

Asian Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii* at Virachey National Park, Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia

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Observer: Gregory Edward McCann (camera trap installer)
Photographs by: Habitat ID (www.habitatid.org) & Virachey National Park staff.
Subjects identified by: Gregory Edward McCann.

Location: Virachey National Park, Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia.
Elevation: Between 621 and 1420 metres.
Habitats: Forest-edge grassland, tall forest, secondary forest, secondary bamboo-dominated forest, and small open clearings consisting of grass and basalt stones.
Date and time: 01 June 2014 to 20 January 2017, various times.

Identity of subjects: Asian Golden Cat, *Catopuma temminckii* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae).

Description of records: These are preliminary results of a three-year camera trapping survey in Virachey National Park (VNP), which commenced early 2014 and concluded in January 2017. The survey resulted in 24 trigger events of Asian Golden Cat, from 6 camera stations. In all a total of 63 images of the species were acquired. All images were acquired by camera traps (Bushnell Trophy Cams and Bushnell HD models) set between 0.5 and 0.75 metres above the ground, with passive infra-red trigger. No baits or lures were used.

As at least two of the time stamps on the images are incorrect (see note below), close inspection of the image set was undertaken to determine whether images were acquired by day or by night. Based on ambient light conditions apparent in the images, 19 of the total 24 trigger events occurred during the day i.e. 79%. Of the 19 daytime triggers, 12 captured colour images and 7 were infra-red. All records are of lone individuals except for one record of two individuals (Fig. 1). Colour images are mostly of reddish-brown animals, but one trigger event appears to show a darker brown individual (Fig. 6).



Fig. 1. Undated image of two Asian Golden Cat.

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Fig. 2. Undated.



Fig. 3. 01 June 2014, daytime.



Fig. 4. 28 March 2015, daytime.



Fig. 5. 09 January 2016, night-time.



Fig. 6. 25 March 2016, daytime.



Fig. 7. 10 May 2016, daytime.

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Note: In this document a single trigger event is defined as one or more images taken at one camera-trap station, which are known or likely to show the same individual or other social unit, and have no gap longer than 30 minutes between successive images. Based on ambient light conditions, the time-stamps on images from at least two of the triggers in this survey is interpreted to be incorrect. Thus, time-stamps from the entire image dataset are not quoted in this document. Date-stamps are considered to be correct, apart from those from Figures 1 and 2. There was never more than one trigger event for Asian Golden Cat on any specific day.

Remarks: The subjects are identified as Asian Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii* based on (i) apparent size, (ii) relatively plain coat and (iii) black and white stripes on the sides and front of the head (Francis, 2008). Some variation in pelage colour is apparent, ranging from orange-brown to medium-dark brown. Dhendup (2016) notes that the Asian Golden Cat is “remarkably polymorphic” and in his study areas in Bhutan his camera traps recorded four morphs: common morph, grey morph, melanistic morph, and spotted. Our colour images (e.g. Figs. 2, 3, 6 and 7) from VNP show simple variations in pelage colour from the typical common (golden) form.

Primary records from other study areas indicate predominantly diurnal or crepuscular activity for this species (Azlan & Sharma 2006, Grassman *et al.* 2005, Gumal *et al.* 2014, Lynam *et al.* 2013, McCarthy *et al.* 2015a, Pusparini *et al.* 2014). Other studies suggest an even split between diurnal and nocturnal activity (Johnson *et al.* 2009). In Myanmar, however, the species appears to be cathemeral (i.e. irregularly active at any time of night or day) (Than Zaw *et al.* 2014) and in Endau-Rompin, Peninsular Malaysia it appears to be predominantly nocturnal (Kawanishi *et al.* 2008).

Beyond Cambodia the species also occurs in Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia (Sumatra), Laos, Malaysia (Peninsular), Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam (McCarthy *et al.* 2015b). In their most recent assessment in 2014 the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assess the Asian Golden Cat as "Near Threatened", as a result of significant habitat loss (McCarthy *et al.* 2015b).

The records documented here confirm the continued existence of Asian Golden Cat in VNP.

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