

Community-based conservation strategies for the African golden cat in Tanzania

E. H. Martin

The African golden cat *Caracal aurata* AGC was first confirmed in Tanzania in 2018 at Minziro Nature Forest Reserve, hereafter Minziro. Minziro is a transboundary forest habitat straddling the Uganda – Tanzania border, where the AGC is threatened by widespread human activity including bushmeat poaching, wildfires, logging, and cattle incursion. However, conservation (threat reduction) efforts to mitigate the threats to the species remain non-existent. Using a grant from the Mohammed Zayed Species Conservation Fund, we engaged local communities from the eight villages adjacent to Minziro to design community-based strategies for AGC conservation. The project employed a three-pronged approach: 1) Raising local community awareness on the existence of AGC in Minziro; 2) Identifying and designing community-based threat reduction conservation initiatives; and 3) Facilitating transboundary conservation for the AGC with our Ugandan counterparts at the transfrontier Sango Bay Central Forest Reserve. We successfully raised awareness on AGC presence and threats it faces in eight villages involving 112 locals from the 8 villages' natural resources and environmental committees VNREC. In addition, through local radios, newspapers and social media, over 500,000 people were reached. We also engaged 1,033 school children of which 741 children were from seven primary schools and 292 children were from three secondary schools all from Missenyi, District Kagera, Tanzania. To mitigate the threat due to habitat loss, the villagers proposed the following projects i) establishing tree nurseries to reduce dependency of locals to Minziro for firewood and building materials and ii) establishing smallholder livestock husbandry targeting poor or marginalised families to address the two key drivers of bush meat hunting (need for food and money). Finally, we engaged our Ugandan counterparts in workshops to devise transboundary conservation collaboration for the AGC. We recommend continued implementation and engagement of local communities in AGC conservation at Minziro.

Investigation of felid guild presence in non-governmental reserves of northern Iran

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Studying elusive animals like the Felidae family is difficult given their cryptic life history and low detectability. Monitoring these species beyond government-protected areas is challenging due to limited access to sufficient human resources and equipment, as well as accessibility and security concerns. In these circumstances, researchers can complement their gathered data by incorporating the extensive information collected by Local Ecological Knowledge. Jashlobar and Neyzevaa Private Conservancy represent two non-governmental reserves located in northern Iran. While the former operates within the private hunting zone protocol established by the National Department of Environment, the latter is characterised by a collaborative conservation plan involving the concerted efforts of NGOs and local communities. The coexistence of locals with wildlife in these areas is marked by persistent conflicts between them, their livestock, herder dogs, and wildlife. This symbiotic equips them with comprehensive information on wildlife and conflict records that could assist our research. In this study, we attempted to gain information on three felids coexisting in these areas; the Persian leopard *Panthera pardus tulliana*, Caucasus lynx *Lynx lynx dinniki*, and manul *Otocolobus manul*. We have validated and improved our scattered camera trapping monitoring and spoor survey by using semi-structured interviews to collect Local Ecological Knowledge. We were able to collect ten records of these three species in areas from 2013 to 2021, and 50% of them delineated the Human Wildlife Conflicts. Furthermore, 80% of the gathered data from these regions pertained to Local Ecological Knowledge, which shows the importance of using this method to collect wildlife and conflict records in these types of areas as samples of private conservancy protected areas. Additionally, the collaboration with local communities in Neyzevaa revealed that it would be beneficial for feline conservation if governments were to establish independent national mechanisms, beyond private hunting zones, to support community-based protected areas.

Manul confirmed in the Hyrcanian region of northern Iran

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We report the first hard evidence of the manul or Pallas's cat *Otocolobus manul* from the south of the Caspian Sea in the Hyrcanian region of northern Iran. Two independent camera-trapped videos of the manul were obtained from two locations in Amol County, Mazandaran Province, on 1 January 2020 and 20 June 2023, respectively. We describe this new finding in relation to the current understanding of manul occurrence in Southwest Asia.

Aspects of Asiatic golden cat ecology and conservation status in Nagaland, India

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Between January 2020 and June 2021, we conducted a camera trapping study in Khelia community forest, Nagaland, India. We obtained 17 records of the Asiatic golden cat *Catopuma temminckii*, encompassing golden, reddish brown and buff brown morphs, highlighting the diversity of coat morphology exhibited by the Asiatic golden cat. The record reveals its cathemeral behaviour and shed light on its temporal habitat use within a community-managed forest with high human presence. Our findings reveal a moderate degree of overlap in activity patterns between the Asiatic golden cat and the dhole *Cuon alpinus*, especially during the morning hours, akin to human presence. Hence, we offer valuable insights into the activity patterns of golden cat in an indigenous community forest. Studies addressing the ecology of forest denizen mammals, such as the golden cat, are crucial for their conservation. Human-induced disruptions such as heightened hunting pressure, resource competition and forest loss pose significant threats to the long-term survival of Asiatic golden cat. Conservation efforts are needed particularly within habitats where golden cat occurs.

