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Felis chaus, Jungle Cat

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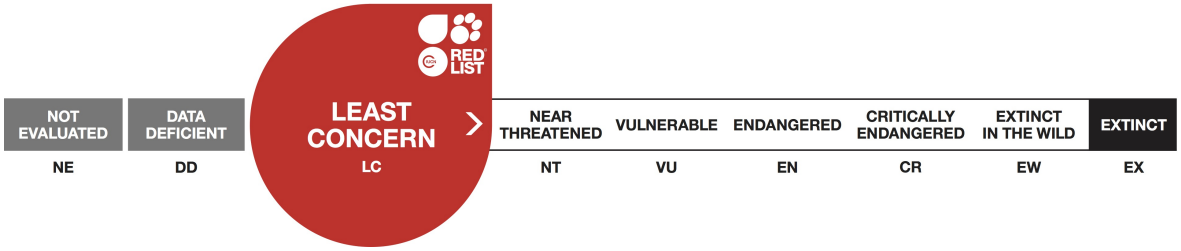

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Taxonomy

Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family
Animalia	Chordata	Mammalia	Carnivora	Felidae

Taxon Name: *Felis chaus* Schreber, 1777

Regional Assessments:

- Mediterranean
- Europe

Common Name(s):

- English: Jungle Cat, Reed Cat, Swamp Cat
- French: Chat de jungle, Chat des Marais
- Spanish: Gato de la Jungla, Gato de los Pantanos

Taxonomic Notes:

Taxonomy is currently under review by the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group (2014). Once thought to be closely related to the lynxes, which share its characteristic traits of tufted ears, long limbs and a short tail (Sunquist and Sunquist 2002), the Jungle Cat is actually a close relative of the domestic cat. With a wide range, a number of subspecies have been proposed (Wozencraft 2005 recognized nine), but Corbet and Hill (1992) argue that the pelage characters used by classical designators vary widely. No modern analysis of subspeciation has been undertaken.

Assessment Information

Red List Category & Criteria: Least Concern ver 3.1

Year Published: 2016

Date Assessed: June 4, 2014

Justification:

Jungle Cat remains probably the most common cat species in South Asia (India, Nepal, Bangladesh), where the majority of the global population occurs and despite likely extensive declines in mainland Southeast Asia, where the species is now extremely scarce and largely restricted to remote lowland deciduous dipterocarp forest (Duckworth *et al.* 2005, Gray *et al.* 2014), it is unlikely that globally averaged declines are sufficient to merit Near Threatened status. Population declines and range contraction are also of concern elsewhere in the species' range particularly in Egypt (Glas 2013), southwest Asia (Abu-Baker *et al.* 2003), the Caucasus (IUCN 2007), central Asia (Habibi 2004) and parts of Turkey (Ogurlu *et al*. 2010). However, very little new information has been obtained from these regions since the previous assessment. Nevertheless, ongoing collation of records, particularly from South Asia, is needed and evidence of declines, particularly outside protected areas may merit reassessment.

In India, there is evidence of continued, and likely accelerating, habitat loss and ongoing poaching for both skins and, potentially, as a result of conflict with farmers (Choudhury 2010, Chowdhury *et al.* 2015,

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S. Mukherjee in litt. 2014, H.S. Baral in litt. 2014, D. Jathana in litt. 2014). The Jungle Cat's preference for open scrub and grassland in South Asia makes the species more susceptible to habitat loss than cat species which also utilise denser evergreen forests.

The majority of the suitable Indian habitat is classified as 'wasteland' which legally eases conversion into any other form of use particularly industrialisation and urbanization – the latter has been identified as a particular threat in India given the pace of urbanisation of agricultural and unprotected forest areas (S. Mukherjee in litt. 2014, D. Jathana in litt. 2014). Hybridisation with domestic cats is also a potential, although unproven, threat. There remains uncertainty as to how the species will respond to habitat loss, and potential interactions with hunting and persecution. Therefore, further research is recommended, particularly in the Indian subcontinent, in order to gather additional data for a more thorough future assessment of the species' likely trends in response to habitat loss. Generally, more information on the species' ecology and status is needed across its range.

