Beaded Lizard: WARFARE ECOLOGY**

In attempt to seek shelter from the coming cold, the Beaded Lizard clambered up to a cliff-side cave to discover a clutch of delicious owlets. With talon and beak, the heaviest owl perforated the Beaded Lizard. Eurasian Eagle Owl advances. Narration by Katie Hinde.

**8th seed Bothrops asper vs. 9th seed Goliath Tarantula: THE GREAT VENMON**

**BATTLE.** Both of these animals are capable of killing with a bite, but the tricky tarantula leveraged its lair to extreme effect. While B. asper slithered by looking for prey, it missed the silk-covered trip wire. And before Bothrops knew better, tarantula delivered a lethal, disgusting bite. Tarantula advances. Narration by Jessica Light.

## What a night of CARNAGE & HIGH DRAMA in the #AltMammals Round 1.

Crocodile, Anaconda, Mantis Shrimp, Secretary Bird, Eagle Owl, Octopus, Tarantula, & Komodo Dragon ALL ADVANCE. They are point scorers this round.

Here's a rundown of what happened to the species that did not win their battles:

Praying Mantis: Drowned

Hellbender: Gulped

Turtle: Broken Beak

Horseshoe Crab: Kicked Apart

Shark: Suffocated & Consumed

Beaded Lizard: Perforated

Viper: Emulsified

Tardigrade: Unscathed & #AltAdvances????

Alt Advances???? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN!!!!

We 'bout broke twitter as folks melted down at the ambiguity... what it means is...

TUNE IN NEXT WEEK FOR ROUND 2 of the #AltMammals!

Urban Jungle Round 2:

### **1st seed Harar Hyena vs. 9th seed Bristol Fox: WHO'S LAUGHING NOW**

At 218 stoats (or 48kg) our female hyena was more than 3x times heavier than our male fox at 63 stoats (or 14kg). Our combatants faced off in the streets of Harar. The fox was confused about how he ended up on these Ethiopian city streets but spied a meaty cow femur. Unfortunately for him, the hyena also spied that bone, and though the fox immediately took up a submissive stance the hyena decided not to let sleeping dogs (or foxes) lie. She grabbed him by the scruff to show him who was boss ... and broke his neck. Harar Hyena advances. Narration by Asia Murphy.

### **12th seed Sewer Rat vs 4th seed Coyote: PAINT THE TOWN... RED**

These combatants faced off in Chicago, where the coyote's diet consists mainly of ... you guessed it: rats! Our sewer rat found himself cornered in a dark alley and leapt out of the way of the coyote's first attack. Coyotes miss 2/3 of the time, so this particular coyote was undeterred. The rat made a run for it with the coyote in hot pursuit, but took a wrong turn and found himself at a DEAD end. With a "shrieking vocalization" the desperate rat jump-attacked the coyote's head. The coyote counterattacked with a pounce of his own, however, and the rat was no match for his larger opponent. Coyote advances. Narration by Katie Hinde & Jessica Light

### **7th seed Porcupine against 2nd seed Cape Town Baboon: #COMEATMEBRO**

This battle found us back in Cape Town, where our resident baboon had just finished a meal of hedgehog (RIP Sonic). The little critter left a bad taste in our baboon's mouth, so he set out looking for water. The water crisis led the baboon into the richer part of the city in search of a pool. He found one, but it had already been claimed by an overheated and unhappy porcupine. The baboon was unfazed since this porcupine was smaller

than a Cape porcupine; unfamiliar with baboons, the porcupine sized him up at roughly the size of a young cougar. Determined, the porcupine put himself between the baboon and the water and exposed his barbed quills (and a warning odor). Porcupine called the baboon's threat-yawning bluff and slapped him in the face with a tail full of quills to win the day. Porcupine advances. Narration by Mauna Dasari.

