

# CAT

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# news





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Original contributions and short notes about wild cats are welcome

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# First record of Asiatic golden cat from Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale Area, Nepal

**We report the first record of Asiatic golden cat *Catopuma temminckii* from Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale TMJ area in Nepal. This is also the second photographic record of the felid in the country and first record of a brown pelage Asiatic golden cat in Nepal.**

A camera trap survey was carried out in the TMJ area of eastern Nepal in November–December 2017 to study the status of small carnivores in the area (Fig. 1). The survey ranged in altitude from 2,375 m to 3,568 m. A total of 30 camera traps were deployed in the area opportunistically along trails, ridges, and waterholes for 406 camera trap nights. The camera traps were positioned at a height of approximately 30 cm.

A single independent image of an Asiatic golden cat was captured on 21 November 2017 at 09:30 h by a camera trap (Bushnell Trophy Cam HD-119774) at 2,873 m (Fig. 2). The image shows a brown morph Asiatic golden cat. There were no other images of the golden cat from any other camera trap site. The camera trap was placed on a trail with medium human disturbance, and no attractant was used. Dominant vegetation in the area was *Rhododendron* spp., while other floras on the site were *Daphne* spp., *Hera-cleum* spp., *Quercus* spp., and ferns. Other sympatric felids captured during the survey were leopard *Panthera pardus* and leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis*. Jungle cat *Felis chaus* was also reported by locals.

The first verifiable record of an Asiatic golden cat from Nepal was a melanistic individual camera trapped on 9 May 2009 at 2,517 m in Makalu Barun National Park which is adjacent to the study area (Ghimirey & Pal 2009). Melanistic morphs have been reported from India and Bhutan (Bashir et al. 2011, Vernes et al. 2015). In Bhutan, four different colour morphs of Asiatic golden cat have been recorded: normal or golden morph, grey morph, melanistic morph and spotted or ocelot pattern morph (Jigme 2011). Different morphs of Asiatic golden cat have been found to occupy the same area and have even been recorded socializing with each other (Vernes et al. 2015). Asiatic golden cats are mostly diurnal (Lynam et al. 2013, Vernes et al. 2015). The highest elevation record of the species is

from Bhutan at an altitude of 4,282 m (Dhendup et al. 2016).

Threats to Asiatic golden cat documented during the survey were linked to poaching. We also heard four gunshots during our field period and an anecdote of a wild felid dying after a villager kept it as a pet.

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**Fig. 1.** Map of the study area with camera trap location where the Asiatic golden cat was captured.



**Fig. 2.** Brown morph of Asiatic golden cat camera trapped in TMJ, Nepal (Photo FON Nepal/RRN).