Previously Published Red List Assessments

2008 – Least Concern (LC) – http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2008.RLTS.T8540A12915235.en

2002 – Least Concern (LC)

1996 – Lower Risk/least concern (LR/lc)

Geographic Range

Range Description:

The Jungle Cat has a broad but patchy distribution. In Africa, it is found only in Egypt, along the Nile River Valley south to Aswan, and in El Faiyum, Farafara, Dakhla and Kharga oases (Glas 2013). In Southwest Asia its occurrence is highly localized around riparian vegetation and permanent water sources. It occurs through Israel, southern Lebanon, northwestern Jordan, western Syria, Turkey, Iraq and into Iran where it is found in the north, from the provinces of Golestan and Mazandaran westwards along the Caspain Sea coastline and Hyrcanian forests to the West Azarbaijan Province (Abu-Baker *et al.* 2003, Sanei *et al.* 2016). In Turkey, the Jungle Cat has a fragmented distribution and seems to be quite widely distributed in the south of the country but to be restricted especially to wetland areas (Gerngross 2014). Jungle cat presence was recently recorded around the Büyük Menderes Delta, Aydin Province, in the Akyatan Wildlife Conservation and Development Area, Akyatan Lagoon, Adana Province, and close to Manavgat, Antalya Province (Avgan 2009, Gerngross 2014). However, its status in Turkey is not known (Avgan 2009). The Jungle Cat is found in the Caucasus mountains (up to 1,000 m) including Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. It occurs west and south of the Caspian Sea as well as south and east of the Aral Sea and associated river valleys, In Central Asia, it is found in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, possibly Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Its distribution extants into South Asia from western Pakistan through almost all of India as well as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal ranging up to 2,400 m in the Himalayan foothills. The Jungle Cat occurrs through Southeast Asia including Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos PDR and Vietnam, to southern China, but is absent from Malayan peninsula south of the Isthmus of Kra (Nowell and Jackson 1996). Its range in Indochina is poorly known, especially in Myanmar. Duckworth *et al.* (2005) reviewed the few historical distribution records from Indochina and added several recent ones from Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam.

Country Occurrence:

Native: Afghanistan; Armenia (Armenia); Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Egypt; Georgia; India; Iran, Islamic Republic of; Iraq; Israel; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Lebanon; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Syrian Arab Republic; Tajikistan; Thailand; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan; Viet Nam

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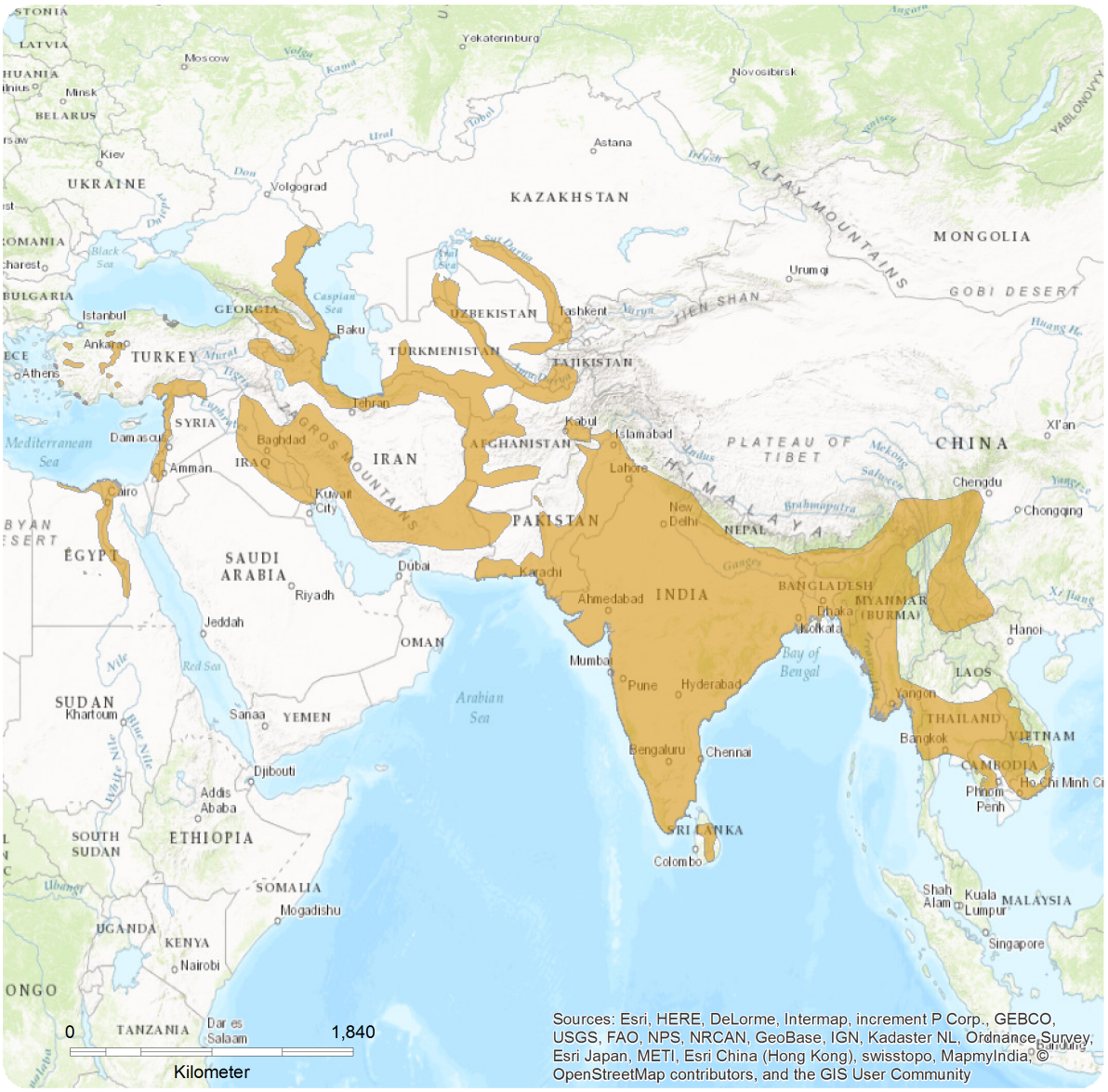
Distribution Map

