

Small cats in Andhra Pradesh

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THE FOLLOWING small cats are known to exist in Andhra Pradesh.

JUNGLE CAT (*Felis chaus*)

Locally known as *jangu pilly*, it has a tendency to stay closer to water, among reeds and typha bushes. Being nocturnal, it offers only fleeting glimpses. However, it is found in almost all forest types, particularly the scrub jungles, grasslands and cultivated fields, and is reported from almost all the sanctuaries and national parks in Andhra Pradesh. On account of its adaptability to various habitats, there is no immediate threat to its existence.

LEOPARD CAT (*Prionailurus bengalensis*)

Found mostly in mixed deciduous and moist deciduous forests, particularly in the Eastern Ghats, Seshachalam hills and Nallamalai hill ranges, it is among the rarer cats. It is mainly arboreal, nocturnal and very elusive.

FISHING CAT (*Prionailurus viverrinus*)

It is the largest of the small cats in Andhra Pradesh, rare and found only in the coastal wetlands and mangroves, especially in the Coringa and Krishna wildlife sanctuaries. The gradual disappearance of the wetlands is bound to effect this species adversely.

RUSTY SPOTTED CAT (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*)

This most rare small cat is found in the northern areas of the Godavari valley and Telangana regions. A live specimen, caught by locals who thought it to be a Jungle cat cub, was received at the Nehru zoological park, Hyderabad in the early 1980's, where it survived for a long period.

Considering the scant information available on the status of the wild small cats in the state, there is every need to study this group of animals which plays a vital role in its ecosystems. The danger to these animals from poaching is minimal, at least in Andhra Pradesh, but their survival is at risk due to an indiscriminate use of pesticides, rodenticides, reclamation of wetlands and the loss of tree cover in the forests.

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