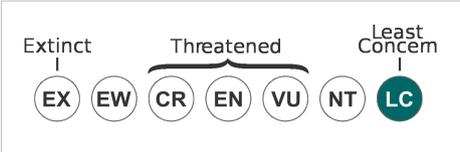


Jungle Cat

Jungle Cat ^[1]	
	
Jungle cat with its prey	
Conservation status	
	
Least Concern (IUCN 3.1) ^[2]	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Carnivora
Family:	Felidae
Genus:	<i>Felis</i>
Species:	<i>F. chaus</i>
Binomial name	
<p><i>Felis chaus</i> Schreber, 1777</p>	
	
Jungle Cat range	

The **jungle cat** (*Felis chaus*) is a medium-sized cat and considered the largest remaining species of the wild cat genus *Felis*. The species is also called the **swamp lynx** but is not closely related to the lynxes.

Felis chaus is listed as Least Concern in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as it is widespread and common particularly in India. Population declines and range contraction are of concern, particularly in Egypt, in the Caucasus, and in southwestern, central and Southeast Asia.^[2]

Description

Somewhat larger than domestic cats, jungle cats range from 55 to 94 centimetres (22 to 37 in) in length, plus a relatively short 20 to 31 centimetres (7.9 to 12 in) tail, and stand about 36 centimetres (14 in) tall. Weight varies across the range from 3 to 12 kilograms (6.6 to 26 lb). Males are slightly larger than females. The face is relatively slender, with large rounded ears that are long and set fairly high on the head.^[3] Due to the long legs and short tail, and the fact that the ears bear a tuft of black hair in the winter,^[3] this cat resembles a small lynx (hence the name "swamp lynx").^[4]

Dependent on the subspecies the colour of the fur is yellowish-grey to reddish-brown or tawny-grey, and is ticked with black. Vertical bars are visible on the fur of kittens, which disappear in adult cats, although a few dark markings may be retained on the limbs or tail. The muzzle is white, and the underside is paler in color than the rest of the body.^[4] In the winter, the fur grows to about 4000 hairs/cm² on the back, and 1700 hairs/cm² on the abdomen, and generally becomes a shade of grayish-ochre.^[3]

The most distinctive feature of a jungle cat is the presence of equal-sized claws on both fore and hind legs (unlike those of common domestic cats, for example, where hind claws are normally longer and stronger than fore). These allow it to climb down trees as easily as up, with its head facing downward. The pawprints measure about 5×6cm, and a typical pace is 29–32cm.^[3]

The skull is fairly broad in the region of the zygomatic arch, which leads to its appearance of having a rounder head than some other cats. Their stomachs have also been found to contain up to 1,200g of food.^[3]

Distribution and habitat

Jungle cats are largely oriental in distribution and found in Egypt, West and Central Asia, but also in South Asia, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. In India they are the most common small cats among the felidae found there.^[5]

They inhabit savannas, tropical dry forests and reedbeds along rivers and lakes in the lowlands, but, despite the name, are not found in rainforests. Although they are adaptable animals, being found even in dry steppe, they prefer wetland environments with tall grasses or reeds in which to hide. They do not survive well in cold climates, and are not found in areas where winter snowfall is common.^[4] They have been observed from sea levels to altitudes of 8000 ft (2400 m) or perhaps higher in the Himalayas. They frequent jungles or open country, and are often seen in the neighborhood of villages.^[6]

Even though jungle cats were known to be absent from the Malayan peninsula, south of the Isthmus of Kra, the possibility of occurrence of the species was reported from a highly fragmented forest in the Malaysian state of Selangor.^[7]

Although never truly domesticated, a small number of jungle cats have been found among the cat mummies of Ancient Egypt (the vast majority of which are domestic cats), suggesting that they may have been used to help control rodent populations.^[4]

Distribution of subspecies

When Johann Anton Gldenstdt travelled in the Russian empire's southern frontier during 1768-1775 at the behest of Catherine II of Russia, he was the first naturalist to catch sight of a *Kirmyschak* in the Caucasus.^[8] In his Latin description of 15 pages, published in 1776, he names the animal *Chaus* – a name retained for the cat by all subsequent zoologists.^[9] ^[10] Today, the trinomial *Felis chaus chaus* still refers to the jungle cat subspecies living in the Caucasus. Other subspecies distributed in the Orient and Asia have been proposed based largely on variation in external morphology.