Felis chaus

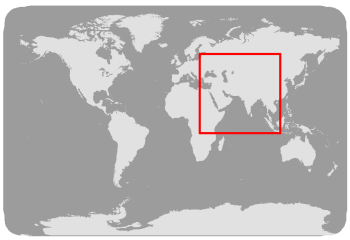


Range

- Extant (resident)
- Possibly Extant (resident)
- Presence Uncertain

Compiled by:

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply any official endorsement, acceptance or opinion by IUCN.

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Population

In Europe, the Jungle Cat is of marginal occurrence, with small populations in Cis-Caspian region and the Caucasus along the Caspian Sea. The European population has been rapidly declining since the 1960s. There was no records of this species in Astrakhan State Reserve (Russian Federation) since the 1980s. In Northern Ossetia (Russian Federation) only about 150 animals were recorded (Kuryatnikov and Varziev 1983). In the Republic of Dagestan (Russian Federation), the number of Jungle Cats was estimated at 105 animals in 2009, at 216 in 2010, at 177 in 2011, at 110 in 2012 and at 307 animals in 2013, showing population fluctuations (Yarovenko 2014). Marked population fluctuations are characteristic of this species in this region, probably because of absence of adaptations to cold winters. Despite these fluctuations the long-term trend in Europe is of decline in both population and area of occupancy. Data from Russia suggest that there are about 500 animals left in the wild (Prisazhnyuk and Belousova 2007). A very small population persists in Georgia (I. Macharashvili pers. comm. to K. Tsysulina 2007). This species is considered threatened in a number of range states in Europe and the Caucasus, and is included in the Red Books of the Russian Federation, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (IUCN 2007). In southwest Asia the species is considered rare and threatened (Abu-Baker *et al*. 2003, Habibi 2004). However, the Jungle Cat is considered common in some parts of its range, primarily in India (Mukherjee 1998, Patel 2011), but also in Pakistan and Bangladesh (Duckworth *et al.* 2005). Nevertheless, in southern China and southeast Asia, it appears quite rare in comparison to sympatric small cats (Duckworth *et al*. 2005). This rarity appears to be a relatively recent phenomenon associated with unselective trapping and snaring, especially in Lao PDR and Thailand as well, where it was described as common by Lekagul and McNeely (1977) but has since suffered drastic declines and is rarely encountered (Duckworth *et al*. 2005, Lynam *et al.* 2006). There are a number of recent camera-trap records from the Eastern Plains Landscape protected area complex in eastern Cambodia (Gray *et al.* 2014) and this area likely remains the stronghold of the species outside South Asia.

Current Population Trend: Decreasing

Habitat and Ecology **(see Appendix for additional information)**

The Jungle Cat, despite its name, is not strongly associated with the classic rainforest "jungle" habitat, but rather with wetlands - habitats with water and dense vegetative cover, especially reed swamps, marsh, and littoral and riparian environments - scrubland, and deciduous dipterocarp forest (Gray *et al.* 2014). Water and dense ground cover can be found in a variety of habitats, ranging from desert (where it is found near oases or along riverbeds) to grassland, shrubby woodland and dry deciduous forest, as well as cleared areas in moist forest (Nowell and Jackson 1996).

