

### **New record and known range expansion for the Pantanal cat in Bolivia**

By S. Gutiérrez-Cruz, E. M. Peñaranda, M. Angel Aponte and D. I. Rumiz

The Pantanal cat *Leopardus braccatus* is one of eight small cat species present in Bolivia, but there are many gaps in our knowledge of its distribution. In this note, we present a new record of the Pantanal cat from the Laguna Marfil Municipal Protected Area, increasing the number of records and expanding its known distribution in Bolivia.

### **First recent photographic record of leopard in the Republic of Djibouti**

By R. Bourgeais, A. Fleury, B. Wattelet and S. Ambassa

The presence of leopards *Panthera pardus* in the Republic of Djibouti is officially recognized in two regions: the Moussa Ali and Goda-Mablas mountains. However, its presence has so far been poorly documented and there has been a lack of reliable evidence of living individuals. We conducted a small-scale camera trap survey in the Goda massif (Tadjourah region, 13.19559 N / 47.52080 E, 800–1700 m altitude) between January and February 2024. In total, eight photo captures of leopards were obtained in 18 days of survey, with at least two distinct individuals identified.

### **Hidden threats to small wild cats: domestic cat and dog disease transmission**

By C. Castro, T. d. Oliveira, A. Garcia, C. Hurtado, M. Kaiser, P. Muñoz, J. Ramírez, F. Tirelli, R. Villalobos, M. Weston and J. Sanderson

Because most small wild cat species have been identified as victims of disease transmission from domestic cats *Felis catus* and dogs *Canis familiaris* to wild cats, the issue is receiving greater attention, particularly in the Americas. For instance, feline immunodeficiency virus, feline leukemia virus, and canine distemper virus have been identified in several wild cat species. To combat disease transmission from domestic cats and dogs to small wild cats, we conducted coordinated vaccination and neutering campaigns from Mexico to Argentina and Chile. Here we report on the extent of the problem and our continuing threat reduction

actions that benefit rural, often indigenous, communities, their domestic cats and dogs, as well as small wild cats.

### **Sunda clouded leopard and other felids in a high-altitude forest of Sarawak, Borneo**

By M. Voon, A. Suzuki, S. Numata, T. Mizuno and M. Gumal

Felids often occupy the top of the food chain and any changes to their population can have cascading effects on the entire ecosystem. Using camera traps, we surveyed felids and their prey at a remote Totally Protected Area TPA, located in a mountainous area in Miri Division, Sarawak, Malaysia, from April 2023 to April 2024. Four species of felids were detected during the surveys: Sunda clouded leopard *Neofelis diardi*, bay cat *Catopuma badia*, marbled cat *Pardofelis marmorata* and leopard cat *Prionailurus javanensis*. Clouded leopards displayed both diurnal and nocturnal activity. Marbled cats were mostly diurnal, whereas leopard cats were mostly nocturnal. No flat-headed cats *Prionailurus planiceps* were recorded during the survey period. This study improves the scarce knowledge of felid diversity and localized activity patterns in a high-altitude remote forest in Borneo.

### **Border fence caused Persian leopard contact with humans in southeast Afghanistan**

By Z. Moheb, H. Safi, Fahim Safi and F. Moheb

The Persian leopard *Panthera pardus tulliana*, categorized as Endangered on the IUCN Red List, occurs in Afghanistan. While leopards have been sporadically reported from different parts of Afghanistan, its distribution is poorly known. Most of the leopard records in Afghanistan are limited to conflict reports or random encounter records over the years. In a recent incident, a leopard reportedly hindered by a border fence along the Durand Line in Dand-e Patan District of Paktiya in southeastern Afghanistan had an encounter with humans and was subsequently killed. Villagers near the fence encountered the animal, resulting in serious injuries to community members and eventually to the death of the leopard. This incident marked the first ever record of the species from southeastern Afghanistan. The only recent record of the species in nearby areas was a case in September 2023 when a leopard showed up in Parachinar City in Khaybar Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The fence is said to be the

reason why the animal was exposed to humans. Border fences have been detrimental for wild species in most cases and the incident in Dand-e Patan could be one of the many cases that are rarely reported. Further research is required to understand the role the border fence plays in wildlife movement and the landscape impediments to wide ranging mammals and their conservation.

