



CONSOLIDATED REPORT FOR SMALL CATS CONSERVATION STATUS IN DUDHWA LANDSCAPE IN UTTAR PRADESH





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Executive Summary:

The Dudhwa Landscape forms a critical part of the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) and supports a remarkable diversity of mammals, including a suite of lesser-known small felids. Understanding the distribution, habitat associations, and persistence of these small felids across the Dudhwa Landscape is therefore essential for evidence-based carnivore conservation planning. Given their varied ecological requirements, the small cat species – individually and collectively -- serve as useful bio-indicators for evaluating the health of the Terai ecosystem and the effectiveness of landscape-level connectivity measures. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India, with State Governments of Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, UNDP, WWF-India and the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) is implementing a Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded project titled “Strengthening conservation and resilience of globally significant wild cat landscapes through a focus on small cat and leopard conservation.” This project aims to secure the conservation of globally significant wild cat landscapes in PAs, tiger corridors and buffer zones northern, north-eastern and western India by filling knowledge gaps, connecting stakeholders (conservation agencies, local communities and other stakeholders), and developing approaches and strategies towards strengthening monitoring and conservation actions for small cats.

The Dudhwa landscape comprises lowland sal forest, grassland and wetland habitats, supporting a wide range of globally significant wildlife species including at least four species of small wild cats - the leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*), rusty spotted cat and jungle cat (*Felis chaus*). The Tiger Reserve consists of three disjunct Protected Areas: Dudhwa National Park and Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Lakhimpur-Kheri district and Katarniaghat WLS in the adjacent Bahraich district. Camera trap-based Relative Abundance Index study provided a baseline on the abundance, spatial distribution, and ecological correlation of small wild cats in the Dudhwa landscape. Correlation analyses highlighted that relative closeness to rivers and grasslands positively influenced small cat occurrence, whereas proximity to villages and *tal* (wetland) coverage was negatively associated with small cat presence. Activity pattern analyses indicated that the four small cats were predominantly nocturnal, with high temporal overlap ($\Delta_4 > 0.80$). However, these species likely occur at relatively low densities, utilize available habitats differentially and have overlapping but differentiated feeding habits – all factors that may reduce the potential for inter-specific competition.

In five villages representing diverse communities, focus group discussions were held on small cat species—covering their behaviour, prey, habitat, ecological role, and coexistence with people. Across all villages, participants mentioned that they have no conflict with small cats and that these species have coexisted with them for generations. They expressed willingness to support their conservation, provided that the government also works on improving their livelihood, education, and awareness. They also discussed the need for measures to reduce conflicts (linked to depredation of small domestic animals) as a measure that would help strengthen local support for small cat conservation.

From a conservation standpoint, these findings emphasize that small felids are highly dependent on fragile ecosystems like the Terai’s wetlands (once extensive, but now limited in their extent, and facing diverse pressures) Maintaining the abundance and diversity of wild prey species – including small mammals, birds and fish, the status of which are poorly understood, and habitat connectivity are also identified as important actions to ensure small cat persistence. Integrating small-cat monitoring goals within the periodic monitoring of tigers, co-predators and prey will be an important step towards developing a fuller understanding of status, trends and conservation needs of small cats, and devising appropriate management strategies that more fully encompass the Terai’s unique ecosystems and wildlife. would enable a more inclusive and ecologically representative assessment of landscape health. Based on the current assessment, targeted conservation measures include prioritizing of wetland restoration, devising strategies to secure wildlife in corridors, and local consultations towards reducing pressure on important small cat habitats In the future, efforts will need to extend towards



promoting the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices (that accommodate small cats and their prey), increasing awareness and creating livelihood opportunities linked to small-cat conservation, and building partnerships to strengthen conservation outcomes.



Overview:

India supports 11 species of small and medium-sized cats, including the jungle cat (*Felis chaus*), rusty-spotted cat (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*), leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*), Asiatic golden cat (*Catopuma temminckii*), marbled cat (*Pardofelis marmorata*), clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), caracal (*Caracal caracal*), Pallas's cat (*Otocolobus manul*), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), and desert cat (*Felis lybica*). These species range in diverse habitats, from wetlands and grasslands to dense forests, cold deserts and even agricultural mosaics (Kitchener et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2020).

Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and its surrounding areas form a critical part of the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL), represents one of the last remaining tracts of alluvial grasslands and moist deciduous forest along the Indo–Nepal border. Encompassing the Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary, and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, along with the corridors between these PAs (distributed mostly over agricultural land), this mosaic supports a remarkable diversity of mammals, including a suite of lesser-known small felids. These small wild cats, though often overshadowed by the more charismatic tiger (*Panthera tigris*), play indispensable ecological roles as mesopredators and indicators of habitat integrity (Sunquist & Sunquist, 2002; Mukherjee et al., 2016).

The small cat species recorded from the Dudhwa Landscape are the leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*), rusty spotted cat and jungle cat (*Felis chaus*) (Habib et al., 2025; Jhala et al., 2020; Chanchani et al., 2014). Each species occupies a distinct ecological niche defined by unique physiology, ecology (in relation to habitat and food selection and other related factors). The fishing cat, a globally threatened wetland specialist, is closely associated with riverine and swamp habitats, especially along the Suheli, Mohana, Girwa and Kaudiyala river systems in Katarniaghat and the buffer wetlands of Dudhwa (Mukherjee et al., 2012; Haque & Vijayan, 1995). The leopard cat, in contrast, is a habitat generalist that thrives in the mosaic of grasslands, sal forests, and agricultural fringes, serving as a potential surrogate for habitat connectivity between protected areas and adjoining community lands (Kawanishi et al., 2008; Srivastava et al., 2021). The jungle cat, more tolerant of human presence, is often encountered in degraded forest patches and along canal networks and agricultural fields, indicating its adaptability to modified landscapes (Mukherjee et al., 2010). The small cat distribution is also reported from trans-boundary area of Nepal, Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve and Bardiya National Park are connected via LaggaBagga corridor with Pilibhit and Dudhwa and via Khata corridor with Katarniaghat respectively. Nepal reported rusty spotted cat for the first time in 2016 from the region highlighting the small cat distribution in the landscape (Khan, 1986, Das, 2019).

The connectivity between Dudhwa, Kishanpur, and Katarniaghat through corridors linkages is crucial for maintaining gene flow and dispersal for these small felids (Wikramanayake et al., 2004; Johnsingh et al., 2004). However, increasing fragmentation from land use change, linear infrastructure expansion, and wetland degradation has posed significant conservation challenges. The small cats' reliance on specific habitat structures—dense undergrowth, water availability, and small prey base—makes them particularly vulnerable to such landscape changes (Kumar et al., 2019). Despite their ecological significance, these species remain among the least studied carnivores in northern India, with



most information derived from incidental camera-trap records within tiger monitoring programs rather than dedicated studies (Jhala et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2015).

Understanding the distribution, population status, habitat associations, and persistence of these small felids across the Dudhwa Landscape is therefore essential for holistic carnivore conservation planning. Given their varied ecological requirements, the small wild cats collectively serve as useful bio indicators for evaluating the health of the Terai ecosystem and the effectiveness of landscape-level connectivity measures (Karanth & Nichols, 2017;). This report aims to synthesize available information on their occurrence and habitat use across Dudhwa, Kishanpur, and Katarniaghat, and to highlight the significance of maintaining corridors for ensuring their long-term survival within a human-dominated matrix.

Project Background:

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India, with State Governments of Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, UNDP, WWF-India and the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) is implementing a Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded project titled “Strengthening conservation and resilience of globally significant wild cat landscapes through a focus on small cat and leopard conservation.” This project aims to strengthen conservation measures in globally significant wild cat landscapes in northern, north-eastern and western India through a landscape conservation approach for wild cats that brings together species conservation programs, connects stakeholders and empowers communities, and operates across PAs, tiger corridors and buffer zones.

Each project landscape is built around a key Protected Area (PA) for wild cat conservation and surrounding buffer zones that contain important habitats for small cats. Activities will be conducted within PAs, buffer zones (demarcated as up to 10km around each PA) and identified tiger corridors within these landscapes. The project landscapes are - Dudhwa landscape in Uttar Pradesh, and Pakke – Eaglenest landscape in Arunachal Pradesh. In addition, Ranthambhore landscape in Rajasthan is covered under the UNDP GEF funded components of the project for soft support (e.g. staff training) and as such is excluded from the scope of WWF/GEF intervention.

Project Objective:

The project objective is to secure populations and habitats of wild cats, subject to habitat encroachment, human-wildlife conflict, poaching and illegal trade in priority landscapes of northern, north-eastern and western India. This will be achieved through four complementary components that aim to:

Component 1: build the required enabling policy framework and institutional capacity.

Component 2: strengthen government management of wild cats and habitats.

Component 3: build community stewardship at landscape level.

Component 4: enhance corporate sector partnerships, regional collaboration, and knowledge transfer and learning.



Components 2 and 3 (WWF GEF funded) will be implemented in two project landscapes (Dudhwa and Pakke-Eaglenest), putting in place the required local capacity, collaborations and community stewardship for landscape-scale conservation in globally-significant landscapes for wild cats that are focused on Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) where small cat distribution overlaps with big cat habitats. Component 2 will bring together key government departments with roles to play in wild cat conservation to support the implementation of landscape-scale master plans. This will help to build a complementary and coordinated action portfolio for wild cat conservation bringing together big cat and small cat conservation under the guidance and supervision of NTCA. Working in parallel with Component 2, in the same wild cat landscapes, Component 3 will build community stewardship and engagement towards the co-management of wild cat habitats.

Project Landscape - Dudhwa landscape in Uttar Pradesh

The Dudhwa landscape comprises three protected areas which together form the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. The surrounding matrix is primarily agriculture with sugarcane and paddy being dominant crops. The landscape lies in Eastern Uttar Pradesh in Lakhimpur-Kheri and Bahraich Districts. The international boundary with Nepal forms the northern boundary of the landscape, with the northern boundaries of Dudhwa National Park (NP) (approx. 56 km) and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) (approx. 55 km) lying on the international India-Nepal border. The landscape comprises lowland sal forest, grassland and wetland habitats, supporting a wide range of globally significant wildlife species including at least four species of small wild cats – fishing cat, jungle cat, leopard cat and rusty-spotted cat. The Tiger Reserve consists of three disjunct PAs: Dudhwa NP and Kishanpur WLS in Lakhimpur-Kheri district and Katarniaghat WLS in the adjacent Bahraich district. Parts of North Kheri Forest Division, South Kheri Division and a small part of Shahjahanpur Forest Divisions form parts of the buffer of the Tiger Reserve. The core area is 1093.79 km², and buffer is 1107.98 km², thus the total area is 2201.77 km². Project interventions in Components 2 and 3 will focus mainly on grassland, wetland and agricultural lands in the vicinity of Dudhwa NP and Katarniaghat WLS.

Project Deliverables by WWF-India

Output 1

Strengthened policy, planning and institutional framework for wild cat conservation in accordance with the National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-2031

Output 1.1

Landscape level master plans for wild cat conservation developed and institutionalized into Government plans and programs for Dudhwa Landscape

Deliverables

- i. Assessment of small cat presence in Dudhwa Landscape
- ii. Occurrence of small cat species using camera trap data
- iii. Occurrence of small cats based on indirect evidence (field and village survey)
- iv. Identify probable hotspots of small cat species in Dudhwa Landscape
- v. Threat to small cat habitat



Chapter 1: Understanding the Abundance and Distribution of Small Cats in the Dudhwa Landscape, Uttar Pradesh

1.1 Introduction:

Small wild felids are an enduring, but often overlooked, component of the Terai–Duars mosaic of the Dudhwa landscape. The Dudhwa complex (Dudhwa National Park, Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary and Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary) contains a fine-scale mix of tall grasslands, alluvial wetlands, sal-dominated forests and agricultural matrix that together create habitat for both large carnivores and a diverse assemblage of small wild cats (jungle cat *Felis chaus*, fishing cat *Prionailurus viverrinus*, leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis*, and the rusty-spotted cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus*). The landscape's protected areas and their intervening corridors therefore function not only as tiger territory but also as critical habitat for these smaller, habitat-specialist felids.



Figure 1: Small Cat species photo captured: a) Fishing Cat b) Jungle Cat c) Rusty Spotted Cat d) Leopard Cat.

Ecologically, small cats occupy a range of functional niches, from wetland specialists that hunt aquatic prey to generalist mesopredators in scrub and crop margins and thus, provide information about habitat condition, prey-base integrity and human–wildlife interface dynamics at spatial scales different from those of tigers and leopards. Because of their cryptic nature, low detection probabilities and



historically tiger-centred monitoring have left important gaps in our understanding of their population status, fine-scale distribution and population trends in the Dudhwa landscape. Recent conservation initiatives and field efforts like camera trapping, sign surveys, targeted wetland surveys and emerging genetic approaches are beginning to address these data gaps.

From a broader conservation perspective, the status of these species globally varies. While leopard cats are widely distributed across Asia and assessed as Least Concern globally, species such as the rusty-spotted cat show more restricted and patchy records and are of greater conservation concern at regional scales. Habitat modifications like wetland drainage, conversion of grasslands, road and rail fragmentation, and human disturbance in the multi-use matrix, all act to shape small-cat occupancy and connectivity across the landscape. These pressures mean that a landscape-level approach, one that explicitly includes corridors and seasonally inundated habitats in survey and management planning is essential to conserve viable populations of these species alongside larger carnivores.

Most available records are either incidental or part of broader mammalian surveys, leaving significant gaps in understanding their habitat associations, elevation ranges, and adaptability to changing landscapes. Given the rapid pace of land-use change, it is increasingly vital to document and understand where these species persist and how they utilize this heterogeneous environment. This chapter aims to generate information on the relative abundance and distribution patterns of small wild cats across the Dudhwa Landscape, and highlights priority areas for monitoring and management. This chapter aims in contributing to a clearer picture of their ecological status and outlines future directions and actions for small cat conservation in this rapidly transforming biodiversity-rich frontier.

1.2 Study Area:

The Dudhwa landscape comprises of some of the last remaining wetland and alluvial tall grassland habitats of the Terai Arc, spanning the large areas within Lakhimpur Kheri and Bahraich districts of Uttar Pradesh, adjacent to Nepal. Characterized by stands of dry deciduous forests dominated by sal (*Shorea robusta*), tall wet grasslands, marshes, and riverine floodplains, the region continues to support a rich assemblage of small wild cats, many of which remain data deficient, relative to the region's large carnivores (Kumar et al., 2019; Yadav et al., 2021) (Figure 2).

Central to the Dudhwa landscape is the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, which includes Dudhwa National Park and Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary, while Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary extends the habitat westward along the Girwa and Kaudiyala river systems. Together, these PAs create an interconnected mosaic of habitats, enabling species movement and ecological continuity (Johnsingh & Negi, 2003; Wikramanayake et al., 2010). According to the Tiger Conservation Plan of Dudhwa TR, the grasslands are classified into three broad categories. (a) Open grassy patches in Sal forests interspersed with swamps represented by grass communities characterized by *Sclerostachya fusca*, *Themeda arundinacea*, *Narenga porphyrocoma*, *Vetiveria* and *Saccharum*. (b) Open grassy patches in Sal forests without swamps represented by grass communities of *Imperata-Saccharum*, *Vetiveria-Saccharum*, and *Vetiveria-Alpluda mutica*. (c) Grasslands with or without patches of trees along major rivers and *nalas*. These are represented by grass communities of *Vetiveria*, *Imperata*, *Sclerostachya*



fusca, *Saccharum bengalense*, *S. spontaneum*, *Phragmites karka* and in drier areas *Cymbopogon martinii*. These are interspersed with *tals* and swampy patches.

Dudhwa NP is dominated by tall swamp grasslands interspersed with sal forest patches and wetland complexes. These conditions are particularly suitable for small wild cats such as the fishing cat and rusty-spotted cat, which depend on dense cover and water-linked prey availability (Mukherjee et al., 2016; Gray et al., 2015). Seasonal flood pulses from the Mohana and Suheli rivers shape these habitats annually, influencing small cat distribution and prey dynamics. Kishanpur WLS, although more compact, represents some of the most structurally diverse sal forests in the reserve. Its floodplain grasslands and forest–agriculture edge habitats offer ideal conditions for jungle cats and leopard cats, both known to tolerate moderate disturbance but sensitive to large-scale habitat fragmentation (Rajaratnam et al., 2007; Grassman et al., 2005). Kishanpur’s connectivity with Dudhwa through narrow forest corridors enhances opportunities for dispersal and genetic flow. Katerniaghat WLS distinguishes itself by its dynamic riverine systems. The Girwa River, supporting remnant populations of gharial and Gangetic dolphin, also creates oxbow lakes and marsh habitats where fishing cats and jungle cats have been repeatedly documented (Nair & Gopi, 2020). Its transboundary linkages to Bardia NP in Nepal make it an important landscape for wide-ranging felids and small carnivores moving across forested river corridors (Wikramanayake et al., 2010).

