

Cats in the News. Cat News 81, 43. Supporting Online Material.

Surge in demand for new tiger product

The illegal trade in tiger products is still one of the big threats to the species. A survey by TRAFFIC in 2021 showed that 43% of traditional medicine practitioners in Vietnam – where tigers are extinct – prescribe illegal tiger derivatives. The newest product is tiger bone glue, believed to treat osteoarthritic conditions, relieve pain and for male sexual enhancement. Of course, there is no proof for its effectiveness. The demand also puts other species at risk, as e.g. lion bones are often laundered as tiger bones.

Source: TRAFFIC <https://t1p.de/2kz80>

Gujarat trains ordered to run slower to avoid lion collisions

In 2020, 674 lions were estimated to live in Gujarat, India. Over the last year, 7 individuals died in train collisions. The Gujarat high court has now ordered several measures as part of a comprehensive review, incl. permanent reduction of train speeds during nighttime at identified hotspots, improvement of locomotive headlights, and better maintenance of existing as well as construction of new underpasses.

Source: Hindustan Times <https://t1p.de/2kxby>

Mortalities in Florida Panthers increase again

In 2023, the number of mortalities documented for Florida panthers had been exceptionally low. Only 13 individuals were found dead during the entire year. This number had already been surpassed in June for all the three previous years. The reason for this decrease in 2023 was unclear and some feared that it might be a bad sign for the population. Now by July 2024, 16 Florida panthers have been found dead, reverting the trend and fitting around the average of previous years. The main cause of death continues to be road collisions (12 out of 16; 1 train collision, 3 unknown).

Source: Wink News <https://t1p.de/bczzz>

Investigation into tiger deaths in Bandavgarh Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, India

Madhya Pradesh is known as India's 'Tiger State'. An increase in tiger death in the state's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve led to the formation of a special committee to investigate. Their report highlights negligence and procedural lapses in the investigation of many tiger deaths, incl. absence of veterinarians for postmortems, inadequate protection of crime scenes, and more. Many cases were superficially classified as intra-species conflict without a detailed investigation.

Source: NDTV <https://t1p.de/ey17k>

Information on India's Project Cheetah unavailable to public

An activist had filed a Right To Information (RTI) plea to gain information on India's Project Cheetah – the reintroduction of the species to the country. The request was denied citing the article for the protection of India's sovereignty, security, and relations with a foreign state. The forest department refers to the international collaboration and the involvement of foreign scientists and experts, and that the publication of such information could harm these relationships and the project's integrity.

Source: Times of India <https://t1p.de/jg47v>

Community-conservation project for the jaguar in Ecuador

Supported by the Fundación Pachamama, which provides equipment and training for local residents, the Achuar community of Sharamentsa helps to protect 10,000 hectares of rainforest. Sustainable tourism through their Community Tourism Center provides an income to the community. In the past, the Achuar hunted jaguars to protect their hunting dogs, but now hunting is banned around the community. For the Achuar, the project is not only about the conservation of biodiversity, but also about the protection of their own cultural heritage and way of life.

Source: Latin American Post <https://t1p.de/cp8ie>

Proposal for Caracal breeding centre in Sariska Tiger Reserve, India

The Bombay Natural History Society has proposed to establish a conservation breeding facility for caracals in Sariska Tiger Reserve. The facility should hold at least five pairs of caracals and would be the first of its kind in India. The proposal is still in the initial stage and will be considered after examination. Caracals are currently extinct in Sariska.

Source: Times of India <https://t1p.de/u82n0>

Ocelot spotted for first time in 50 years in southern Arizona, U.S.A.

A camera trap study, organised by the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation together with Pheonix Zoo, recorded an ocelot in the Atascosa Highlands. It was identified by its coat pattern as a previously unknown individual. This is the 7th known individual in Arizona within the last 20 years and the first one in this region in over 50 years.

Source: AZ Central <https://t1p.de/66up1>

New regulations introduced for mountain lion hunting in Texas, U.S.A.

For the new hunting license cycle, the state of Texas, U.S.A., has introduced two new rules regarding the hunting of mountain lions: canned mountain lion hunts are banned, and trappers need to check their traps at least every 36 hours if they target mountain lions. Overall, Texas offers less protection for mountain lions than other states. Because they are designated as “non game” they can be hunted throughout the year. Conservationists call the new regulations a “modest first step toward common sense”.

