

Chanting the Crocidura

I can't remember whether we (Mark Peters and an AMS 128 drumming class) started with mammal chanting and discovered the many shrews or whether we chanced upon the Crocidura and started there, only later broadening the idea to chanting all the mammals and the broader speciation. Whatever the origin of chanting the species, the Crocidura or "white toothed shrews" have a lot to offer. There are many of them (the most speciose genus of all the mammals), over 120 different species around the world, and some of the names are very beautiful and satisfying to chant in Latin or Latin mixed with Greek, Polish, Zulu, e.g. Crocidura fuscomurina, Crocidura dsinezumi, Crocidura andamanensis, Crocidura stenocephala ('narrow headed' in Greek). We can learn some history and geography from shrews like Crocidura xantippe named after the wife of Socrates, or Crocidura canariensis probably found on the Canary Islands.

"Crocidura" makes a great "coro" or response into a 6/8 or 12/8 rhythm like alternating "hand over hand" triplets (BasstonetoneBasstonetoneBttBtt etc. see Ch. 29) or any of the rhythms that make up the "bembe" interlocking pattern. The accent on -dur- of Crocidura matches up with the Bass of hand-over-hand or the Bass thumps in bembe patterns very nicely. So the Croci- syllables usually become pickup notes. (Hopefully we have a track of this on the CD).

Each name of a different species of white toothed shrew offers a challenge to make a fit with the next 6/8 measure. "arabica" and "armenica" are easy because the accent on the 2nd syllable of each name matches a thumped bass in the same position as the bass of "crociDURa" i.e.

crociDURa aRABica
crociDURa arMENica

But "maquassiensis," "yankariensis," "hildegardeae," "gueldenstaedtii" "bottegoides" may cause some consternation for whoever is calling out their names at a fast tempo.

Why do this?

To honor some unsung and rarely chanted fellow mammals with whom we may share a tree shrew ancestor who lived 50 to 80 million years ago.

To have some fun with music and language.

Crocidura desperata	Crocidura fsicheri	Crocidura goliath
Crocidura dhofarensis	Crocidura flavescens	Crocidura gracilipes
Crocidura dolichura	Crocidura floweri	Crocidura grandiceps
Crocidura douceti	Crocidura foxi	Crocidura grandis
Crocidura dsinezumi	Crocidura fuliginosa	Crocidura grassei
Crocidura eisentrauti	Crocidura fulvastra	Crocidura grayi
Crocidura elgonius	Crocidura fumosa	Crocidura greenwoodi
Crocidura elongata	Crocidura fuscomurina	Crocidura
Crocidura erica	Crocidura glassi	Crocidura

Pat Campbell:

Speaking of mammal-chanting, let's not forget that some of them sing: whales go so far as to sing their most complex songs rhythmically, across a range of pitches, and with similar endings that are as close to human-rhyming as animals can get.

Why not choose poems, or invent them, to honor the tree shrew, the puffin bird, the fox, the walrus and the wildebeest? For the last three animals, there are these poems to share.

Excerpt from "Four Little Foxes" by Lew Sarett

"Speak gently, Spring, and make no sudden sound;
For in my windy valley, yesterday I found
New-born foxes squirming on the ground—
Speak gently. (plus three more stanzas)

Excerpt from "The Walrus and the Carpenter" by Lewis Carroll

"The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might:
He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and bright—
And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,
Because she thought the sun
Had got no business to be there
After the day was done—
"It's very rude of him," she said,
"To come and spoil the fun!"

The sea was wet as wet could be,
The sands were dry as dry.
You could not see a cloud, because
No cloud was in the sky:
No birds were flying overhead—
There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand:
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:
"If this were only cleared away,"
They said, "it *would* be grand!" (plus eight more stanzas about oysters)

“The Wildebeest” by June Daly

You who like a boulder stand
In your brown, beloved land;
All a wild ox ought to be:
Long of nuzzle, lean of knee,
Vigilant of restless eye,
Taut and sinewy of thigh,
Shaggy-bearded, mane-adorned,
Massive-shouldered, vicious-horned...
You who stand to watch us pass
Fetlock deep in tawny grass,

Watch in peace! For not today
Menace comes your browsing way.
Watch in peace! And when we pass,
Cross again the golden grass
That billows round you like a sea.
Many may your seasons be
In these pastures' pleasant length,
Rugged monument to strength.