### **6th seed Bobcat vs 3rd seed Berlin Boar: BOAR-ED**

At roughly 12kg (60 stoats) the male bobcat was large, but the female boar had him beat at roughly 100kg (454 stoats). Our boar had just given birth to piglets, which made her behavior "increasingly protective and unpredictable" and also drove her to forage to sustain lactation. The bobcat approached stealthily and pounced the sleeping piglet pile, but their squeals of fear masked momma's return. At an impressive 25 miles an hour, the momma boar charged into the bobcat and biting down on one of his haunches. Infuriated, the bobcat slashed one of the sow's eyes with his switchblade claw. Momma boar flung the bobcat... into a graffitied wall. Berlin Boar advances. Narration by Katie Hinde, Mauan Dasari, Anne Hilborn, & Jessica Light

### **Great Adaptations Round 2:**

#### **Pygmy Hippo, Tasmanian Devil, Crabeater Seal, Cheetah, Harar Hyena, Coyote, Berlin Boar, and Porcupine ADVANCE!**

#### **1st seed Pygmy Hippo vs. 9th seed Maned Rat: DISPUTES OVER DINNER**

In the first battle of the night we found the hippo and maned rat searching for dinner along the same stream in Sierra Leone. The maned rat didn't find the wetter climate to its liking, but soon found its attention turned to the hippo. The hippo had arrived to forage for fruits and ferns on its 5-6 hour feeding bout. On edge, the rat piloerected to show his poison bits, but the hippo presented a big challenge at a weight of 180-275 kgs (as opposed to the rat, which weighs in around 2-3 kg). The rat wisely decided that one challenge was enough for the day and forfeited the grounds to the hungry, hangry hippo to forage in another spot. Pygmy hippo advances. Narration by Patrice Connors.

#### **5th seed Water Deer vs. 4th seed Tasmanian Devil: BEDEVILED**

Though the diurnal water deer is at home in the coastal plains and marshy areas of China and Korean, this battle found us in the Tasmanian woodlands. The solitary deer happened upon the grisly sight of the Tasmanian devil munching on the carcass of a kangaroo. Naturally, the water deer let out a scream (or a "whicker") and snarls to show his saber canines. The Tasmanian devil answered with a scream of his own and the deer, which usually tries to avoid a fight, did just that and hopped off. Tasmanian Devil advances. Narration by Marc Kissel.

#### **6th seed Jaguarundi vs. 3rd seed Crabeater Seal: SQUASH THE COMPETITION**

The battle took place on the pack ice of the Southern Ocean, providing the Crabeater Seal with home court advantage. Jaguarundi got the drop on the seal by smelling his crustacean breath, but didn't have the advantage for long. Though the seal was unaccustomed to meeting a threat out of the water, the home court advantage worked in his favor. The jaguarundi lost the element of surprise due to its dark colored coat against the ice, but pounced anyway. Even with 9.7 mm teeth, however, the jaguarundi

was unable to pierce the seal's 5 cm thick blubber and soon found that his hopes - and himself - squashed. Crabeater Seal advances. Narration by Josh Drew.

**10th seed Aye-Aye vs. 2nd seed Cheetah: AYE DIDN'T SEE THAT ONE COMING**

We returned to the Serengeti plains at sunset. The nocturnal aye-aye can travel up to 4 km a night by ground and tree. Though it was previously thought that Cheetahs would mostly stay put at night, Anne Hilborn discovered that they can move a lot at night as well. This evening, the cheetah decided to seek a better vantage point in a tree where he proceeded to startle himself and the aye-aye (in the middle of his dinner, no less). Both combatants fell out of the tree; the aye-aye snapped at the intruder and made the mistake of turning his back on the cheetah, who promptly bit his head off. Cheetah advances. Narration by Anne Hilborn.

Urban Jungle Round 2:

**1st seed Harar Hyena vs. 9th seed Bristol Fox: WHO'S LAUGHING NOW**

At 218 stoats (or 48kg) our female hyena was more than 3x times heavier than our male fox at 63 stoats (or 14kg). Our combatants faced off in the streets of Harar. The fox was confused about how he ended up on these Ethiopian city streets but spied a meaty cow femur. Unfortunately for him, the hyena also spied that bone, and though the fox immediately took up a submissive stance the hyena decided not to let sleeping dogs (or foxes) lie. She grabbed him by the scruff to show him who was boss ... and broke his neck. Harar Hyena advances. Narration by Asia Murphy.

