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Photographic evidence of marbled cat from Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram, India

The marbled cat *Pardofelis marmorata* is one of the rarest and the least known felid species. It is listed as Near Threatened in the IUCN Red List and in Appendix I of CITES. In India, the species is restricted to eastern Himalayan foothills, especially Arunachal Pradesh. Twice a marbled cat was photo-captured in tropical mixed forest of Dampa Tiger Reserve at an elevation of 586 m in December 2015. In view of the fact that, there is a great paucity of information on the present status and distribution of the species, and that not many confirmed records are available, the photographic evidence of a marble cat in Dampa Tiger Reserve can contribute to determine its distribution and habitat.

Marbled cat is one of the rarest and the least known felid in South Asia. It is a small, elusive, forest-dependent felid with a uniquely marbled coat pattern. Morphologically, the marbled cat resembles the clouded leopard with a long tail, cloudlike pelage pattern, and elongated canines (Sunquist & Sunquist 2002). The marbled cat is listed as Near Threatened in the IUCN Red List and in Appendix I of CITES (Ross et al. 2016). It is protected by national legislation across most of its range. The species is known to occur from south-east China through Myanmar (Shepherd & Nijman 2008), Bhutan (Dhendup 2016), Thailand (Grassman & Tewel 2000), Laos PDR, Vietnam, Cambodia (Duckworth et al. 2005), Malay Peninsula (Gumal et al. 2014), Borneo (Rustam et al. 2016) and Sumatra (Pusparini et al. 2014). In India, the marbled cat can only be found in the eastern Himalayan foothills, especially Arunachal Pradesh (Selvan et al. 2013) and in Assam (Borah et al. 2013). Marbled cats are mainly found in moist and mixed deciduous-evergreen tropical forests and in hill forests (Ross et al. 2016).

As part of our study in Dampa Tiger Reserve from 2014-2016, 15 camera traps were deployed at 8 to 12 stations with 1 to 2 camera traps per station. They were extensively

used for photo-capturing Malayan sun bear in over 500 km² of forest reserve. Camera traps were set based on indirect evidences and preliminary transects surveys and were functional on average during 20-30 days in an area. The reserve is situated within the western limits of Mizoram, India, bordering Bangladesh and falls within 23°3'48.11" N / 92°23'40.70" E (Renthlei et al. 2011). In the course of the study, twice a marbled cat individual was photo-captured in tropical mixed forest of Dampa Tiger Reserve at an elevation of 586 m. The cat was photo-captured while on a move at different times of the day: on 22 December 2015 at 10:36 h and on 27 December 2015 at 16:51 h (23°39'19.48" N / 92°22'05.90" E; Fig. 1). In view of the fact that, there is a great paucity of information on the present status and distribution of the species and not many confirmed information available, the photographic evidence of a marble cat in Dampa Tiger Reserve can contribute to determine its distribution and habitat. The species is endangered and its population is believed to be declining due to hunting and poaching. Occurrence of the cat in a protected area like Dampa Tiger Reserve can further boost the population and survival of the species.



Fig. 1. Photo captures of a marbled cat in Dampa Tiger Reserve.

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