Despite this richness, small wild cats in the Dudhwa landscape face multiple threats, including grassland conversion, unsustainable resource extraction along forest edges, wetland degradation, and increasing human–wildlife interactions driven by agricultural expansion (Khan et al., 2014). Most existing knowledge of small cats in the region comes from sporadic field sightings or camera-trap bycatch from tiger monitoring efforts (Mondal et al., 2012; Yadav et al., 2021), underscoring the need for targeted research. Given the habitat heterogeneity and PA contiguity, the Dudhwa landscape presents a unique opportunity to examine niche partitioning, habitat preferences, and movement ecology of small wild cats across grassland, sal forest, and riparian gradients. Strengthening conservation interventions, particularly in wetlands, floodplain grasslands, and ecological corridors, will be essential for ensuring the long-term persistence of these species across the Terai ecosystem.

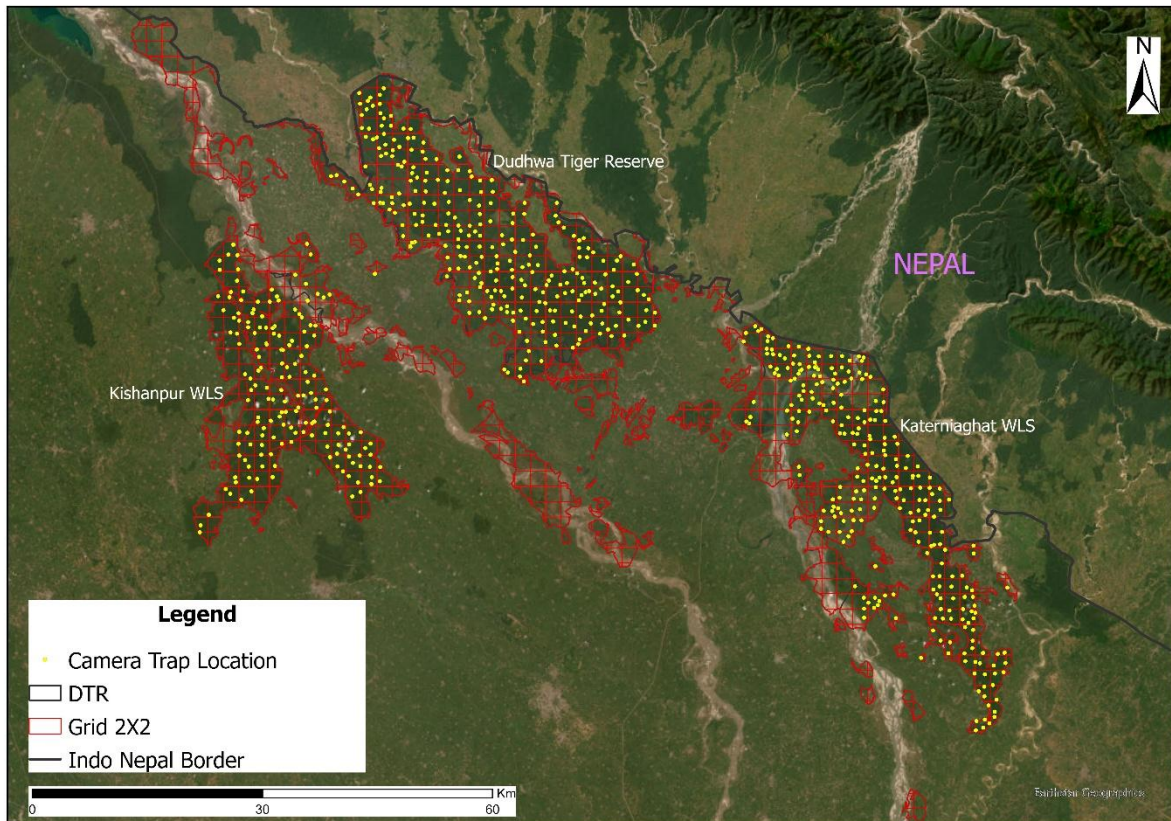


Figure 2: Study area with surveyed grids and deployed camera traps

1.3 Survey Methods:

The camera trap-based Relative Abundance Index (RAI) study conducted in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve provides important insights into the presence and distribution of small wild cats across four sites: Dudhwa National Park (DNP), Katarniaghat (KTG), Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS), and North Kheri Forest Division (NKFD). By-catch camera trap image data from two years (2020 and 2022) for the four species (Fishing cat (FC), Rusty Spotted Cat (RSC), Jungle Cat (JC) and Leopard Cat (LC) obtained from Phase 4 Tiger Monitoring Exercise were extracted and compiled (Table 1). The Relative Abundance Index (RAI) was calculated which is a simple metric for estimating a species' population size.

$$\text{RAI} = (\text{Total Independent Events} / \text{Total Trap Days}) \times 100$$

1.4 Results and Discussion:

1.4.1 Species photo-captured

Among the species recorded, fishing cat showed the highest abundance in DNP (2.85) and KWLS (2.33), highlighting the significance of wetland-rich habitats in these areas that support its semi-aquatic lifestyle. Additionally, both PAs faces lesser level of anthropogenic pressure as compared to KTG and NFD. Jungle cat was widely distributed across all sites, with the highest RAI in KWLS (2.50), followed by DNP (1.61) and NKFD (1.23), reflecting its adaptability to diverse habitat and preference to drier



habitats ranging from grasslands to forest edges, and farmland, which are also rich in rodent population, serving as abundant food reserves. The rusty-spotted cat, was not detected in DNP but recorded in KTG (0.10), KWLS (1.07), and NKFD (0.42), with KWLS emerging as the most significant area within the landscape for the conservation of this this elusive species. In contrast, the leopard cat showed relatively low abundance, with values of 0.29 in DNP, 0.76 in KTG, 0.10 in KWLS, and complete absence in NKFD, suggesting a more restricted presence within the landscape (Table 2). Overall, the findings emphasize that KWLS and DNP harbour greater diversity and abundance of small cats compared to NKFD, where habitats are smaller and more fragmented and disturbed.

Table 1: Number of small cat images captured in Dudhwa landscape

Species	DNP	KTG	KWLS	NKFD
Fishing Cat	651	98	92	10
Leopard Cat	67	153	4	0
Jungle Cat	367	74	81	32
Rusty Spotted Cat	0	21	42	11

Table 2: RAI of small cat species in Dudhwa landscape

Species	DNP	KTG	KWLS	NKFD
Fishing cat	2.85	0.49	2.33	0.39
Jungle cat	1.61	0.37	2.5	1.23
Rusty spotted cat	0	0.1	1.07	0.42
Leopard cat	0.29	0.76	0.1	0

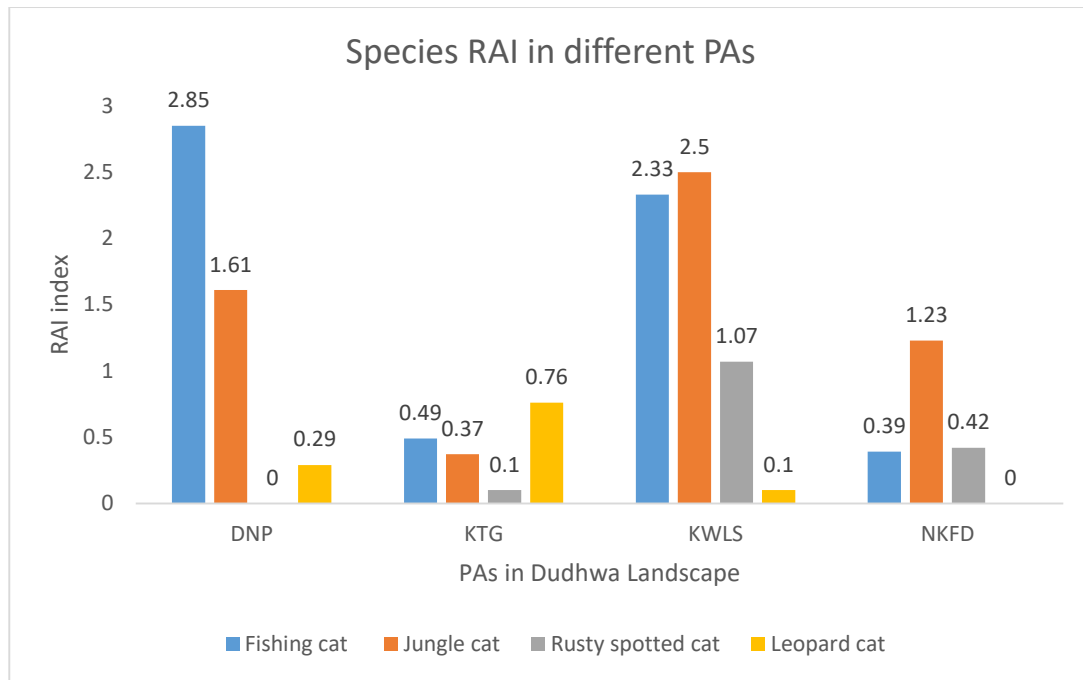


Figure 3: RAI of small cat species in Dudhwa Landscape

1.4.2 Distribution of small cats and their relation with environmental variables:

Heat maps serve as a data visualization tool and they provide quick and intuitive interpretation of complex spatial or numerical data.

In Figures 4, warmer colours such as red and orange represent zones of higher concentrations or relative abundance, whereas yellow and pale shades indicate areas of lower concentrations. This visual gradient allows for quick interpretation of species distribution patterns across locations like Dudhwa National Park, North Kheri Forest Division, and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary. The concentration of higher RAI values around regions suggests that these habitats may offer favourable ecological conditions—such as wetlands, water channels, and prey availability—that support optimum populations for a species. Conversely, areas with lower RAI values may require further assessment to understand potential habitat disturbance or limited prey resources.