**12th seed Sewer Rat vs 4th seed Coyote: PAINT THE TOWN... RED**

These combatants faced off in Chicago, where the coyote's diet consists mainly of ... you guessed it: rats! Our sewer rat found himself cornered in a dark alley and leapt out of the way of the coyote's first attack. Coyotes miss 2/3 of the time, so this particular coyote was undeterred. The rat made a run for it with the coyote in hot pursuit, but took a wrong turn and found himself at a DEAD end. With a "shrieking vocalization" the desperate rat jump-attacked the coyote's head. The coyote counterattacked with a pounce of his own, however, and the rat was no match for his larger opponent. Coyote advances. Narration by Katie Hinde & Jessica Light

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**6th seed Bobcat vs 3rd seed Berlin Boar: BOAR-ED**



At roughly 12kg (60 stoats) the male bobcat was large, but the female boar had him beat at roughly 100kg (454 stoats). Our boar had just given birth to piglets, which made her behavior "increasingly protective and unpredictable" and also drove her to forage to sustain lactation. The bobcat approached stealthily and pounced the sleeping piglet pile, but their squeals of fear masked momma's return. At an impressive 25 miles an hour, the momma boar charged into the bobcat and biting down on one of his haunches. Infuriated, the bobcat slashed one of the sow's eyes with his switchblade claw. Momma boar flung the bobcat... into a graffitied wall. Berlin Boar advances. Narration by Katie Hinde, Mauan Dasari, Anne Hilborn, & Jessica Light

## **Antecessors & #AltMammals Round 2**

Deodicurus, Andrewsarchus, Dimetrodon, Ambelodon, Orinoco Crocodile, Secretary Bird, Komodo Dragon, and Anaconda ADVANCE!  
& Tardigrade... AltAdvances #WhatDoesItMean

**1st seed Orinoco Crocodile vs. 9th seed Goliath Tarantula:** SPIDEY SENSES NOT TINGLING ANYMORE. Each contestant in this bout had previously defeated a species related to their opponent. But while the tarantula is the largest spider in the world, it didn't stand a chance against a crocodile. After failing to damage crocodile's eyes with spidey's chitinous hair, spidey's underdog run was ended in a single bite. Orinoco Crocodile advances. Narration by Chris Anderson

**5th seed Secretary Bird vs. 13th Mantis Shrimp:** PUTTING ITS FOOT DOWN. Despite an impressive array of acrobatics from the Mantis Shrimp, the Secretary Bird's stomp was too strong. The stomatopod dodged the first foot, but a follow up finishes the fight. Secretary Bird advances. Narration by Joshua Drew.

**3rd seed Komodo Dragon vs. 6th seed Eurasian Eagle Owl:** STOMACH HOOTS. Eurasian Eagle Owl is known to eat a lizard from time to time, and so owl swooped for a scaly snack. But what owl wasn't the only one on the hunt for Komodo dragon hatchlings. Owl became the bonus bird for a hunting, full size Komodo Dragon who snapped owl's neck & swallowed her whole. Komodo Dragon advances. Narration by Katie Hinde.

**2nd seed Green Anaconda vs. 10th seed Common Octopus:** "POP" GOES THE OCTOPUS. Sometimes the arena makes all the difference. In this battle, the octopus was forced out of its saltwater environment and into a freshwater river. With no way to balance the salt in its body with the water outside, octopus's cells fill until they burst. The Anaconda casually swims by, with its microscopic tardigrade passenger still in tow! Green Anaconda advances. Tardigrade #AltAdvances. Narration by Lara Durgavich.

## **ANTERCESSORS Round 2:**

**1st seed *Doedicurus clavicaudatus* vs. 8th seed *Thalassocnus catans*:** THIS TANK'S TREADS CAN'T STOP TRUCKIN'. It's not ideal to eat before a fight, which puts the Marine Sloth in a pinch. After finishing its foraging, aqua sloth crosses paths with the Doedicurus. Feeling threatened, the #TankMammal charges! The aqua sloth

tries to counter, but its bones are too heavy to strike in time. Doedicurus advances.  
Narration by Patrice K. Connors.

