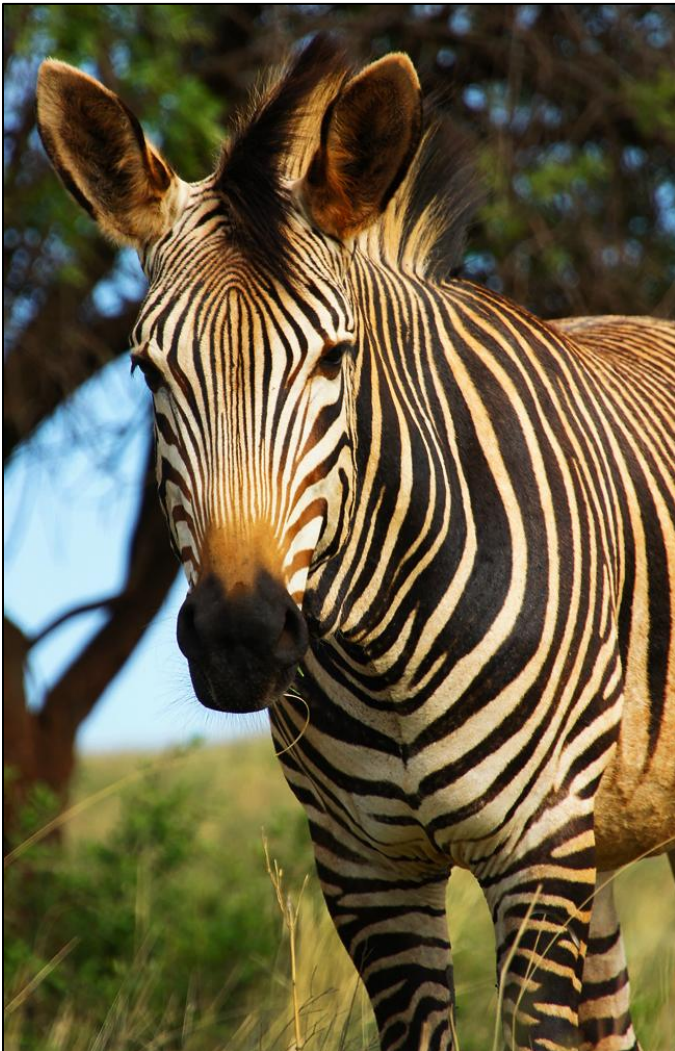


## R1: MIGHTY STRIPES

Round 1 of the Mighty Stripes Division featuring mammal combatants that have... wait for it... STRIPES! Stripes can be adaptations for warning, camouflage, temperature control, individual identity, or possibly to confuse biting insects!



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**Okapi (1) vs Four-Striped Grass Mouse (16)** - Introducing our Mighty Stripes top-seeded combatant, Okapi! Okapis (*Okapi johnstoni*) are the closest living relatives to giraffes. But instead of the spots or patches that cover a giraffe's body, Okapis are sporting stripes, resembling zebras. White or cream colored horizontal stripes line the upper parts of the rear & front legs to their solid white ankles. To our eye, these stripes are in stark contrast to the dark, velvety body of Okapis. In the African rainforests where Okapis occur, these stripes work as camouflage, looking similar to the streaks of light penetrating the forest.



# R1: MIGHTY STRIPES



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Seeded last in the Mighty Stripes division is the Four-Striped Grass Mouse, named for the four, longitudinal, dark stripes down the back of these small rodents. There are currently 5 species of Grass Mice in the genus *Rhabdomys* recognized, all occurring throughout southern Africa with different species often having different social systems & habitat preferences. Four-Striped Grass Mice (*Rhabdomys pumilio*), as currently recognized, prefer arid & grassy habitats along coastal South Africa. This rodent species is highly abundant & social, with a bold & inquisitive personality.

Today's battle occurs on the Okapi's home turf, Maiko National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Okapi are active during the day (diurnal) and females are larger than males. Our

large, female Okapi is walking slowly while feeding. Four-Striped Grass Mouse finds himself in an unfamiliar & intimidating habitat. Too many plants! Too humid! No frens! Male Grass Mice, however, are bold & curious. Our male Grass Mouse starts sniffing around, exploring. Okapi chomps on some plants following a trail that encompasses her home range. As Okapi steps, scent glands near her feet release a tar-like discharge onto passing plants, marking her passage through the dense vegetation of her territory. Four-Striped Grass Mouse detects a presence nearby, not through his sense of sight but SMELL! The discharge from the Okapi's scent glands has a distinct smell, one that Four-Striped Grass Mouse has picked up and finds noxious. Four-Striped Grass Mouse can't take the novelty and flees from the field of battle! OKAPI REPELS FOUR-STRIPED GRASS MOUSE! Narrated by Prof. Jessica Light.