### **Known western range of Asiatic golden cat extended to Jajarkot, Nepal**

By B. Baral, G. B. Singh, D. R. Basnet, J. Rai and R. Kathariya

The Asiatic golden cat *Catopuma temminckii* has never been recorded west of the Gaurishanker Conservation Area. Here, we present novel camera trap evidence of an Asiatic golden cat in the Barekot Rural Municipality of Jajarkot, Nepal in a temperate mixed deciduous forest with bamboo understory. Out of 59,228 photographs taken over 1,027 trap days between 29 May 2024 and 13 October 2024, a single photograph of the cat was obtained in the national forest. This record indicates that its known westernmost global range occurs in Nepal and provides a distribution update for the species, opening up a new avenue for felid conservation and research in Nepal.

### **First photographic record of clouded leopard in Wangchuck Centennial NP, Bhutan**

By K. Wangdi and T. Dhendup

The presence of clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* had been reported in Bhutan, but it had not been documented within the jurisdiction of Wangchuck Centennial National Park (WCNP). Following the park's formation in 2008, WCNP conducted a series of camera trap surveys, including the Nationwide Tiger Survey between 23 October 2014 and 27 March 2015, the Takin Distribution Survey in 2018, and the Rapid Biodiversity Survey in 2019. None of these surveys were able to capture the elusive clouded leopard on camera. However, during the recent Nationwide Tiger Survey conducted between 2021 and 2022, WCNP obtained the first

photographic evidence of the clouded leopard's presence within the park, marking a significant milestone in the park's wildlife documentation.

### **Ten Asiatic golden cat colour morphs in Wangchuck Centennial National Park, Bhutan**

By K. Wangdi and T. Dhendup

The Asiatic golden cat *Catopuma temminckii* is a Vulnerable small felid exhibiting remarkable polymorphism in its coat colours. Here, we document the record of ten colour morphs of the Asiatic golden cat in Wangchuck Centennial National Park (WCNP), Bhutan. Utilising data from camera trap surveys carried out as part of the Nationwide Tiger Survey (NTS 2021) and the Nationwide Snow Leopard Survey (NSLS 2022), we identified ten distinct colour morphs: pure black, melanistic, blackening, cinnamon, brown, grey, ocelot, tightly rosetted, golden, and brown short hair. The highest altitude record for the species was at 4,565 m, a new altitude record in the park. The presence of such diversity of colour morphs across the altitudinal range highlights WCNP's role as an importance habitat for Asiatic golden cats. Our observation contributes to the information of the Asiatic golden cat's phenotypic variation in Bhutan and emphasises the need for further studies to understand the ecological and genetic factors contributing to the high polymorphism in this species.

### **Felid diversity in Wangchuck Centennial National Park of Bhutan**

By K. Wangdi and T. Dhendup

As part of the Nationwide Tiger Survey (2021) and Nationwide Snow Leopard Survey (2022), camera traps were installed across the Wangchuck Centennial National Park (WCNP) at elevations ranging from 1,820 to 5,090 m. Besides the target species, tiger *Panthera tigris* and snow leopard *Panthera uncia*, the camera traps also recorded six other wild cat species: common leopard *Panthera pardus*, Clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*, Asiatic golden cat *Catopuma temminckii*, mainland leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis*, marbled cat *Pardofelis marmorata* and Pallas's cat *Otocolobus manul*. With eight felid species documented, WCNP ranks second only to Jigme Dorji National Park (JDNP) in terms of felid diversity within a single

conservation landscape in Bhutan, as JDNP has recorded nine wild cat species to date. Although dedicated surveys are periodically conducted for tigers and snow leopards, we recommend similar surveys for other wild cats, which often receive less attention.

