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Cover: Oil painting of Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*. © R. Mahesh.



Small Wild Cats Special Series

Evidence of Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* (I. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1831) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in National Chambal Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh, India

Anshoo Nishad¹ , Hiyashri Sarma² , Rajib Saha³ , Vijay Pratap Singh⁴ , Maneesha Bhatt⁵ ,
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We report two roadkill incidents of the Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* in National Chambal Sanctuary, Etawah District, Uttar Pradesh. Both incidents were recorded on the road connecting Bharthana and Sindaus, which is a major district road with bituminous surface. The first carcass was spotted on 14 March 2025 at 0640 h at 26.572° N, 79.102° E. This location is approximately 2 km south of the Yamuna River and 3 km north of the Chambal River, and is bordered by crop fields, villages, and ravines (Figure 1). The carcass was a male cat measuring 78 cm in total length, including a 24 cm tail (Image 1). The second roadkill was found on 24 April 2025 at 0528 h along the same road, but closer to the Chambal River at 26.554° N, 79.096° E. Forested patches and ravines surround the road at this location (Figure 1). This individual was a female and measured 60.7 cm in total length, with an 18 cm long tail (Image 2). Both roadkill were recorded along the same stretch of road from Chakarnagar to the bridge over the Chambal River at Sahson.

Our records are the first documented occurrences

of the Rusty-spotted Cat in southern Uttar Pradesh and also within the boundaries of the National Chambal Sanctuary. They add a new locality within the species' known range.

The Rusty-spotted Cat has previously been recorded in neighbouring regions of National Chambal Sanctuary, including Keoladeo National Park (Singh et al. 2017), Dholpur & Karauli Districts (Sharma & Dhakad 2020), Ranthambore Tiger Reserve (Jhala et al. 2020) in Rajasthan, and in Gwalior Forest Division in Madhya Pradesh (Pawar et al. 2024). Previous records in Uttar Pradesh are limited to the Terai region further north (Anwar et al. 2010, 2012; Jhala et al. 2020; Pawar et al. 2021).

Our records underscore the need for targeted surveys in these forested patches of the Chambal–Yamuna interfluvial landscape. This region between both rivers consists of a network of rugged gullies and ravines, stretching for approximately 480 km in a 10-km wide belt for Chambal river (Haigh 1984; Joshi 2014) and The Yamuna River is bordered by ravines along roughly 250

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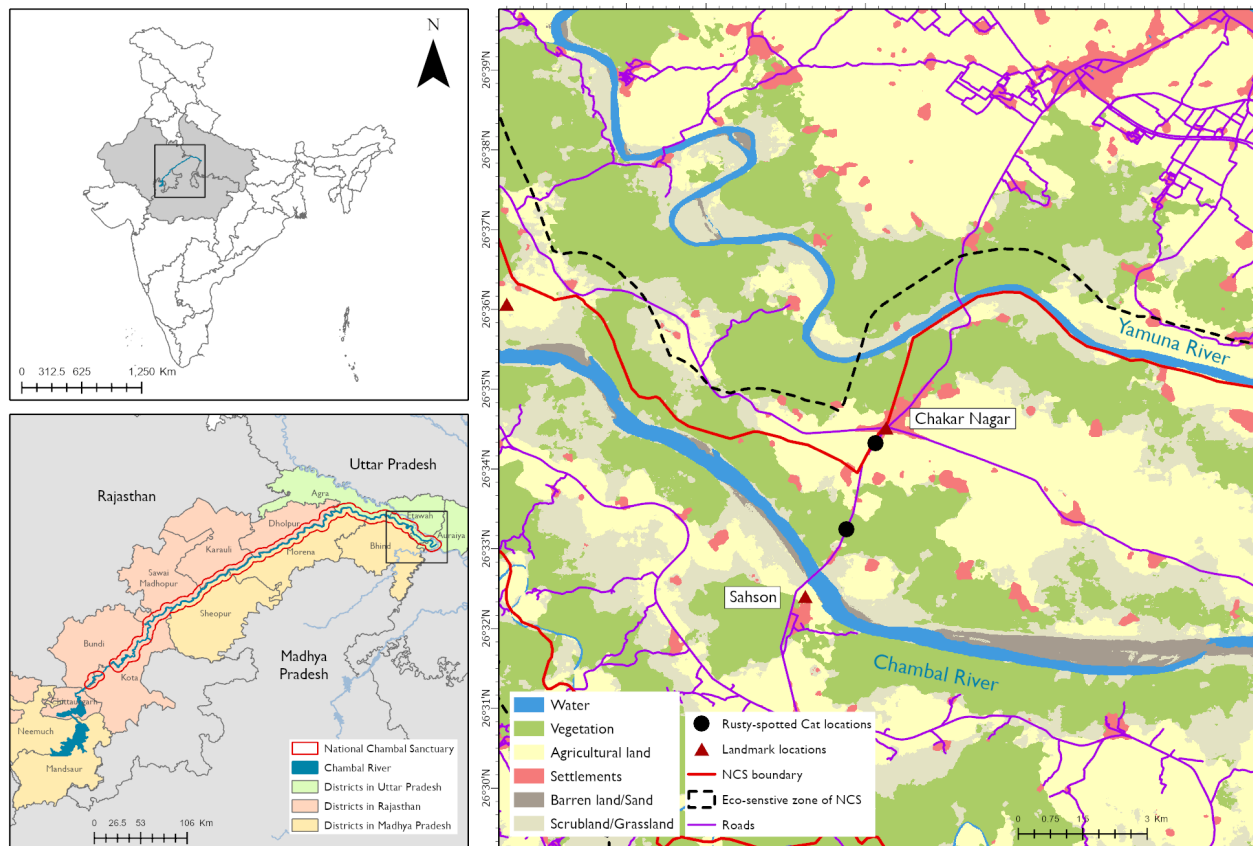


Figure 1. Locations of roadkill records of Rusty-spotted Cats in National Chambal Sanctuary, Etawah District, Uttar Pradesh.

km of its course (Chatterjee 2009), which are dominated by thorn forests (Champion & Seth 1968). Elsewhere in India, the Rusty-spotted Cat has been recorded in similar thorn and dry deciduous forests and rugged, hilly terrain (Vyas & Upadhyay 2014; Sharma & Dhakad 2020; Singh & Kariyappa 2020; Singh et al. 2026).

Multiple roadkill incidents indicate that vehicular traffic has been a significant threat to the Rusty-spotted Cat (Tehsin 1994; Digveerendrasingh 1995; Rao et al. 1999; Vyas & Upadhyay 2014; Nayak et al. 2017; Adhikari et al. 2019; Sharma & Dhakad 2020; Patel et al. 2024; Pawar et al. 2024; Vyas et al. 2025), which is a possible consequence of habitat fragmentation associated with developmental and agricultural activities. This threat reinforces the need for targeted mitigation measures to ensure the persistence of this small cat in human-modified landscapes.

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Image 1. Rusty-spotted Cat roadkill found on 14 March 2025. © Hiyashri Sarma.

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Image 2. Rusty-spotted Cat roadkill found on 24 April 2025. © Rajib Saha.

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