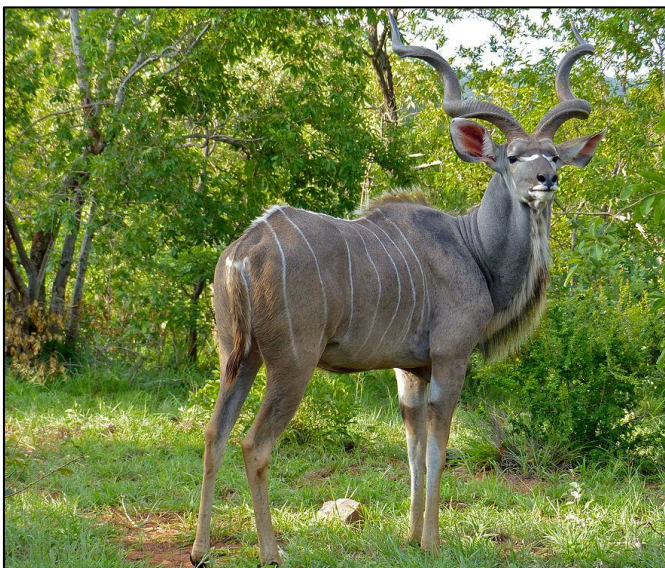
**Greater Kudu (2) vs Badger Bat (15)** - Float like a butterfly, look like a...badger? Also called the pied butterfly bat & panda bat, tonight's bat contestant is a striking beauty of dark fur patterned with light yellow stripes similar to the European badger. This bat makes its home in the tropical moist lowland and dry forests of Africa, with most specimens recorded from the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. With long, narrow



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wings, the Badger Bat (*Glauconycteris superba*) is likely a canopy species, flying at high speeds to catch insects in flight above the trees. "Based on morphological characteristics, the Badger Bat was briefly reclassified as a new genus Niumbaha, meaning "rare" or "unusual" in Zande, the language of the Azande people - the primary ethnic group in South Sudan. Greater Kudus (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) are one of the world's largest antelope. They have a dark head and are grey-brown with 4-12 light stripes along their mid-section that camouflage them from predators like spotted hyena, wild dogs, and big cats in the forests, savannahs & shrublands in southern & eastern Africa. Their legs are long & overall body shape is narrow. Adult male Kudus can be twice the size of females, reaching nearly 700 lbs! Their striking twisted horns are the largest of any antelope and are attached to the skull permanently. Antlers shed, horns do not.



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[Reeder D, Helgen K, Vodzak M, Lunde D, Ejotre I / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY 3.0](#)

Tonight's battle takes place at Etosha National Park in northern Namibia, where it is currently the middle of the night. Most of the park is a lake bed. The recent rains mean there's plenty of water & new vegetation growth for browse. Our Kudu is a massive male with nearly 3 full twists to his 4.5-foot-long horns. In the darkness, he is browsing on the sweet, new growth of Mopane leaves. Our Badger Bat, a mature female, is transported by MMMagic to the field of battle. She flits along where the forest meets the open grasslands, switching between different echolocation calls to learn about this unfamiliar place. Badger Bat detects a large hatch of insects flying above kudu's head, she swoops by his ear, catching insects in her tail membrane & pitching them into her mouth, like a butt spoon. WHAMMMM!!!! A barn owl snatches Badger



# R1: MIGHTY STRIPES

Bat out of the air, lands and gobbles the bat down in less than 2 minutes, removing Badger Bat from the field of battle. KUDU OUT-SNACKS BADGER BAT! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut and Dr. Alyson Brokaw.

**Striped Hyena (3) vs Fire-Footed Rope Squirrel (14)** - Both of tonight's competitors display Mighty Stripes, are found across the African continent, and lead solitary lifestyles - but their similarities stop there. Striped Hyenas (*Hyaena hyaena*) tip the scales at 55kg (121lbs) with stripes adorning their torsos and legs, and are active during dawn, dusk and into the night. Don't confuse Striped Hyena with its Spotted cousin nor the hairier Brown Hyena or Aardwolf. Striped hyenas stripes are most visible during the summer when their hair is shorter.



