



Exciting news from Jim Sanderson, Small Wild Cat Conservation Foundation

Covid-19 lit a fire under SWCCF. During the past six months SWCCF has been transformed by our donors and field partners around the world. Supported by generous donations, SWCCF is working on more projects than ever before. Our website <http://www.smallcats.org> has been transformed and now features links to many of our field projects. The need for community of nearly 50 partners created a connected, horizontally organized global network of small cat conservationists. Four members volunteered to serve as Regional Coordinators; their stories follow. The Fishing Cat Working Group became Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance (FCCA). Incorporated in Texas, FCCA is now a 501(c)3 non-profit. Thanks to a young, enthusiastic Pakistani conservationist, FCCA now has community conservation projects in every range country where fishing cats occur. The quest to declare the Talamanca onchilla a species unto itself has accelerated. SWCCF partner Embaka launched the first community conservation project to save Africa's least known wild cat, the African golden cat. The African Golden Cat Working Group was created and quickly added partner projects in Cameroon and Sierra Leone. In Brazil, the Regional Coordinator is pushing to convince the federal government that a subspecies of Pampas cat needs immediate attention. Below are their stories. Many more are forthcoming. Thanks to a small but dedicated group of donors & conservationists working together, SWCCF is ramping up small cat conservation efforts globally. Covid-19 has not slowed us down.



Ai Suzuki, Myanmar

The Fishing cat occurs across South and Southeast Asia. The species shows patchy distribution indicating an inseparable association with wetlands. Ayeyarwady delta in Myanmar is one of the largest deltas in Southeast Asia, but very limited information is available on their distribution and status. We are investigating their distribution along with remaining mangrove forests while implementing threat reduction programs, especially trying to reduce the number of indiscriminate snares. Under the COVID-19 lock-down, we have shifted to a more collaborative approach with communities. We create job opportunities related to camera trap surveys initiated by local people. Local people set camera traps for Fishing cats around their villages and protect cameras. Also, we distributed a food package for 30 households in most need, and at that time, we interviewed people to obtain their suggestions to manage the mangrove area while minimizing conflict with local livelihoods. We asked their historical interaction with mammals in the mangrove, and knowledge on biodiversity to make some booklets to pass that knowledge to the future generations. Together with local communities, we are currently exploring the status of Fishing cats and conservation strategies.

[Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance»](#)



Badru Mugerwa, Uganda

The African golden cat (*Caracal aurata*) is the least known of Africa's 10 species of wild cats and its biology has eluded scientists for centuries. An African golden cat skin was purchased from a London shop before 1820 but the origin of the skin remained a mystery. Differing color morphs...such as grey, rufous, and black lead to a confused number of separate species. Our understanding of this cat is further challenged by its secretive behavior and rarity. I have recorded all the three color morphs, the melanistic one being the rarest. Found across Africa's rain forest midsection, little else is known.

For instance, geographic range maps show the African golden cat occurs in Angola based solely on a skin purchased from a trader in 1860. A single record 20 years old fills in Sierra Leone, and records from the late 1800s add Liberia. Like all forest wildlife, we know bush-meat hunting extracts a heavy toll. In southwest Uganda, Embaka's community conservation project involves ending bush-meat hunting by providing rural villagers with local pigs that can be used as food but also sold for cash that enables villagers to buy their children essential school uniforms and supplies. Embaka is now rolling out a mobile dental clinic to provide dental care that has never been available before.

[Embaka »](#)



**José D. Ramírez-Fernández,
Costa Rica**

The smallest cat north of the equator in the Americas occurs only in the Talamanca mountains of Costa Rica and western Panama. Known by many common names, the Northern tiger-cat (oncilla, tigrina, or small spotted cat) (*Leopardus tigrinus*) occupies only the highest elevation cloud forests. Separated by the low elevation Darien of eastern Panama, the nearest population occurs in mid-elevation forests of Colombia. Due to a lack of samples, the few molecular analyzes performed suggest that what we call the Talamanca oncilla is sufficiently different to be a unique species. Costa Rica Wildlife Foundation's Oncilla Conservation (OC) project is on it! By looking actively for biological samples and working with local communities, OC aims to collaborate on solving this taxonomic issue, raise awareness on the species conservation status and mitigate threats to its survival.

[Costa Rica Wildlife Foundation »](#)



Tadeu de Oliveira, Brazil

The tiger cats and the Pampas cats are part of puzzling, little known species complexes. There are proposals to split the two species into several species. The tiger cat species complex will likely be formed by four different species (two are recognized) and the Pampas cat was proposed to be five species. Of these Significant Evolutionary Units, Brazil holds four, all of which are subjects of Conservation and Research Program Wild Cats Brazil. During these pandemic times, we have been focusing our conservation actions in the public policies realm of conservation. We've been discussing with Maranhão State's environmental authorities into using the northern tiger cat (*Leopardus tigrinus*) as a flagship species for both the State's and Mirador State Park conservation. Mirador was recently confirmed as a key worldwide conservation area for *L. tigrinus*. Our community conservation efforts in Mirador are concentrated in bringing the community within and outside park borders to understand and care for this and other cat species, as well as targeting their main threats, the very high likelihood of disease transmission by domestic dogs. Mirador also holds an important population of the savanna species of Pampas cat, *L. braccatus*, which for some unknown reason is mostly melanistic there. We are encouraging the Federal Government to declare the ecologically distinct Pampas cat Evolutionary Units to be distinctive species so that Brazilian legislation can take legal action (it applies only to species, not to populations). The Pampas cat *L. munoai* found in the Pampas grasslands is critically endangered and likely on the brink of

oblivion. Needless to say, we know almost nothing about it. Nevertheless we have already elucidated important threats and key conservation actions needed. The Conservation and Research Program Wild Cats Brazil appreciates all the help received.

[Wild Cats Brazil»](#)



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