

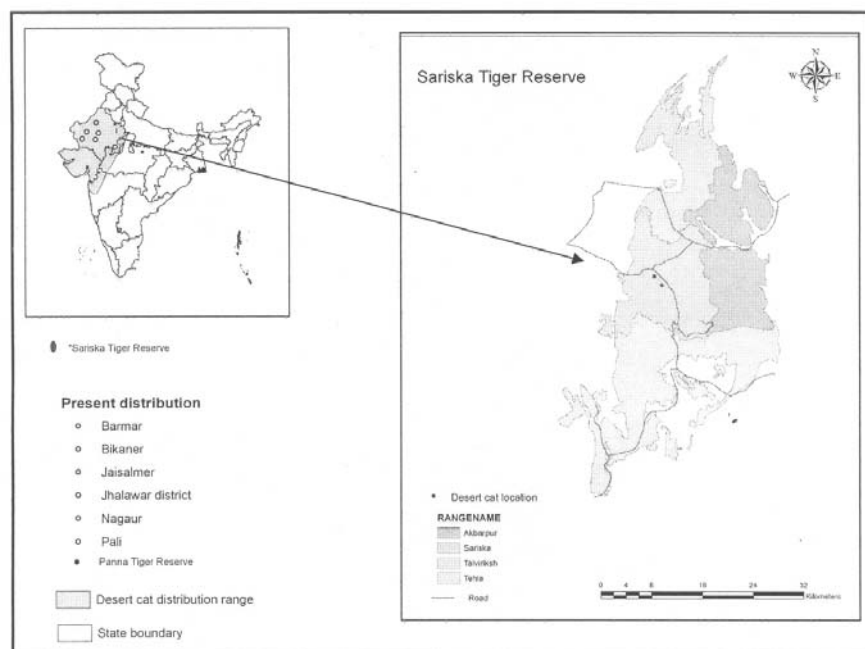
FOREST NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

RECORD OF DESERT CAT (*FELIS SILVESTRIS ORNATA*) IN SARISKA TIGER RESERVE, RAJASTHAN

Indian Desert Cat (*Felis silvestris ornata*), earlier known as *Felis lybica*, is distributed in the deserts of North-Western India extending into the drier part of Central India and near Pune in the Deccan; Westwards, the range extends through the desert lands from Sind to northern Africa, and Northwards into the steppes of Central Asia (Prater, 1965). This species has been reported from the dry open areas of Desert National Park, Jaisalmer (Prater, 1965; Kitchener, 1991; Menon, 2003), some parts of eastern and central Maharashtra

(Prater, 1965; Morrison, 1951) and also from Panna National Park, Madhya Pradesh (Yoganand, 1998). In Rajasthan, it has been reported to inhabit the arid areas on the western side of the Aravalli hills which include districts of Bikaner, Barmer, Jaisalmer, Pali and Nagaur (Kankane, 2000; Sharma *et al.*, 2003) (Fig. 1). A survey conducted by the Zoological Survey of India, reported the occurrence of this species in Jhalawar District (Kankane, 1997) which is on the eastern side of the Aravalli hills.

Fig. 1



Distribution of Desert cat (*Felis silvestris ornata*) in India.

During the course of fieldwork on 'Ecology of leopard in Sariska Tiger Reserve' (STR), the authors recorded the presence of desert cat in camera traps which was otherwise not reported earlier in STR. The cat was identified on the basis of their sandy yellow spots more or less infused with grey with numerous black spots and usual two distinct parallel black bars on the inner side of each forearm (Prater, 1965) (Fig 2). It was captured at two different locations in a same trapping night in different time intervals. The distance between the two camera trap was 700 m. The first capture was on 13

January, 2008 at 4.19 a.m. in Sadar beat which is on the western side of STR (27° 22' 59.8" N lat., 76° 22' 19.9" E long.). Another capture was at 4.45 a.m in the same beat in another camera trap (27° 22' 13.7" N lat., 76° 22' 58.2" E long.) (Fig 1). These locations had *Acacia*-mixed forest as major vegetation type which includes *Acacia leucophloea*, *Acacia catechu* and a few trees of *Mitragyna parviflora*. Major shrub species found were *Grewia falvesence*, *Capparis sepiaria*, *Capparis decidua* while *Lantana camara* and *Adhatoda vasica* were represented as weeds.

Fig. 2



Camera trap photograph of desert cat (*Felis silvestris ornata*) captured on 13 Jan. 2008 at 4.45 a.m in Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan.

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