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Oddfeel / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY 4.0

Fire-footed Rope Squirrels (*Funisciurus pyrropus*) weigh 243g (1/2 lb) and are diurnal tree squirrels with a fabulously striped tail. Fire-Footed Rope Squirrels will eat discarded bark from the *Ceiba pentandra* tree that's been ripped by chimpanzees foraging for the inner bark richer in sap.

Tonight's battle takes place in the Loisaba Conservancy in the Laikipia Plateau of central Kenya. Fire-Footed Rope Squirrel, however, is feeling less than fabulous on the home turf of Striped Hyena. Squirrel prefers moist savannas and lowland tropical forests, not this much drier grassland. The sun is setting and Fire-Footed Rope Squirrel is darting between the grasses, trying to find a nice tree to climb and make its home for the night. Not too far away, Striped Hyena is standing alone and still, surveying the landscape. Striped Hyena is hungry and normally would scavenge the



savanna for a good meal, but nearby Spotted Hyenas are protecting a fresh carcass, so Striped Hyena selects food foraging option 2: hunt for small mammals. Fire-Footed Rope Squirrel stands on hind legs - completely still - attempting to scan the surroundings, but the high grasses limit visibility, and the grass isn't strong enough to support the weight of the squirrel to get a better view. Fire-Footed Rope Squirrel hears a rustle in the grass before Striped Hyena snatches the squirrel with hyena jaws! Striped Hyena shakes head violently from side-to-side, snapping small squirrel bones. STRIPED HYENA CHOMPS FIRE-FOOTED ROPE SQUIRREL! Narrated by Prof Patrice K. Conners.

**Striped Dolphin (4) vs Chequered Elephant Shrew (13)** - Striped dolphins (*Stenella coeruleoalba*) get both their common and scientific names from the striking blue-gray and white stripes and blazes which fan out from eye to tail. Striped dolphins are more robust than most dolphins: Individuals can get up to 2.5m long and weigh 157kg. While Striped dolphins will sometimes travel alone or in small groups, they can be very social and form schools of several thousand. Elephant Shrews (*Rhynchocyon cirnei*), also called Sengi, are distantly related to elephants but even less related to shrews. The animals get their Elephant name because these small mammals have a long and dexterous proboscis they use to help find insects within leaf litter. What the common name does get right is these Elephant Shrews are “checkered,” with several black and

white alternating squares in distinct stripes running along the length of the back. While the schnoz of Elephant Shrews is outstanding, they do not have extraordinary smelling abilities. Analysis of their nasal structures suggests olfaction is less refined than dogs.



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It's a beautiful day in the lush forests of Tanzania when M M Magic transports the Chequered Elephant Shrew into the Mediterranean Sea, home habitat of the higher-seeded Striped Dolphin. Striped Dolphins occur in deep waters away from the continental shelf. Nearby, a male Striped Dolphin is moving steadily through the warm, pelagic waters. Dolphin “streaks” through the waves with minimal drag because of his tapered body shape. Panicked Elephant Shrew frantically swings its long limbs. Adapted for running rather than deep water, the little mammal flails, making tiny splashes. Struggling more and more to keep above the swells, the Elephant Shrew grows exhausted. Soon only the tip of the Elephant Shrew's long nose is above the water,



# R1: MIGHTY STRIPES



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on prey. Common Striped Possum (*Dactylopsila trivirgata*) are white with three black stripes: one along the back and two on each side, running from a distinctive "Y" pattern on the head and merging together on the long tail. For marsupials, the Striped Possum has the largest brain compared to its mass (423g). It isn't exactly clear why Striped Possums have such large brains, but it's possible they evolved large brains to cognitively deal with unexpected environmental change.



[Thomas A. Hermann / Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain](#)

still providing precious air. WHOOSH!!! Deepwater red shrimp trapped in nets are hauled up by a fishing trawler... but there's bycatch! Sengi is saved! For once bycatch rescues a life. The fishing vessels sails on, leaving behind the dolphin on the field of battle! STRIPED DOLPHIN OUTSWIMS CHEQUERED ELEPHANT SHREW! Narrated by Prof Brian Tanis.

