



## Color Morphs of Wild Cat

Indian scientists from the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), an international conservation charity, and University College London (UCL) have discovered **six color morphs** of the golden cat in **Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh**.

- Six color morphs include **tightly-rosetted, cinnamon, melanistic, gray, golden, and ocelot types**.

### Color morphs

- Colour morphs are basically occurrence of **two or more discrete colour forms** of the animal within a population. for example- Black panther is a color morph of the common leopard.
- Colour morphs are thought to arise from **random genetic mutations** and take hold in the population through **natural selection**.
- Dibang Valley hosts the **world's most diverse range** of colour morphs of a wild cat species ever reported in one site.

### Significance

- Understanding the **evolutionary theory of color morphs** could help scientists to understand how quickly species can **adapt and evolve** to changing environments.
- This would help scientists to gain better insight into the **resilience capacity of the species to climate change or habitat degradation and destruction**, which is also the reason for decreasing population of these species.
- Color Morphs could help in **conservation of Asiatic Golden Cats**, as it provides **Ecological Benefits** to cats like:
  - occupying **different habitats** at different elevations from wet tropical lowland forests to

- alpine scrubs .
- Providing **camouflage** while preying on pheasants and rabbits.

### **Asiatic Golden Cat**

- Asiatic Golden Cat is a medium-sized wild cat native to **north-eastern Indian** subcontinent
- The **Asiatic golden cat** (*Catopuma temminckii*) is listed as **near threatened** on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of threatened species.
- Asiatic cats are mentioned in [Wildlife protection Act's](#) schedule 1.
- Wild cats are also included in Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora(CITES) appendix 1

### **Dibang Valley**

- Dibang Valley District is located in the North-Easternmost corner of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Largest district of Arunachal Pradesh with the lowest density of population in India.
- India's first 'snow tigers' were spotted in upper reaches of Dibang Valley.

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