

Cats in the News

First puma cubs in Michigan, U.S.A., since about a century

Motorists had spotted and photographed a pair of puma cubs in early March in Ontonagon County MI, U.S.A. This is the first confirmed reproduction in the state since the eradication of pumas in the early 1900s. Experts estimated the cubs to be 7 to 9 weeks old. So far there had been around 130 documented sightings in Michigan since 2008, all of them of males presumed to be transient animals from the Dakotas.

Source: MLive <https://t1p.de/v0vnt>

Annual tiger survey in Karnataka, India

The annual tiger survey in Karnataka, India, estimated a population of 393 tigers across five tiger reserves. This continues a slightly decreasing trend with 2023's estimate at 408 and 2022's at 417 tigers, and 2018's at 472 individuals. However, it is highlighted that this estimates includes only the five tiger reserves. The All India Tiger Estimation in 2022 estimated 563 individuals for the state of Karnataka, with a stable population.

Source: The Hindu <https://t1p.de/zkiki>

Contraceptives slow lion population growth in Malawian reserve

Back in 2003, African Parks signed an agreement with the Malawi government to manage Majete Wildlife Reserve. One of the main steps was the reintroduction of lions, by introducing 3 animals in 2012. Today, there are 80-100 lions, putting pressure on the park's prey population potentially causing conflicts with surrounding settled areas. Since 2022, the management administers contraceptives to specifically targeted lionesses to help maintain the ecological balance. No negative behaviour or psychological impacts on the lions have been observed.

Source: Mongabay <https://t1p.de/34bge>

Strange event spikes interest in caracals in Egypt

In mid-March, a caracal was reported to have attacked a several Israeli soldiers near the Egyptian border. This extremely unusual behaviour from a species that tends to avoid humans, caused a huge spike in the interest in the species in Egypt. The number of online searches soared and animal breeders were flooded with requests to take pictures with the animal and to even buy caracals.

Source: Ynet News <https://t1p.de/fihsj>

First picture of caracal in Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve, India

For two decades, there was no record of caracals in Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, India. Now, a camera trap captured the species for the first time. It is now confirmed in 4 out of 5 tiger reserves in Rajasthan.

Source: The Times of India <https://t1p.de/ootag>

Avian Influenza in bobcats from New York, U.S.A.

A new study found widespread exposure of bobcats to avian influenza in the state of New York, U.S.A. Whilst many individuals died from the infection, others survived. Antibodies were detected in 16 bobcats that were live-captured in early 2024 – some had been exposed to H5N1, others to different virus strains. The study does not allow to infer survival rates, as the detection of antibodies is only possible in individuals that survived long enough to be sampled. Animals that died quickly or were too ill to be trapped are not represented.

Source: Cornell University <https://t1p.de/76lp7>

Bobcat sightings increase in Connecticut, U.S.A.

Some 15 years ago, there were a few hundred observations of bobcats per year in Connecticut reported to the responsible Department. This number increased strongly from 2017 onwards, and there were more than 4'000 annual sightings reported for the last four years. The species seems to profit from fragmented habitat, incl. using hedgerows between houses to ambush prey in suburban areas.

Source: CT Insider <https://t1p.de/c2tdl>

Wildcats thrive on Crete, Greece

Wildcats were believed to be extinct on the Greek island of Crete, until its accidental rediscovery in 1996. It is the only wild cat species and largest exclusive carnivore on the island. Recent camera trap surveys showed densities of 0.5–2 individuals per km² of suitable habitat in three mountain ranges. Future research will focus on genetic analysis and determination of the degree of interbreeding with domestic cats and the evolutionary relationship with the European wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) and African wildcat (*Felis lybica*).

Source: Greek Reporter <https://t1p.de/eff7p>

Range extension of clouded leopard in Tibet

Two hundred camera traps were installed in 2023 in Qomolangma National Nature Reserve in southern Tibet. In September, two of them captured a clouded leopard each. This is the first record of the species in Jilong County. This is the fifth recognised site in China. The area is relatively close to two known occurrences in Nepal (Langtang National Park and Annapurna Conservation Area) and the researchers suspect that it might serve as a migration corridor.

Source: The Island Packet <https://t1p.de/k0est>

Sumatra's tigers continually under pressure from illegal killings

In March 2025, several events took place in connection with the illegal killing of Sumatran tigers: One female tiger had to be captured. She had lost a front leg, presumably in an illegally set snare trap. Due to the injury, she had started targeting livestock as an easier prey. Officials had also received a report of a different tiger in a different province being caught in a snare trap. When they arrived, the tiger was gone and traces of recent human activity were found. Officials were able to arrest 6 suspects in connection with the incident. In another province, officials also arrested another 5 people on suspicion of trafficking. In April, a man received the heaviest sentence for crimes against

protected wildlife ever in Indonesia for a different incident. He was sentenced to five years in prison and a fine of approximately 12,000 USD.