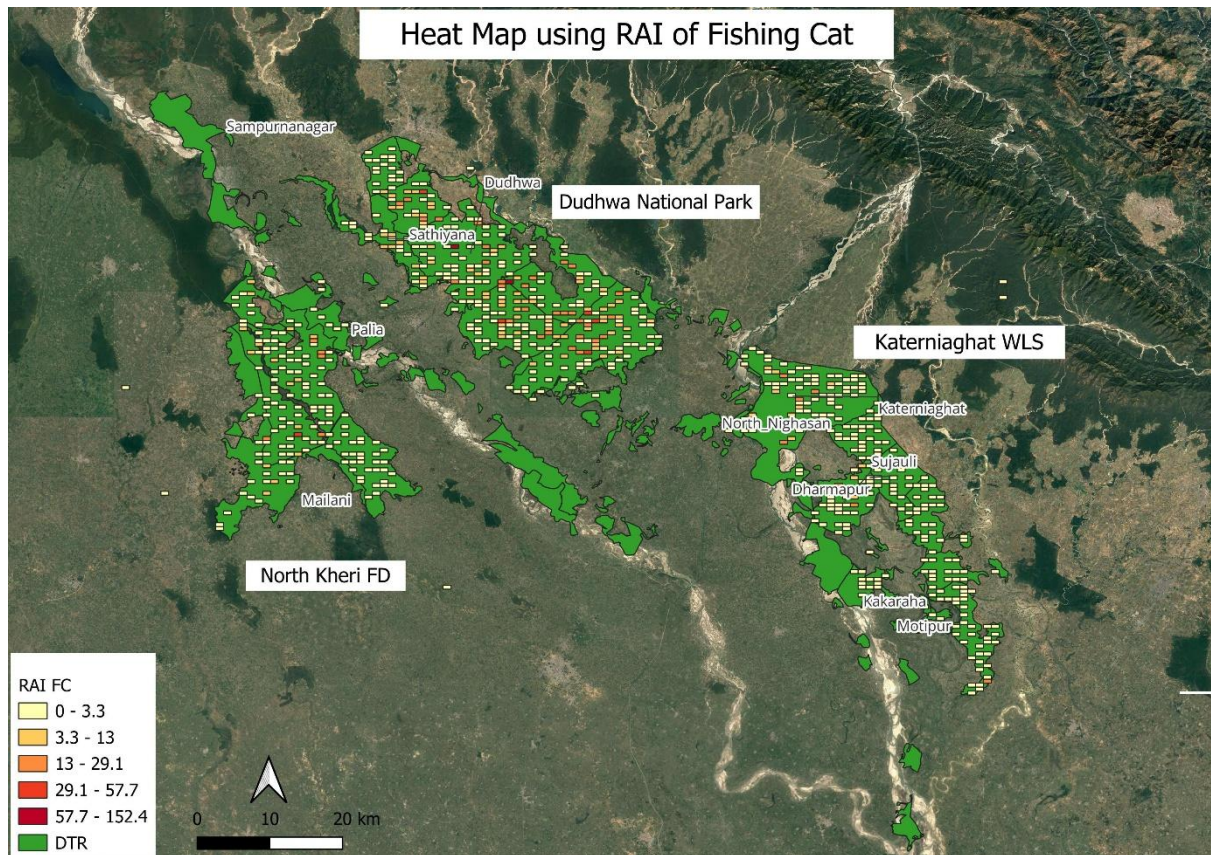


Figure 4: Distribution of Fishing Cat



Figure 5: Fishing Cat

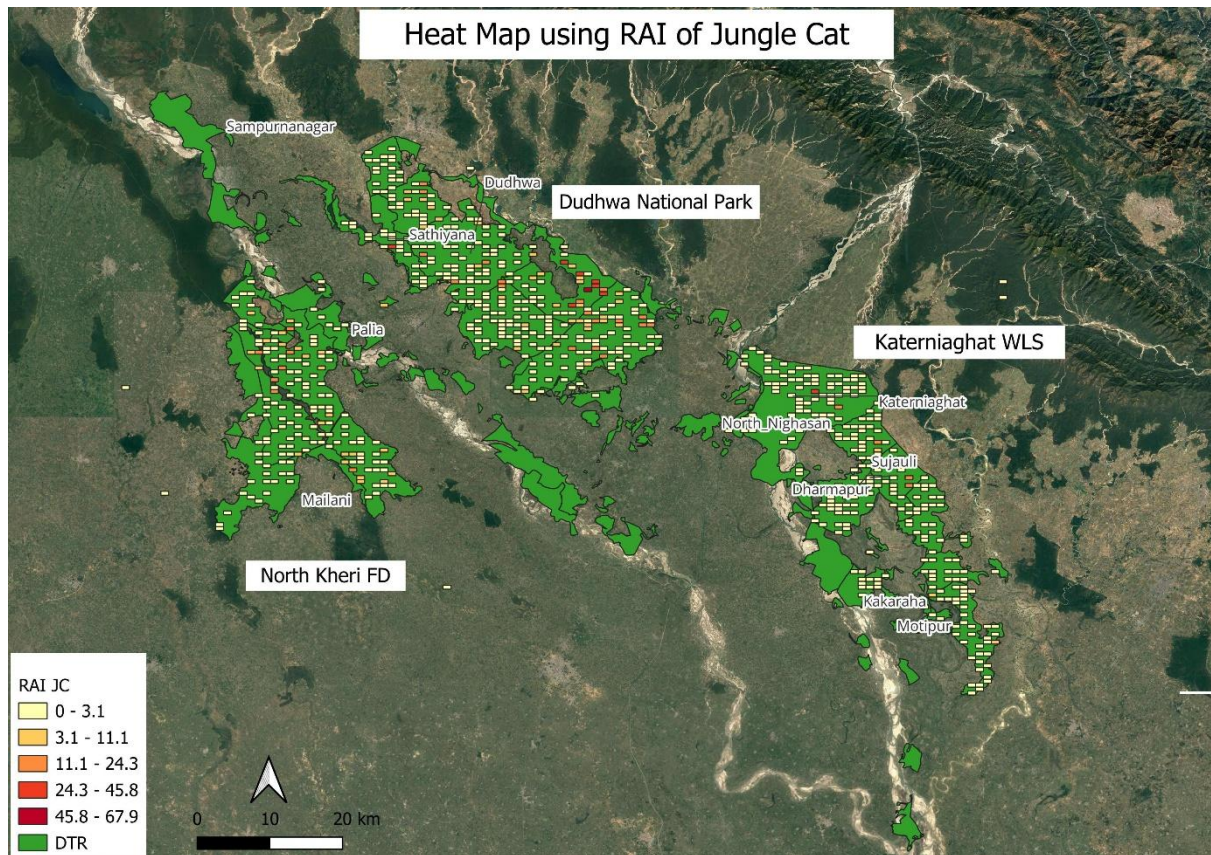


Figure 6: Distribution of Jungle Cat



Figure 7: Jungle Cat

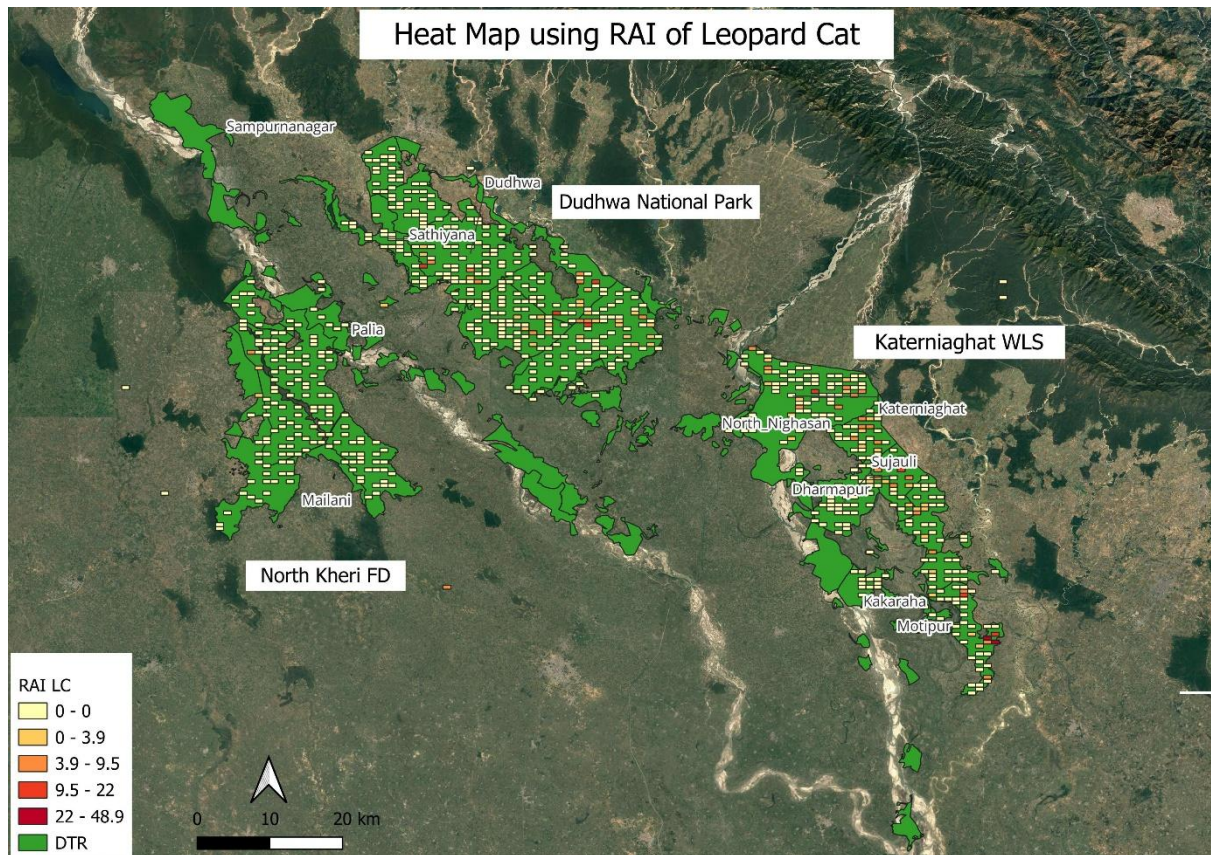


Figure 8: Distribution of Leopard Cat



Figure 9: Leopard Cat

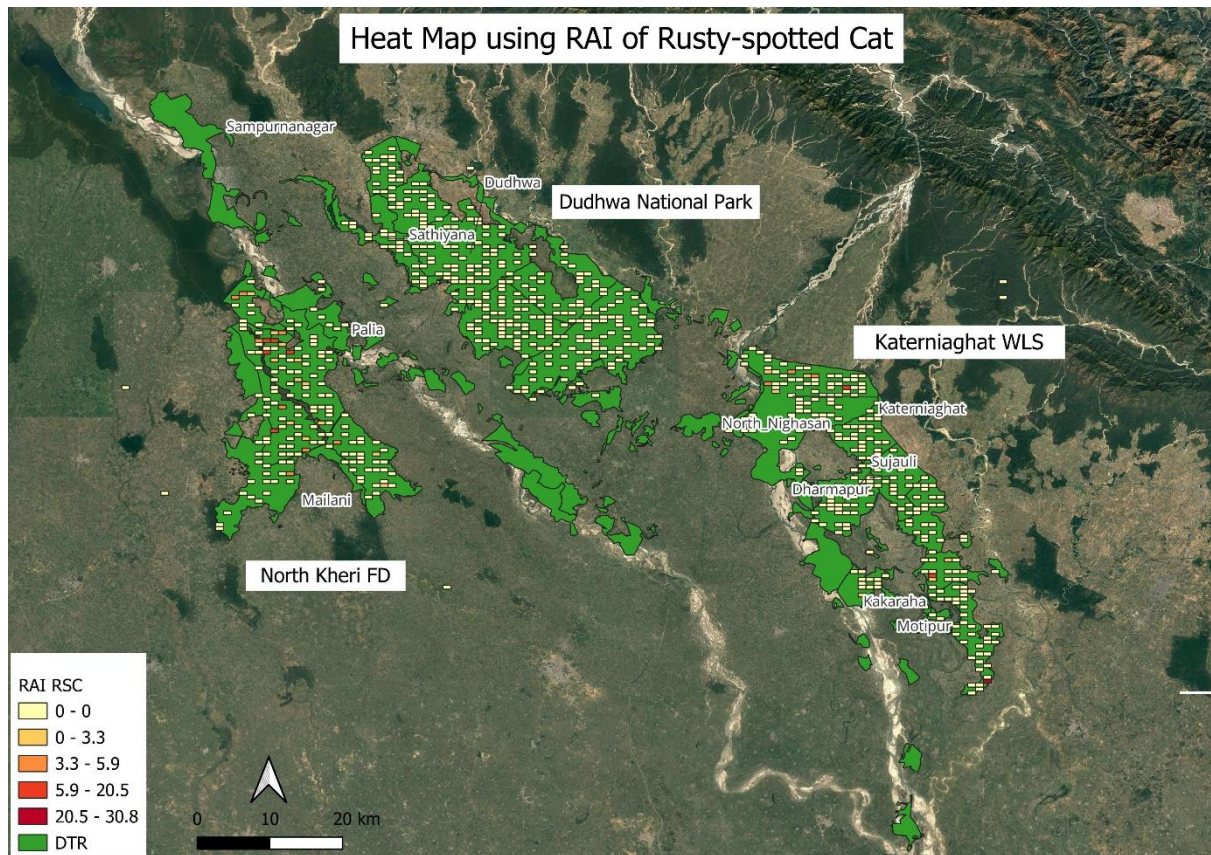


Figure 10: Distribution of Rusty Spotted Cat



Figure 11: Rusty Spotted Cat



1.4.3 Activity Pattern of Small Cats:

Diel activity or activity pattern refers to the daily cycle of activity and rest shown by animals over a 24-hour period. It is usually studied to understand how species divide time for feeding, movement, and other behaviour in relation to ecological factors like prey availability, temperature, predation risk, and human disturbance. Studying the activity pattern or the overlap between two species helps in understanding how species function or the level of competition/avoidance among them. Dhat 4 ($\Delta 4$) is a statistical measure of temporal overlap between two species' activity patterns, ranging from 0 (no overlap) to 1 (complete overlap).

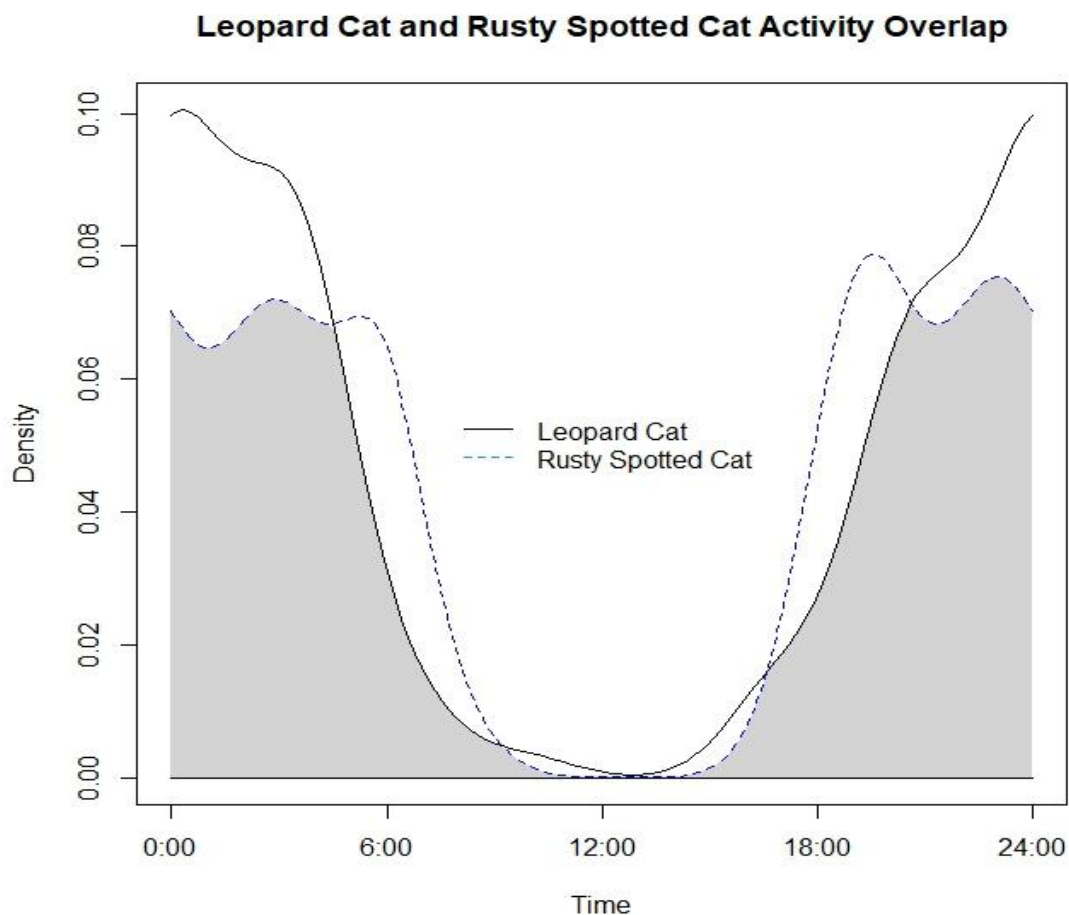


Figure 12: Activity Overlap between Leopard Cat and Rusty Spotted Cat (Dhat 4=0.831)

A value of 0.831 indicates a high degree of overlap between Leopard cat and Rusty-spotted cat activity times. This suggests that both species are primarily nocturnal and crepuscular, utilizing similar time windows for movement and foraging.

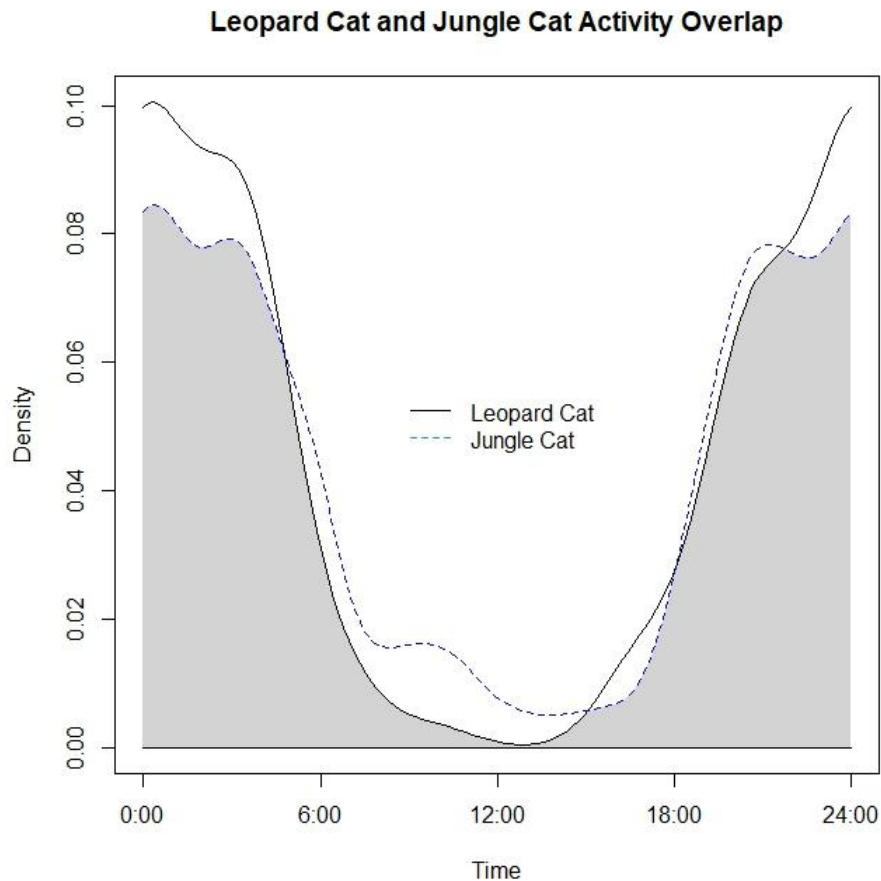


Figure 13: Activity Overlap between Leopard Cat and Jungle cat (Dhat 4=0.902)

A value of 0.902 indicates an extremely high overlap, suggesting Leopard cats and Jungle cats are active during almost the same times. This means both species are predominantly nocturnal/crepuscular and share similar time niches. Additionally, leopard cats show arboreal behaviour which also justifies the coexistence with jungle cat.



