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Cover: Digital illustration of *Impatiens chamchumroonii* in Krita by Dupati Poojitha.



Small Wild Cats Special Series

First photographic evidence of the Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* (I. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1831) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in Kapilash Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha, India

Alok Kumar Naik¹ , Sumit Kumar Kar² , Shyama Bharati³ , Ashit Chakraborty⁴  & Ashis Kumar Das⁵ 

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During a routine wildlife patrolling survey on 30 April 2025, we sighted a single Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* at 21.57 h at the southwestern edge of Kapilash Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha. The individual rested on a branch of a Forest Ebony *Diospyros sylvatica* tree (Image 1) at a height of about 2 m above ground. The habitat around this location consists of dry deciduous forest next to a small seasonal stream. The closest village is about 100 m away from this location.

Our record of the Rusty-spotted Cat represents the first in Kapilash Wildlife Sanctuary and therefore merits further surveys in the vicinity. This protected area is located in the undulating hills of the Dhenkanal Forest Division in Odisha (Figure 1) at an elevation of 76–643 m. This division harbours tropical moist, dry deciduous to semi-evergreen forest composed of Sal *Shorea robusta*, Bael *Aegle marmelos*, Coromandel Ebony *Diospyros melanoxylon*, Burma Ironwood *Xylocarpus xylocarpa*, Indian Butter Tree *Madhuca longifolia* and several *Dillenia*, *Ficus* and *Terminalia* species (Champion & Seth 1968; Palei et al. 2017). The average rainfall is 1,500–1,700 mm from June to September (Palei et al. 2019). The cold

season from early November to late March exhibits an average temperature of 10–30 °C, which rises to 41 °C in the summer (Alok Kumar Naik personal observation).

Elsewhere in Odisha, the Rusty-spotted Cat has been recorded during camera trapping surveys in similar habitats and climatic conditions, including Similipal Tiger Reserve, several wildlife sanctuaries and forest divisions (Mishra et al. 2019; Palei & Debata 2019; Palei et al. 2019, 2022; Hanumant et al. 2025; Patra et al. 2025). The next closest locality record in Hadagarh Wildlife Sanctuary (Palei et al. 2022) is about 85 km to the northeast but segregated by a largely human-dominated agricultural landscape. Given the widely scattered records of the Rusty-spotted Cat in Odisha, we recommend detailed studies to determine the connectivity between population units. It is also necessary to assess human-induced disturbances, forest loss, forest fire and other threats to the Rusty-spotted Cat in Odisha.

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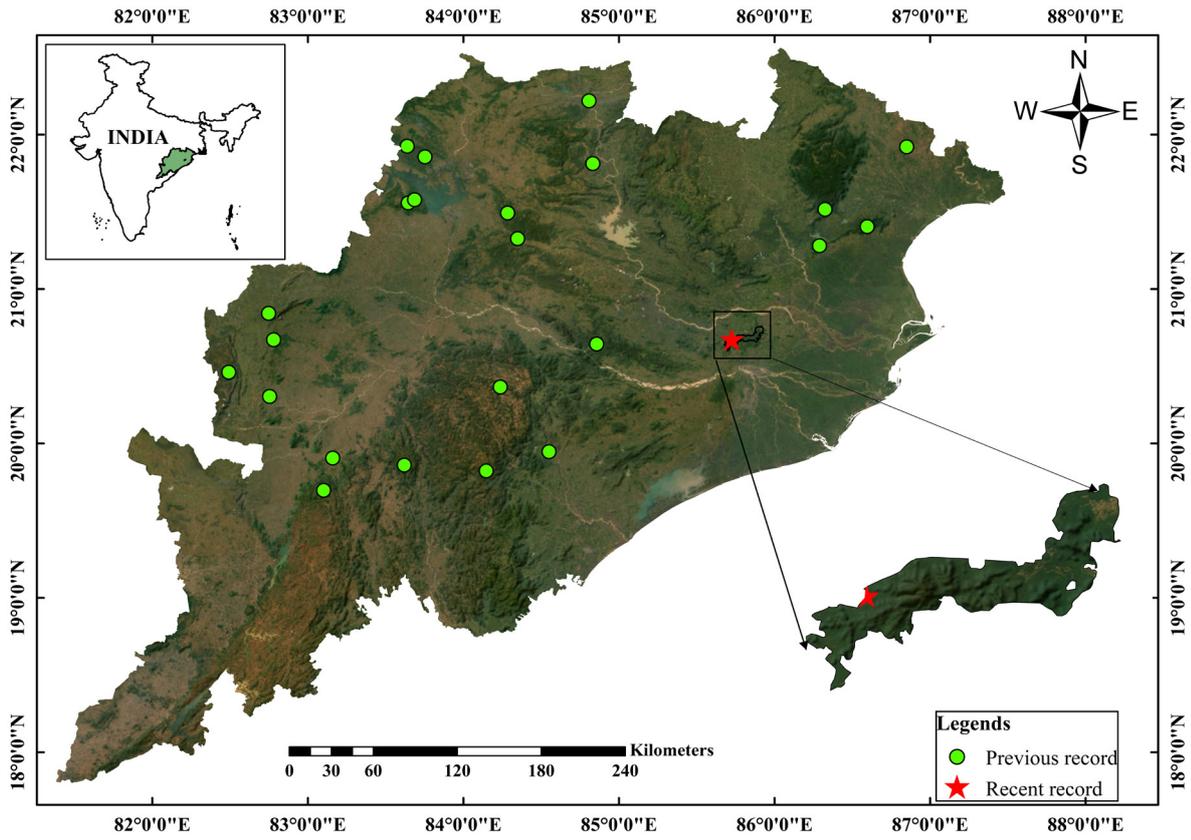


Figure 1. Map with record locations of the Rusty-spotted Cat in Odisha.



Image 1. Rusty-spotted Cat photographed on 30 May 2025 in Kapilash Wildlife Sanctuary. © Ashis Kumar Das & Alok Kumar Naik.

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