Source: The Texas Tribune <https://t1p.de/gt8wk>

First sighting of Canada lynx in Vermont, U.S.A., since 2018

In August, a private person filmed a lynx walking along a road in Vermont, U.S.A. This is the first sighting in the state since 2018 and there have been only 7 confirmed sightings since 2016. This latest sighting stems actually a lot further south than most confirmed lynx reports in the state.

Source: Smithsonian Magazine <https://t1p.de/c2tro>

Snow leopard studies integrated into curriculum in Mustang, Nepal

The municipality of Gharapjhong in the district of Mustang, Nepal, began to incorporate studies on snow leopards into the local curriculum. The goal is to raise awareness, with the hope to decrease the growing human-wildlife conflict. According to experts, human-wildlife conflict is the biggest threat to the conservation of the snow leopard in the country.

Source: The Kathmandu Post <https://t1p.de/l52d3>

Virtual fences to reduce road mortality in Iberian lynx

Despite its recent upgrade from Endangered to Vulnerable on the Red List, the Iberian lynx still faces many threats, incl. road mortality. Back in the 1980s, some 17% of deaths were caused by traffic collisions. Whilst this number has already been reduced to less than 10%, a new approach shall decrease it further: virtual fences. Similar to a system used to protect the Marsican brown bear in Italy from road traffic, sensors are installed along key roads, detecting animals in the vicinity, and warning them in case of approaching cars with sound and light signals.

Source: CNN <https://t1p.de/vg99v>

Two captive-born wildcats die after release in Scotland

After the release of 19 wildcats into Cairngorms National Park last year, another 9 individuals were released this summer. However, bad weather and lower availability of voles made the releases more difficult. One of the released cats died from starvation around four weeks after its release. The female had moved to an area without good food supply and did not return to the soft-release pen where supplementary food would have been provided. A second female was run over shortly after her release.

Source: The Herald <https://t1p.de/12tnd>

Small Cat Conservation Project in India

The Indian Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched the Small Cat Conservation Project. It aims to close knowledge gaps, integrate the small cats' conservation into the larger landscape management efforts, foster community involvement and ensure active participation by local people in the conservation efforts. In its initial phase, the project will concentrate on three key landscapes: Dudhwa in northern India, Rajasthan, and Pakke in the Northeast, with efforts focussing on fishing cat, caracal and clouded leopard, respectively.

Source: Indian Masterminds <https://t1p.de/kf2wg>

Two-year anniversary of Project Cheetah, India

On the second anniversary of Project Cheetah – the reintroduction of cheetahs to India – the government said that the “cheetah cubs thrive in their natural habitat”. However, conservationists have pointed out that all the translocated cheetahs and their offspring live in enclosures with the last free-ranging one having died in August. They have called it “a captive breeding programme set within protected areas”. Currently, the Indian government attempts to source another batch of cheetahs from Kenya, to be released in a second protected area.

Source: Deccan Herald <https://t1p.de/4tkcu>

Lions, cheetahs and Hippos disappearing from Gashaka Gumpti NP, Nigeria

During a tour of Gashaka Gumpti National Park, Nigeria, the Conservator of Parks announced that lions, cheetahs and hippos are probably locally extinct. Wildlife in the park is threatened by poachers, encroachment from farmers, and herders letting their livestock graze within the park perimeters. The Park works with the NGO Africa Nature Investors to train rangers and improve their equipment in order to tackle the threats to the park.

Source: The Sun Nigeria <https://t1p.de/veitq>

First two tigers delivered to Kazakhstan for future reintroduction

Two Amur tigers were transported from the Netherlands to Ile-Balkash State Nature Reserve in Kazakhstan. They will stay in a small enclosure outside the reserve, before being moved into a larger one, and eventually, possibly being released into the wild. Further 3-4 wild tigers are expected to be delivered from Russia in 2025. The project together with WWF aims to restore the Turanian / Caspian tiger which became extinct some 70 years ago.

Source: The Astana Times <https://t1p.de/fqkwa>

Leopards dying from Canine Distemper Virus in Nepal

So far, studies had been able to show that leopards in Nepal had been exposed to Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) due to the presence of antibodies in dead leopard. However, the cause of death could not be established. The presence of antibodies only shows that the animal suffered from the disease at some stage in its life. A new study now found live virus within leopards that had died with disease symptoms. The leopards contained different sub-lineages of the virus, that had previously been detected in domestic dogs and partially in other wild carnivores. Whilst wild carnivores cannot be vaccinated, it would be important to inoculate dogs against the virus to prevent the spread of the disease.

Source: Mongabay <https://t1p.de/m35xk>

Dozens of captive tigers die from bird flu in Vietnam

Since August, 47 tigers, 3 lions and 1 leopard have died in two zoos in Vietnam. It is suspected that the animals have been fed infected chickens.