Jungle Cat and Rusty Spotted Cat Activity Overlap

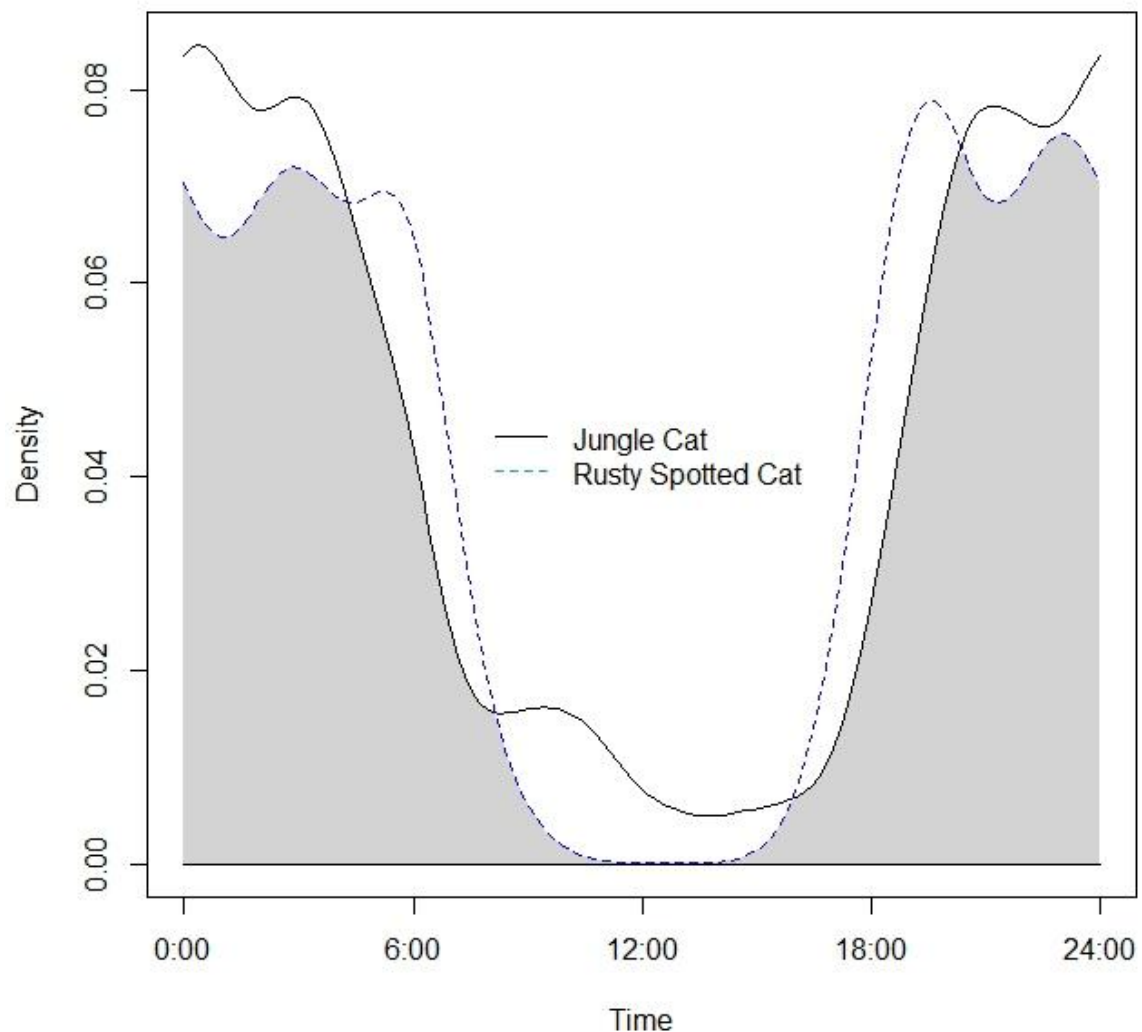


Figure 14: Activity Overlap between Jungle cat and Rusty Spotted Cat (Dhat 4=0.869)

A value of 0.869 indicates high temporal overlap between Jungle cat and Rusty-spotted cat. This suggests that both species share very similar nocturnal activity schedules. Despite this, coexistence is possible through niche partitioning, such as Jungle cats preferring more open grasslands, while Rusty-spotted cats may use denser undergrowth or rocky areas. Prey size differences may also reduce direct competition, with Jungle cats targeting slightly larger prey and Rusty-spotted cats focusing on smaller vertebrates and insects.

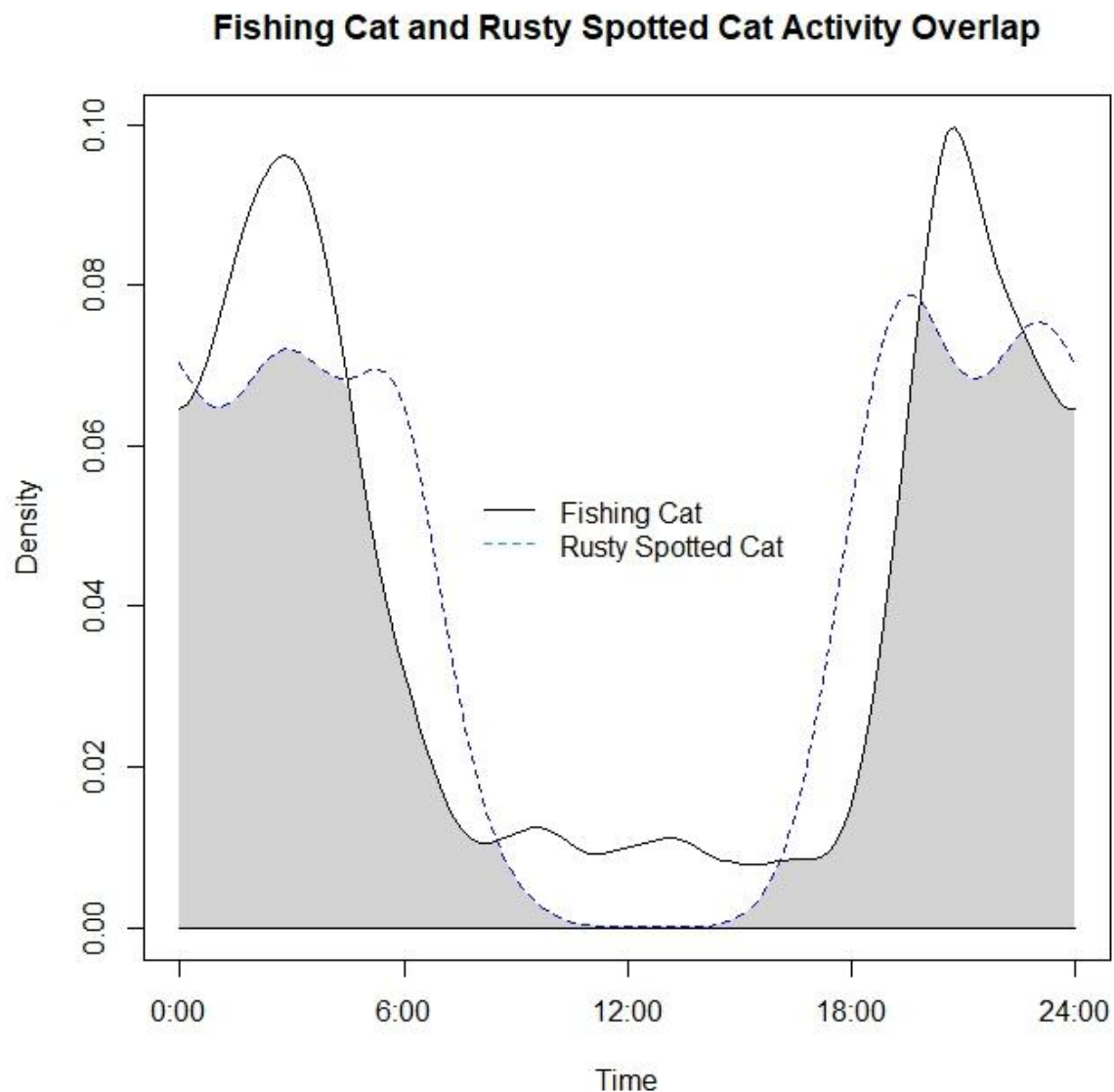


Figure 15: Activity Overlap between Fishing cat and Rusty Spotted Cat (Dhat 4=0.814)

A value of 0.814 indicates high temporal overlap, but slightly lower than the values observed between Jungle cat–Rusty-spotted cat (0.869) and Leopard cat–Jungle cat (0.902). This suggests both species share largely similar nocturnal activity windows, but Fishing cats, being semi-aquatic, may concentrate more around wetland edges, while Rusty-spotted cats use drier scrub or forest habitats. Such ecological differences in habitat use and prey specialization (fish and amphibians for Fishing cat, small mammals and insects for Rusty-potted cat) likely reduce direct competition despite the overlap in activity time.

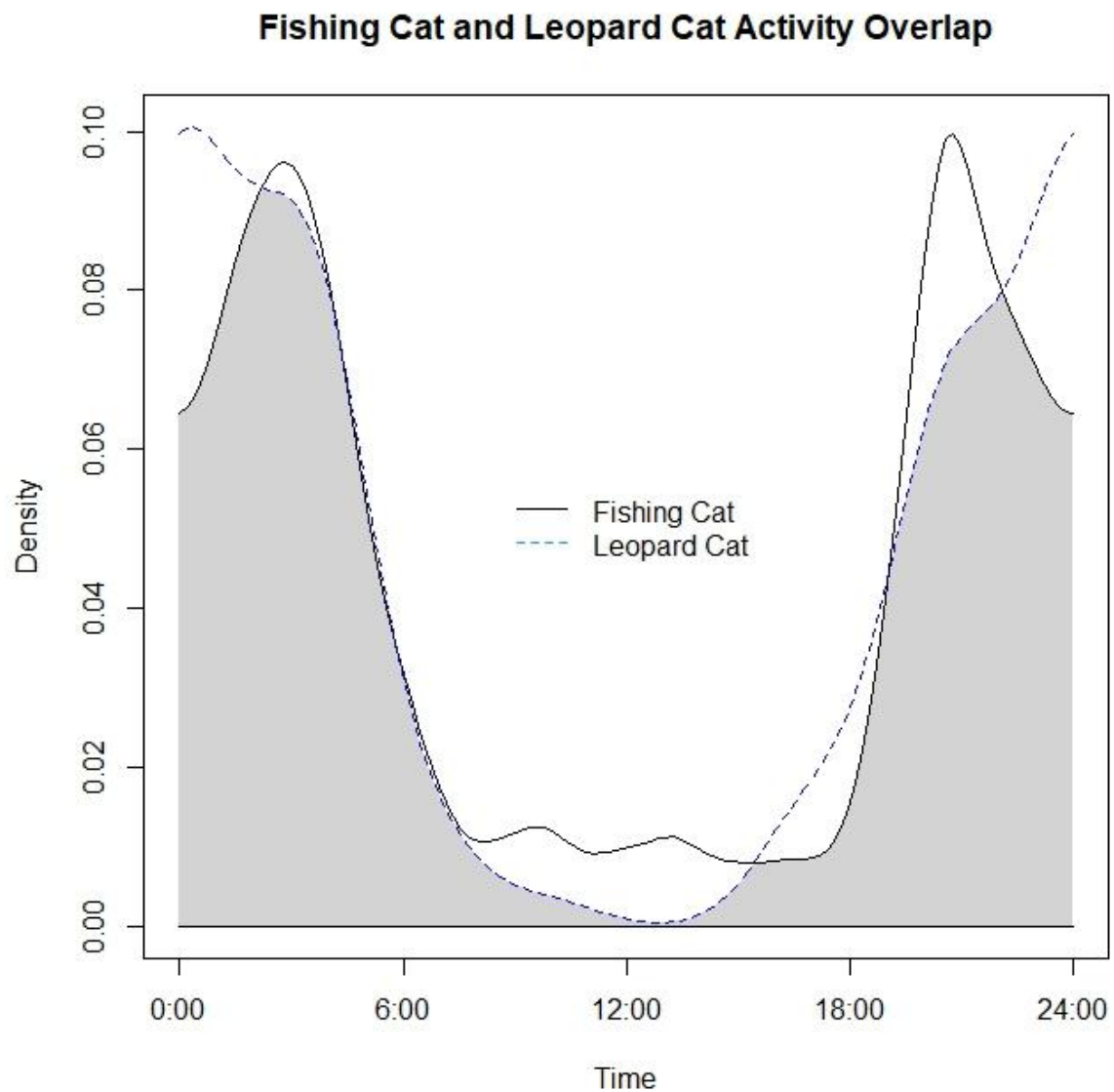


Figure 16: Activity Overlap between Fishing cat and Leopard Cat (Dhat 4=0.884)

Both species are nocturnal, with two clear peaks of activity — early morning (0:00–6:00 hours) and late evening (18:00–24:00 hours). Daytime activity (10:00–16:00 hours) is very low for both species, indicating avoidance of diurnal periods. The shaded region illustrates their temporal overlap, which is substantial across the night.



Fishing Cat and Jungle Cat Activity Overlap

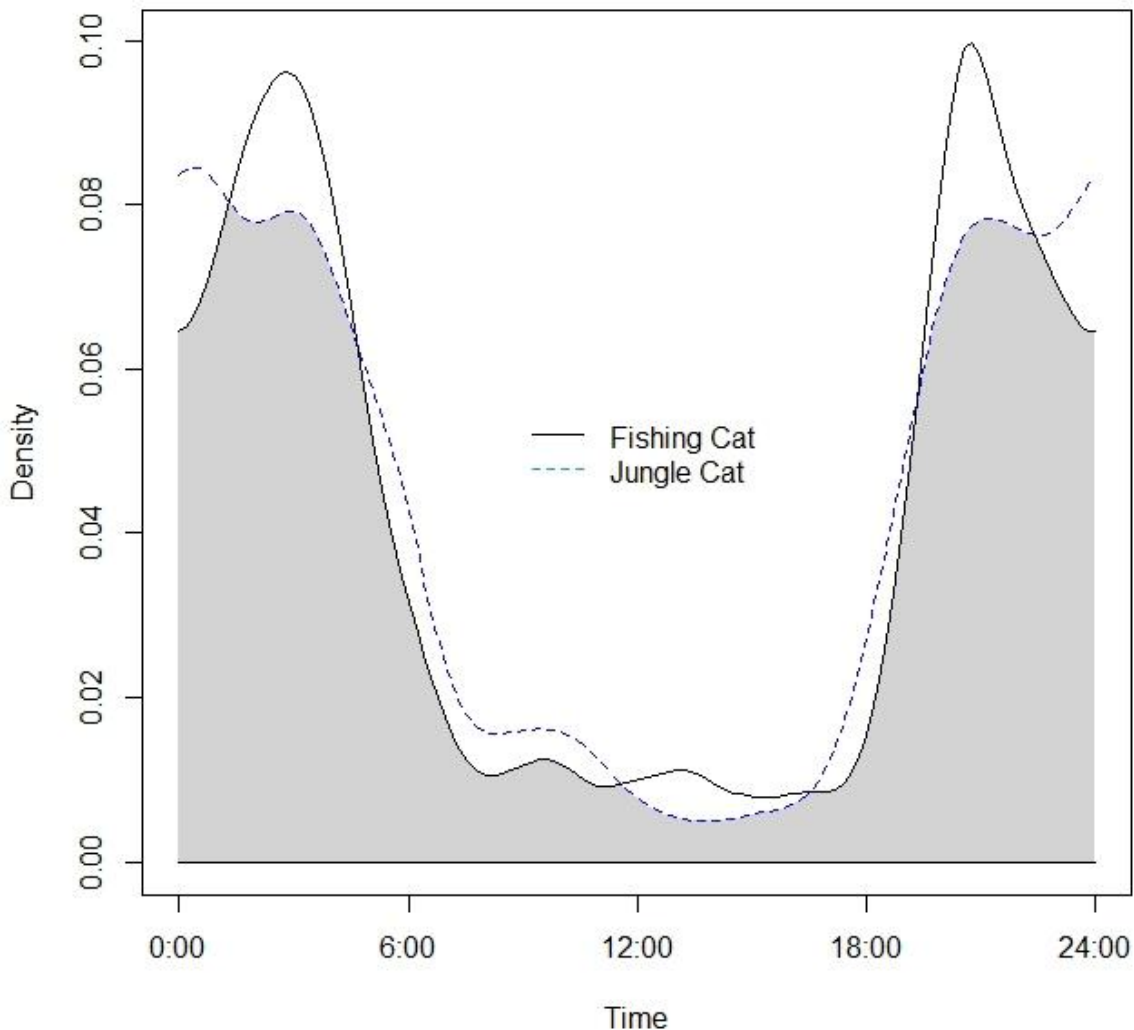


Figure 17: Activity Overlap between Fishing cat and Jungle Cat (Dhat 4=0.96)

A value of 0.96 suggests that both species highly overlap with each other which may lead to higher inter-species competition but fishing cat are found to be more habitat specialist and prefer more wetlands and grass as compared to jungle cat, as jungle cat prefer more dry and open grasslands additionally fishing cats are found to be more prey specialist over jungle cats which lead to coexistence among both species.

1.5 Conclusion:

This study provides a baseline on the abundance, spatial distribution, and ecological correlation of small wild cats across the Dudhwa landscape using camera-trap derived Relative Abundance Index (RAI) data. The analysis reveals distinct yet overlapping ecological niches among the four focal species—Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*), Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*), Leopard Cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), and Rusty-spotted Cat (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*)- reflecting the habitat heterogeneity of the Terai ecosystem. The relatively higher RAI values of Fishing Cat and Jungle Cat in Dudhwa



National Park (DNP) and Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS) underscore the critical role of wetland-grassland mosaics and low-disturbance zones in supporting viable populations of semi-aquatic and generalist species. Conversely, the restricted occurrence of Rusty-spotted Cat, particularly in Katarniaghat (KTG) and North Kheri Forest Division (NKFD), indicates its localised distribution and potential vulnerability to habitat alteration.

