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A puma, a tapir, and a stalking horse

by M. Hunter, A. Calhoun, N. Mcphee, M. Peñaranda del Carpio, J. Shiffer and C. Foley

We witnessed a puma *Puma concolor* apparently exhibiting "stalking horse" behaviour, i.e. shadowing the movements of a lowland tapir *Tapirus terrestris* to use it as cover while hunting. The puma followed the tapir closely as they walked down a road for approximately 700 meters and 20 minutes in the Kaa-Iya del Gran Chaco National Park of Bolivia. This phenomenon, long known for human hunters, was first described in the biological literature in August 2023 for trumpetfish *Aulostomus maculatus* and other coral reef species and has been reported anecdotally for leopards *Panthera pardus*. We discuss and reject alternative explanations for our observations and conclude that this is the first case of a wild mammal using another animal as a "stalking horse" to be documented in the scientific literature.

Highest elevation record of margay in Sierra Madre de Chiapas, Guatemala

by I. E. Monti, F. Dartora, L. Atzeni, P. Miccinesi, C. A. T. López and C. Augugliaro

The margay *Leopardus wiedii* is a small wild felid native to the tropical forests of Central and South America. It is typically found below 3,000 m in elevation. Habitat fragmentation due to human activities significantly threatens the species' survival. The study area was focused on the Bosque Municipal San Juan, Olintepeque, Guatemala, a fragmented pine-oak forest, where human encroachment through agriculture and illegal deforestation is prevalent. We conducted a camera trap survey from November 2022 to November 2023. We deployed 30 camera traps arranged systematically across the area, totalling approximately 4,000 trap nights. A new elevation record for the margay was found at 3,045 m, extending the known altitudinal range of the species. This record underscores the importance of high-altitude ecosystems as potential refuges for wildlife impacted by habitat loss at lower elevations. Conservation efforts must focus on protecting and connecting these critical habitats to ensure the long-term survival of margay populations.

Records of short-tailed pumas in northeastern Argentina

by M. l. Chatellenaz, E. M. Zaracho and M. G. Villordo

The tails of felids play a crucial role in hunting, maintaining balance while climbing trees and jumping between branches, and communication. As a result, felids with abnormally short tails are rarely seen in the wild, with records limited to a few individuals across five species. We report five instances of pumas *Puma concolor* with short tails in northeastern Corrientes, Argentina, in 2015 and 2018. While we cannot state this with certainty, the condition appears to be a congenital defect rather than the result of accidental tail loss. Despite concerns that a

missing tail might hinder hunting and other activities, the individuals appeared to be in good physical condition, and one of them, a female, was recorded breeding on two occasions. Such cases are rare, but reporting on them can help to anticipate potential negative impacts on wild felid populations.

Blood to blood: first documentation of vampire bat parasitism on a jaguar

by E. R. Olson, A. Azofeifa, E. Solano-Mora, W. Villachica, L. Fonseca and G. Saborío-R

Camera traps have been valuable in providing insights into a wide range of wildlife behaviours and interactions. Recently camera traps have allowed researchers to document vampire bat *Desmodus rotundus* parasitism of wild and domestic animals – a rare and difficult interaction to observe. Through maintenance of a long-term wildlife conservation and monitoring camera trap study in Corcovado National Park in Costa Rica, we provide the first documented evidence of a jaguar *Panthera onca* being parasitized by a vampire bat. We captured a total of 320 s of video from the initiation of hematophagy to the end of the event. During this time, the bat fed intermittently on the jaguar for a total of ca. 231 s (ca. 72% of observation time). The vampire bat fed at least 35 times, in periods of 0.5 to ≥ 20 s (censored due to camera ceasing recording after 20 s). Cessation of hematophagous bouts appeared to be predominantly caused by bat responses to jaguar movements, and feeding duration generally increased over time. The jaguar may have been susceptible to parasitism by the vampire bat because it was stationary for an extended period and preoccupied due to the predation and consumption of an olive ridley sea turtle *Lepidochelys olivacea*. This suggests that mammalian predators may be particularly vulnerable to vampire bat parasitism when they are more preoccupied with consumption and protection of prey that is difficult to move. While our observation represents a relatively unique interaction, it provides insights into tropical community ecology and jaguar conservation.

Photographic evidence of rusty-spotted cat in Mangar Bani sacred grove, India

by S. Harsana and N. Kaushik

The rusty-spotted cat *Prionailurus rubiginosu*s, one of the world's smallest felids, is native to India, Sri Lanka and Nepal. It is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. We report on a new distribution record for the rusty-spotted cat from the Mangar Bani sacred grove and the last remaining natural forest in Aravalli mountains in Haryana State, bordering the national capital, Delhi. This discovery underscores the importance of preserving not only the rusty-spotted cat but also its habitat, highlighting the critical role of community-led conservation efforts in protecting biodiversity hotspots. Our findings provide valuable insights into the ecological requirements of the rusty-spotted cat and emphasise the urgency of rigorous conservation actions to safeguard this vulnerable species and its habitat.

