

## Detailed Description of Fishing Cat

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### DESCRIPTION

*Prionailurus viverrinus* (fishing cat) is a species of mammal belongs to the cat family. These are classified into endangered by the IUCN. They are associated with freshwater habitats and are native to Asia. They are solitary carnivores and are known to live 120 months and can reach 777.67 mm. They have parental care (both male and female). They depend on walking on trees (locomotion) to move.

Wetlands are the preferred habitats for catfish. In India, these fishing cats are mainly found in the mangrove forests (Sundarbans), foot hills of the Himalayas along the Ganges and Brahmaputra river valleys, and in the Western Ghats. They will breed throughout the year, but in India i.e., northeastern India coastal wetlands occurs from January to February, and hatches occur from March to May. Mating is also observed in June. The gestation period lasts 6370 days. Litter size varies in between 1-4 and the young are suckled at six months of age. Their lifespan is of 12 years on average.

Specialization in fishing can be seen in the partially-webbed toes on the front legs. They use their paws to scoop up fish. In addition, the cat sometimes gently strokes the surface of the water with its paws to imitate insects, and then picks up the fish for probing. The fishing cat is known to be a noble swimmer and capable of swimming long distances, even in deep water. It can swim and chase prey underwater using its strong tail as a paddle. They are nocturnal in nature and also feed on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and carrion-feeds on the carcasses of larger animals.

The geographic range size of female fishing cats in Nepal's Chitwan National Park was 4-6 km<sup>2</sup>. A male had a range of

16-22 km<sup>2</sup>. In Thailand, a male had geographic ranges of 11-13 km<sup>2</sup> and female home ranges of 4 km<sup>2</sup>. Male geographic ranges comprise several female geographic ranges and both genders use fragrances to brand. Significant homeland overlap between individuals of the same sex has also been observed in the mangroves of Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, India. However, spatially overlapping same-sex people were shown to largely avoid time due to their activity patterns.

Destruction of wetlands is the extreme threats as it is preferred habitat to the fishing cat. As a result of human settlements, drainage for agriculture, pollution and logging, most of India's wetlands are at risk of destruction. Another threat to the fishing cat is the depletion of its main prey due to unsustainable fishing practices. It is also occasionally hunted for its fur.

These are currently classified as Endangered (VU) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and is protected by Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which regulates the international trade in this species. In India, the fishing cat is listed in Appendix I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and is therefore protected from hunting. Under this law, offenders found guilty can be punished with a prison term of up to three years or a fine of up to Rs.25,000 or both.

However, due to the loss of their favorite wetland habitats greater conservation efforts are needed to reverse the rapid decline in fishing cat numbers. WWF India is working to preserve wetland habitats through its broader conservation programs in the Sunderbans, North Bank, Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong, Western Ghats Nilgiris and Terai Arc Landscape programs.

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