

Project Update: March 2021

Introduction

Through the grants received from Rufford Small Grants, the study is being conducted on "Identifying Felids ranging out park boundaries, assessing their impacts on community properties around Nyungwe National Park and proposing mitigation measures". This research came up in order to contribute to the provision of responses on problem animals which have been reported around Nyungwe National Park, where wild felids are in suspect to range out the park boundaries and kill livestock. This report is updating how far the project is being implemented with preliminary findings.

Key findings on camera trap's captures

➤ Felids

Camera traps captured two species of felids such as African wildcat (*Felis silvestris lybica*) and serval (*Leptailurus serval*)

i) Wildcat (*Felis silvestris lybica*)



Wildcat recorded in community forest nearby the park boundary

The above cat was recorded in community forests nearby the buffer zone and core forest. It was recorded nearby community settlements.

Besides this wild cat, we recorded a domestic cat and a third cat which is expected to be a hybrid between wildcat and domestic cat.

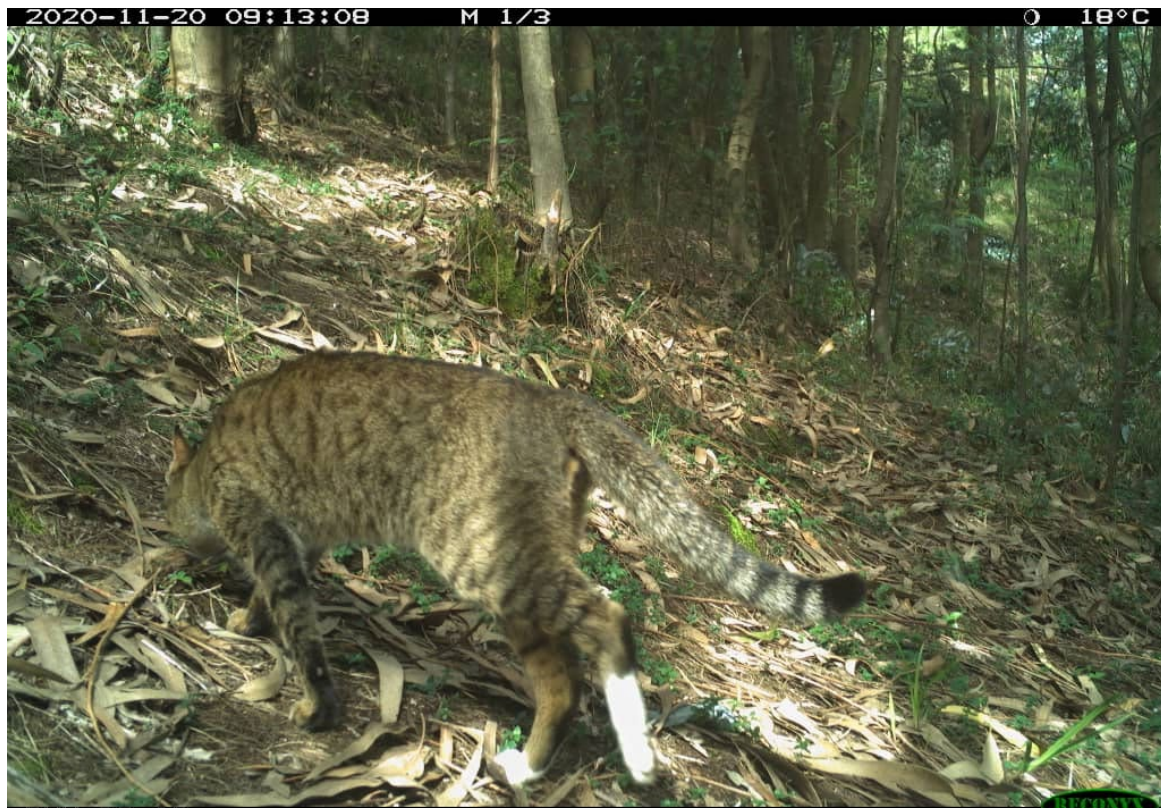
- Domestic cat



- A third cat suspected to be hybrid:

In this study, there is amazing record of a cat which is totally different from wildcat and domestic cat. Following consultation with different carnivorous/felids specialists, they proved that the third cat recorded with white leg (see picture below) could be found from hybridisation between wild and domestic cats. Amazingly, this hybridisation is not commonly known in African cats, and may need more study that may include the collection of DNA data and making blood analysis among the three species of recorded cats.

Recorded cats: assumed to be hybrid between wild and domestic cats



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ii) **Serval (*Leptailurus serval*)**

This species was recorded in community farmlands, buffer zones and inside the park. Camera traps are showing that the population of this species may have increased in numbers.



➤ **Other species**

Camera traps are recording side-striped jackal (*Canis adustus*), domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*), serval, large-spotted genet (*Genetta maculata*), olive baboon (*Papio anubis*), black-fronted duiker (*Cephalophus nigrifrons*) and livestock. The following are some pictures of recorded animals.



Large-spotted genet (*Genetta maculata*)



Side-striped jackal (*Canis adustus*)



Black-fronted duiker (*Cephalophus nigrifrons*)



Livestock: cows and sheep

Conclusion

The identification of felids that leave park boundaries to kill livestock is ongoing and the progress is good though the decisions for combating the spread of covid-19 hinder the camera trapping activities. Until now, no records of leopard or golden cat have been observed though local communities complained that these species were moving around, but this will be verified and concluded by final results.