Sources: Mongabay <https://t1p.de/0ky4h>, and Mongabay <https://t1p.de/p2dr2>

Snow leopard population estimate in Humla, Nepal

A camera trap study deployed 61 cameras in 2022/23 in Humla, western Nepal. Researchers identified a total of 39 snow leopards. This was the first study in this area outside protected areas and the results were a positive surprise.

Source: The Kathmandu Post <https://t1p.de/1so04>

Leopard survey in Piketberg and Cederberg regions, South Africa

Surveys performed by the Cape Leopard Trust around the Piketberg and Cederberg regions covered an area of approximately 1,500 km² and 1,600 km², respectively. The camera traps generated together almost 300,000 images. In Piketberg, 45 leopards were captured at 54 sites and in Cederberg 37 individuals at 50 sites. In both cases, several individuals were known from previous studies performed between 2017 and 2020. The project also included close work landowners and managers.

Sources: Piketberg - The Newspaper <https://t1p.de/pp2tn>, Cederberg – IOL <https://t1p.de/ff11c>

Changes to Jaguar tourism in Pantanal suggested

The Pantanal hosts the second-largest population of jaguars behind the Brazilian Amazon. In the past, tourism companies cooperated and communicated openly with each other when one group spotted a jaguar to improve chances for their guests to see the species. Nowadays, the number of jaguars habituated to human presence rose from 29 to 130 between 2013 and 2023. Up to 30 boats are simultaneously on the water, and chances to spot an animal are over 90%. When a jaguar is spotted, big crowds are soon present. This diminishes the individual experience of the guests, but of course also has a bigger impact on the jaguars. Tourism generates almost 7 million USD in the region.

Source: Mongabay <https://t1p.de/vtkvt>

Snow leopard population estimate for Nepal

The first national population estimate of snow leopards has resulted in an estimate of 397 individuals. This contributes to the Population Assessment of the World's Snow Leopards (PAWS) under the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP). The result is based on studies from 2015–2024. With only about 2% of the global range, Nepal hosts almost 10% of the estimated global snow leopard population.

Source: Mongabay <https://t1p.de/etb3i>

India to host International Big Cat Alliance headquarters

The government of India has signed an agreement with the International Big Cat Alliance (which came into force in January 2025, see *Cats in the News* in Cat News 82) to host the Convention's headquarters and secretariat.

Source: The Indian Express <https://t1p.de/7icm8>

First caracal recorded in Cholistan Desert, Pakistan

A wildlife official spotted the caracal one morning in Cholistan Desert, Pakistan. Whilst there were some sightings reported in the previous month, this is the first record on camera for the region. The population size in Pakistan is unknown.

Source: Arab News <https://t1p.de/8rxx9>

Mumbai hosts highest leopard density, but Bengaluru hosts highest number

A survey in Sanjay Ghandi National Park, India – considered to be the green lung of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region – identified 54 leopards in area of about 103 km², resulting in the highest leopard density in the world. Some of the individuals have been identified in the area already back in 2015. Meanwhile in Tungabeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (85 km²), only 3 adult leopards were discovered. Camera traps also captured jungle cat and rusty-spotted cat. Whilst the Mumbai hosts the highest density, a camera trap survey found 80-85 leopards in the vicinity of Bengaluru, 54 of which inside Bannerghatta National Park. The leopard numbers inside the park have steadily increased in the last 6 years.

Source: Deccan Herald <https://t1p.de/7api2> (Mumbai) and <https://t1p.de/zkmxz> (Bengaluru)

Rare record of Malayan tiger in Bang Lang National Park, Thailand

Camera traps have captured a Malayan tiger in Bang Lang National Park, southern Thailand. This is only the second sighting in the area, after 2023.

Source: Bangkok Post <https://t1p.de/yot1p>

Statewide assessment of snow leopard abundance in Sikkim, India

WWF India, in collaboration with the Government of Sikkim, published the report on the *Statewide assessment of the population & density of snow leopards in Sikkim, India*. Performed in 2022, this was the first survey of its kind in Sikkim. It estimated 21 snow leopards in the state and was part of the nationwide *Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India* (population numbers published in January 2024 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change).

