JUNGLE CAT

Felis chaus Schreber, 1777 spotted in IISc Campus, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

Jungle Cat *Felis chaus* Schreber, 1777 spotted in IISc Campus, Bengaluru on 9 March, 2017

IUCN Red List:
Least Concern
(Gray et al. 2016)

Mammalia
[Class of Mammals]

Carnivora
[Order of Carnivores]

Felidae
[Family of Cats]

Felis chaus
[Jungle Cat]

Species described by Schreber in 1777

Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Campus is located in the heart of the city Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. Campus with an overall area of 161.87 hectares and tree coverage of 43.625 hectares (Ramachandra et al. 2014b) of land and a water body named as Centenary Pond made on the Centenary Year of Institute 2008 provides a relief and shelter to 153 birds (Shyamal 1994) and wildlife species. Institute also has a Mini Forest, an area of 1.65–1.75 hectares, having 54 species of tree native to Western Ghats and support species like Slender Loris (Ramachandra et al. 2014a).

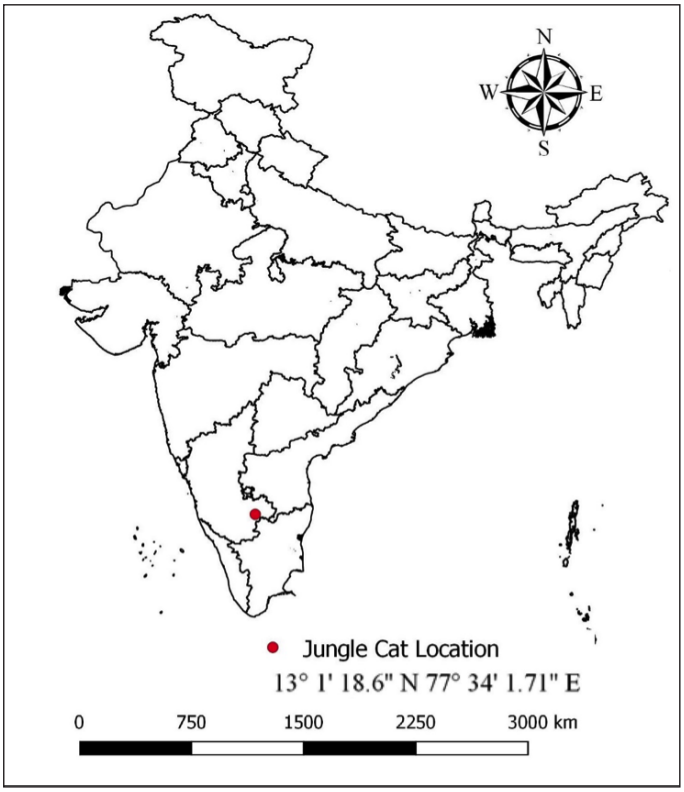
On 9 March 2017, while going on for a routine birding stroll, I encountered a Jungle Cat *Felis chaus* at 18:52hr near

Centenary Pond (13°1'18.6"N & 77°34'1.71"E) in the Jubilee Park of the IISc campus feeding on small mammal. Species was identified after carefully examining and comparing the photograph of *Felis Chaus* individual clicked by Nikon D5200 DSLR camera mounted with Nikon 15–200 mm telescopic lens.

Global Distribution : Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Egypt, Georgia, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Laos, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam (Gray et al. 2016)

Felis chaus, commonly called as Jungle Cat was first described by Schrebber in 1777. Jungle Cat also known by many names like Swamp Cat, Reed Cat is a rare wild cat species in Southwest Asia (Baker et al. 2013) and is strongly associated with dense water vegetation, especially reed swaps and marshes (Osborn & Hemley 1980; Baker et al. 2013). In Tropical Asia according to Tikader (1983) in Paunikar (2011) Jungle Cat was widely observed around forest plantation and sugarcane fields till elevation of 2,400m above sea level in Himalaya (Guggisberg 1975 in Ogurlu et al. 2010).

Felis chaus can be related and mistaken with domestic cat. Jungle Cat is distinguished by long legs, thin body, and yellow brown and reddish-grey fur; weighs around 13kg; average tail length is 27cm for sample size of 49; and males are distinctively bigger than females (Ogurlu et al. 2010). Diet varies from fish both in wild by hunting to opportunistic feed from restraunt's garbage in urban scenario to water birds along the shore (Ogurlu et al. 2010). Diet also has been reported from two bird orders Columbidae and Phasinidae with ground feeding bird species like *Columba livia* Rock Pigeon, *Streptopelia chinensis* Eastern Spotted Dove, *Streptopleia tranquebarica* Red Collared Dove, *Coturnix coturnix* Common Quail and *Perdicula asiatica* Jungle Bush Quail to *Funambulus pennantii* Five Stripped Squirrel, a rodent belonging to family Sciuridae (Paunikar, 2011).



Jungle Cat location on India map

Though timid can approach human settlement for feeding, gets more active after sunset and during winters hardly seen. Voice is stronger

than that of domestic cat (Ogurlu et al. 2010). Considering their wide distributions *Felis Chaus* has been assessed as Least Concern (Gray 2016), comes as Schedule II species under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and in Appendix II under CITES (Paunikar 2011). Main threat is habitat fragmentation due to cutting and burning of reed swamps (Ogurlu et al. 2010). Indian Institute of Science with 60% of vegetation cover (Ramachandra 2014a), has potential to support species with suitable habitat and further studies are needed to be carried out in future to help bring out this role of IISc Campus in urban landscape.

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Manoj Kumar Singh[1] & T.V. Ramachandra[2]
[1]Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management (IIITM-K), P.O. Kariyavattom, Technopark Campus, Kazhakkoottam, Kerala 695581, India. Email: [1]wildlife8manojks@gmail.com (corresponding author)
[2]Energy & Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560012, India. Email: [2]tvr@iisc.ac.in

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