**2nd seed *Amebelodon fricki* vs. 7th seed *Homo floresiensis*:** FEAR ME, FLO! We saw last time just how formidable the Amebelodon is, which beat its opponent by flicking it off the field of battle. And this time, Flo the hominid manages to startle the wrong animal. As the Amebelodon charges, Flo tumbles out of the way and scrambles for safety. Amebelodon advances. Narration by Marc Kissel.

**4th seed *Andrewsarchus mongoliensis* vs 5th seed *Thylacoleo carnifex*:** FIRST FIERCE FIGHT — FOR FOOD. In the animal kingdom, sometimes stubbornness pays off. In the battle between Andrewsarchus and Thylacoleo, neither predator wanted to give up their claim to a fresh kill. Certain of its size advantage, Andrewsarchus didn't respect the staying power of Thylacoleo and paid for it with a permanent reminder across its snout. But Andrewsarchus escalated and fought off the smaller Thylacoleo. Andrewsarchus advances. Narration by Asia Murphy.

**3rd seed *Dimetrodon limbatus* vs. 7th seed *Pseudaelurus quadridentatus*:** SAIL AWAY PUFF QUADDY. Puffy's usual tactics fail due to Dimetrodon's signature sail. Unable to pounce on its opponents neck or back, Puffy is forced to flee in the face of a Dimetrodon. As a reward for its troubles, Dimetrodon gets to finish Puffy's meal and advances. Narration by Anne Hilborn and Jessica Light

#### **SWEET 16:**

Amebelodon, Orinoco Crocodile, Deodicurus, Anaconda Pygmy Hippo, Cheetah, Coyote & Porcupine ADVANCE  
& Tardigrade... AltAdvances #WhatDoesItMean

Antecessors division:

#### **1st seed *Deodicurus* against 4th seed *Andrewsarchus*: JAWDROPPING**

We went back in time about a million years for this battle, which took place along the modern-day coast of Uruguay. Deodicurus, aka #TankMammal, was looking for food. Andrewsarchus was almost 18,000 km away from home and roughly 40 million years in the future. Andrewsarchus mistook #TankMammal for a boulder, but when the boulder started to move Andrewsarchus lunged for the Deodicurus with its massive jaws. Deodicurus smashed its head into Andrewsarchus' snout and hit just the right spot to stop the predator. Andrewsarchus tried to circle around but Deodicurus managed to keep a side to the predator, but Andrewsarchus moved to gnaw on Deodicurus' bony hindquarters. #TankMammal waited just long enough for Andrewsarchus to break a tooth on his bony hide and give up in favor of searching for softer prey. Deodicurus advances. Narration by Asia Murphy & Patrice Kurnath.

#### **3rd seed *Dimetrodon* against 2nd seed *Amebelodon*: DROPPING DIMES**

The Not-Dinosaur Dimetrodon and distant-elephant-relation Amebelodon faced off in Nebraska. Dimetrodon was looking for food and wandered into Amebelodon's

environment (who was also looking for food). Dimetrodon spotted a baby Amebelodon and tried to bite the baby, but Momma Amebelodon rushed to protect the baby. The Dimetrodon weighed an average of 150 kg whereas the Amebelodon weighed about 9,000 kg; the Dimetrodon tried to flee, but couldn't avoid a kick to its sail that it sent it ... well, sailing. Amebelodon advances. Narration by Marc Kissel.

When the Kat's away:

### **1st seed Orinoco Crocodile vs. 5th seed Secretary Bird: DE-FEET-ED**

We returned to the Orinoco basin for this battle, where the Secretary bird found itself over 8,000 km from its home in Sub-Saharan Africa. The bird stopped to drink from a river that was also a release site for captive born Orinoco crocodiles. Before being released into the wild, our crocodile's favorite food was chicken. The Secretary bird spied the hungry croc just as he was set to strike and tried to take flight. The croc, with a bite force strong enough to break a human femur (roughly 4,000 Newtons), grabbed the bird by the ankle. The bird's 7-foot wingspan was enough to get him in the air, but not enough to win. Orinoco Crocodile advances. Narration by Mauna Dasari.