The correlation analyses highlight that relative closeness to rivers and grasslands positively influences species occurrence, whereas closeness to villages and extensive *tal* coverage exerts a negative effect. Activity pattern analyses demonstrate high temporal overlap ($\Delta_4 > 0.80$) among species, suggesting strong nocturnal tendencies and potential interspecific competition. The arboreal nature of Rusty spotted cat and Leopard Cat leads to avoidance with the other two species, reducing the interspecific competition and promoting coexistence.

Integrating small-cat monitoring within the ongoing tiger-based surveillance framework would enable a more inclusive and ecologically representative assessment of landscape health. Targeted conservation measures should prioritize wetland restoration, corridor protection, and reduction of human-induced pressures around village interfaces. Future research integrating occupancy modelling, prey availability assessment, and genetic connectivity analyses will be essential to derive population estimates and inform adaptive management strategies.

Collectively, the results reinforce that conserving small wild cats in Dudhwa requires a landscape-level, multi-species approach that recognises their ecological distinctiveness, trophic roles, and sensitivity to anthropogenic gradients—ensuring their persistence alongside apex predators in one of India's most dynamic Terai ecosystems.



Chapter 2: Understanding the perceptions regarding small cats in and around Dudhwa Landscape, Uttar Pradesh, India

2.1 Village wise summary of small cat conservation Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with local communities based are questionnaire:



Figure 18: Locations of Villages where FGDs were conducted in Dudhwa Landscape

2.1.1 Amba Village:

Information Generated from Focus Group Discussions conducted in Amba village Katarniaghat WLS (Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (DTR))

Scope & Purpose of Focus Group Discussions

This information was collected through FGDs in the respective villages. Although this has been presented here in a questionnaire-response format, the interviewer/moderator was required to weave these questions into a discussion and gather additional information where required.

- Date Conducted – 23 Sept. 2025
- Survey Team – Dabeer Hasan
- Farmers, *Bagh Mitras/Gaj Mitras*, Gram Pradhan & Panchayat representatives, Women SHG members (75 Villagers from Amba, Bishunapur, Bhawanipur & Bharthapur villagers)
- Total HH- 299
- Location - Amba village, Katarniaghat WLD, Bahraich district in UP



FGD Data

Section 1: Wildlife / habitats in proximity to villages:

1. Describe to us what *jangal*, *jhaadi*, *nalas* are near your village, and are these areas used by any of the following wildlife (show an album, including images of the small cats and other wildlife)

All the participants were given information about the nearby forest area like Gerua river, Kula, Orai Nala and other forest area and they were shown photos of wildlife as well as small wild cats. During which participants learned about the identification and conservation of small cats. (Photo shown- leopard, fishing cat, Jungle cat, leopard cat, rusty spotted cat, tiger, wild boar, cheetal, nilgai all participants know very well except wild cat)

Jungle cat - Identified

Fishing cat - Identified

Leopard cat - Identified (Only 2 participants)

Rusty spotted cat- Not identified

2. Do any of these animals also use farmlands?

Yes

3. How have these habitats changed over time (in their extent, quality etc.), and how has wildlife use of these areas changed?

Some people mentioned that there have been changes in their habitats, due to which wildlife comes into farmland areas, such as in search of food or because of a lack of shelter. Some survey participants mentioned that the number of wild animals in the forest has increased, and therefore they look for territory in farmland.

4. Which of these wildlife cause you harm, and which if any, are detrimental to you and why?

Tiger and leopard – because they kill livestock and attack on humans.

Elephant - because they damage crop & house and attack on humans.

Wild boar & other herbivorous - because they damage crop

Section 2: Small cats

What are the local names for each of these?

Everyone knew the local names of other wildlife, but for small cats, only "Banbilar" was mentioned as the local name (All cat species)

Two persons were identified the leopard cat with name

Have the local people sighted/heard small cats in their surrounding habitat? (showing of pictures – Leopard cat, Jungle cat, Fishing cat, Rusty spotted cat). How often are these spotted, and how does it compare with how commonly they were seen 10 years ago?



Village residents reported seeing only the jungle cat in their surroundings- sugarcane field, *nalas* and fringe of forest. It is seen two to three times a year in fields or forests. One or two times, the jungle cat gives birth to kittens in sugarcane fields.

What are the preferred habitats for each of these species, and why?

Preferred habitats for these species are where they have food and places for shelter, which is why they are found near villages, as the risk from large predators is lower there.

What is the preferred prey for each of these species? How abundant are these prey species and where are they found?

The preferred prey of these species are small animals like rats, rabbits, birds, squirrels and in village areas, domestic chickens and ducks. These prey species are often found more abundantly in rural areas compared to forests.

Have you observed any changes (increase/ decrease) in the abundance of these prey species (over the last 10 years, and last 20 years)? If yes, why?

People had different opinions about this. About one-third of the people said they could not say anything clearly. One-third believed that the population of these species has increased because illegal hunting has been controlled. Another one-third thought that the population of these species has decreased due to habitat destruction.

Are there any peculiar or unique behaviour of these small cats by which you know or recognize them?

Their size and colour are known, but no unique or special behaviour is observed.

Do you associate the presence of these cats (for each species) with any benefits, or harm? If yes, what/ why?

People have said that these cats definitely control rats and other crop-damaging animals, but their presence is harmful to domestic chickens.

Do you think that their numbers are (a) increasing; (b) decreasing; or (c) stable? Why?

Everyone agreed that the population of small cats has increased along with big cats because earlier roaming poachers (Bawariya & Paridhi community) used to hunt a lot, but now hunting is banned, so the populations of cat species as well as all wildlife species have increased.

What do they think the reason might be?

There were no relevant responses to this question.

Do they think the reason is related to changes in the surrounding habitat?

There is no information about this.

Are there any farming practices that may be beneficial for these species – if yes, are you willing to follow these or not (if no, why not)?



The farmers meant that sugarcane crops are beneficial for these species, but these crops attract tigers/leopards and elephants; therefore, pulses, wheat, turmeric, mentha and paddy crops could be beneficial for these species. They are ready to coordinate with the agriculture department to adopt other crops.

Some farmers said that if the population of these animals is to increase, maize cultivation should be encouraged

What according to the local people are recommended for sustenance and maintenance of their surrounding habitat for long term survival of small cats?

Awareness programs about the conservation of small cats, organic farming, employment, education, and other incentives should be provided to the local community. Formation of committee

Do they want to volunteer/be involved towards the conservation of wildlife and habitat surrounding them?

Yes

Summary and Discussion

In Amba, villagers recognized the presence of diverse wildlife near forested areas such as Gerua River and Orai Nala, frequently reporting tigers, leopards, elephants, and wild boars as sources of conflict due to crop and livestock losses. Among small cats, only the Jungle cat was commonly identified, sighted two to three times a year, mostly in sugarcane fields and forest edges. Villagers acknowledged that these cats help control rodents but occasionally prey on domestic poultry. They believe small cat populations have increased following hunting restrictions and improved awareness. Farmers considered turmeric, paddy, wheat, and mentha cultivation supportive of wildlife and expressed readiness to coordinate with agricultural departments for sustainable practices. The community strongly supported awareness initiatives and volunteered for small cat conservation. They suggested that there is no harm from small cat and he can provide all support of conservation. Most people said that they would protect the wild cats, but wild cat should not be brought from outside and released. They suggested that form a committee for wild cat conservation.



Participant Percentage Distribution (Village - Amba)

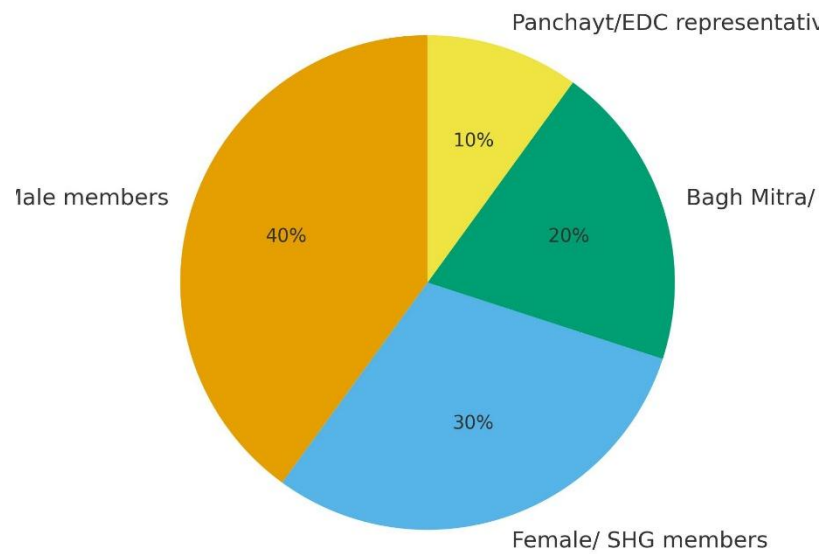


Figure 19: Details of Participants for FGDs in Amba Village, Katarniaghat WLS (DTR)





2.1.2 Matehi (Rana Farm) Village:

Information Generated from Focus Group Discussions conducted in Matehi village Katarniaghat WLS (DTR)

Scope & Purpose of Focus Group Discussions

This information was collected through FGDs in the respective villages. Although this has been presented here in a questionnaire-response format, the interviewer/moderator was required to weave these questions into a discussion and gather additional information where required.

- Date Conducted – 23 Sept. 2025
- Survey Team – Dabeer Hasan
- Farmers, *Bagh Mitras/Gaj Mitras*, Panchayat representatives, Women SHG members (50 Villagers from Ranafarm, Matehi & Azamgadhpurwa villagers)
- Total HH- 250
- Location - Matehi village, Katereniaghat WLD, Bahraich district in UP

FGD Data

Section 1: Wildlife / habitats in proximity to villages:

1. Describe to us what *jangal, jhaadi, nalas* are near your village, and are these areas used by any of the following wildlife (show an album, including images of the small cats and other wildlife)

All the participants were given information about the nearby forest area like Orai Nala, bhinsalot phanta and other forest area and they were shown photos of wildlife as well as small wild cats. During which participants learned about the identification and conservation of small cats. (Photo shown- leopard, fishing cat, jungle cat, leopard cat, rusty spotted cat, tiger, wild boar, cheetal, nilgai all participants know very well except wild cat)

Jungle cat - Identified

Fishing cat - Identified

Leopard cat - Not identified

Rusty spotted cat - Not identified

2. Do any of these animals also use farmlands?

Yes, Jungle cat & Fishing cat

3. How have these habitats changed over time (in their extent, quality etc.), and how has wildlife use of these areas changed?

Some people mentioned that there have been changes in their habitats, due to which wildlife comes into farmland areas, such as in search of food or because of a lack of shelter, some people mentioned



that the number of wild animals in the forest has increased, and therefore they look for territory in farmland.

4. Which of these wildlife cause you harm, and which if any, are detrimental to you and why?

Tiger and leopard – because they kill the livestock and attack on humans.

Elephant - because they damage crop & house and attack on humans.

Wild boar & other herbivorous - because they damage crop

Section 2: Small cats

What are the local names for each of these?

Everyone knew the local names of other wildlife, but for small cats, only "Banbilar" was mentioned as the local name. They said that they often see the Jungle cat & fishing cat, but they also call it "banbilar."

Have the local people sighted/heard small cats in their surrounding habitat? (showing of pictures – Leopard cat, Jungle cat, Fishing cat, Rusty spotted cat). How often are these spotted, and how does it compare with how commonly they were seen 10 years ago?

Local people have reported seeing only the jungle cat and fishing cat in their surroundings-sugarcane field, *nalas* and fringe of forest. It is seen two to three times a year in fields or forests. One or two times, the jungle cat & fishing cat gives birth to kittens in sugarcane fields often.

What are the preferred habitats for each of these species, and why?

Preferred habitats for these species are where they have food and places for shelter, which is why they are found near villages, as the risk from large predators is lower there.

What is the preferred prey for each of these species? How abundant are these prey species and where are they found?

The preferred prey of these species are small animals like rats, rabbits, birds, squirrels and in farmland areas, domestic chickens and ducks. These prey species are often found more abundantly in rural areas compared to forests.

Have you observed any changes (increase/ decrease) in the abundance of these prey species (over the last 10 years, and last 20 years)? If yes, why?

People had different opinions about this. About one-third of the people said they could not say anything clearly. One-third believed that the population of these species has increased because illegal hunting has been controlled. Another one-third thought that the population of these species has decreased due to habitat destruction.

Are there any peculiar or unique behaviour of these small cats by which you know or recognize them?

Their size and colour are known, but no unique or special behaviour is observed.



Do you associate the presence of these cats (for each species) with any benefits, or harm? If yes, what/ why?

People have said that these cats definitely control rats and other crop-damaging animals, but their presence is harmful to domestic chickens, which are in low number.

Do you think that their numbers are (a) increasing; (b) decreasing; or (c) stable? Why?

Everyone agreed that the population of small cats has increased along with big cats because earlier roaming poachers (Bawariya & Paridhi community) used to hunt a lot, but now hunting is banned, community is aware about wildlife protection, so the populations of cat species as well as all wildlife species have increased.

What do they think the reason might be?

There is no information about this.

Do they think the reason is related to changes in the surrounding habitat?

There is no information.

Are there any farming practices that may be beneficial for these species – if yes, are you willing to follow these or not (if no, why not)?

Respondents thought that sugarcane crops are beneficial for these species, but these crops attract tigers/leopards and elephants; therefore, pulses, wheat, turmeric, mentha and paddy crops could be alternative beneficial crops for these species. They are ready to coordinate with the agriculture department to adopt then other crops if they have got some support.

What according to the local people are recommended for sustenance and maintenance of their surrounding habitat for long term survival of small cats?

Awareness programs about the conservation of small cats, organic farming, employment, education, and other incentives should be provided to the local community.

Do they want to volunteer/be involved towards the conservation of wildlife and habitat surrounding them?

Yes

Summary and Discussion

In Matehi, villagers living near Orai Nala and Bhinsalot Phanta reported regular sightings of Jungle and Fishing cats, both locally known as *Banbilar*. These species are often seen near farmlands and water sources, where they find prey like rats, rabbits, and chickens. The community noted that the overall wildlife population has increased as poaching has declined. Although sugarcane fields provide shelter for small cats, they also attract tigers and elephants; thus, villagers suggested diversifying crops such as sugarcane, paddy, wheat, vegetables and mentha. The community highlighted the importance of awareness programs, organic farming, and livelihood support to balance conservation with their agricultural needs, and showed a positive willingness to participate in conservation efforts.

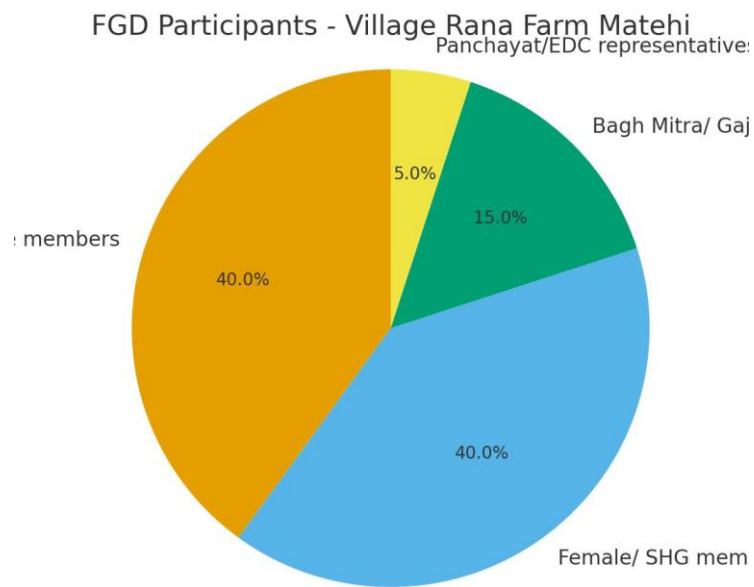


Figure 20: Details of Participants for FGDs in Matehi (Rana Farm) Village, Katarniaghat WLS (DTR)





2.1.3 Gulra (Bhagwant Nagar) Village:

Information Generated from Focus Group Discussions conducted in Gulra village, Dudhwa NP (DTR)

Scope & Purpose of Focus Group Discussions

This information was collected through FGDs in the respective villages. Although this has been presented here in a questionnaire-response format, the interviewer/moderator was required to weave these questions into a discussion and gather additional information where required.

- Date Conducted – 24 Sept. 2025
- Survey Team – Dabeer Hasan, SPO, Kandhai Lal, PO & Radheyshyam, APO
- Farmers, Forest staff, Panchayat representatives, Women SHG members (70 Villagers from Gulra & Bhagwantnagar village)
- Total HH- 350
- Location - Gulra village, Dudhwa NP, Lakhimpur district in U.P.