A note on female leopard rearing cubs in human dominated landscape of Vansda town

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The cub-rearing behaviour of leopards *Panthera pardus fusca* has been documented in many human-dominated landscapes. We observed and recorded instances of leopard cub rearing within the urban environment of Vansda, Gujarat, Western India.

Interaction between a leopard- and a tiger at a kill site in India

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Documenting interspecific interactions between sympatric large carnivores, such as leopards *Panthera pardus* and tigers *Panthera tigris*, are important for understanding ecosystem dynamics. In India, these interspecific interactions between the large carnivores shape ecological communities by determining the distribution, abundance, and co-existence of each other and also the prey community. Here, we present an incident where a tiger and a leopard were captured in the same frame by a camera trap deployed at a leopard kill of domestic cattle. The tiger was photographed again on the next day moving the remnants of the prey. While it is impossible to conclude what happened in between or afterward due to the lack of successive images, this rare event of capturing these two elusive predators at a kill simultaneously suggests that they interact at a much finer scale than often presumed.

Photographic evidence of the rusty-spotted cat from Gwalior Forest Division, India

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The world's smallest cat species, the rusty-spotted cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus*, was camera trapped during an opportunistic camera trap survey in Gwalior Forest Division, Madhya Pradesh, India. These cats are extremely elusive and rare, making their documentation challenging in the wild. Despite the scarcity of images of this feline in central-India, our discovery indicates a broader distribution in the region than pre-viously assumed, highlighting its adaptability to human-modified landscapes. This represents the first photographic evidence of the cat's presence within the Gwalior area.

A possible case of cooperative feeding in Pallas's cat in India

M. G. L. Mills

Two different adult Pallas's cats *Otocolobus manul* were observed to bring food to a den at which there were three large kittens in The Ladakh Union Territory, India. This is believed to be the first time that cooperative feeding has been observed in this species, and which heretofore has only been documented in two other Felid species; lions and domestic cats.

Discovery of five felids in Sungai Ingei Conservation Forest in Brunei Darussalam, Borneo

J. K. Charles and B. B. Ang

This is the first camera trap discovery of the presence of all five Bornean felids in the pristine, undisturbed Sungai Ingei Conservation Forest of Brunei Darussalam in 2010–2011 – Bornean clouded leopard *Neofelis diardi borneensis*, marbled cat *Pardofelis marmorata*, flat-headed cat *Prionailurus planiceps*, leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis* and the endemic Borneo bay cat *Catopuma badia*. Camera trapping during the Sungai Ingei Faunal Biodiversity Survey from 2009–2012 involved the deployment of 82 camera traps with a trapping effort of 51,202 trap-nights. When compared to other sites in Borneo, all the cats in this site showed early detections, bay cat by day 37, flat-headed cat by day 39, clouded leopard by day 43, marbled cat by day 54 and leopard cat by day 92. In term of independent images, the most detected cat was the clouded leopard with 59 images, followed by leopard cat (24), bay cat (18), marbled cat (12) and flat-headed cat (5). The absence of human disturbance in this forest is probably reflected in early detections and number of independent images. This is also the first record of the bay cat in Brunei Darussalam with the images being of the red-brown morph. The flat-headed cat was detected in only 2 of the 6 camera trapping sites that were associated with aquatic habitats while the other felids were recorded in 5–6 sites. This is the only site in Borneo where it is rare and unique to have all 5 felids in a small protected forest underscoring the value of this pristine undisturbed forest with lack of total disturbance for the presence and survival of these felids.

A preliminary evidence of leopard cat predation by Javan leopard in Indonesia

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Mount Muria, Central Java, Indonesia, is one of 29 suitable landscapes of the En-dangered Javan leopard *Panthera pardus melas*, an endemic species to the Java Island-. In September- 2022, we installed 80 camera traps in 40 stations in Mount Muria landscape, with a density of one station per 4 km², to estimate the Javan leopard density-. After 45 days, we recorded photographic evidence of two adult male Javan leopards carrying a small cat with its mouth, that may indicate preying on leopard cats *Prionailurus javanensis*. Our findings provide valuable insights into possibility of predator--prey inter-actions, which is beneficial for further conservation action.

First breeding records of the flat-headed cat on the Kampar Peninsula, Indonesia

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The flat-headed cat *Prionailurus planiceps* is a small wild felid, found in Sumatra, Borneo, and Peninsular Malaysia. Rarely observed, it is strongly associated with semi-aquatic environments such as peat swamps. The species is classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red list and is Protected under Indonesian Regulation No. P106/MENLHK/SETJEN/KUM.1/12/2018. In 2015, the Riau Ecosystem Restoration program first documented the presence of flat-headed cat in the peat swamp forests of the Kampar peninsula. Continuous camera trap monitoring has now confirmed successful breeding of flat-headed cats in this area. Notably, two videos captured by a camera trap on 14 and 15 August 2021, documented a female flat-headed cat carrying a kitten. These valuable insights into

the species' breeding behaviour, highlight the continued need for monitoring to further understand the species ecology and inform long-term conservation strategies.