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

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
effortlessness 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
its’ 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 Kolliakkarai 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
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.

References


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