Source: BBC <https://t1p.de/nuplw>

Leopard population in Odisha, India, increases again

The leopard population in state of Odisha, India, has been estimated at 696 individuals for 2024. This is a 22% increase compared to the 568 individuals estimated in 2022, but still short of the 760 individuals estimated in 2018. Some 45% of the population occurs outside protected areas. From next year onwards, the All Odisha Leopard Estimation will be synchronised with the annual All Odisha Tiger Estimation.

Source: The Hindu <https://t1p.de/ym8lh>

Survey for felid species planned in North Bengal

Whilst censuses for large species – e.g. tigers, leopards and elephants – are well established in north Bengal, little information is available on other wild cats. According to the chief conservator of forests (wildlife, north), a survey is now planned to gather information also on the smaller cat species. A detailed map of their habitats shall be created and the populations shall be estimated.

Source: The Telegraph India <https://t1p.de/3yqnc>

Critique on Rajasthan's Project Leopard

Seven years ago, the Indian state of Rajasthan had launched Project leopard. The project aimed to improve the leopard's prey base, reduce human-wildlife conflict and illegal killing. However, a former Indian Forest Service officer claims that no real work was done on the ground and prey base is still largely absent. As a consequence, human-leopard conflict is still high and leopards have attacked and killed humans, also resulting in illegal retaliatory killings. The Steering Committee of Project Leopard should be activated and hold regular meetings to attempt solving the problems.

Source: The Times of India <https://t1p.de/2b2sm>

Ocelot breeding center to be built at Texas University

Ocelots have gone almost extinct in the U.S.A. and can only be found in the very southern tip of Texas. In December, the construction of an ocelot conservation facility will begin at Texas A&M University – Kingsville’s Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. The plan is to use semen from wild trapped ocelots to breed with captive females, but still have the genetics from Texas ocelots. Young ocelots would be released at age of about one year. The first ocelots are hoped to arrive at the center by December 2025.

Source: Kris 6 News <https://t1p.de/0ocdv>

Tiger population increases in Bangladesh’s Sundarbans

The government of Bangladesh released the report on the Status of Tigers in the Sundarbans of Bangladesh. The camera trap survey indicates that 125 adult tigers live in the Sundarbans, which are deemed to be last remaining habitat in Bangladesh. This is an increase compared to the estimate of 114 individuals in the last survey in 2018, and 106 individuals in 2015.

Source: Mongabay <https://t1p.de/26425>

MoU on snow leopard conservation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic

On 17 October 2024, the governments of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the conservation of snow leopards. The agreement focuses on cooperation of four protected areas in the northern Tien Shan Mountains, enabling them to coordinate joint actions and share experiences in researching, strengthening protection and monitoring of snow leopards. The MoU will last for five years.

Source: UNDP <https://t1p.de/zkygz>

Leopards in sugarcane and maize fields in north Karnataka, India

Within the last 5 years, the area used to grow sugarcane and maize have both increased by 30% in Karnataka state, India. The dense cover offered from these fields offers an alternative habitat for leopards, in which they find prey and even a place to rear their young. However, it also brings them into closer vicinity of humans and livestock, increasing human-leopard conflict.

Source: Deccan Herald <https://t1p.de/l03u4>

Mexico’s school for young jaguars

The Jaguar Xoo sanctuary was created in 2000, initially serving as a consignment centre for seized animals. However, when two jaguar kittens arrived in 2016, it was decided to create a work plan for their future release, which happened in 2021. Available facilities include two “wildlife simulators”, where live prey can be offered to train the jaguars’ hunting abilities. Currently, there are two jaguars at the centre, but release permits have not yet been issued. In addition, there are also three pumas at the sanctuary which are planned to be released back into the wild in 2025.

Source: Mongabay <https://t1p.de/jx8ce>

Do leopards and golden cats influence forest regrowth?

Sarah Tossens is a PhD student at the University of Liège, Belgium. She has set up camera traps in a national park of the Republic of Congo, and two FSC certified forest plantations in the Republic of Congo and Cameroon. Whilst leopards and golden cats were captured in the Congo, none appeared

on the camera traps set in the forest plantation in Cameroon. This sad result also offered an opportunity to research the “landscape of fear”. Stations were set up with scent of carnivore urine. Initial results indicate, that forest regeneration is improved around these stations, as herbivores appear to avoid them. However, the data analysis has not yet been completed.

