



Indian Desert Cat

Why in News

Recently, an **Indian Desert Cat** has been spotted for the first time in **Madhya Pradesh's [Panna Tiger Reserve \(PTR\)](#)**.

- The Indian Desert Cat is also known as the **Asiatic Wildcat or the Asian Steppe Wildcat**.

Key Points

- **Scientific Name:** *Felis silvestris ornata*



- **About:**

- It is usually a creature of the **Thar desert in Rajasthan, and inhabits scrub desert areas**.
- The cat occurs in **arid and semi-arid zones of western India** which includes Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra up to Pune and Nagpur.
- This cat is found in deserts **and can survive without water**.
- The **toes of the species have cushion-like hair** which help it balance the fluctuating desert temperatures.

- **Habitat:**

- It can be found mostly in **scrub deserts, up to 2,000-3,000 m elevation**, mountainous areas with sufficient vegetation, as well as **temperate forests**.
- The Asiatic wildcat usually **occurs close to water sources but can also live in low-water areas**. It does not seem to avoid cultivated areas and human settlements.

- It avoids vast deserts, dense forests and deep snow.

- **Threats:**

- It possesses beautiful soft fur, hence, most sought after in the **international fur trade**.
- **Hybridisation** with domestic cats can lead to **the loss of genetic information and is thought to be one of the main threats**. Hybridisation was reported from Pakistan and

- Central Asia and is most likely also a problem in India.
- Another important threat is from **poaching related to conflict with humans**.
 - **Habitat destruction** and reduced habitat quality remain important issues. The Asiatic wildcat is under heavy pressure due to **land use changes**.
 - **Rodenticides** and other chemicals may also threaten it.

▪ **Protection Status:**

- [IUCN Red List](#): **Least Concern**
- [CITES](#): **Appendix-II**
- [Wildlife protection Act's](#): Schedule-I.

Panna Tiger Reserve

▪ **Location:**

- It was established in 1981 and is situated in the **Vindhya mountain range** in the northern part of Madhya Pradesh.
- Ken river (a tributary of the Yamuna River) flows through the reserve.
- The region is also famous for Panna diamond mining.
- [Ken-Betwa river interlinking project](#) will be located within the tiger reserve.

▪ **Recognition:**

- In July, 2021, PTR was awarded the **Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CAITS) certificate** by the [National Tiger Conservation Authority](#) for meeting the established international standards for tiger conservation and management.
- [The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) designated the Panna Tiger Reserve as a Biosphere Reserve on August 25, 2011.

▪ **Other Tiger Reserves in Madhya Pradesh:**

- Sanjay-Dubri.
- [Satpura](#).
- [Bandhavgarh](#).
- [Madhav National Park](#)
- [Pench Tiger Reserves](#)

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