Areas with extensive deciduous dipterocarp forest and at least scattered surface water are the species predominant known habitat in Indochina. However, areas such as the Nakai Plateau which support other forms of savanna-like vegetation may support the species. It is probably absent from all closed canopy forests, including rainforest. The species may make use of agricultural areas with a low intensity of human use and which retain patches of scrub (Duckworth *et al.* 2005). In Iran, the Jungle Cat was found in a variety of habitats such as from plains, agriculture lands and mountains but was mostly found in shrub lands and woodlands (Sanei *et al.* 2016). In the Republic of Dagestan (Russian Federation), the favourite habitat of it was reed thickets, thorn bush thickets and thick lowland forests near water bodies (Yarovenko 2014). An analysis of habitat preferences, from camera-trap photographs, in eastern Cambodia demonstrated a strong preference for deciduous dipterocarp forests with no encounters (c.f.

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Leopard cat) in other forest types (Gray *et al.* 2014).

Jungle cats have adapted well to irrigated cultivation, having been observed in many different types of agricultural and forest plantations throughout their range, such as sugar cane plantations in India. In Israel, they can be found around pisciculture ponds and irrigation ditches. Vereschagin (1959) noted that the Jungle Cat's use of the semi-arid plains of Azerbaijan increased with the development of a local irrigation system and decreased with its abandonment. However, mowing the seasonally flooded riverine tugai vegetation (trees and shrubs with dense stands of tall reeds and grasses) of this region for livestock fodder, as well as ploughing it under for agriculture, is known to be associated with the decline of Jungle Cat populations in the European-central Asian parts of its range (Nowell and Jackson 1996).

In India, in a study in the Pench Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, the Jungle Cat was mostly active in the night hours (Majumder *et al.* 2011), whereas in Cambodia, Jungle Cats were found to be more active during the day (Gray *et al.* 2014).

Jungle Cats feed mainly on prey that weighs less than one kilogram. Small mammals, principally rodents, are the prey most frequently found in feces and stomach contents (Adhya 2014, Majumder *et al.* 2011). A study in India's Sariska reserve estimated that Jungle Cats catch and eat three to five rodent per day (Mukherjee *et al.* 2004). Birds rank second in importance, but in southern Russia waterfowl are the mainstay of Jungle Cat diet in the winter. With overwintering populations of waterfowl congretating in large numbers on unfrozen rivers and marshes, the Jungle Cat hunts among reed beds and along edges of wetlands, searching for injured or weakened birds. Other prey species are taken more opportunistically, including hares, nutria, lizards, snakes, frogs, insects, and fish (Majumder *et al.* 2011, Ogurlu *et al*. 2010, Sunquist and Sunquist 2002, Patel 2011). In India, they have been seen to scavenge kills of large predators such as the Asiatic lion. In a study in southern Uzbekistan, the fruits of the Russian olive made up 17% of their diet in winter. While Jungle Cats specialize on small prey, they are large and powerful enough to kill young swine, subadult gazelles, and chital fawns (Sunquist and Sunquist 2002).

Density estimates from natural tugai habitat in central Asia range from 4-15 individuals per 10 km², but where this vegetation type has declined due to development density it does not exceed 2 cats per 10 km² (Nowell and Jackson 1996).

Systems: Terrestrial

Use and Trade

Some illegal trade (and killing) continues in India (Sunquist and Sunquist 2002, Choudhury 2010) and elsewhere in South Asia.

Threats (see Appendix for additional information)

The biggest threat to Jungle Cat is habitat loss particularly industrialisation and urbanisation of low intensity agricultural areas and scrubland in the Indian subcontinent. Habitat destruction for agricultural purposes and infrastructure development are also issues in Turkey and Iran (Ogurlu *et al.* 2010, Sanei *et al.* 2016). In Turkey, wetlands are mainly threatened by dam constructions and irrigation projects (Avgan 2009, Gerngross 2014). Additionally, environmental pollution and illegal hunting are threatening the

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Jungle Cat in Turkey too (Ogurlu *et al.* 2010). Also in Iran, illegal killing of Jungle Cats by shooting or trapping is a threat (Sanei *et al.* 2016). Jungle cats can do well in cultivated landscapes (especially those that lead to increased numbers of rodents) and artificial wetlands. However, reclamation and destruction of natural wetlands, ongoing throughout its range but particularly in the arid areas, still pose a threat to the species, as density in natural wetlands is generally higher (Nowell and Jackson 1996). Nevertheless, the species' response to urbanisation and degradation of low intensity agricultural landscapes is unclear and merits further research.