**Side-Striped Jackal (5) v. Common Striped Possum (12)** – Side-Striped Jackals (*Lupulella adustus*) are one of three species of medium-sized canids native to Africa. They are easy to identify by the prominent white and black stripe along the sides of their body, separating their gray back from brown belly. The Side-Striped Jackal is small (13kg and only 95cm long) and stocky with shorter legs, so they do not chase prey. Instead they hide in dense vegetation and ambush pounce

In Gabon, Africa, just outside the town of Gamba, a Jackal is searching its home habitat for food. MMMagic transports a large Possum, who is native to tropical forests of Australia and New Guinea, outside the town and feels fairly at ease in the habitat.





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Sniffing the wind, the Possum detects some ripened figs that have fallen to the forest floor. While it does occasionally eat figs, Stripped Possums will often forage for insects around fruits and flowers, so the ripe figs are a rich foraging patch for insects. The Jackal has also smelled the delightful aroma of fallen figs! Jackals are opportunistic feeders that consume other small mammals, but as much as 1/3rd of their diet can consist of figs and other fruits. Excited for the prospect of a quick meal, both mammals simultaneously converge on the fig pile. Emerging from the dense vegetation, they see each other- Jackal lunges while the Possum turns to flee! Pouncing, the Jackal slips on some rotten figs!



Naveedanjumkhan / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA 4.0

With paws and jaws landing just to its side, the Possum darts up a nearby tree trunk & disappears into the canopy. Unable to climb after its prey, the Jackal settles for a fig dinner. **SIDE-STRIPED JACKAL DISPLACES STRIPED POSSUM!** Narrated by Prof. Brian Tanis.



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**Wildcat (6) v. Highland Streaked Tenrec (11)** – Tenrecs (*Hemicentetes nigriceps*) are small mammals endemic to Madagascar that range greatly in shape and size. Highland Streaked Tenrec weighs 160g and is covered with a mix of hairs and spines with three distinctive white stripes along its back. Wildcat (*Felis silvestris silvestris*) is a big felid (6.5kg /14lbs) that has stripes along its whole body. Wildcats are found on three continents and are divided into multiple subspecies. Our Wildcat combatant is from the woodland lineage of Scotland that is on the brink of extinction.



# R1: MIGHTY STRIPES

In the wooded Highlands of Northern Scotland, the Streaked Tenrec of the Madagascan Highlands feels right at home in the habitat of the Wildcat because of the similar humid forests amongst the mountains. Tenrec starts foraging, stirring the leaf litter and soft ground for earthworms. Suddenly, Tenrec stops digging with its enlarged forelimbs. From head to rump, it raises its spines and starts a "buzzing" vocalization- classic Tenrec defensive maneuvers (Marshall & Eisenberg, 1996).



Giant Eland / ZooChat / CC-BY-SA 4.0

Wildcat has been watching this strange looking creature through the leafy undergrowth and the felid adjusts itself, centering its body over paws, leaving a forepaw raised, eyes concentrated on the Tenrec. Spines still raised, Tenrec moves its head in short bursts, trying to locate the nearby threat. CRUNCH! THRASH! HISSSSS! REEEEEOOOOOW!! An equally-sized, big feral domesticated cat jumps into the scene! Cat tussle

ensues!! Domesticated cats are one of the biggest threats to Scottish Wildcats due to direct competition for space and food, disease transmission, and hybridization. Tenrec watches as the two cats tumble apart, one felid fleeing, one felid chasing into the forest, both felids leaving the field of battle. TENREC OUTLASTS WILDCAT!! Narrated by Prof. Patrice Connors.

**Sumatran Striped Rabbit (7) v. Numbat (10)** – Numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*) is a medium-sized (700g), endangered marsupial found only in two naturally occurring populations in SW Australia. Numbats are reddish-brown near the head, have a black mask with white spots near the shoulders and transitions to dark brown toward the tail with bright stripes in the middle and a bottlebrush tail. The males can be twice the size of the females. Numbats have simple, conical teeth that are barely visible above the gum and an exceptionally long tongue ideal for eating termites.



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Indonesia covers only 1.3% of the world’s total area, yet contains 12% of mammals of the world, including two native and one introduced rabbit. Sumatran Striped Rabbit (*Nesolagus netscheri*) is the only native rabbit to the island of Sumatra. Sumatran Striped Rabbit is endangered and known only from a few museum specimens and camera trap records. The Sumatran Striped Rabbit range and status has been difficult to determine by confusion with invasive European Rabbits that were pets that now live wild in urban and suburban areas. Sumatran Striped Rabbits are similar size to European Rabbit (~1.5kg) but the Sumatran Striped Rabbit has black/brown stripes on a yellow-gray background and short black ears.

