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



Small Wild Cats Special Series

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

Tarun Singh¹ , Harshvardhan Singh Rathore² , N. Abhin³ , Subhalaxmi Muduli⁴ , Yash Deshpande⁵ , Vivek Sarkar⁶ , Diganta Sovan Chand⁷ , Samrat Gowda⁸ , Prakash C. Gogineni⁹ , Manoj V. Nair¹⁰ , Bivash Pandav¹¹ & Samrat Mondol¹²

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We report a camera trap photograph of a Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* in Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha (Image 1). A single individual was recorded on 18 May 2025 at 0140 h by one of 73 camera traps deployed from April to May 2025, for a total of 2,206 camera trap days. This camera trap was installed beside a forest road near a seasonal stream at an elevation of 215 m. It was operational for 24 hours per day and active for 32 days. It also recorded a Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*, Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica*, Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*, and a feral Dog *Canis familiaris*. The vegetation around this location is mainly composed of Sal *Shorea robusta* and *Clerodendrum infortunatum* dominating the ground cover. The Euclidean distance to the nearest village boundary is 3.2 km. There was no human disturbance at this location, except for patrolling vehicles of the forest department.

Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary covers an area of 272.75

km² and is characterized by rugged, hilly terrain (Sahu et al. 2014; Figure 1). Tropical moist deciduous, dry deciduous and semi-evergreen forests are the predominant forest types in this region of Odisha (Champion & Seth 1968).

Our record is the first in Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary. A previous camera trapping survey from January to August 2013 failed to detect the cat despite 916 camera trap days across 65 locations in Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary (Debata & Swain 2018). The next closest records of the Rusty-spotted Cat in northern Odisha were obtained in Similipal Tiger Reserve (Palei & Debata 2017; Mishra et al. 2019) and in Hadagarh Wildlife Sanctuary (Palei et al. 2022; Mishra & Mohan 2023). In Odisha, the Rusty-spotted Cat has been recorded by camera traps in both protected and non-protected areas, including the mixed deciduous forests of Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary (Palei et al. 2023a) and the forest divisions of Bargarh, Bolangir,

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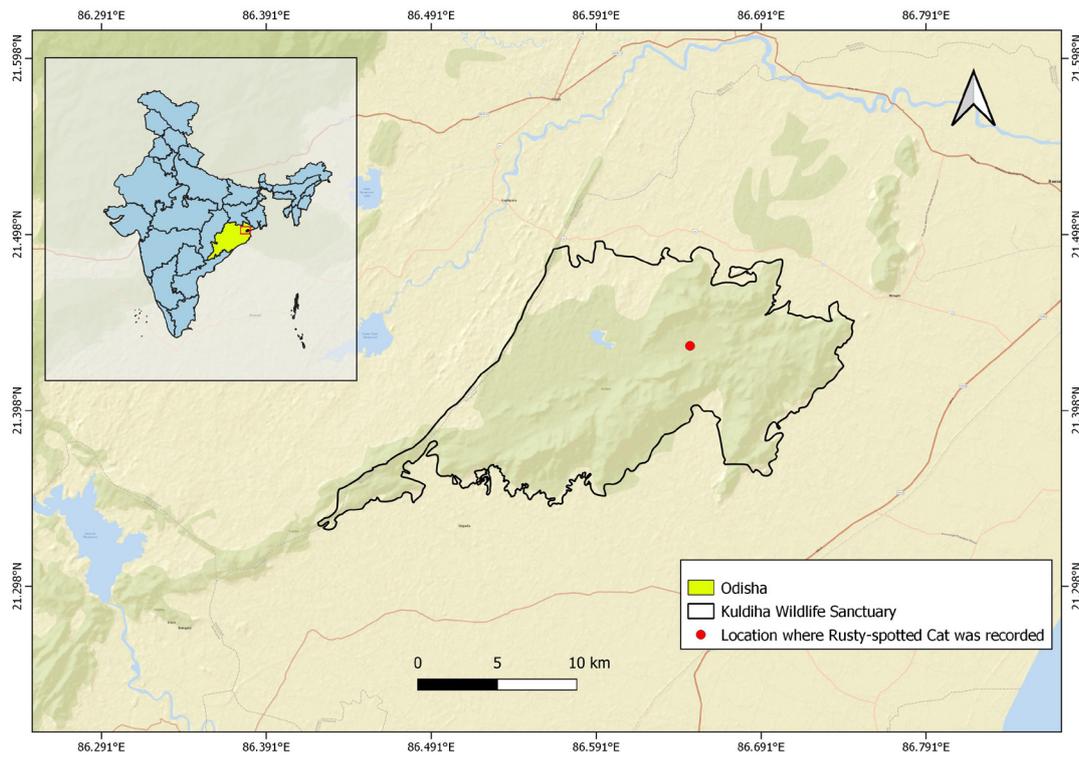


Figure 1. Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary showing the location of the camera trap station where the Rusty-spotted Cat was photographed.



Image 1. Camera trap photograph of the Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* in Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary on 18 May 2025. © Wildlife Institute of India and Odisha Forest Department.

Bonai, and Sundargarh (Palei et al. 2019, 2023b; Kumar et al. 2021; Patra et al. 2025). Rescued individuals have been reported in Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary and the Ghumusur and Phulbani Forest Divisions (Palei & Debata 2017; Palei et al. 2019). It was also recorded in the Atei Reserve Forest, which forms part of an important wildlife corridor linking Similipal and Satkosia Tiger Reserves (Hanumant et al. 2025).

Given the widespread occurrence of the Rusty-spotted Cat in Odisha, dedicated camera trap surveys should be undertaken to assess its population status. Information generated from such studies would also enhance our understanding of its ecological requirements and aid in developing a conservation action plan.

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