### **3rd seed Komodo Dragon vs. 2nd seed Green Anaconda: THE STRUGGLE IS REAL**

These contestants faced off in Yaguas National Park in Peru. The Komodo dragon spotted a dead deer under a bush and approached only to find the other end of the deer already being swallowed by a 70 kg anaconda. The anaconda let go of the deer and wraps around it to drag the carcass away, but the lizard bit down and ground its teeth on the snake's tail. The snake struck the dragon in retaliation and wrapped itself around the 65 kg dragon. The Komodo dragon refused to let go and the anaconda flipped the dragon upside down in the water, squeezing the entire time. Komodo dragon couldn't hold up under the pressure. Green Anaconda advances. Narration by Katie Hinde. BUT WAIT! The tardigrade made an appearance on the back of the anaconda and continues to #AltAdvance!

Great Adaptations:

### **1st seed Pygmy Hippo vs. 4th seed Tasmanian Devil: IN-DANGERED SPECIES**

The hippo started this battle grazing on a "hippo lawn" like a proper forager. The scavenging Tasmanian Devil (now classified as endangered by the IUCN) found a carcass of a duiker on the hippo lawn and screamed in delight. Startled, the hippo yawned and head-shook as a threat display, and the timid T.Devil took the hint and high-tailed it off the battle field. Pygmy Hippo advances. Narration by Chris Anderson.

### **3rd seed Crabeater Seal vs. 2nd seed Cheetah: SEAL THE DEAL**

The seal was wildly out of his depth on the plains of the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. Serengeti was about 100 degrees hotter in temperature than the seal's native Antarctica, so he managed to drag his 600-pound bulk into a water hole in an attempt to stay cool. The cheetah approached the water hole looking for a drink and was startled when the seal started to move. The seal lunged at the approaching cheetah and

showed his impressive teeth in a behavioral display he'd use against rival males. Though cheetahs are successful predators (for cats), they don't know what to do with themselves when their prey doesn't run. Our cheetah was disturbed by the seal's directness and moved away to wait. Unable to regulate its body temperature in such heat, the seal expired anyway. Cheetah advances. Narration by Anne Hilborn & Josh Drew.

Urban Jungle:

### **1st seed Harar Hyena vs 4th seed Coyote: NO MORE LIVING THE HY-LIFE**

These contestants faced off in the streets of Ethiopia. The coyote was unfamiliar with the area but had found a dump in which to hunt for rodents. The hyenas of Harar also scavenge the dump, however, and our hyena and coyote crossed paths at said dump. At 20 kg the coyote was smaller than the hyena (60 kg), but the coyote went on the offensive and targeted the hyena's vulnerable spot: her rump. The hyena tucked into herself in defense and the coyote, acknowledging his inferior odds, darted away. Hyena gave chase, but the coyote crossed a nearby highway and the hyena was struck by a car in her attempt to follow. Coyote advances. Narration by Lara Durgavich & Tara Chestnut.

### **3rd seed Berlin Boar vs. 7th seed Porcupine: #POKINGTHEBOAR**

This battle brought us back to Berlin, where the half-blind boar was rooting around a tree for food whilst also trying to keep an eye on her piglets. The porcupine, who needed a break after her run in with some aggressive primates in previous rounds, made its way toward a nice tree it could hide in. Porcupine had chosen the boar's tree, but scented the pig before seeing her. Unwilling to give up the only tree in the area big enough to support its 12 kg frame, the porcupine put up his quills and blindsided the boar. Startled (and tired), Momma boar decided to see herself and her piglets out rather than fight. Porcupine advances. Narration by Jessica Light.

### **ELITE TRAIT:**

**Amebelodon, Orinoco Crocodile, Coyote, Pygmy Hippo ADVANCE!**

& [#TardiGrandalf](#) [#AltAdvances](#)!?!?

**4th seed Coyote vs. 7th seed Porcupine: STICKING THE LANDING.** No longer in their cityscape, the Porcupine & Coyote battled in a high-elevation CLOUD FOREST. The Porcupine retreated up a nearby tree thinking it would be safe there. However, the Coyote gave chase bc they can at times climb trees. But not great. Both combatants tumbled to the forest floor. BUT Porcupine self-impaled on their OWN QUILLS! These injuries eventually gave the Coyote the chance to finish the fight. Coyote advances. Narration by Chris Anderson, Jessica Light, & Tara Chestnut.