The subspecies recognized by the *Integrated Taxonomic Information System* are listed by year of first descriptions:

- *Felis chaus affinis* (Gray, 1830) inhabits the Himalayan region;
- *Felis chaus kutas* (Pearson, 1832) inhabits northern Pakistan;
- *Felis chaus furax* (de Winton, 1898) inhabits Israel and Iraq;
- *Felis chaus nilotica* (de Winton, 1898) inhabits the Nile valley in Egypt;
- *Felis chaus fulvidina* (Thomas, 1929) inhabits Southeast Asia, i.e. Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam;
- *Felis chaus maimanah* (Zukowsky, 1915) inhabits the northwestern parts of Jordan, eastern parts of Iraq along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Iran, northwards to the northern and western parts of Lebanon, Syria and to Turkey, and the Levant;^[11]
- *Felis chaus prateri* (Pocock, 1939) inhabits the Thar desert in western India and eastern Pakistan;
- *Felis chaus kelaarti* (Pocock, 1939) lives in Sri Lanka;
- *Felis chaus oxiana* (Heptner, 1969) lives in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya regions of Central Asia.



Felis chaus affinis (Gray, 1830)

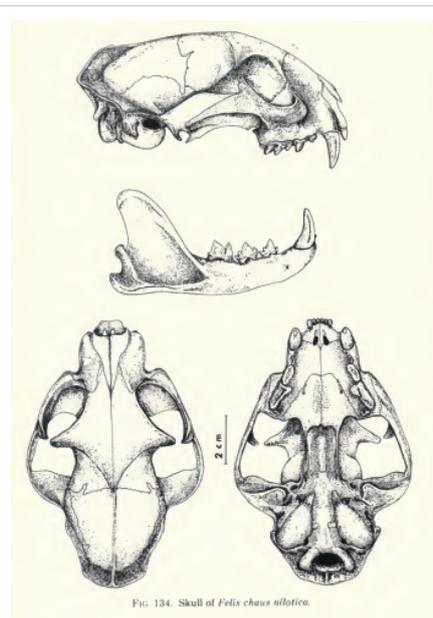


FIG. 134. Skull of *Felis chaus nilotica*.

Skull of *Felis chaus nilotica*

Status in the wild

Although jungle cats are listed as *Least Concern* in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, some populations of subspecies are declining in several countries and areas:

- Since the 1960s, populations of the Caucasian jungle cat living in the Cis-Caspian region, along the Caspian Sea and in the Caucasus range states have been rapidly declining. Only some small populations persist today. There has been no record in the Astrakhan Nature Reserve in the Volga Delta since the 1980s.^[12] This subspecies is considered threatened and included in the Red Books of the Russian Federation, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.^[13]
- In the 1970s, Southeast Asian jungle cats still used to be the most common wild cats near villages in certain parts of northern Thailand and occurred in many protected areas of the country.^[14] But since the early 1990s, jungle



Jungle cat, Uttarakhand, India

cats are rarely encountered and have suffered drastic declines due to hunting and habitat destruction. Today, their official Thai status is critically endangered.^[15] In Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, jungle cats probably once occurred widely using secondary habitats, which is easily accessible to hunters and where hunting pressure is now very heavy. Due to unselective trapping and snaring, jungle cats appear quite rare nowadays in comparison to sympatric small cats. Skins are occasionally recorded in border markets, and live individuals, possibly taken from Myanmar or Cambodia, occasionally turn up in the Khao Khieo and Chiang Mai zoos of Thailand.^[16]