Unselective trapping, snaring and poisoning around agricultural and settled areas have caused population declines in many areas throughout its range (Abu-Baker *et al.* 2003, Duckworth *et al.* 2005). India formerly exported large numbers of Jungle Cat skins before the species came under legal protection (over 300,000 were declared as being held by traders there when export was banned in 1979), and some illegal trade (and killing) continues there (Sunquist and Sunquist 2002, Choudhury 2010), elsewhere in South Asia (Chowdhury *et al.* 2015, H.S. Baral in litt. 2014) as well as in Egypt (Glas 2013) and Afghanistan (Habibi 2004). The scarcity of Jungle Cat in mainland Southeast Asia is likely the result of high levels of hunting in open and accessible deciduous dipterocarp forest (Duckworth *et al.* 2005).

Conservation Actions **(see Appendix for additional information)**

The Jungle Cat is listed on CITES Appendix II. It is protected from hunting in some range states (India), but in many it receives no legal protection outside protected areas (Nowell and Jackson 1996). The species now receives legal protection from all hunting and trading within Afghanistan after being placed on the country's 2009 Protected Species List. Furthermore, given the amount of habitat loss occurring in riparian and wetland areas in Afghanistan, this species should be considered a research priority.

The ecology and status of the Jungle Cat is poorly known (Nowell and Jackson 1996, Sunquist and Sunquist 2002). In Southwest and Southeast Asia, where it is considered rare and declining, more research needs to be undertaken to gain knowledge of current distribution, both in and outside of protected areas (Abu-Baker *et al.* 2003, Duckworth *et al.* 2005). Some farmers consider the Jungle Cat a pest which takes poultry (Abu-Baker *et al.* 2003), and conservation measures should include better protection for domestic fowl and halting of indiscriminate poisoning and trapping. The Jungle Cat would also benefit from improved protection of natural wetlands and reedbeds, particularly in the more arid parts of its range, and improved legislation prohibiting fur trade.

The Jungle Cat was recorded in 13 protected areas in Iran (Sanei *et al.* 2016). There are recent Jungle Cat records from protected areas in India as from Nagarjunasagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve, Andhar Pradesh, Dihang-Dibang Biosphere Reserve, Biligri Rangaswamy Temple Tiger Reserve, Mundumalai Tiger Reserve and from Mana National Park (Behera and Borah 2010, Borah *et al.* 2012, Choudhury 2010, Kalle *et al.* 2013, Kumara *et al.* 2014). In 2013, its presence was recorded in Chitwan National Park, Nepal (Lamichhane *et al.* 2014). There are also a number of recent records from protected areas from eastern Cambodia such as from the Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary and Mondulkiri Protected Forest (Channa *et al.* 2010, Gray *et al.* 2014) as well as from Phu Khieo Wildlife Sanctuary in Thailand (Borries and Koenig 2014) and from the Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary, Myanmar (Linnell *et al.* no date). However, all protected areas in Cambodia are insufficiently managed and threatened by habitat loss, degradation, and hunting.

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Appendix

Habitats

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Habitat	Season	Suitability	Major Importance?
1. Forest -> 1.4. Forest - Temperate	Resident	Suitable	-
1. Forest -> 1.5. Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Dry	Resident	Suitable	-
1. Forest -> 1.8. Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Swamp	Resident	Suitable	-
2. Savanna -> 2.1. Savanna - Dry	Resident	Suitable	-
3. Shrubland -> 3.4. Shrubland - Temperate	Resident	Suitable	-
3. Shrubland -> 3.5. Shrubland - Subtropical/Tropical Dry	Resident	Suitable	-
4. Grassland -> 4.4. Grassland - Temperate	Resident	Suitable	-
4. Grassland -> 4.5. Grassland - Subtropical/Tropical Dry	Resident	Suitable	-
5. Wetlands (inland) -> 5.1. Wetlands (inland) - Permanent Rivers/Streams/Creeks (includes waterfalls)	Resident	Suitable	-
5. Wetlands (inland) -> 5.3. Wetlands (inland) - Shrub Dominated Wetlands	Resident	Suitable	-
5. Wetlands (inland) -> 5.4. Wetlands (inland) - Bogs, Marshes, Swamps, Fens, Peatlands	Resident	Suitable	-
5. Wetlands (inland) -> 5.9. Wetlands (inland) - Freshwater Springs and Oases	Resident	Suitable	-
8. Desert -> 8.1. Desert - Hot	Resident	Suitable	-
8. Desert -> 8.2. Desert - Temperate	Resident	Suitable	-