**1st seed Pygmy Hippo vs. 2nd seed Cheetah: NIGHT(MARE) VISION.** Forced to fight in foreign territory of the GRASSLAND, the Pygmy Hippo tries to calm itself by noshing on some grass. But the cheetah, not seeing great in the dark, approaches too

close & the herbivorous hippo says the best defense is a good offense. The play-by-play was maximal carnage #Charge #Impale #Stomple. Hippo advances. Narration by Anne Hilborn and Asia Murphy.

**1st seed Orinoco Crocodile vs. 2nd seed Anaconda: YOU SHALL NOT PASS.** At the TINAJA in Bears Ears Monument, we find the Anaconda ALREADY DEAD. Not from the venom in the Komodo bite, but my cancer. Yet while the Crocodile closes in to enjoy anaconda-wrapped, eagle owl-stuffed Komodo Dragon, a new hero emerges! #TardiGandalf! Which is nonsense. No points for AltAdvance. Orinoco Crocodile advances, Tardigrade trades in for a new ride #AltAdvance. Narration by Katie Hinde, Mauna Dasari, & Josh Drew.

**1st seeded Doedicurus clavicaudatus vs. 2nd seed Amebelodon fricki: The Upside Down.** Transported across millennia to an URBAN PARK, specifically the Gateway Arch National Park in St Louis, neither animal is particularly enjoying its vacation. Doedicurus attempts to dine and decline interaction that's been the go to tactic for #TankMammal. But aggressively in musthe, Amebelodon flips over Doedicurus for the win. Amebelodon advances. Narration by Marc Kissel, Patrice Connors and Laura Durgavich.

FINAL ROAR:

**1st seed Pygmy Hippo against 4th seed Coyote: PLAYING IT COOL**

This match found our contestants in New York City's Central Park. While coyotes have been seen in the park, it was an unlikely place for our hippo. Luckily, the park has an important resource for the hippo: water. Hot from its time battling the cheetah in the dry grasslands, NYC is chilly for the hippo, but the layer of fat is good insulation. The coyote was headed for the zoo but found itself distracted by the large thing in the lake. Alpha coyotes aren't as afraid of new things as their less dominant counterparts, which meant that our alpha male stepped out onto the ice to check out the unusual looking boulder in the lake. The hippo gave a threat yawn and the animal's movement disturbed the ice and knocked the coyote into the frigid water. Though the coyote managed to climb out of the water it began behaving erratically and park goers concerned about a possibly rabid animal called the Urban Park Rangers and Animal Control. Realizing that our coyote was hypothermic, the Rangers and Animal Control safely captured the coyote to release him back in the wild later. Hippo advances. Narration by Jessica Light, Tara Chestnut, Patrice Kurnath, Lara Durgavich, & Anne Hilborn

**1st seed Orinoco Crocodile against 2nd seed Amebelodon:**

**#PuttingYourFootDown**

Our crocodile entered this battle with a tardigrade hitchhiker, whilst the Amebelodon brought a torn masseter muscle. This battle took place in a tinaja of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The masseter is a muscle which moves the lower jaw, or mandible, up and down, and the injury made it painful for the Amebelodon to use its shovel-tusk to scrape bark from trees. Our Amebelodon was understandably grumpy. During this time, our 900 pound crocodile was lounging in a tinaja and munching on anaconda pieces. Crocodiles digest slowly, so there was plenty of snake left. The

Amebelodon approached the crocodile's tinaja looking for water, and since he lived alongside giant crocs from the Miocene he was unthreatened by our Orinoco Croc. The crocodile lunged and sunk its teeth into Amebelodon's trunk. The Amebelodon dragged the croc out of and away from the water until the croc finally released his trunk. Confident, the croc turned his back on Amebelodon and found his tail suddenly stomped on and his retreat stopped. Though our croc tried to fight back, it found itself unceremoniously trampled. Amebelodon Advances. During the tussle with the croc, tardigrade switched up his ride & #AltAdvances BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?!  
Narration by Asia Murphy, Chris Anderson, Josh Drew, Marc Kissel, & Mauna Dasari

## **CHAMPION PYGMY HIPPO!!!!**

(no sports summary available)