Section 1: Wildlife / habitats in proximity to villages:

1. Describe to us what *jangal*, *jhaadi*, *nalas* are near your village, and are these areas used by any of the following wildlife (show an album, including images of the small cats and other wildlife)

All the participants were given information about the nearby forest area like Suheli river and other forest area and they were shown photos of wildlife as well as small wild cats. During which participants learned about the identification and conservation of small cats. (Photo shown- Leopard, fishing cat, jungle cat, leopard cat , rusty spotted cat , tiger , wild boar, cheetal, nilgai all participant know very well except wild cat)

Jungle cat - Identified

Fishing cat - Not identified

Leopard cat - Not identified

Rusty spotted cat - Not identified

2. Do any of these animals also use farmlands?

Yes - Jungle cat

3. How have these habitats changed over time (in their extent, quality etc.), and how has wildlife use of these areas changed?

Some people mentioned that there have been changes in their habitats, due to which wildlife comes into farmland areas, such as in search of food or because of a lack of shelter, some people mentioned



that the number of wild animals in the forest has increased, and therefore they look for territory in farmland.

4. Which of these wildlife cause you harm, and which if any, are detrimental to you and why?

Tiger and leopard – because they kill the livestock and attack on humans.

Elephant - because they damage crop & house and attack on humans.

Wild boar & other herbivorous - because they damage crop

Section 2: Small cats

What are the local names for each of these?

Everyone knew the local names of other wildlife, but for small cats, only "Banbilar" was mentioned as the local name. They said that they often see the Jungle cat only, they also call it "banbilar."

Have the local people sighted/heard small cats in their surrounding habitat? (showing of pictures – Leopard cat, Jungle cat, Fishing cat, Rusty spotted cat). How often are these spotted, and how does it compare with how commonly they were seen 10 years ago?

Local people have reported seeing only the jungle cat in their surroundings- sugarcane field, *nalas* and fringe of forest. It is seen often crop fields or forests. One or two times, the jungle cat gives birth to kittens in sugarcane fields often.

What are the preferred habitats for each of these species, and why?

Preferred habitats for these species are where they have food and places for shelter, which is why they are found near villages, as the risk from large predators is lower there.

What is the preferred prey for each of these species? How abundant are these prey species and where are they found?

The preferred prey of these species are small animals like rats, rabbits, birds, squirrels and in farmland areas, domestic chickens and ducks. These prey species are often found more abundantly in rural areas compared to forests.

Have you observed any changes (increase/ decrease) in the abundance of these prey species (over the last 10 years, and last 20 years)? If yes, why?

People had different opinions about this. About one-third of the people said they could not say anything clearly. One-third believed that the population of these species has increased because illegal hunting has been controlled. Another one-third thought that the population of these species has decreased due to habitat destruction.

Are there any peculiar or unique behaviour of these small cats by which you know or recognize them?

Their size and colour are known, but no unique or special behaviour is observed.



Do you associate the presence of these cats (for each species) with any benefits, or harm? If yes, what/ why?

People have said that these cats definitely control rats and other crop-damaging animals, but their presence is harmful to domestic chickens, ducks which are in low number.

Do you think that their numbers are (a) increasing; (b) decreasing; or (c) stable? Why?

Everyone agreed that the population of small cats has increased along with big cats because earlier roaming poachers (Bawariya & Paridhi community) used to hunt a lot, but now hunting is banned, community is aware about wildlife protection, so the populations of cat species as well as all wildlife species have increased.

What do they think the reason might be?

There is no information about this.

Do they think the reason is related to changes in the surrounding habitat?

There is no information.

Are there any farming practices that may be beneficial for these species – if yes, are you willing to follow these or not (if no, why not)?

The farmers meant that sugarcane crops are beneficial for these species, but these crops attract cat species. Maize is also beneficial because maize field attract Rodents like mice, rats, and squirrels and this is main prey of small cat.

What according to the local people are recommended for sustenance and maintenance of their surrounding habitat for long term survival of small cats?

Awareness programs about the conservation of small cats.

Do they want to volunteer/be involved towards the conservation of wildlife and habitat surrounding them?

Yes

Summary and Discussion

In Gulra village near the Suheli River, the Jungle cat was the only small cat species recognized and seen in fields and *nalas*. Villagers reported increased wildlife movement into farmlands due to habitat changes and growing animal populations. They valued Jungle cats for controlling rodents but noted some loss of poultry. Sugarcane and maize fields were identified as important habitats for these species since they attract rodents—the main prey of small cats. The community felt small cat numbers had risen due to anti-poaching efforts and growing awareness. They stressed the need for continued awareness and engagement in conservation activities to ensure sustainable coexistence between people and wildlife. Most people said that they would protect the wild cats, but animals should not be brought from outside and released.



FGD Participants - Village Gulra Bhagwantnagar

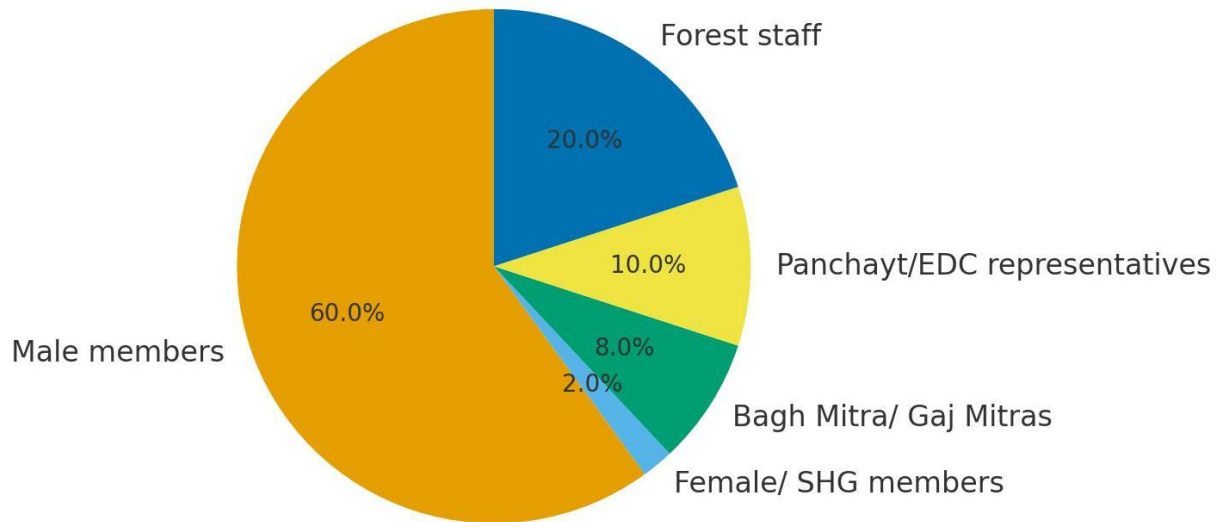


Figure 21: Details of Participants for FGDs in Gulra (Bhagwant Nagar) Village, Dudhwa NP (DTR)





2.1.3 Parsia Village:

Information Generated from Focus Group Discussions conducted in Parsia village, Dudhwa NP (DTR)

Scope & Purpose of Focus Group Discussions

This information was collected through FGDs in the respective villages. Although this has been presented here in a questionnaire-response format, the interviewer/moderator was required to weave these questions into a discussion and gather additional information where required.

- Date Conducted – 24 Sept. 2025
- Survey Team – Dabeer Hasan SPO, Kandhai Lal P.O. & Radheyshyam, APO
- Farmers, Forest staff, Panchayat representatives, Women SHG members (60 Villagers from Parsia village)
- Total HH- 450
- Location - Parsia village, Dudhwa NP, Lakhimpur district in U.P.

Section 1: Wildlife / habitats in proximity to villages:

1. Describe to us what *jangal*, *jhaadi*, *nalas* are near your village, and are these areas used by any of the following wildlife (show an album, including images of the small cats and other wildlife)

All the participants were given information about the nearby forest area like Changa Nala, Kula, and other forest area and they were shown photos of wildlife as well as small wild cats. During which participants learned about the identification and conservation of small cats. (Photo shown - leopard, fishing cat, jungle cat, leopard cat, rusty spotted cat, tiger, wild boar, cheetal, nilgai all participant known very well except wild cat)

Jungle cat - Identified

Fishing cat - Identified

Leopard cat - Not identified

Rusty spotted cat - Not identified

2. Do any of these animals also use farmlands?

Yes, Jungle cat & Fishing cat

3. How have these habitats changed over time (in their extent, quality etc.), and how has wildlife use of these areas changed?

Some people mentioned that there have been changes in their habitats, due to which wildlife comes into farmland areas, such as in search of food or because of a lack of shelter, some people mentioned



that the number of wild animals in the forest has increased, and therefore they look for territory in farmland.

4. Which of these wildlife cause you harm, and which if any, are detrimental to you and why?

Tiger and leopard – because they kill the livestock and attack on humans.

Elephant - because they damage crop & house and attack on humans.

Wild boar & other herbivorous - because they damage crop

Section 2: Small cats

What are the local names for each of these?

Everyone knew the local names of other wildlife, but for small cats, only "Banbilav/Banbilar" was mentioned as the local name. They said that they often see the Jungle cat and fishing cat, they also call it "banbilar/banbiav.

Have the local people sighted/heard small cats in their surrounding habitat? (showing of pictures – Leopard cat, Jungle cat, Fishing cat, Rusty spotted cat). How often are these spotted, and how does it compare with how commonly they were seen 10 years ago?

Local people have reported seeing only the jungle cat in their surroundings- sugarcane field, *nalas* and fringe of forest. It is seen often crop fields or forests. One or two times, the jungle cat gives birth to kittens in sugarcane fields often.

What are the preferred habitats for each of these species, and why?

Preferred habitats for these species are where they have food and places for shelter, which is why they are found near villages, as the risk from large predators is lower there.

What is the preferred prey for each of these species? How abundant are these prey species and where are they found?

The preferred prey of these species are small animals like rats, rabbits, birds, squirrels and in farmland areas, domestic chickens and ducks. These prey species are often found more abundantly in farmland areas compared to forests.

Have you observed any changes (increase/decrease) in the abundance of these prey species (over the last 10 years, and last 20 years)? If yes, why?

They can't say anything.

Are there any peculiar or unique behaviour of these small cats by which you know or recognize them?

Their size and colour are known, but no unique or special behaviour is observed.

Do you associate the presence of these cats (for each species) with any benefits, or harm? If yes, what/ why?



People have said that these cats definitely control rats and other crop-damaging animals, but their presence is harmful to domestic chickens and ducks.

Do you think that their numbers are (a) increasing; (b) decreasing; or (c) stable? Why?

Everyone agreed that the population of small cats has increased along with big cats because protection and awareness regarding wildlife conservation.

What do they think the reason might be?

There is no information about this.

Do they think the reason is related to changes in the surrounding habitat?

There is no information.

Are there any farming practices that may be beneficial for these species – if yes, are you willing to follow these or not (if no, why not)?

The farmers meant that sugarcane crops are beneficial for these species because their shelter.

What according to the local people are recommended for sustenance and maintenance of their surrounding habitat for long term survival of small cats?

Awareness programs about the conservation of small cats.

Do they want to volunteer/be involved towards the conservation of wildlife and habitat surrounding them?

Yes

Summary and Discussion

Parsia is the *Tharu* (Tribal) community village and surrounded by forest patches and *nalas* like Changa Nala, villagers identified both Jungle and Fishing cats but were unfamiliar with other small cat species. They often observed Jungle cats breeding in sugarcane fields and recognized their role in controlling rodents, though domestic poultry predation was mentioned as a minor issue. Most participants felt wildlife populations, including small cats, had grown due to increased protection and community awareness. Sugarcane fields were viewed as key habitats offering shelter and prey availability. Villagers emphasized the importance of awareness programs and expressed a collective willingness to volunteer for conservation and habitat management initiatives.



FGD Participants Type - Village Parsia

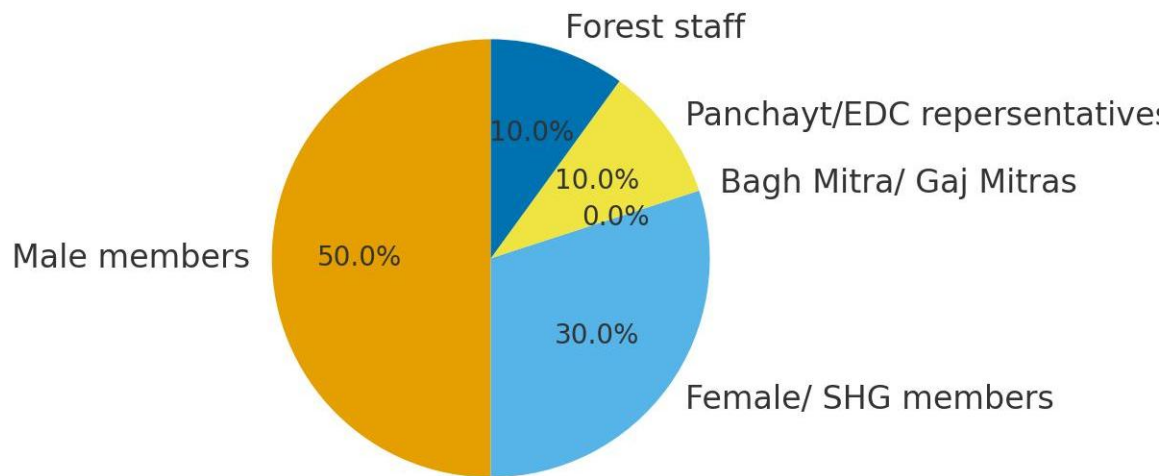


Figure 22: Details of Participants for FGDs in Parsia Village, Dudhwa NP (DTR)





2.1.4 Kishanpur Village:

Information Generated from Focus Group Discussions conducted in Kishanpur village, Kishanpur WLS (DTR)

Scope & Purpose of Focus Group Discussions

This information was collected through FGDs in the respective villages. Although this has been presented here in a questionnaire-response format, the interviewer/moderator was required to weave these questions into a discussion and gather additional information where required.

- Date Conducted – 25 Sept. 2025
- Survey Team – Dabeer Hasan, Rohit Ravi & Radheyshyam
- Farmers, Forest staff, Panchayat representatives, Women SHG members (50 Villagers from Parsia village)
- Total HH- 140
- Location - Kishanpur village, Kishanpur WLS, Lakhimpur district in U.P.

Section 1 –: Wildlife / habitats in proximity to villages:

1. Describe to us what *jangal*, *jhaadi*, *nalas* are near your village, and are these areas used by any of the following wildlife (show an album, including images of the small cats and other wildlife)

All the participants were given information about the nearby forest area like Sharda River, Jhadi *tal Nala* and other forest area and they were shown photos of wildlife as well as small wild cats. During which participants learned about the identification and conservation of small cats. (Photos shown- leopard, fishing cat, jungle cat, leopard cat, rusty spotted cat, tiger, wild boar, cheetal, nilgai all participants know very well except wild cat)

Jungle cat - Identified

Fishing cat - Identified

Leopard cat - Not identified

Rusty spotted cat - Not identified

2. Do any of these animals also use farmlands?

Yes – Jungle cat & Fishing cat

3. How have these habitats changed over time (in their extent, quality etc.), and how has wildlife use of these areas changed?

No change in population and no much idea

4. Which of these wildlife cause you harm, and which if any, are detrimental to you and why?



Tiger and leopard – No conflict in this particular village

Elephant - Not present in his area

Wild boar & other herbivorous - because they damage crop

Section 2: Small cats

What are the local names for each of these?

Everyone knew the local names of other wildlife, but for small cats, only "Banbilar" was mentioned as the local name. They said that they often see the Jungle cat and fishing cat, they also call it "banbilar."

Have the local people sighted/heard small cats in their surrounding habitat? (showing of pictures – Leopard cat, Jungle cat, Fishing cat, Rusty spotted cat). How often are these spotted, and how does it compare with how commonly they were seen 10 years ago?

No change

What are the preferred habitats for each of these species, and why?

The preferred habitat of farmland and jungle/ waterbody for their food and shelter and Sometimes they come to the fields to protect themselves from big cats.

What is the preferred prey for each of these species? How abundant are these prey species and where are they found?

