Night Life

Jungle Cat

The jungle cat (*Felis chaus*) is also called the swamp cat or reed cat, as it is often associated with wetland habitats like swamps, littoral and riparian areas. The species has a very wide-ranging but patchy distribution that extends from the Nile River Valley in Africa, through India and tropical China to Southeast Asia. Although their preferred habitat is the tall grasses and reed beds surrounding wetlands, it is an extremely adaptable species and is also found in desert oases, grasslands, scrub jungles, deciduous forests, agricultural areas and forest plantations. Interestingly, although their geographical range is largely below 1000m, in the Himalayas, jungle cats have been sighted at up to 4000m elevation. They are most active at night, but are not strictly nocturnal; jungle cats have been sighted moving around at dusk and during the day. They usually hunt small rodents, lizards, snakes, frogs, hare, insects and small birds, but may also scavenge upon the kills of large predators. The jungle cat is threatened by habitat loss, poaching and trade for meat and skin. Farmers often poison and hunt jungle cats in retaliation for attacking poultry, and in Asia, there has been a dramatic decline in jungle cat numbers since the 1990s.

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