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Biodiversity & Ecology 7

Fairy Circles of the Namib Desert

Ecosystem engineering by subterranean social insects

Glossary and abbreviations

Biodiversity Observatory = defined study areas for long-term monitoring of the change of biodiversity. In this volume the term is more specifically used for the standardized biodiversity observatories of one square kilometre size established in the BIOTA Africa project (Jürgens et al. 2010).

BIOTABase = databank software developed in the BIOTA Africa project to store vegetation data in space and time (Muche et al. 2018).

BP = abbreviation for “bare patch”, the roughly circular bare area in the centre of a fairy circle

Disc = often used term to describe the roughly circular flat areas around certain ant nests

EB = abbreviation for “ephemeral belt”

Fairy circle = the “fairy circles” of the Namib Desert, caused by either *Psammotermes* or *Hodotermitid* termites

Fairy circle cluster = a neutral term to describe occurrences of numerous fairy circles in an area?

Fairy circle landscape = a landscape type which regularly contains fairy circles

Fairy circle number = see “plot number”

FC = abbreviation for “fairy circle”

Frass = faeces of insects

Polydomous nest system = nest system of an insect colony that uses more than one nest (see Robinson 2014).

Polycalic nest system = see polydomous nest system

PB = abbreviation for “perennial belt”

MT = abbreviation for “matrix”

Plot number = All vegetation records of the Namib Desert including the records of fairy circles are stored in a data base in the software package BIOTABase (see above). In the case of fairy circles, the plot number captures the whole fairy circle, e.g. plot number 12345. Vegetation records of the single zones of a fairy circle are combinations of the relevant plot number and an acronym for the type of belt, e.g. 12345MT = matrix of fairy circle 12345.