First photographic record of mainland leopard cat in Goa, India

by A. Pungaliya, A. Borker, A. Patil and R. Rajagopalan

The mainland leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis*, is a small wild cat species widely distributed throughout Asia. Although various aspects of its ecology have been studied in Southeast Asian countries, little is known about its ecology in India. We present a photographic record of the mainland leopard cat from the state of Goa. The cat was captured by a camera trap on 7 March 2024 at 00:54 h during a field study to monitor wildlife activity around artificial water ponds in the buffer zone of the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary. This marks its first likely photographic record in the state of Goa. This record expands our understanding of the mainland leopard cat's distribution in the northern Western Ghats of India.

Using camera traps to identify and help manage problematic tigers in Nepal

by R. Kadariya, R. B.K.C., S. Kumar Thapa, U. Paudel, B. P. Shrestha, A. Thapa, A. Tumbahangphe and N. Subedi

The tiger *Panthera tigris* population of Nepal almost tripled between 2009 to 2022, resulting in a rapid increase in human-tiger conflict. In this study, we investigated two cases of tigers involved in conflict in Bardia National Park from 2019 to 2021. In 2021, intensive camera trapping identified two adult male tigers as the problematic individuals responsible for human-tiger conflict. These tigers were captured and transferred to captivity. Our intervention showed that quick and intensive monitoring is effective in identifying and categorising tigers as problem animals, helping to make management decisions that reduce human-tiger conflict.

Insights into tiger dispersal along the Similipal-Satkosia tiger corridor in Odisha, India

by D. D. Hanumant, N. C. Palei, H. S. Palei and A. K. Mishra

We present recent evidence of tiger *Panthera tigris* dispersal between Similipal Tiger Reserve and Satkosia Tiger Reserve in eastern India, highlighting the strong possibility of corridor functionality. Supporting the recovery and natural repopulation of tigers in this area requires the successful establishment of corridors and the implementation of proactive and timely conservation actions.

First record of a leopard preying on a flying fox

by S. Gubbi, K. Prabhu and S. Suthar

The leopard *Panthera pardus* is an adaptable large carnivore with a varied diet and found in a wide variety of habitats. Its diet is well-documented across its distributional range. However, in this study from southern India, we document an unusual prey species; the Indian flying fox *Pteropus giganteus giganteus*. This is possibly the first-ever documentation of a leopard preying on this highly arboreal, frugivorous prey species. This observation brings to the forefront the

possible role of leopards in diploendozoochory as they prey on a variety of primates, viverrids, rodents and ungulates which rely on seeds and fruits as part of their diet. We recommend further studies on the role of this large feline as a secondary disperser which will help add new dimensions to possible trophic relationships.

Photographic evidence of the tiger in Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhutan

by D. Phuntsho, W. Dorji, T. Tenzin, K. Choden, S. Dendup and N. Shacha

We report on the first photographic evidence of a tiger *Panthera tigris tigris* in Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhutan. Camera trapping in this easternmost Sanctuary was carried out for a total of 3 months between October 2021 and January 2022 as part of a nationwide tiger survey. The camera trap was triggered by a tiger at an altitude of 3,366 m in a mixed conifer forest.

The status of Sunda leopard cat in rice field area of west Sumatra, Indonesia

by A. Fakhri, Aadrean and Rizaldi

The Sunda leopard cat *Prionailurus javanensis* is a species of small wild cat from Sumatra. This cat is commonly found in human-dominated landscapes, including rice fields. This study aims to determine the status of this cat in a rice field area of West Sumatra. This research was conducted from May to July 2023 using three methods: track surveys, camera traps and interviews. This study found a relative abundance of Sunda leopard cat tracks of 9.63 tracks/km and a camera trap frequency of presence rate of 0.333. This cat is mainly found when rice plants are in a generative growth phase, presumably hunting ricefield rats *Rattus argentiventer*. Information from rice farmers supported these findings, providing useful preliminary insights into the ecology of this cat in rice fields. The presence of this cat in an area of high human activity puts it at risk of human-induced threats. In-depth research on the distribution, habitat suitability of rice fields, and threats to this cat in rice fields is urgently needed.

Past occurrence of mainland clouded leopard in Hong Kong

by M. K. Yiu Hui, F. Li and J.-H. Yang

Although Hong Kong is well within the natural range of the mainland clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*, there has been no local evidence supporting its existence. Here, we present the first documentation of this species in Hong Kong based on two photographic records from 1948, suggesting the species survived in the degraded forest patches on the Hong Kong border until the early 20th century.

Roadkill record of fishing cat in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape, Assam

by S. Gupta, B. Barukial, M. F. Ahmed and R. H. Begum

The fishing cat *Prionailurus viverrinus* is found in fragmented habitats across South and Southeast Asia, with significant populations in Kaziranga National Park. On 24 September 2024, a fishing cat was recorded as roadkill near Kaziranga, highlighting ongoing risks from road infrastructure. Roadkill has been identified as a one of the major mortality factors for the species, particularly along NH 715, which runs through Kaziranga. This incident underscores the need for focused research on wildlife-road interactions and, if needed, the development of effective mitigation strategies to reduce roadkill in biodiversity hotspots.