Source: WWF India <https://t1p.de/xmu12>

Jaguars vs. cows – report on deforestation for cattle ranching

The NGO Global Witness has released a report on the deforestation for cattle ranching in Brazil, destroying the habitat of jaguars and many other species. Cattle are sometimes raised on farms with deforested lands and are then moved to “clean” farms before entering the market. This practice is called “cattle laundering”. The report calls on companies such as JBS – the world’s largest meat processor – to better control their supply chains and to implement their pledges to eliminate illegal deforestation from the supply chain.

Source: Global Witness <https://t1p.de/xuhyb>

Rare record of Bornean Bay Cat

Records of the Bornean Bay Cat are very rare. In March 2025, the Kayan Mentarang National Park, North Kalimantan, Borneo, Indonesia, published a video taken by a camera trap showing a Bornean Bay Cat walking along a fallen log. The previous record was from 2003.

Source: Radio Republik Indonesia <https://t1p.de/9tns>

Puma reproduction in Oklahoma, U.S.A.

In October 2024 and December 2024, camera traps captured pictures of puma kittens in two different counties within Oklahoma, U.S.A. Since 2002, there have only been 85 confirmed puma sightings in the state; tendency increasing. These two photos are the first signs of reproduction in the state, “a key indicator the population is becoming established”.

Source: Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation <https://t1p.de/4iv38>

Bobcat preys on invasive python in Florida, U.S.A.

In Florida, U.S.A., Burmese pythons are an invasive species. A snake that was equipped with a radio tracker by scientists, was found decapitated buried beneath some pine needles. The researchers set up a camera trap, which showed a bobcat returning to the kill to feed. It is suspected that a cold spell left the cold-blooded snake relatively sluggish. Whilst this time the bobcat emerged on top, there have also already been incidents where the python ate the bobcat.

Source: Live Science <https://t1p.de/asimw>

Continued high hunting pressure on pumas in Wyoming, U.S.A.

A bill calling for unlimited hunting of pumas in Wyoming (see *Cats in the News* Cat News 82) was rejected. Nevertheless, regulations for the next three years aim to keep the hunting pressure at a high level. The argument remains the same as for the aforementioned proposed bill: to enable mule deer and pronghorn populations to recover (without evidence that lower puma numbers are required to do so). Hunting pressure was already increased in previous years. As a result, some regions contain almost exclusively immature pumas. When Wyoming’s puma management plan was created in 2006, 12 out of its 29 populations were marked as “sources” and managed for long-term hunting, and only one was marked for reducing the population (“sink”). Nowadays, there are only 4 “sources” and 6 “sinks”.

Source: WyoFile <https://t1p.de/ehyge>

Slight decrease in jaguar population in Misiones rainforest

The Misiones rainforest lies between Argentina and Brazil. Jaguar monitoring in the area began in 2003 and resulted in a population estimate of 40 individuals. Since then, conservation efforts resulted in a steady increase of the population, which has more than doubled. However, the latest census showed for the first time a slight decrease in the population with an average estimate of 84 individuals. Conservation organisations warn that conservation efforts and resources should not be decreased despite the overall improved situation, or all the achievements might become undone.

Source: Noticias Ambientales <https://t1p.de/p0war>

First Caracal reproduction recorded in Turkmenistan

Camera traps have captured the first evidence of reproduction of caracals in Turkmenistan. The picture was taken in the Garabogazgol basin in the frame of a monitoring project that was launched in mid-2024. At the same time, it is the northernmost record of caracal in the country.

Source: Turkmenportal <https://t1p.de/21ke1>

Tigers predating livestock – everybody does it

A study collected DNA samples from livestock kill sites in Kanha and Bandhavgarh, Central India, to identify the tiger individuals predating livestock. So far, it had been assumed that a small number of problem individuals specialises on livestock depredation. However, the study identified 87 different tigers causing 155 livestock kills, which equals to about 40% of the total tiger population in the area. Most individuals were identified from only one livestock kill and only some 30 individuals have been identified at multiple kills.

Source: Mongabay India <https://t1p.de/slhuu>

British Columbia, Canada, proposes ban on exotic cat ownership

The Canadian Province of British Columbia proposes to ban exotic cat ownership, i.e. of all non-native and non-domestic cat species. The ban would include breeding, sale and future ownership. Current owners would be allowed to keep their current animals until the animal's death, but would need to apply for a free permit to do so.

Source: BC Gov News <https://t1p.de/wq5wb>

Thank you to Richard Hatakeyama for sending news items.

Current news are also published on the Cat SG Facebook page: <https://t1p.de/evuiq>

If you'd like to contribute current news items from your area, please contact r.buerki@kora.ch