### **First photographic record of fishing cat from Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal, India**

By A. Mukherjee, M. K. Chattopadhyay, A. Bose, S. Adhurya, A. Khan, K. Das, K. Deuti and G. D. Bhowmick

This study recorded the first photographic evidence of the fishing cat *Prionailurus viverrinus* in the Paschim Bardhaman district of western West Bengal. One adult female was photographed during an ongoing project on Indian grey wolves. This new photographic evidence not only extends the known range of the fishing cat beyond the Gangetic plains of West Bengal but also marks the first photographic record of the species from western West Bengal.

### **Black-footed cat recorded in western Makgadikgadi Pans National Park, Botswana**

By R. Kotze, K. Kesch, D. Bauer, J. Seymour-Smith and A. Loveridge

The black-footed cat *Felis nigripes* is endemic to southern Africa. However, due to its shy, nocturnal nature and rarity, there is limited information on its distribution. Despite previous reports of being widespread across Botswana, there have been few verifiable sightings over the last two decades. Here we present a camera trap image of a black-footed cat from the south-western Makgadikgadi Pans National Park, captured during a systematic large carnivore survey in 2017. We suggest trying to collect additional records with more targeted systematic surveys over the coming years.

### **Arabian leopard habitat suitability across potential historical range**

By C. E. Dunford, Q. E. Martins, G. K.H. Mann, D. R. Mills, J. A. Spalton, J. Robertson, E. Gallacher, G. A. Balme and H. S. Robinson

Modelling the distribution of rare or endangered species is often difficult, especially when the species is cryptic. These species are often data deficient and require creative approaches to draw reasonable inferences about their likely distribution and status. Herein we model habitat suitability for the Critically Endangered Arabian leopard *Panthera pardus nimr* across the species' historical range using a resource selection function developed using data gathered from an ecologically similar leopard population in the Cederberg Mountains, South Africa. We used a two-step process, with an original model that was based purely on environmental factors being used to refine the sample area for a second model which incorporated likely human impacts on leopard habitat. Our model found that anthropogenic impacts had a significant negative impact on habitat suitability probability (HSP), reducing the area of highly suitable leopard habitat by 36.8%. The largest area of moderately ( $>0.2$  HSP) and highly suitable ( $>0.5$  HSP) Arabian leopard habitat fell within Yemen (68% and 78% respectively), with Saudi Arabia accounting for the next largest share. Although Oman is considered to be the main stronghold for Arabian leopards, our model suggests that it contains a relatively modest proportion of Arabian leopard habitat. We believe that this model provides a useful first step towards planning range-wide conservation measures for Arabian leopards, and highlights areas with significant recovery potential that should be prioritised for Arabian leopard conservation.

### **First observation of intraspecific aggression between two Persian leopards**

By T. Rosen, S. Fateyev, N. Hudaikhuliev, A. Potaeva, A. Veyisov and A. Ghoddousi

Intraspecific aggression is a common characteristic of felids, often leading to serious injury or even death. The most common causes of aggression among felids are competition for food, territory and mates. Such aggressions are a significant cause of mortality among leopard *Panthera pardus* populations in Africa. However, evidence on the significance of this behaviour in other leopard subspecies is rare. Four cases of intraspecific killings in Persian leopards *P. p. tulliana* have been documented in Iran. All cases were discovered after the aggression ended with limited information on the cause of the aggression. In Turkmenistan,

in April 2024, we documented intraspecific aggression between two male Persian leopards for the first time on camera traps. In this case, we observed that competition over mating could be a significant factor in intraspecific aggression. Males might be more tolerant of each other during periods of high resource availability, as hypothesised with cougars. However, prey depletion may trigger more encounters and aggression related to mating and territory as well.

Across the range and in Turkmenistan, Persian leopards navigate an increasingly fragmented landscape that has suffered significant wild prey loss. While no mortality from intraspecific aggression has yet been documented in Turkmenistan, it is possible that resource loss can provoke intraspecific aggression and potentially also mortality. Conservation efforts aimed at reducing poaching pressure, leading to prey recovery, can potentially reduce such aggression and associated mortality.