

Project Update: April 2011

The news about my research is rather mixed. Come the end of June 2011, I will have 10 months worth of occupancy data from scats, tracks, and kitten rescues, diet data from 50 (and counting) scats, some recommendations as to studying small cats on agriculture areas and, most importantly, lessons learned. It is clear that there is a resident population of the cats in this area, in spite of the intensive agriculture that is practised and they seem to be reproducing successfully, judging by the number of kittens found by agricultural workers. I have sent samples to Thailand for genetic studies, and hope that they will give me a better idea of how many individual cats are in the area. I think that all of this will give us a substantially better idea of the biology of the cats than we had previously.

However, on 19th April 2011, I decided to pull out all the traps from the cane fields, as the last parcel of standing cane is being harvested. We have been trying to trap leopard cats for 7 months. We've tried three different kinds of live traps and the foot snare. We have tried all sorts of bait (from lab rats, to cane rats, to chicks supplemented by all sorts of smelly things like sardines, dried fish, shrimp paste, fish and chicken guts, cumin, catnip, chicken liver, dead rats, dead birds, etc.) I've also consulted other small cat researchers as to their trapping methods, and have been guided by the local hunters as to trap placement. I followed every advice I was given (save for making leopard cat kittens as live bait); even had a local shaman do some ceremonies with the traps, all of it to no avail. So, it is with great difficulty that I am informing you that I won't have any telemetry data to report on.