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New distributional record of Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus rubiginosus* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India



A adult Rusty-spotted Cat on a crotch of Tamarind tree *Tamarindus indica*.

Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus rubiginosus* (Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1831) is one of the diminutive felids (Sunquist & Sunquist, 2002) found in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka (Mukherjee et al. 2016). Recently a photographic record has been reported from Bardia National park in Nepal, which extends its distribution range farther to the north (Lamichhane et al. 2016). It is found to be inhabitants of moist and dry deciduous forest, tropical thorn forest, scrub forest, grasslands, arid shrublands, rocky areas and hill slopes (Sunquist & Sunquist 2002), in addition to that, it has been frequently reported

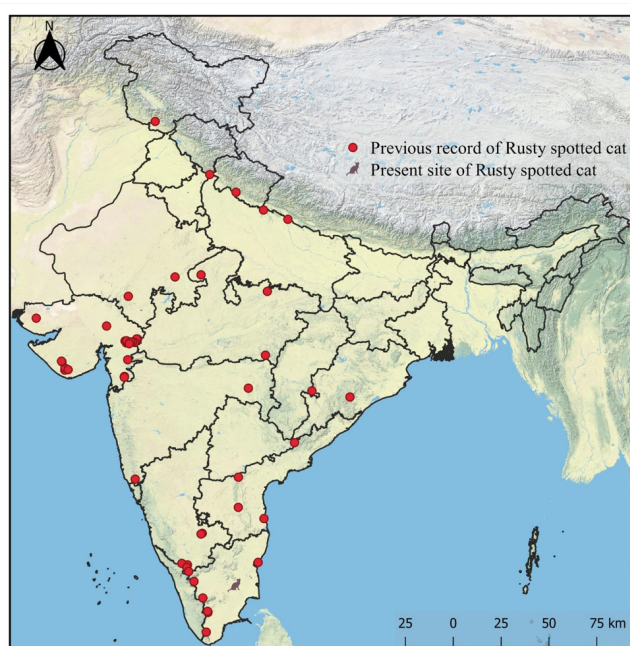
from teak, bamboo, grassy, dry thorny vegetation (Guggisberg 1975; Pathak 1990; Worah 1990; Pocock 1939) and also amid agricultural regions and human settlements (Nowell & Jackson 1996; Mukherjee 1998; Kettle & Watson 2004). In Sri Lanka Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus phillipsi* is found from sea level to elevation of 2,100 meters in humid forests, in low scrub, on mountaintops, and in arid coastal regions (De Alwis 1973; Phillips 1984). A pair of solid brown colour stripes on the nape and withers is a distinct character of Rusty-spotted Cat (Pocock 1939). It is nocturnal and more arboreal

in habits (Nowell & Jackson 1996), it is an effortless climber than domestic cat and is extremely agile and active (Sunquist & Sunquist 2002). Though, the diet of Rusty-spotted Cat has not been reported properly, they mostly hunt on the ground and its diet consist primarily of birds, small mammals, insects, lizards, and frogs. Local residents in Sri Lanka has reported that Rusty-spotted Cat are most active after heavy rain shower, as they emerge to devour on rodents and frogs (Kristin & Peter 1996) and it is also known to depredate on domestic poultry (Phillips 1935; Pocock 1939).

Habitat loss and anthropogenic activities considered to be significant cause for its population decline, as well, poaching and killing for meat are some of the important threats for the species (Mukherjee & Koparde 2014). In connection to that, IUCN has categorized its global

conservation status as 'Near threatened' and listed as 'Endangered' in National Red List of Sri Lanka (MOE, 2012). Further, it has been listed as listed as a Schedule I species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 of India. Exclusive ecological studies have not been carried out in Rusty-spotted Cat as in larger cat (Schaller 1967; Chundawat 1992; Chellam 1993; Karanth & Sunquist 1995; Acharya 2007; Andheria et al. 2007; Ramesh et al. 2012; Selvan et al. 2013). Not-widely known about its behaviour in the wild though few studies have documented about its population status in Kevadi reserve forest of Gujarat (Kunal 2012) in India and its behavioral study in captivity at Sri Lanka (Jayaratne et al. 2015). Present observation intensifies it's existing spatial distribution.

Although, this species has been recorded virtually everywhere in India, its distribution is yet to be documented clearly (Nayak et al. 2017). Here we present recent record of this species from Tiruchirappalli (Trichy, as it well known), Tamil Nadu. Tiruchirappalli district is located at the central part of Tamil Nadu, situated on the bank of Cauvery river and surrounded by Perambalur district in north, Sivagangai and Madurai in south, Karur, Dindugal in west and Thanjavur in east. The entire district is almost plain in topographically except a detached Pachaimalai hill in the north (Kavitha & Aruchamy 2013). The present sighting of rusty-spotted cat was recorded at 20:15 h on 05 March 2012 at Kollidakarai residential area (N10°52'47.43" E78°41'25.12"), where it has been sitting on crotch of Tamarind tree *Tamarindus indica*. The tree was stood on the bank of dry stream together



Map of India showing the various locations of previous and present sightings of Rusty-spotted Cats.

with *Borassus flabellifer*, *Prosopis juliflora*, *Senna auriculata*, *Opuntia ficus-indica*, and *Azadirachta indica*. The present sighting occurred outside the Reserve Forest, signifies the new location for this species in human-dominated habitat. The record of this species in different locations in India emphasizes that a detailed field survey is required on its population status and distribution.

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