Source: Mongabay <https://t1p.de/ona7b>

Conservation of jaguars in the Atlantic Forest

The *Programa Grandes Mamíferos da Serra do Mar* monitors at least 11 jaguars in the Serra do Mar region of Paraná, Brasil. The population size is still small relative to the region’s size. The region lies close to the huge metropolitan area of São Paulo, and the research also tracks hunting and human-wildlife conflict. As part of the *Jaguar Conservation Strategy 2020-2030*, the project contributes to the conservation of jaguars in the extremely biodiverse but also endangered Atlantic forest.

Source: WWF <https://t1p.de/5irgz>

Biodiversity credits reach the market with jaguars as a key indicator

Biodiversity Credits are an innovative new project that was launched in June. Credits can be purchased from a platform, and the funds are used to preserve native vegetation. The initial phase targets an area of 50,000 football fields in the Serra do Amolar in the Pantanal, where it will address illegal hunting, habitat fragmentation and human-wildlife conflicts while promoting sustainable conservation practices. Jaguars were selected as one of the key indicator species. Credits can be purchased for US\$ 2.

Source: CICLOVIVO <https://t1p.de/ebmef>

IUCN releases report on 10 years tiger conservation action

Ten years ago, IUCN launched the Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP) with support of the German Cooperation and KfW Development Bank. IUCN has now published a report, looking back at a decade of tiger conservation and the impact of the ITHCP. Up to now, the German Cooperation has invested €47.5 million, and the ITHCP has awarded 32 grants from 16 grantees.

Source: IUCN <https://t1p.de/yj1ft>

Tigress translocated to Similpal Tiger Reserve to improve genetic diversity of population

Similpal Tiger Reserve, India, hosts a population of 27 tigers, incl. 13 pseudo-melanistic ones – the only known pseudo-melanistic tigers in the world. A study suggested inbreeding as the cause for this unique coat pattern. To remedy the situation, a tigress has been translocated to Similpal Tiger Reserve, where she is currently kept in an enclosure awaiting release. A second tigress is planned to follow. The two individuals shall contribute to an improvement of the genetic diversity in the population.

Source: The Hindu <https://t1p.de/6yuhn>

California introduces “Room to Roam Act”

The state of California, U.S.A., has introduced a new law that has been nicknamed the “Room to Roam Act”. According to the new law, local authorities must identify connectivity areas and minimise impacts on them to ensure the movement of animals across the fragmented landscape. For example, mountain lions are hoped to benefit from the law, as an existing population in the Santa Anas shows signs of inbreeding and is hemmed in by the I-15 highway.

Source: Los Angeles Times <https://t1p.de/lycrp>

Committee to investigate disappearance of a third of Ranthambore's tigers

Ranthambore National Park is estimated to host 75 tigers. Of 11 of those, there has been no concrete evidence for more than a year and for another 14 individuals for less than a year. Because of this, Rajasthan's Chief Wildlife Warden has established a three-member committee to investigate the situation. The Committee shall look into the efforts made to trace the tigers and examine all records of tiger monitoring to detect possible negligence and shortcomings in the monitoring. The Chief Wildlife Warden also emphasises that it does not mean that these tigers have been killed or poached.

Source: The Indian Express <https://t1p.de/f893k>

Guiña kitten in danger in Concepción due to feral dogs

A guiña kitten was detected in camera traps at the Campus Naturaleza of the University of Concepción, Chile. This does not only confirm the presence of the species, but also possible reproduction in the area. The species is threatened by habitat fragmentation, hunting and attacks by feral dogs. It has been shown that feral dogs have modified the behaviour of the guiña and other species, who do not use areas anymore or changed their activity patterns to avoid the dogs.

Source: Biobiochile <https://t1p.de/c9dx6>

Snow leopards spotted in China's Yunnan Province

In November, it was reported that two observations of snow leopards in China's Yunnan Province were made back in February. These were the first records in Yunnan for many years and are among the southernmost records within China. The species' high altitude distribution and the lack of systematic surveys resulted in some uncertainty about its occurrence within the Province.

Source: Xinhua Net <https://t1p.de/6l5qk>

Stray dogs – a new threat for the Balkan Lynx

When the Balkan Lynx Recovery Program (BLRP) was established, the biggest threats to the Balkan lynx were assumed to be habitat destruction and pollution. After the inclusion of poaching and inbreeding to the list, it is now stray dogs that emerge as an additional issue. Several times, cameras set at fresh lynx kills captured dogs finishing it off. A docuseries was produced on the impact of dogs on wildlife to raise awareness of the issue.

Source: Earth Island Journal <https://t1p.de/nasbl>