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Original contributions and short notes about wild cats are welcome

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**Cover Photo:** Jaguars feeding on anaconda  
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# New record of Asiatic wildcat from Central Indian landscape

**We report here a new record of the Asiatic wildcat *Felis lybica ornata* from moist-deciduous forests of Central India. The subspecies was captured in a camera trap survey undertaken to study the dispersal patterns of tiger *Panthera tigris* in a corridor between the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve BTR and Sanjay-Dubri Tiger Reserve SDTR in eastern Madhya Pradesh. To our knowledge, this is the first record of the Asiatic wildcat from the study area.**

The Asiatic wildcat or Indian Desert cat was previously recognised as one of the five subspecies of the globally widespread wildcat *Felis silvestris* (Yamaguchi et al. 2015). The revised taxonomy of the felidae now recognises the steppe and bush cats of Africa and Asia as a separate species *Felis lybica* and the Asiatic wildcat *Felis lybica ornata* as a subspecies (Kitchener et al. 2017).

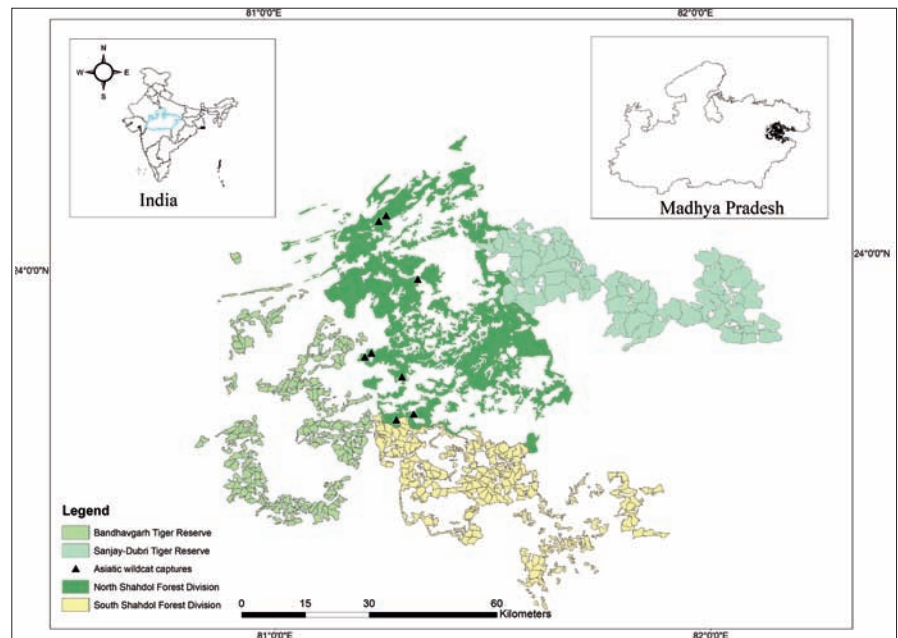
The Asiatic wildcat is distributed in Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the western plains of India and throughout north-western China and possibly Kyrgyzstan and Georgia (Yamaguchi et al. 2015, Ghoddousi et al. in prep.). In India, the wildcat is distributed in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra (Menon 2014, Yamaguchi et al. 2015). Mukherjee (1998) mentions reports of Asiatic wildcat from Central India in Pench Tiger Reserve, Pande et al. (2013) reported the subspecies in Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary and Ramesh et al. (2013) in Panna Tiger Reserve. More recently, the Asiatic wildcat was reported from eastern Madhya Pradesh in BTR (Rather et al. 2017).

In this study, we report the occurrence of Asiatic wildcat in the corridor joining BTR and SDTR (Fig. 1). The corridor spreads over an area of more than 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is administered as

the North and South Shahdol Forest Divisions. Sal *Shorea robusta* is the dominant form of vegetation and occurs in association with tendu *Diospyros melanoxylon*, char *Buchanania cochinchinensis*, seji *Lagerstromia parviflora* and Palash *Butea monosperma*. The corridor is fragmented by agricultural fields and faces high anthropogenic pressure. The study was aimed to monitor the dispersal of tiger bet-

ween the two reserves through the corridor by large scale camera trapping carried out for over a year. The Asiatic wildcat was first captured in Godawal range of North Shahdol Forest Division on 9 March 2018 at a site located at 23°58'1.776" N / 81°20'39.156" E (Fig. 2). The subsequent camera trapping showed the presence of the species throughout the corridor from BTR to the SDTR. The species occurred in all major habitat types including dense sal forests, sal mix forests, scrublands and near human habitations.

This record provides crucial information regarding the distribution of the Asiatic wildcat in India. The species seems not to be restricted to the arid and semi-arid parts of the country, but to also occur more often than previously thought, in moist deciduous forest. The domestic cat *Felis catus* occurs throughout the range of the Asiatic wildcat in India and looks very similar in appearance to it. This record thus needs to be supported by further genetic



**Fig. 1.** Location of the study area and camera trap captures of Asiatic wildcat, The Corbett Foundation, Bandhavgarh.



**Fig. 2.** Camera trap image of the Asiatic wildcat in the study area, 3 March 2018 (Photo The Corbett Foundation).

and behavioural studies on co-occurring populations of domestic cats and wildcats.

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