

Colocolo

Colocolo ^[1]	
	
Conservation status	
<i>Not recognized</i> (IUCN 3.1)	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Carnivora
Family:	Felidae
Genus:	<i>Leopardus</i>
Species:	<i>L. colocolo</i>
Binomial name	
<i>Leopardus colocolo</i> (Molina, 1782)	
	
Combined range of Colocolo, Pampas Cat, and Pantanal Cat	
Synonyms	
<i>Oncifelis colocolo</i> <i>Lynchailurus colocolo</i>	

The **Colocolo** (*Leopardus colocolo*) is a small spotted and striped cat native to the west Andean slope in central and northern Chile.^[2] Until recently it included the more widespread Pampas Cat (*L. pajeros*) and Pantanal Cat (*L. braccatus*),^[1] and some maintain these as subspecies of the Colocolo.^{[3][4]} Confusingly, when these are treated as subspecies of the Colocolo, the "combined" species is sometimes referred to as the Pampas Cat.^[5]

Taxonomy

Genus

Like most other small cats, the Colocolo was formerly included in the genus *Felis*,^[6] but together with the Geoffroy's Cat and Kodkod some have placed it in *Oncifelis* instead.^[7] Today all major authorities place it in *Leopardus*.^{[1][3][4]}

Species and subspecies

As traditionally defined, the Colocolo occurs in the widest range of habitats of any small South American felid.^[3] This, combined with distinct differences in pelage colour/pattern and cranial measurements, was the basis for splitting the Pantanal Cat and Pampas Cat from the Colocolo.^[2] Based on genetic divergence, it has been estimated that the splits within the Colocolo group occurred approximately 1.7 million years ago.^[8] This divergence was lower than that found within the Geoffroy's Cat (approximately 2 mya) or *Oncilla* (approximately 3.7 mya; this very high divergence –far higher than other species in the genus– has resulted in some suggesting more than one species is involved in the *Oncilla*).^[8] Furthermore, the distribution pattern within the Colocolo group based on genetics did not completely match that based on pelage colour/pattern and cranial measurements, and supported some of the traditional subspecific division rather than species division.^[8] While the population in northern Chile has been placed in the Colocolo based on cranial measurements, genetics associate it with Pampas Cats from Bolivia, and while the population in western Argentina has been placed in the Pampas Cat based on pelage colour/pattern and cranial measurements, genetics associate it with the Colocolo.^{[2][8]} More recent genetic analysis also supports maintaining the Pantanal and Pampas Cats as subspecies of the Colocolo.^[9]

When the Pantanal and Pampas Cats are treated as a separate species, the Colocolo has two subspecies: *L. c. colocolo* and *L. c. wolffsohni*.^{[1][2]}

Description and habitat

The Colocolo is a small, but heavy-set cat, only 56 to 67 centimetres (22 to 26 in) in body length, with a short 29 to 32 centimetres (11 to 13 in) tail, and weighing around 3 kilograms (6.6 lb) on average.^[10] There are two subspecies, which differ in their pelage colour and pattern:

- *L. c. colocolo* (n nominate): Reddish or dark grey with rusty-cinnamon stripes on the flanks and two stripes on each cheek, a cinnamon upperside of the ears with black edges and tips, 4-5 reddish rings on the tail (outer two are darker), dark brown stripes on the legs, black chest spots, and whitish underparts with rusty-ochraceous stripes.^[2] It is found in central Chile in subtropical, xerophytic forests at altitudes of up to 1800 metres (5900 ft).^[2]
- *L. c. wolffsohni*: Similar to nominate, but the flanks have large, reddish brown rosette-shaped spots with darker borders, the upperside of the ears are black with a greyish base and a small grey spot, there are usually 8 rings on the tail (of the same colour as the flank spots), and the stripes on the legs and spots/stripes on the underparts are very dark brown (almost black).^[2] It is found in northern Chile in spiny shrublands and páramo.^[2] Of two specimens, one was taken at an altitude between 2000 and 4000 metres (6600 and 13000 ft), and the other at 4100 metres (13500 ft).^[2]

Externally, the Colocolo differs from the Pantanal Cat in its larger size, and pelage colour and pattern.^[2] Some Pampas Cats are as large as the Colocolo, and some subspecies of the Pampas Cats have the same pelage colour and pattern as Colocolos of the subspecies *wolffsohni*.^[2]

Behavior

Little is known about the Colocolo's hunting and breeding habits; however, it is believed to prey mainly on small mammals and birds. Guinea pigs are thought to form a large part of the diet, along with viscachas and other rodents, and tinamous.^[10] Though some have suggested it is chiefly nocturnal,^[10] others suggest it is mainly diurnal.^[9]

Litters are relatively small, usually consisting of only one or two kittens, and occasionally three. The kittens weigh around 130 grams (4.6 oz) at birth.^[10] The Colocolo's life span is between 9 and 16 years.

Status

The IUCN have only rated the "combined" species (including Pantanal and Pampas Cats), in which case the Colocolo is considered Near Threatened.^[4] Whether the Colocolo will receive a higher rating if the Pantanal and Pampas Cats are treated as separate species is unclear, but it may be Endangered,^[2] and its range is smaller than that of the Kodkod, rated as Vulnerable by the IUCN.^[11] However, unlike the Kodkod, the Colocolo is not associated with the highly threatened temperate rainforests found in the region.^{[2][11]}

References

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