



Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance

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Why in News

Recently, **the Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance** started a worldwide campaign to raise awareness for conservation of fishing cats.

The Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance is a team of **conservationists, researchers and enthusiasts** working to achieve functioning floodplains and coastal ecosystems that ensure survival of the **fishing cat**.

Key Points



- **Scientific Name:** *Prionailurus viverrinus*.
- **Description:**
 - **It is twice the size of a house cat.**
 - The **fishing cat is nocturnal** (active at night) and apart from fish also preys on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and scavenges on carcasses of larger animals.
 - The species breed all year round.
 - They spend most of their lives in areas of dense vegetation close to water bodies and are excellent swimmers.

- **Habitat:**
 - Fishing cats have a patchy distribution along the **Eastern Ghats**. They abound in estuarine floodplains, tidal mangrove forests and also inland freshwater habitats.
 - Apart from **Sundarbans** in West Bengal and Bangladesh, fishing cats inhabit the **Chilika lagoon** and surrounding wetlands in Odisha, Coringa and Krishna mangroves in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Threats:**

Wetland degradation and conversion for aquaculture and other **commercial projects**, sand mining along river banks, agricultural intensification resulting in loss of riverine buffer and conflict with humans in certain areas resulting in targeted hunting and retaliatory killings.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable. Despite multiple threats, the Fishing Cat was recently **downlisted to “Vulnerable” from “Endangered”** in the IUCN Red List species assessment.
 - **CITES:** Appendix II
 - **Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **Conservation Efforts:**
 - Recently, **the Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance** has initiated a study of the **bio-geographical distribution of the fishing cat** in the unprotected and human-dominated **landscapes of the northeastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh**.
 - In 2012, the **West Bengal government officially declared the Fishing Cat as the State Animal** and the Calcutta Zoo has two big enclosures dedicated to them.
 - In Odisha, many NGOs and wildlife conservation Societies are involved in Fishing Cat research and conservation work.
 - **The Fishing Cat Project**, launched in 2010 started raising awareness about the Cat in West Bengal.

Source:TH