Threats

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Threat	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact Score
2. Agriculture & aquaculture -> 2.1. Annual & perennial non-timber crops -> 2.1.4. Scale Unknown/Unrecorded	Ongoing	-	-	-
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.1. Ecosystem conversion 1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		
2. Agriculture & aquaculture -> 2.3. Livestock farming & ranching -> 2.3.2. Small-holder grazing, ranching or farming	Ongoing	-	-	-
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.1. Ecosystem conversion 1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		

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2. Agriculture & aquaculture -> 2.4. Marine & freshwater aquaculture -> 2.4.3. Scale Unknown/Unrecorded	Ongoing	-	-	-
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.1. Ecosystem conversion 1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		
5. Biological resource use -> 5.1. Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals -> 5.1.1. Intentional use (species is the target)	Ongoing	-	-	-
	Stresses:	2. Species Stresses -> 2.1. Species mortality		
5. Biological resource use -> 5.1. Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals -> 5.1.2. Unintentional effects (species is not the target)	Ongoing	-	-	-
	Stresses:	2. Species Stresses -> 2.1. Species mortality		
5. Biological resource use -> 5.1. Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals -> 5.1.3. Persecution/control	Ongoing	-	-	-
	Stresses:	2. Species Stresses -> 2.1. Species mortality		
5. Biological resource use -> 5.3. Logging & wood harvesting -> 5.3.5. Motivation Unknown/Unrecorded	Ongoing	-	-	-
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		
9. Pollution -> 9.3. Agricultural & forestry effluents -> 9.3.4. Type Unknown/Unrecorded	Ongoing	-	-	-
	Stresses:	1. Ecosystem stresses -> 1.2. Ecosystem degradation		

Conservation Actions in Place

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Conservation Actions in Place
In-Place Research, Monitoring and Planning
Action Recovery plan: No
Systematic monitoring scheme: No
In-Place Land/Water Protection and Management
Conservation sites identified: Yes, over part of range
Occur in at least one PA: Yes
Area based regional management plan: Unknown
Invasive species control or prevention: Unknown
In-Place Species Management
Harvest management plan: No
Successfully reintroduced or introduced beningly: No
Subject to ex-situ conservation: No
In-Place Education

Conservation Actions in Place
Included in international legislation: Yes
Subject to any international management/trade controls: Yes

Conservation Actions Needed

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Conservation Actions Needed
1. Land/water protection -> 1.1. Site/area protection
1. Land/water protection -> 1.2. Resource & habitat protection
2. Land/water management -> 2.3. Habitat & natural process restoration
4. Education & awareness -> 4.2. Training
5. Law & policy -> 5.1. Legislation -> 5.1.2. National level
5. Law & policy -> 5.4. Compliance and enforcement -> 5.4.2. National level
6. Livelihood, economic & other incentives -> 6.1. Linked enterprises & livelihood alternatives

Research Needed

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Research Needed
1. Research -> 1.2. Population size, distribution & trends
1. Research -> 1.3. Life history & ecology
1. Research -> 1.5. Threats
1. Research -> 1.6. Actions
3. Monitoring -> 3.1. Population trends

Additional Data Fields

Distribution
Estimated extent of occurrence (EOO) (km^2): 23609624
Lower elevation limit (m): 0
Upper elevation limit (m): 4178
Population
Population severely fragmented: No
Continuing decline in subpopulations: Unknown

http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2016-2.RLTS.T8540A50651463.en

Population
Extreme fluctuations in subpopulations: No
All individuals in one subpopulation: No
Habitats and Ecology
Continuing decline in area, extent and/or quality of habitat: Yes
Movement patterns: Not a Migrant

http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2016-2.RLTS.T8540A50651463.en

The IUCN Red List Partnership

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ is produced and managed by the IUCN Global Species Programme, the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) and The IUCN Red List Partnership.

The IUCN Red List Partners are: BirdLife International; Botanic Gardens Conservation International; Conservation International; Microsoft; NatureServe; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Sapienza University of Rome; Texas A&M University; Wildscreen; and Zoological Society of London.