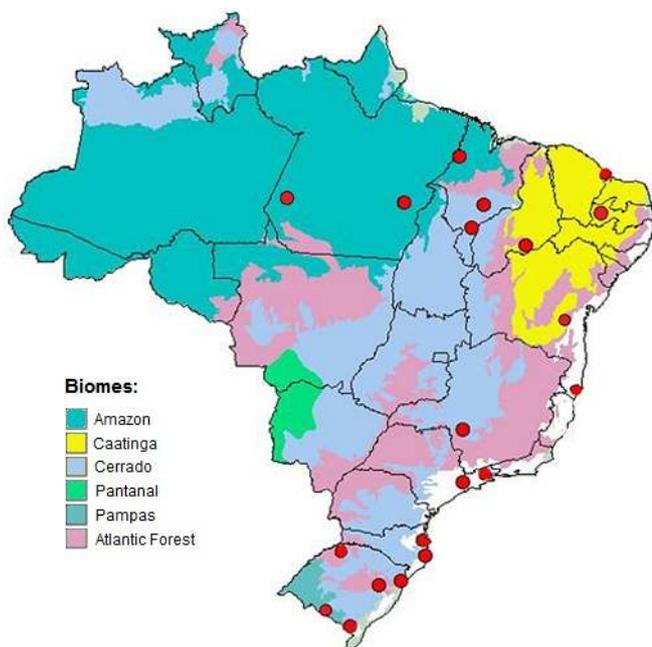


Project Wild Cats of Brazil: contributions towards small cat conservation – a demographic, home range and distribution assessment for cat conservation in Brazil

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The Neotropical Felidae are among the least known species of the family. There is an unfortunate lack of information regarding their demographic and natural history parameters as well as their status assessment, which are of critical importance in management and conservation action planning. Project Wild Cats of Brazil (PWCB) started in 2004 aiming to study all small cat species occurring in Brazil. In 2010, it became a research program. Its present actions concentrate on the ecology and conservation issues in all critical habitats of Brazil. The main sources of data for ecological studies are camera-trapping photographs.



Project Wild Cats of Brazil: study sites marked with red dots.



Ocelot ranked first in 80.8% of the surveyed areas. Photo credit: PWCB

Species abundance varied greatly from 0.036 to 12.368 photos/100 camera-trapping days. Ocelot *Leopardus pardalis* was the most abundant cat and ranked first in most habitat types, whereas the smaller species were recorded less often. Jaguarundi *Herpailurus yagouaroundi* was the

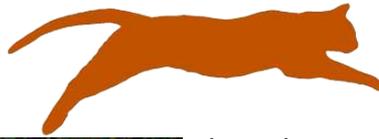


Margay is the least common cat in savanna habitat. Photo credit: PWCB



Jaguarundi is the least photographed cat in Brazil. Photo credit: PWCB

least abundant species almost everywhere. The Northern Tiger Cat *L. tigrinus* was not strongly associated with forested habitats as the Margay *L. wiedii* and Southern Tiger Cat *L. guttulus* were. Area requirements for the effective conservation of smaller cat species appear to be larger than for



Geoffroy's Cat is the most abundant cat in southern Brazil. Photo credit: PWCB

Range limits are being established for the two Tiger Cat species. The Tiger Cat species complex is also being evaluated in ecological terms. Data generated by PWCB have been key in determining the Red List status of all these species at the national level in Brazil as well as globally in the framework of the IUCN Red List Assessments of 2008 and 2016 (e.g. Oliveira et al. 2008, 2013, 2015, 2016). We also made significant contributions towards the elaboration of the Small Cats Conservation Action Plan of Brazil. We estimated densities of all species, and also formed a new ecological theory called "The Ocelot Effect", which is the dominant effect of a mid-sized predator, the Ocelot, as the main influence in the dynamics of the Neotropical smaller felid guild (Oliveira et al. 2010, Oliveira 2011).

the larger-sized Ocelot. Whereas Ocelot conservation relies on the system of protected areas, conservation of the smaller species will largely depend on strategies implemented outside protected areas.

Home range estimates varied from 1.8 to 63.7 km² with VHF telemetry for Margay, Jaguarundi, Southern Tiger Cat and Geoffroy's Cat *L. geoffroyi*, and with GPS telemetry for Geoffroy's Cat and Margay, all in mosaics of natural and agricultural areas. Knowledge of the geographic distribution range has also been improved and refined with range extension for Pampas Cat *L. colocola*, Margay and Ocelot.



Pampas Cat was recorded in tropical savanna in northeastern Brazil. Photo credit: PWCB



Southern Tiger Cat is mostly associated with the highly threatened and fragmented Atlantic forest biome. Photo credit: PWCB



Northern Tiger Cat is the only Endangered carnivore in Brazil due to its occurrence mostly in the threatened Cerrado and Caatinga biomes. Photo credit: PWCB

In 2011, we discovered a unique evolutionary process, which resulted in the separation of the Tiger Cat into two separate species: the Northern Tiger Cat *L. tigrinus* and the Southern Tiger Cat *L. guttulus* (Trigo et al. 2013).

Acknowledgements are due to Fundo Nacional do Meio Ambiente (FNMA conv. 001/04), Pró-Vida Brasil, Área de Vida and Bioconsultoria.

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Small *W*ild Cat Conservation *N*ews

Proceedings

of the

First International Small Wild Cat Conservation Summit

11–14 September 2017, United Kingdom