The preferred prey of these species are small animals like rats, rabbits, birds, squirrels and in farmland areas and this is beneficial for farmers.

Have you observed any changes (increase/ decrease) in the abundance of these prey species (over the last 10 years, and last 20 years)? If yes, why?

They can't say anything.

Are there any peculiar or unique behaviour of these small cats by which you know or recognize them?

Their size and colour are known, but no unique or special behaviour is observed.

Do you associate the presence of these cats (for each species) with any benefits, or harm? If yes, what/ why?

People have said that these cats definitely control rats and other crop-damaging animals.

Do you think that their numbers are (a) increasing; (b) decreasing; or (c) stable? Why?

Everyone agreed that the population of small cats has increased along with big cats because protection and awareness regarding wildlife conservation.

What do they think the reason might be?

There is no information about this.



Do they think the reason is related to changes in the surrounding habitat?

There is no information.

Are there any farming practices that may be beneficial for these species – if yes, are you willing to follow these or not (if no, why not)?

The farmers meant that sugarcane crops are beneficial for these species because their shelter but this village not growing sugarcane the villagers of Kishanpur are cultivating groundnut.

What according to the local people are recommended for sustenance and maintenance of their surrounding habitat for long term survival of small cats?

Awareness programs about the conservation of small cats.

Do they want to volunteer/be involved towards the conservation of wildlife and habitat surrounding them?

Yes

Summary and Discussion

In Kishanpur, located near the Sharda River and forested *nalas*, villagers reported sightings of Jungle and Fishing cats, locally known as *Banbilar*. Wildlife conflicts were minimal while the village surrounded by Kishanpur WLS and Sharda River, the minimal crop damage reported from wild boars posing the main challenge. Villagers believed small cats benefit agriculture by preying on rodents and causing no harm. They observed stable populations of both prey and small cats, attributing this to protection and awareness. *Nala* and bushes support and shelter small cat; groundnut is the main crop grown locally. The community recommended ongoing awareness programs and expressed strong interest in supporting small cat conservation and maintaining ecological balance in their surroundings.

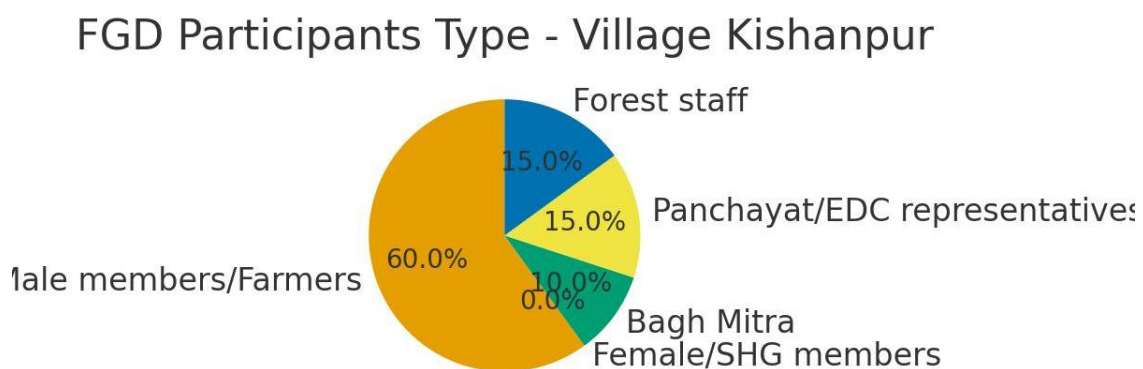


Figure 23: Details of Participants for FGDs in Kishanpur Village, Kishanpur WLS (DTR)





2.2 Conclusion:

In five villages representing diverse communities and landscapes, discussions were held on small cat species—covering their behaviour, prey, habitat, ecological role, and coexistence with people. This topic was entirely new for most villagers, as no one had previously spoken to them about the conservation of small cats. In the villages around Katarniaghat WLS, people had limited awareness, whereas in other villages, knowledge was almost absent (this was the first time villagers had been introduced to the concept of conserving small cat species, as they had neither thought about these animals earlier nor had anyone previously discussed them.)

Across all villages, participants mentioned that they have no conflict with small cats and that these species have coexisted with them for generations. They expressed willingness to support their conservation, provided that the government also works on improving their livelihood, education, and awareness. Since most villagers face problems due to tiger, elephant, and leopard attacks, they also discussed the need for measures to reduce such conflicts so that these experiences do not negatively affect their attitude toward wild cat conservation.

Throughout the discussions, emphasis was placed on the benefits of small cats—particularly how they indirectly control crop-damaging pests. This understanding has encouraged a positive inclination toward their conservation. In the future, efforts can focus on promoting sustainable agricultural practices, creating livelihood and educational opportunities, and increasing awareness to strengthen conservation outcomes.



Chapter 3: Details of workshops and meetings conducted for small cat conservation status at Dudhwa landscape, Uttar Pradesh

3.1 Introduction

GTF and WWF-India have entered into a one-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) to jointly prepare a conservation strategy for small wild cats in the Pakke–Eaglenest and Dudhwa landscapes. The initiative, co-funded by both organisations, was formally approved at WWF-India on 28 February 2025. Recent camera-trap datasets generated by the Dudhwa TR Forest Department confirm the occurrence of fishing cats, jungle cats and leopard cats in Dudhwa NP and Katerniaghat WLS. Comparable data from Kishanpur WLS was not available at the time of analysis. The rusty-spotted cat has not been detected in the current camera-trap grids; likely because its preferred habitats occur closer to human settlements and often include arboreal microhabitats that standard camera-trap layouts seldom capture.

3.2 Workshop Details

3.2.1 Workshop 1, Katerniaghat Interpretation Centre, 27th April 2024:

A dedicated capacity-building workshop was held for frontline staff of Katerniaghat WLS. The division spans roughly 550 km², including about 400 km² of notified sanctuary and another 150 km² of Reserve Forests forming the buffer. Situated to the east of Dudhwa NP, the division falls within Nanpara Tehsil (Bahraich district) and is ecologically linked to Nepal's Bardia NP via the Khata corridor. Katerniaghat represents the Terai–Bhabhar unit of the Upper Gangetic Plains biogeographic zone. Its northern boundary aligns with the Indo-Nepal border, while its southern edge meets the Saryu River near Murthiha. Several ranges like Murthiha, Dharmapur, Nishanghara and Katerniaghat, border Nepal and remain sensitive to pressures such as illegal logging, poaching and cross-border grazing. The sanctuary contains numerous perennial and seasonal waterbodies and faces ongoing threats from erosion caused by the Girwa River and hydrological disturbances linked to the Girijapuri Barrage (Figure 28).

Small Cat Identification Exercise

The first exercise evaluated the staff's ability to identify small cat species. After a brief training session, participants formed seven groups (around five members each) and were asked to identify 16 photographs. Of the total 112 responses, 85 were correct, giving an overall accuracy of 76%. Fishing cats were identified most accurately, while leopard cats were most frequently misidentified, often confused with the rusty-spotted cat. Discussions revealed that although few staff members had seen all species, sightings of fishing cats were relatively common, especially inside core areas. Their absence from MSTRIPES and routine monitoring was attributed to the lack of a dedicated reporting protocol.

Habitat Mapping and Threat Assessment

In the second exercise, staff were provided with range-wise maps to discuss local threats and species presence. Fishing cat observations were commonly reported from Sujauli (Bandha Road and Bakdaha



Taal), Nishanghar Range near the Nepal border, and around the Gharial Centre in Katarniaghat Range. Swampy habitats dominate parts of Katarniaghat Range, with fishing cats, jungle cats and otters noted around Beats 1 & 2 and Nakwaghat. Motipur Range supports habitat for fishing and jungle cats, particularly in Balsinghpur and Rajapur beats, which also hold good populations of hog deer and barking deer.

In Murtiha Range, fishing cats, leopard cats and jungle cats were recorded around Semri Nala, and in Beats 20–21 of Sujauli Range near the PA boundary. Along the Indo-Nepal border in Dharampur Range, jungle cats were frequently observed. Buffer zones such as North Nighasan and Dhauhra reported regular sightings of fishing and jungle cats but also highlighted concerns related to railway lines, human–wildlife conflict and enforcement challenges (Figure 29).

Preliminary synthesis indicated that the southern parts of Katarniaghat, Sujauli and Motipur ranges appear more suitable for fishing cats, while leopard cats and jungle cats were more frequently reported along the northern border abutting Nepal, where human pressures are comparatively higher.

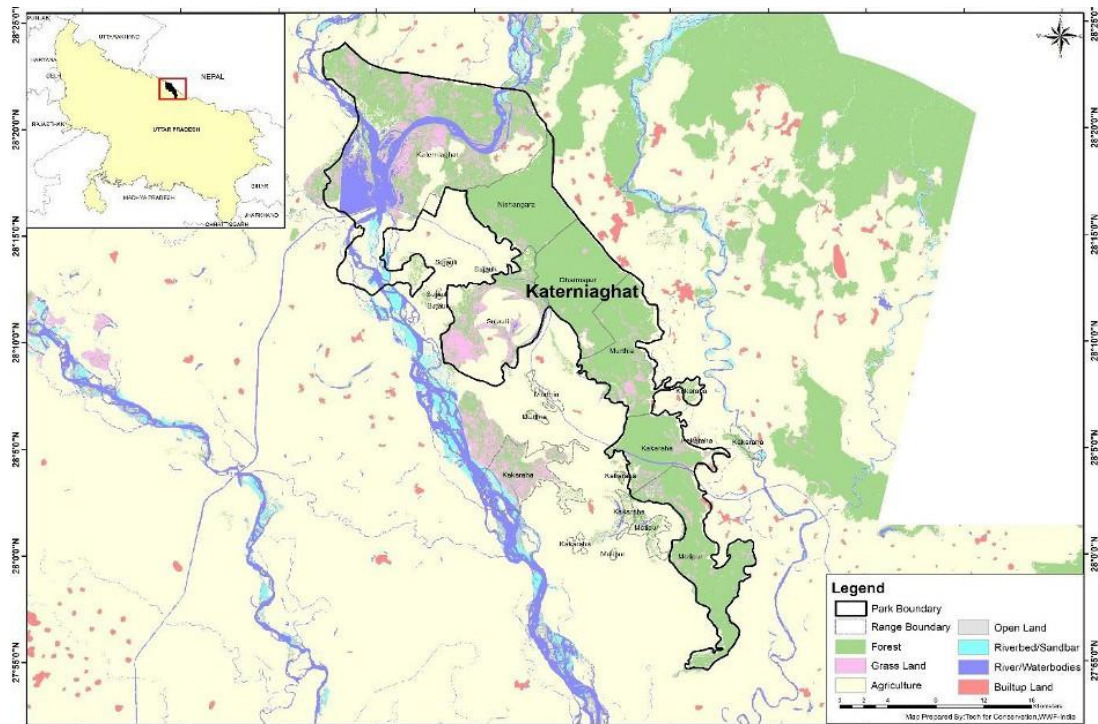


Figure 24: Administrative Map of Katarniaghat WLS

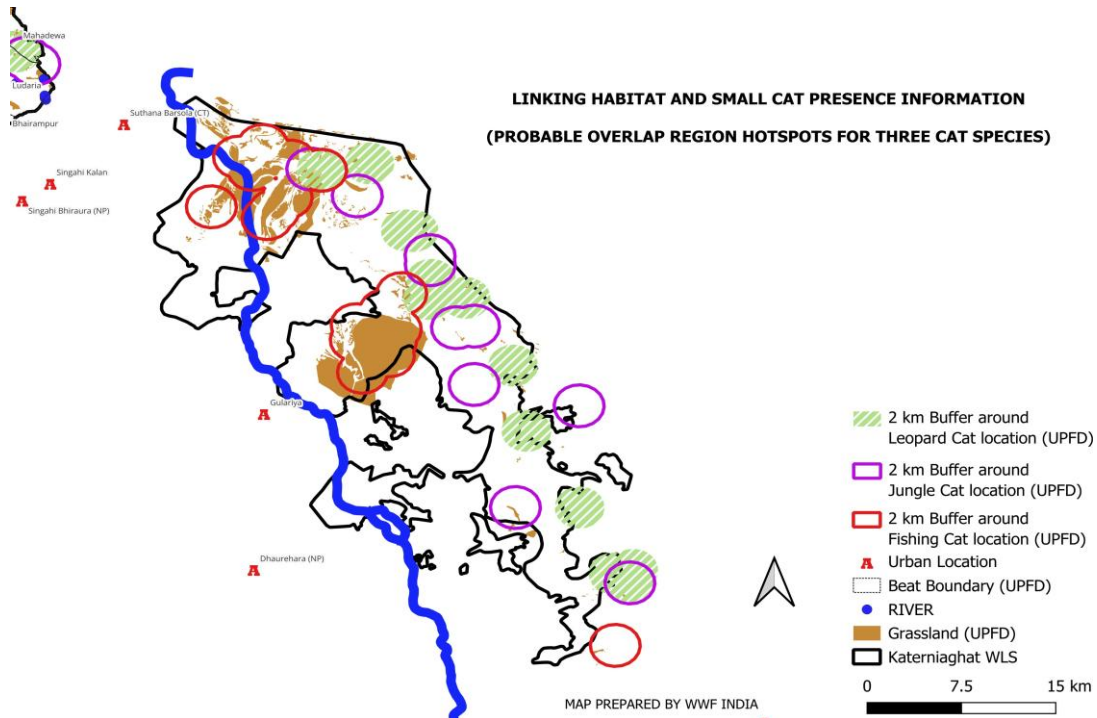


Figure 25: Preliminary buffer mapping of camera trapped data of small cats in Katerniaghat WLS to develop hotspots regions of small cats overlap

3.2.2 Workshop 2, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, 28th April 2024:

Dudhwa TR covers roughly 883 km², including about 490 km² of Dudhwa NP, 190 km² of buffer forests and 203 km² of Kishanpur WLS. Historically, the park and buffer areas belonged to the North Kheri Forest Division, while Kishanpur was part of the South Kheri Division. Dudhwa NP lies within Palia and Nighasan Tehsils (Lakhimpur district), while Kishanpur falls under Gola Tehsil (Lakhimpur) and Powayan Tehsil (Shahjahanpur) (Figure 30).

Small Cat Identification Exercise

The exercise structure mirrored that of the Katerniaghat workshop. Eight groups participated, again identifying 16 images each. Out of 128 identifications, 99 were correct (77%). Fishing cats were recognised most consistently, followed by the rusty-spotted cat, while leopard cat images were most often misidentified—frequently mistaken for fishing cats.

Mapping Habitats and Threats

Using range-level maps, staff identified local challenges and areas where small cats are commonly recorded. In Budhna Range, rusty-spotted and fishing cats were reported from Phersiya Beat, although proximity to villages contributes to high disturbance. Bhadraula Beat had confirmed records of fishing and jungle cats, while areas around Chota Palia and Salukpur Beat were considered strong habitats for fishing cats. The Suheli River supports wildlife across these stretches, although monsoon flooding affects fishing cat habitat in Maholi and Gulra beats.

Staff also highlighted suitable habitats in Bheera and Sonaripur ranges, though these areas are vulnerable to annual flooding and forest fires. On the northern Indo-Nepal border, Mahadeva Beat



GIS-based habitat mapping revealed notable overlap of fishing cat and jungle cat habitats in Amangarh and Belghat beats, despite the presence of roads and railways. Fishing cats were also recorded in Sohna, Surma and Tehri beats. Leopard Cats were associated with Sarota, Bhadraula and Phersiya beats, often in fragmented forests with varying levels of human disturbance. Some beats—Persiya, Rehta, Bhadi and Kusumba—showed overlapping potential habitat for all three small cat species (Figure 31).

