

Project Update: November 2011

Rusty spotted cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* is the highly protected species under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972 (as amendment 2006), under highly protected schedule (I). Therefore only Government of India can permit for the trapping and the radio collaring permission. Under the guidance of the Chief Wildlife Warden of Gujarat State (the home state in the western India where this study was proposed and being conducted), I must acknowledge Mr. R.V. Asari IFS and Dr. Alexander Sliwa from Germany, curator of cologne zoo and member of IUCN Cat Specialist Group, IUCN, the radio-telemetry proposal was finally submitted with Government of India. The proposal was sanctioned from Government of India in the last week of December 2010. The final permission for the conduction of radio telemetry project was arrived in January 2011. Meanwhile Dr. Alexander Sliwa visited the study site and gave all necessary guidance required for the conduction of the project during his one week visit at Kevadi.

The actual field work was started from mid-February 2011. Total 10 traps were utilised to trap the rusty spotted cat. The study area is 60 km². The intensive trapping area has been selected as 20 km². We utilised chicken pieces and dried fish as the lure. We also placed camera traps to monitor the event near to traps. We exercised trapping efforts of 857 trapping nights, during February 2011 to November 2011, (spreading over 175 days). The traps were placed in all available major and micro habitats of the intensive trapping area. In the very beginning phase of the trapping, we trapped diurnal species like small Indian mongoose *Herpestes javanicus* twice, a kitten of feral cat once, a puppy of stray dog once and small Indian civet *Viverricula indica* twice. Since our study area is not protected area and surrounded by many villages, we found our two traps stolen and one damaged. We then changed our strategy by experiencing these results of theft and unwanted species trapping and also considering the nocturnal nature of the rusty spotted cat decided to put traps between 1800 hr to 0700 hr. After this strategy we trapped jungle cat *Felis chaus* twice. One was female and one was male. Camera traps showed results of visiting species including striped hyena *Hyaena hyeana*, sloth bear *Melursus ursinus* and barn owl, near to traps.

We are still unsuccessful to trap the rusty spotted cat, the principal study animal. Even the sightings of this cat in the entire study area were becoming extremely rare compared to recent past year. We could sight only one individual of rusty spotted cat on November 15th 2011. I am unable to understand the reason behind this. Now in this regards the conservation approach towards rusty spotted cat is more important. Even our camera traps were unsuccessful in catching the photo of this cat.

Five different schools' children aged 9 to 15 attended nature education and wildlife conservation talks at Kevadi. They were also showed photos of rusty spotted cat at Kevadi. One batch of post-graduation students from Gujarat University was also given conservation talks on various aspect of wildlife including Rusty spotted cat.

Our conservation attempts are now being noticed worldwide. In February 2011 poster presentation was presented at Seattle in United States of America, at ZACC 2011 conference. ZACC2011programs@zoo.org. Presented poster is attached. The conference programme, posters, presentations and Open Roundtable Discussion notes are now posted for download at www.zaccconference.com/past.htm. The member of Foundation Spots of Netherlands, Ms. YVONNE RIJSDIJK, also visited Kevadi and participated in field work and offered some help as volunteer.

I am still struggling with the fundamental objective of the project - trapping the rusty spotted cat. I am in touch of all experienced persons whom I know and who can help me to achieve the goal. I need little more time on this project.

Rusty Spotted Cat

**From New Distribution Record to Radio Telemetry
A Journey Towards Rusty Spotted Cat's Elusive and Secretive Ecology.**

CAT NEWS

The Origin and Contribution
Endemic to the Indian sub-continent and found only in India and Sri Lanka, the Rusty Spotted Cat is still rarely attempted under any separate research programme.

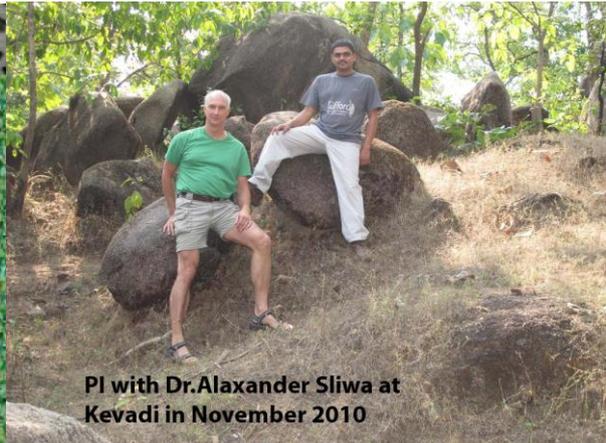
The Elusive Cat
Until today, very little is known of this cat's ecology and biology except few natural history observations are available on its distribution.

The Desperate Mission
Identification of areas throughout the species' range that have optimum, relatively large and secure populations.

Our Supporter
Rufford
AVATS

Our Team
Our focus disseminates messages in regards to awareness building with their community on how to collect forest minor produce without harming the forest.

Field Assistants:
Kamal Patel
Dr. Alexander Sliwa
K.N. Akaraj-IFS



PI with Dr. Alexander Sliwa at Kevadi in November 2010



Member from Foundation Spots of Netherlands in volunteering act. November 2011



jungle cat examine the trap. photo captured by camera trap. October 2011



Sloth bears passing through the trapping site captured by the camera trap. October 2011



Hyena passing through the trapping site. photo captured by camera trap.



Field assistants-Chatur and Mulchand preparing cages for trapping.