


Chinese mountain cat

Chinese Mountain Cat ^[1]	
Conservation status	
<div style="text-align: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">Extinct EX</div> <div style="text-align: center;">EW</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Threatened ┌───┬───┬───┐ CR EN VU</div> <div style="text-align: center;">NT</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Least Concern LC</div> </div> <p>Vulnerable (IUCN 3.1)^[2]</p> </div>	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Carnivora
Family:	Felidae
Genus:	<i>Felis</i>
Species:	<i>F. bieti</i>
Binomial name	
<i>Felis bieti</i> Milne-Edwards, 1892	
	
Distribution of the Chinese Mountain Cat (in green)	

The **Chinese Mountain Cat** (*Felis bieti*), also known as the **Chinese Desert Cat**, is a small wild cat of western China. It is the least known member of the genus *Felis*, the common cats. A 2007 DNA study found that it is a subspecies of *Felis silvestris*; should the scientific community accept this result, this cat would be reclassified as *Felis silvestris bieti*.^[3]

Some authorities regard the *chutuchta* and *vellerosa* subspecies of the Wildcat as Chinese Mountain Cat subspecies.^[1]

Description

Except for the colour of its fur, this cat resembles a European Wildcat in its physical appearance. It is 27–33 in (69–84 cm) long, plus a 11.5–16 in (29–41 cm) tail. The adult weight can range from 6.5 to 9 kilograms (14 to 20 lb). They have a relatively broad skull, and long hair growing between the pads of their feet.^[4]

The fur is sand-coloured with dark guard hairs; the underside is whitish, legs and tail bear black rings. In addition there are faint dark horizontal stripes on the face and legs, which may be hardly visible. The ears and tail have black tips, and there are also a few dark bands on the tail.^[4]

Distribution and ecology

The Chinese Mountain Cat is endemic to China and has a limited distribution over the northeastern parts of the Tibetan Plateau in Qinghai and northern Sichuan.^[5] It inhabits sparsely-wooded forests and shrublands,^[4] and is occasionally found in true deserts. It has been observed in environments from 2800 to 4100 metres (9200 to 13500 ft) in elevation.^[4]

The Chinese Mountain Cat is active at night; it hunts for rodents, pikas, and birds. They breed between January and March, giving birth to two to four kittens in a secluded burrow.^[4]

History

The species was first described in 1892 from specimens collected by Félix Biet and, as of 2007, was known only from six animals, all living in Chinese zoos, and a few skins in museums. In summer 2007 some photos of this elusive cat were caught by camera traps in Sichuan.^[6]

This cat is protected in China, but it is still endangered due to the organised poisoning of pikas, its main prey; these poisonings either kill the cats unintentionally, or withdraw their food basis.

References

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