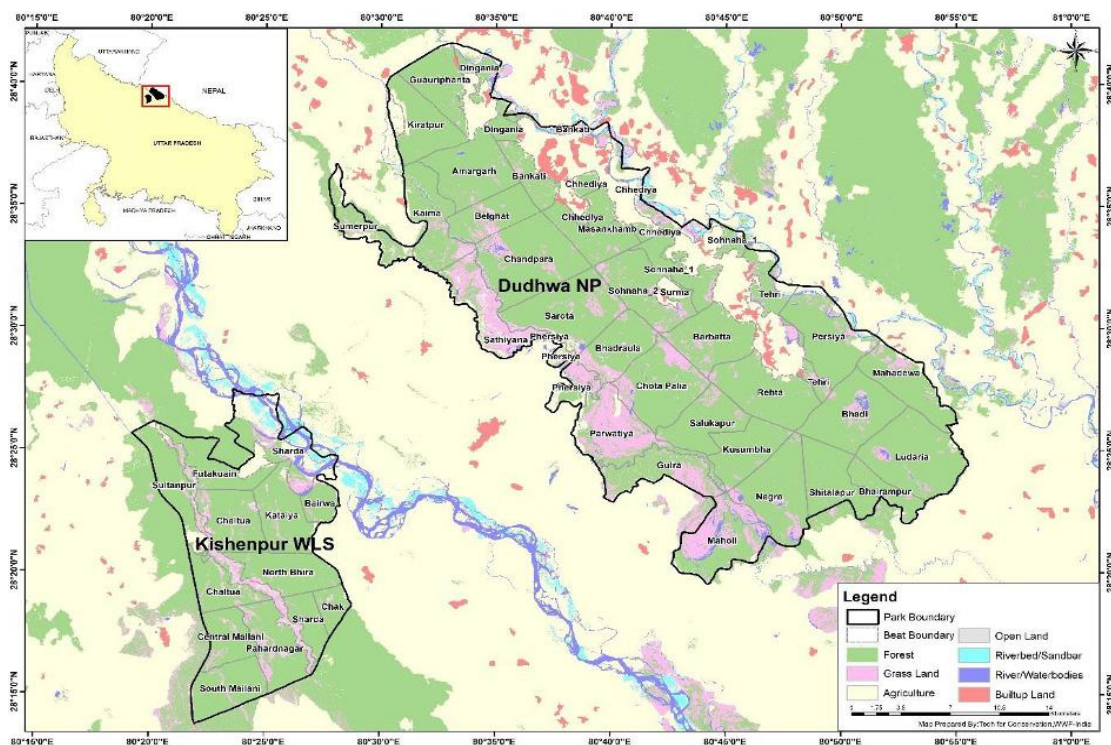


Figure 26: Administrative Map of Dudhwa National Park

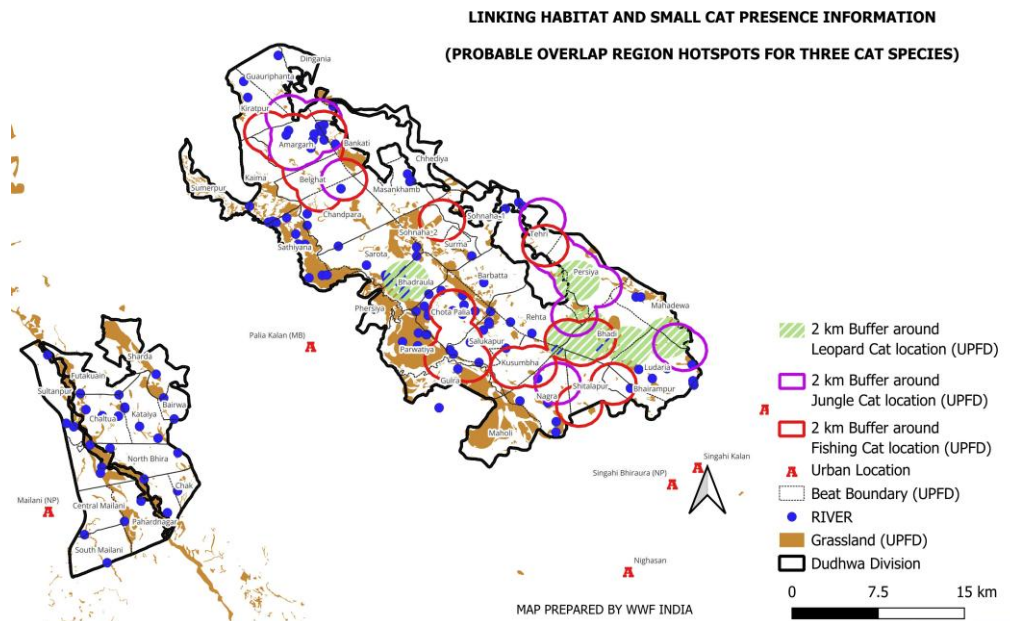


Figure 27: Preliminary buffer mapping of camera trapped data of small cats in Dudhwa NP to develop hotspots regions of small cats overlap (beat and range boundary was not available during the mapping)

3.3 Way Forward

The Dudhwa landscape offers an important opportunity to document fine-scale habitat use by small wild cats and other lesser-known carnivores. Grassland and swamp management in the region has traditionally been guided by the needs of larger species such as Swamp Deer, Rhinoceros and Tiger, making subtle changes in microhabitats harder to detect. Small cats, however, can serve as effective umbrella species for understanding these shifts. Future work should include detailed mapping of grassland structures, such as, tall versus short grass patches, swampy grasslands and areas with high soil moisture to link vegetation characteristics with small cat presence. This will also help track ecological processes such as siltation and grassland community dynamics. Mohana River corridor between Dudhwa and Katarniaghat has undergone extensive deforestation and requires restoration, as noted by NTCA. Fishing Cats appear to move across this linkage and may act as a focal species for reconnecting the two PAs. There is a need to explore restoration strategies and community-based engagement models that use the fishing cat as a flagship for habitat continuity. Rusty-spotted cat remains difficult to document through conventional tiger-oriented camera-trap designs, especially in grassland mosaics. Its conservation in the Dudhwa landscape carries significant transboundary value, as the species occurs across India and Nepal (besides Sri Lanka). Planned village-level surveys will help gather insights on its presence, contributing to a broader, cooperative conservation strategy involving Nepal. Leopard cats, frequently observed in the illegal wildlife trade globally, require particular attention in border-adjacent areas of Dudhwa. Strengthening enforcement, training frontline staff and enhancing awareness on legal protocols will be essential. Village surveys will also aim to identify potential trade routes for lesser-known species and feed this information back to the forest department for targeted action.



Chapter 4: Details of awareness and educational outreach programs and Bagh Mitra trainings conducted with respect to small cat conservation at Dudhwa landscape, Uttar Pradesh

4.1 Bagh Mitra Training Programme at Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary

A series of training programmes were organized in the Katerniaghat WLS to enhance the knowledge and capacity of *Bagh Mitras* regarding small cat species, their ecology, and conservation needs.

Training Schedule and Locations

12th December – Training conducted at Murtiha Range Campus for *Bagh Mitras* of Murtiha Range and Dharmapur Range.

13th December – Training conducted at Village Rampurwa for *Bagh Mitras* of Nishangada Range and Katerniaghat Range.

Training Content

The sessions were facilitated by Mr. Dabeer Hasan, Senior Project Officer, WWF-India, who provided detailed training on the following topics:

- Importance of small cat species in the ecosystem
- Identification features of various small cat species
- Habitat characteristics of different small cat species
- Potential threats faced by these species
- Role of local communities and *Bagh Mitras* in small cat conservation

The training emphasized community participation, early reporting of sightings, and strengthening field-level conservation efforts.

Participation of Forest Officials

The following Range Officers were present and actively supported the training activities:

- Shri Ratnesh Kumar, Range Officer, Murtiha
- Shri Deepak Mishra, Range Officer, Dharmapur
- Shri Surendar Kumar Srivastav, Range Officer, Nishangada

They also briefed field staff about small cat species and encouraged *Bagh Mitras* and *Gaj Mitras* to promptly share information related to small cat sightings. Forest staff mobile numbers were provided for quick communication. Additionally, village heads and Eco-Development Committees were advised to raise awareness in their respective areas.

Participation Details

Murtiha Training (12 December): Approximately 30 participants (*Bagh Mitras* & forest staff) attended.



Rampurwa–Nishangada Training (13 December): Approximately 50 participants (*Bagh Mitras*, *Gaj Mitras*, EDC representatives, Panchayat representatives & forest staff attended.

Outcome

The training programmes were successfully conducted and significantly enhanced the understanding of *Bagh Mitras* regarding small cat conservation. The active involvement of forest officials and community representatives contributed to strengthening grassroots conservation efforts within the Katarniaghat WLS.



***Bagh Mitra* training at Murtiha Range on 12-12-2025**



Training at Rampurwa Nishangada on 13-12-2024

4.2 Follow-Up *Bagh Mitra* Training Programme at Dudhwa–Kishanpur Corridor | 4 December 2025 | Nagla Forest Chauki

A follow-up *Bagh Mitra* training programme was conducted on 4th December 2025 in the Dudhwa–Kishanpur corridor, building upon the introductory session organised in September. This workshop was designed in response to both the encouraging community engagement observed after the first training and the field-skill gaps identified through ongoing interactions. Following the earlier session, a WhatsApp group comprising all participating *Bagh Mitras* was created, and it has since become an active platform for sharing wildlife-related information. However, it was also evident that some of the reports being circulated lacked accuracy, particularly in the identification of pugmarks, hooves, species, and wildlife signs. Misidentification of small cats as leopard cubs—often resulting in unnecessary alarm—has been seen to be a major defect in identification as observed in other areas where these community members work. These findings reaffirmed the need for a more field-oriented, skill-based training module.

Objectives and Training Focus

The primary objective of the workshop was to strengthen the field skills and ecological understanding of approximately (58) participants, including *Bagh Mitras*, Gram Pradhan, field staff, and our team members working in the Dudhwa–Kishanpur corridor. The training centred on five thematic components:



Wildlife Identification & Field Skills:

Participants received hands-on learning in identifying pugmarks and hoof marks, with emphasis on differentiating between carnivores and herbivores. Demonstrations on reading movement trails, recognising scat, scratch marks etc., helped improve their ability to interpret field evidence. A detailed session was devoted to distinguishing tigers and leopards from small cats such as jungle cat, fishing cat, leopard cat, and rusty-spotted cat.

Small Cat Conservation:

Since small cats are frequently misreported as leopard cubs, special focus was placed on understanding their appearance, habitats, ecological role, and behavioural patterns. The resource persons highlighted how confusion between small cats and leopards can lead to unnecessary panic and conflict escalation. Basics of small cat monitoring through sign surveys, camera trapping, and reading landscape clues were also introduced.

Behaviour, Ecology & Conflict Response:

Participants were familiarised with the natural history and ecology of conflict-prone species including tiger, leopard, sloth bear, elephants, and various ungulates. The module covered seasonal movement patterns, dispersal behaviour, and safe first-response actions during conflict events. Practical dos and don'ts were discussed to enhance volunteer safety and effectiveness.

Use of Tools & Reporting:

Practical demonstrations were given on using camera traps, time-stamp cameras, and GPS-based applications. Exercises on concise and accurate reporting were included to help volunteers avoid rumours, minimise misinformation, and communicate incidents promptly.

Landscape Understanding:

The importance of terrain, water sources, and natural corridors was explained, enabling participants to contextualise wildlife movements—especially of small cats and large carnivores—within the broader landscape.

Field Component

The practical session took place on the outskirts of the Nagla forest in Palia Range and neighbouring fields. This location was selected due to its abundance of pugmarks and wildlife signs, offering an ideal open setting for safe and effective learning. Necessary permissions for the training had been obtained from the DFO, North Kheri Forest Division.

Conclusion

The follow-up training is hoped to significantly strengthen the capacity of *Bagh Mitras*, reinforcing their role as reliable first responders in local communities. By addressing long-standing identification issues and incorporating small cat conservation themes, the workshop must have improved the quality



of field information and enhanced early-warning and conflict-mitigation efforts. As jungle craft cannot be mastered in a single session, continued field-based guidance and future training will remain essential. The initiative marks another step toward building a skilled, informed, and dependable community network supporting conservation in the Dudhwa–Kishanpur corridor.



***Bagh Mitra* training at Dudhwa-Kishanpur Corridor on 04-10-2025**

4.3 Small Wild Cat Conservation Awareness Program

Location

Kishannagar Village, Gram Panchayat Kadiya, Buffer Zone, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve
Date: October 14, 2025

An awareness program for the conservation of small wild cats was organized on October 14, 2025, in Kishannagar village, a hamlet under Gram Panchayat Kadiya situated within the buffer zone of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. The program was conducted as part of community engagement initiatives aimed at strengthening local participation in wildlife conservation.

Kishannagar village was selected due to its strategic location along the Nepal border and its ecological connection to the Basanta corridor. The village landscape includes agricultural land adjoining the forest area, with the Mohana River flowing through it. The *Tharu* tribal community forms the major population of this area and shares a deep traditional association with forests. Women from this community play an active role in agriculture, livestock rearing, and collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs).

Program Highlights

The awareness program was held at Bhalla Farm, Kishannagar. Assistant Project Officer Radheshyam Bhargav interacted with women's groups and local residents, sharing information about the identification, importance, and conservation of small wild cats.

Dabeer Hasan, Senior Project Officer, WWF-India explained various aspects related to habitat, food habits, and ecological significance of small wild cats. He stressed that these species have coexisted



harmoniously with humans and play an essential role in maintaining ecological balance. The officers urged the local community to protect forest habitats, promote coexistence, and actively participate in conservation efforts.

Visual presentations and photographs of different wild cat species were shown during the session to help participants identify local species. Villagers identified the Jungle Cat and Fishing Cat as common species seen near agricultural areas and riverbanks. They confirmed that these species do not cause harm to humans or livestock. Following the program, local residents expressed commitment to assist in conservation activities and report future sightings.

Educational Outreach

A special session was later organized at Vidya Vriksh Gurukul Learning Center, where social workers have been teaching Tharu children about environment and wildlife conservation. Responding to their ongoing interest, project officers conducted an interactive session with children covering topics such as:

Importance of wildlife in maintaining ecological balance

Uniqueness of the Terai forest ecosystem

Prevention of human-animal conflict

Identification of local wildlife species

Significance of ecological corridors and the Mohana River

Information about Gangetic Dolphin and local plant species

Conservation of small wild cats in Terai region

Educational copies and wildlife learning books were distributed among the students.

Participation

Approximately 100 villagers and students actively participated in the program. Their engagement highlighted strong community interest in wildlife conservation and coexistence practices.

Outcome

The Kishannagar awareness program successfully strengthened public understanding of small wild cat species and their ecological importance. It facilitated community cooperation for habitat protection and demonstrated the positive role of education in conservation awareness among both adults and children.



**Awareness program and educational outreach at Kishannagar Village, Buffer zone, DTR on
14-10-2025**



4.4 Small Wild Cat Conservation Awareness Workshop

Location

Nature Interpretation Centre, Katarniaghat Range, Katarniaghat Wildlife Division

Date: 6th October, 2025

Organizing Department: Forest Department, Katarniaghat Wildlife Division

Wildlife Week is celebrated annually during the first week of October with the objective of raising public awareness about the importance of wildlife and its conservation. In this context, an awareness workshop on the theme “Conservation of Small Wild Cats” was organized at the Nature Interpretation Centre, Katarniaghat Range on 7th October, 2025.

Participation

Officials of the Forest Department, Panchayat members, *Gaj Mitra*, *Bagh Mitra*, teachers, students, and local villagers were present in the workshop. The event witnessed the active participation of approximately 150 attendees.

Objectives

The main aim of the workshop was to sensitize the Panchayat/EDCs members of community, teachers, students, media personals and forest staff on various aspects of small wild cats, including species identification, habitat, ecological importance, threats, and the concept of human-wildlife coexistence.

Key Activities

Informative Lecture: Mr. Dabeer Hasan, Senior Project Officer, TAL, WWF-India, delivered an in-depth lecture covering the identification of small wild cat species, their prey and natural habitats, coexistence with local communities, and their importance to the ecosystem.

Quiz Competition: A wildlife quiz competition was organized for students and local participants.

Discussion and Presentation: An open discussion on human-wildlife coexistence was held, along with a dedicated presentation on dolphin conservation, which highlighted the challenges and measures for conserving the Ganges river dolphin.

Major Outcomes

- Participants gained detailed knowledge about the ecological role of small wild cats, causes and solutions to human-wildlife conflict, and methods for peaceful coexistence.
- Awareness regarding dolphin conservation and the broader impact of biodiversity on ecological balance was substantially increased.
- Local communities, teachers, and students expressed their willingness to contribute actively towards conservation initiatives.
- At the end of the session, all present resolved to increase coordination and regularize public awareness activities on wildlife conservation. The need for continuation of such programmes by the Forest Department was strongly emphasized.



Awareness workshop at Nature Interpretation Centre, Katarniaghat range on 06-10-2025



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