- Jungle cats are rare in the Middle East. In Jordan, they are highly affected by the expansion of agricultural areas around the river beds of Yarmouk and Jordan rivers, where they are hunted and poisoned by farmers for attacking poultry.^[11] In Afghanistan they are also considered rare and threatened.^[17]

Ecology and behavior

Jungle cats are solitary in nature. They rest in other animals' abandoned burrows, tree holes, and humid coves under swamp rocks, or in areas of dense vegetation. Although often active at night, they are less nocturnal than many other cats, and in cold weather may sun themselves during the day. They have been estimated to travel between 3 and 6 kilometres (1.9 and 3.7 mi) per night, although this likely varies depending on the availability of prey. Territories are maintained by urine spraying and scent marking.^[4] The jungle cat's main competitors are the jackal and forest cat.^[3]

Their most common predators include crocodiles, bears, wolves, and other larger felines such as tigers. When countered by a threat, the jungle cat will vocalize before engaging in attack, producing small roars, a behavior uncommon for domestic cats. The meow of the jungle cat is also somewhat lower than that of a typical domestic cat's.^[3] In some cases, they jump on their attacker, but will usually retreat upon encountering larger threats. There have been known cases of jungle cats attacking curious humans near their habitat, but their attack seems to pose no medical significance besides wound infection from clawing.

Jungle cats mostly hunt for rodents, frogs, and birds. They may also hunt hares, squirrels, juvenile wild boar, as well as various reptiles, including turtles and snakes.^[3] They can sometimes catch fish while diving, but mostly swim in order to disguise their scent trails (as opposed to domestic cats, who use grooming to effect this), or to escape threats, such as dogs or humans.^[3] They have been observed to be capable of swimming as much as 1.5km at a time.^[18] Near human settlements, they may feed on domesticated chickens and ducks. They may also climb trees.^[3]

Like most other cats, they hunt by stalking and ambushing their prey, and they use reeds or tall grass as cover. They are adept at leaping, and sometimes attempt to catch birds in flight. Although they can run at up to 32 kilometres per hour (20 mph), they rarely pursue prey that escapes their initial pounce.^[4] Like most cats, the Jungle Cat utilizes not only sight and hearing while hunting, but also its sense of smell.^[3] While running, jungle cats tend to sway from side to side.^[3]

Jungle Cats are generally hard to tame, even if taken into captivity at a young age.^[3]

Reproduction

During mating season, the male "barks", sounding like a large dog.

Females are sexually mature at the age of 11 months and give birth to litters of one to six kittens, although more than three is relatively unusual. Jungle cats sometimes raise two litters in a year.^[3] Estrus appears to last from January through to mid-April; in males, spermatogenesis occurs mainly in February and March.^[3] Gestation lasts 63–66 days and is remarkably short for an animal of this size. Birth generally takes place between December and June, depending on the local climate, although females can sometimes give birth to two litters in a year. Before birth, the mother prepares a den in an abandoned animal burrow, hollow tree, or reed bed.^[4]

Kittens weigh 43 to 160 grams (1.5 to 5.6 oz) at birth, tending to be much smaller in the wild than in captivity. Initially blind and helpless, they open their eyes at ten to thirteen days of age, and are fully weaned by around three months. Males usually do not participate in the raising of kittens, but in captivity have been observed to be very

protective of their offspring, more than the females, or males of other cat species. Kittens begin to catch their own prey at around six months, and leave the mother after eight or nine months.^{[4] [19]}

The jungle cat's median life expectancy in captivity is ten to twelve years. In the wild, however, some Jungle Cats have been known to live for as long as twenty years.

Hybrids

This species of cat is capable of being domesticated under certain conditions. Cat breeders have been able to hybridize jungle cats with certain domestic cats, producing such breeds as the "chausie" (Jungle Cat x domestic cat) and the "jungle bob" (Jungle Cat x Pixie Bob).

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External links

- Entry in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2009.2 (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/8540/0>)
 - Cat Specialist Group Species Accounts: Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*) (<http://lynx.uio.no/lynx/catsgportal/cat-website/catfolk/chaus01.htm>)
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