It is morning in Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park, South Sumatra, Indonesia, our adult male Rabbit is nestled in at the base of a shrubby tree on the edge of the forest where local coffee growers recently saw Striped Rabbits. Numbat is transported by MMMagic to this unfamiliar humid habitat with dense vegetation. He snuffles around, taking in all of the new scents when he takes a big whiff around the shrub where Rabbit is tucked in to sleep for the day. Nearby, a Sun Bear is tearing into a partially rotten log on the forest floor to get at the fatty and nutritious termites inside. Rabbit remains still but gives Numbat as much side eye as an animal with lateral orbits can give. Numbat's raised snout detects the siren scent of termites! Skittering to the far side of the log to avoid the Sun Bear, Numbat joins the line of tromping termites, tongue-lassoing the tasty treats while toddling of the field of battle! SUMATRAN RABBIT OUTLASTS NUMBAT!!! Narrated by Dr. Tara Chestnut.

**Striped Polecat (8) vs Giant Striped Mongoose (9)** – Striped Polecat (*Ictonyx libycus*) is mostly black, with white stripes running down the body and a black head with a white ring around the face and white areas near the nose. The coloration is an “aposematic” warning to tell other animals not to mess with it. Polecats can release a stinky foul-tasting fluid from their anal scent glands, which lingers on their fur. Striped Mongoose (*Galidictis fasciata*) is beige or tan in color with 5-8 dark-colored stripes on its back that run the length of the body to help with camouflage.

# R1: MIGHTY STRIPES



Striped Polecat

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Scientific names sometimes change due to new evidence. The Latin binomial species name for the Striped Mongoose has been split to include two subspecies: *G. f. fasciata* and *G. f. grandidieri*. Both of our combatants are medium-sized carnivores (mesopredators) found in Africa. Polecat has a somewhat odd distribution throughout northern Africa (but not the Saharan Desert) and Striped Mongoose is found only in Madagascar. Taxonomically and evolutionarily, Striped Mongooses are cat-like carnivorans in family Eupleridae (~900g), while Polecats are distantly-related and dog-like in the family Mustelidae (~600g).

In Taourirt Province, Morocco, in North Africa, the semi-desert with low grasses and bushes attract small vertebrate prey and provide excellent cover for the nocturnal hunting of the Striped Polecat. Transported by MMMagic, Striped Mongoose blinks at the disappearance of his mountain forest home replaced by scrubland.



[Thierry Cordenos](#) / [iNaturalist](#)/ [CC BY-NC 4.0](#)

In the darkness, both medium-sized predators hunt for small rodents, slinking across the open ground in the faint light cast by the waning crescent moon. Striped Mongoose dives at a rodent and comes up with a fat-tailed jird! Crunch-munching on the foreign delicacy, Striped Mongoose is interrupted as Striped Polecat steps into the moonlight with a piercing stare. Within animal communities, predator-on-predator attacks happen to eliminate the competition, such that "killing is common between <related> predator species and of not dis-similar body size" (Ritchie & Johnson 2009). The two stare at each other as a rivulet of jird blood runs onto Mongoose's chin. "In intact predator communities in Africa, a carnivore may be at risk of attack from as many as 14+ species of other carnivores" (Ritchie & Johnson 2009). Striped Mongoose has never before encountered a mustelid, but has no misapprehensions that he has encountered an aggressive competitor in Striped Polecat.





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Striped Polecat launches at Striped Mongoose! Tumble-rolling to the base of a shrub, the two predators grapple, scraping claws and biting teeth! Striped Mongoose attempts to flee into trees, but uselessly snaps fragile twigs of the scrub-brush available in the semi-desert, escaping nowhere as Striped Polecat closes in! Striped Mongoose, now fighting for his life, twist-grapples against the Polecat! The mesopredators are the same body length (70cm), but the Mongoose's heavier weight begins to give the advantage, tiring the Polecat whose clawing and biting becomes feebler... Rolling clouds cast shadows on the locked combatants, as Striped Polecat's eyes fade to unseeing. "Overall, mortality rates in carnivore populations due to attacks by other predators may be in the range of 40–80%" (Ritchie & Johnson 2009). STRIPED MONGOOSE ELIMINATES THE COMPETITION... STRIPED POLECAT!! Narrated by Profs Jessica Light & Katie Hinde.



**Jessica Popescu**  
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#2023MMM

MIGHTY STRIPES EMOJI BATTLE



## Okapi vs. Four-Striped Grass Mouse

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