



# FISHING CAT

CARNIVORA

Family: Felidae

Genus: *Prionailurus*

Species: *viverrinus*



**Range:** Sri Lanka throughout Peninsular India into Pakistan and Kashmir, Indochina, Southern China, Sumatra and Java

**Habitat:** marshy thickets, mangrove swamps and dense cover along streams and up to 7,000'

**Niche:** terrestrial, nocturnal, carnivorous

**Wild diet:** small mammals, birds, fish, crustaceans, mollusks, frogs and snakes

**Zoo diet:**

**Life Span:** (Wild)

(Captive) 12 yrs

**Sexual dimorphism:** male almost twice as heavy as female

**Location in SF Zoo:** Outside Lion house, across from Penguins

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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The fishing cat has two light, longitudinal stripes extend across the forehead and along the inner corner of the eye in pure white. On the forehead the light stripes are framed on both sides by dark brown to black lines that extend to the back across the neck to the shoulder region. The back of the small rounded ears is black with a white spot in the middle. A light to white stripe with dark edges also extends at an angle across the cheek, from the eye to the throat. The base color of southern members is brownish gray whereas northern members are more iron to silver-gray.

The shoulder has a dark, butterfly-shaped marking on both sides. The legs, paws and tail are spotted while the flanks have spots that form angles of about 30-60 degrees in the forward direction. The surface enclosed by the angle is often slightly darker than the base coloration ("halos"). The build is stocky, the limbs relatively short, and a tail that is unusually thick and muscular near the base and only reaches the heel of a standing animal. The head is large and elongated and dentition that is exceptionally strong, considering the animal's size. The eyes are set closer together than other cats. The forepaws have digits joined by traces of swimming membranes. The claw sheaths are too small to allow the claws to retract completely.

<b>Weight:</b> M - 24-26 lbs F - 13 - 15.5 lbs
<b>Length:</b> 28 - 34 in
<b>TL:</b> - 10 - 13 in
<b>SH:</b> - 15 - 16 in

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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The major threat to fishing cats is the destruction of their wetlands habitat. For example, in Sri Lanka it has been documented that a variety of factors are responsible for this loss, including land reclamation, dumping, clearing of the natural vegetation, and pollution. Also destructive fishing practices that greatly reduce the fish stock they require and they are also a victim of poaching being hunted for food, medicine, or various body parts. They are listed on CITIES Appendix II and endangered on the IUCN Red List.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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Female fishing cats call to attract males to initiate mating. The home range for female fishing cats was found to be 4-8 km<sup>2</sup>. The home range for a male was 22 km<sup>2</sup>.

Fishing cats have been known to pat their paw on the surface of the water imitating an insect in order to attract fish.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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Kittens have been seen in the wild in April and June. A single kitten has been taken from a lair consisting of beaten down patch among reeds, with tunneled approaches from two sides. In captivity, births have occurred in March and August. Eyes open at 16 days, first meat at 53 days and adult size reached at 264 days.

Although capable of breeding all year round, birth peaks have been noted in March and May in north-eastern India. In captivity, males have been recorded to aid in the rearing of young

Estrous:	Sexual Maturity: 10 months
Gestation: 63 - 68 days	Weaning Age: 4-6 months
# of Mammae:	Weight at birth: 6 oz
# of Young: 1 - 4	

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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Largest member of the genus that also includes: Leopard Cat, *Prionailurus bengalensis*, Iriomote Cat *Prionailurus iriomotensis*, Flat-headed Cat, *Prionailurus planiceps* and the Rusty-spotted Cat, *Prionailurus rubiginosus*, all found in SE Asia.

Prior to work done in 1993 these cats were lumped with many others in the genus *Felis Viverra* (L) a ferret -inus (L) suffix meaning like, pertaining to.

### Sources:

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