

First photographic record of Rusty-spotted Cat from Dang Forest, Gujarat

Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* is one of the most elusive wild cats of the Indian Subcontinent (Pocock 1939; Appel 2016). This world's smallest wild cat is nocturnal and occurs in moist and dry deciduous forests as well as scrubs and grasslands. It prefers dense vegetation and rocky areas. Since 2016, the global wild population is listed as 'Near Threatened' on the IUCN Red List as it is fragmented and affected by loss and destruction of its prime habitat, deciduous forests. (Mukherjee et al. 2016)

Gujarat is one of the few states from where this elusive cat has been reported (Vyas & Upadhyay 2014; Rabari et al. 2022; Vyas et al. 2018; Chaudhary et al. 2022). Dang Forest in southeastern Gujarat is one of the best habitats for these magnificent little cats. It was last reported from the Dang Forest on 25 October 2000 (Vyas & Upadhyay 2014) from forested corridor between Vansda National Park and Purna Wildlife Sanctuary,



Rusty-spotted Cat from Dang Forest, Gujarat.

but no photographic records can be found till date.

After 23 years, we saw and photographed a Rusty-spotted Cat again on 11 February 2023 (0849h) near Dhuldha Village of Purna Wildlife Sanctuary

(20.9648N, 73.6607E).

Elevation was 166 m. The habitat was mainly agriculture and patches of deciduous forest. The cat was seen near a small stream where it came to drink water and was chased away soon by a domestic cat.

Recent published sightings of Rusty-spotted Cat from Gujarat are as follows:

1. A Rusty-spotted Cat was captured in a camera trap from Bedapani area located in Balaram-Ambaji Wildlife Sanctuary (24.360N,72.792E) on 19 January 2020 at 0716h (Rabari et al. 2022)

2. The Rusty-spotted Cat was captured at 13 sites out of 50 camera trap sites from March 2017 to June 2017 and November 2017 to January 2018 across 200 square kilometer area of Gir National Park (Chaudhary et al. 2022).

From 1999–2013 there have been 11 reported sightings of Rusty-spotted Cat from Dangs (around Vansda National Park), Ratanmahal, Jambughoda, and Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuaries (Vyas & Upadhyay 2014):

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Citation: Roy, A. & J. Makwana (2023). First photographic record of Rusty-spotted Cat from Dang Forest, Gujarat. *Mammal Tales* #42, In: *Zoo's Print* 38(5): 01–02.