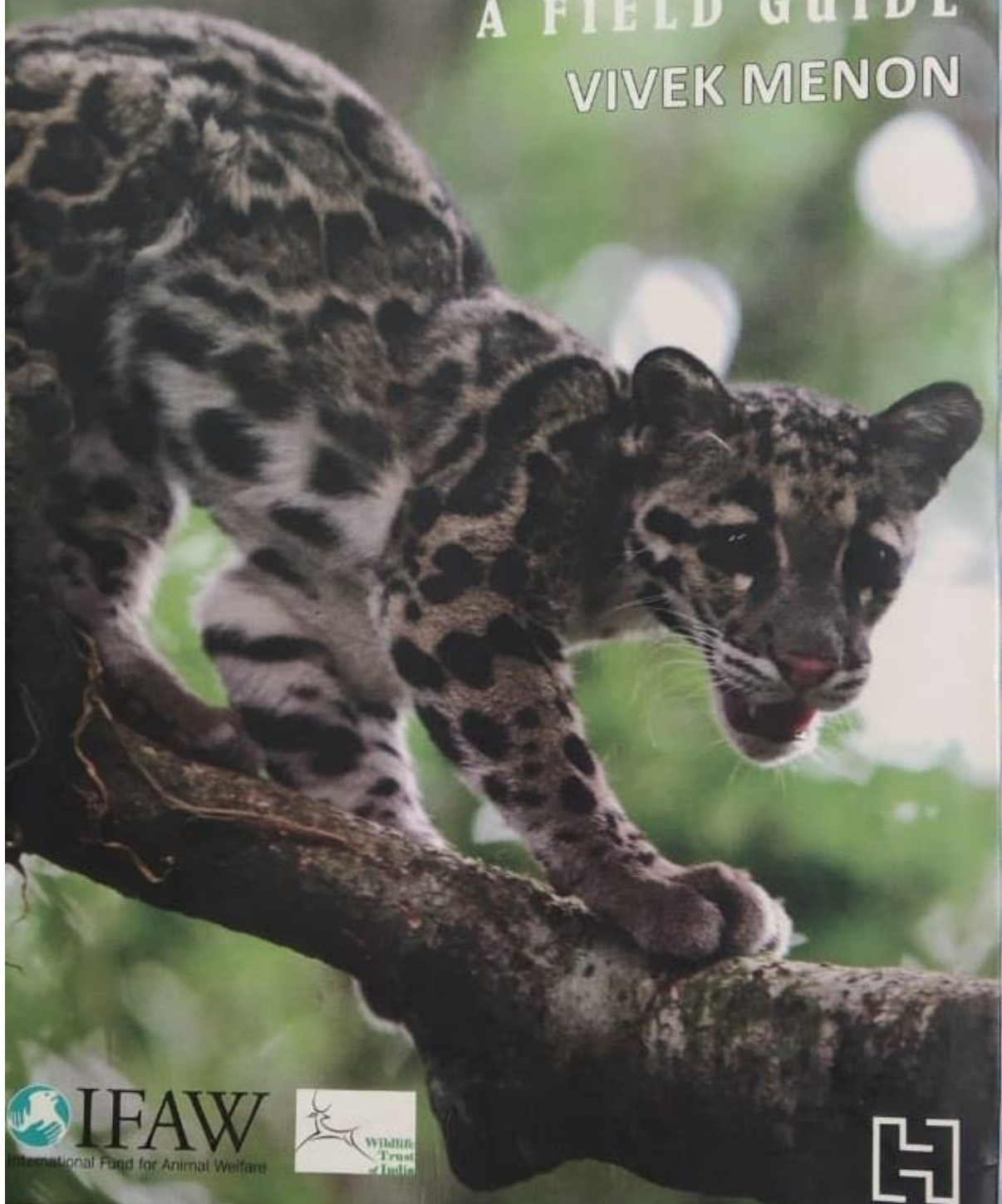




INDIAN MAMMALS

A FIELD GUIDE

VIVEK MENON



*For Shiva and Shasta
and their generation of nature lovers*

First published in 2014 by Hachette India
(Registered name: Hachette Book Publishing India Pvt. Ltd)
An Hachette UK company
www.hachetteindia.com

1

Text Copyright © 2014 Vivek Menon
Copyright for photographs rests with the individual photographers
Copyright for illustrations rests with the individual photographers
Distribution maps and evolutionary charts Copyright © Wildlife Trust of India
Map of India – Biogeography (page 16) Copyright © Vivek Menon and
Smita Bodhankar Warnekar

Vivek Menon asserts the moral right to be identified as the
author of this work

All rights reserved. No part of the publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system (including but not limited to computers, disks, external drives, electronic or digital devices, e-readers, websites), or transmitted in any form or by any means (including but not limited to cyclostyling, photocopying, docutech or other reprographic reproductions, mechanical, recording, electronic, digital versions) without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN 978-93-5009-760-1

Hachette Book Publishing India Pvt. Ltd
4th & 5th Floors, Corporate Centre
Plot No. 94, Sector 44
Gurgaon 122001, India

Printed and bound in India
by Manipal Technologies Ltd, Manipal

COMMON NAME: FISHING CAT

Family: Felidae **Subfamily:** Felinae **Latin Name:** *Prionailurus viverrinus*¹³⁸ Bennett, 1833
Subspecies: *P. viverrinus*¹³⁹ Bennett, 1833 **Local Names:** *Kaattanpuli/Meen pidiyan poocha* (Malayalam), *Khupya bagh* (Hindi), *Meccho biral* (Bengali), *Mesheka* (Assamese), *Minugara bekku* (Kannada) **Best Seen At:** Keoladeo Ghana NP, Rajasthan **IUCN/WPA/Indian Status:** Lower Risk/ V Rare **Social Unit:** Solitary **Size:** HBL: 57–115 cm, TL: 24–40 cm, Wt: 5–16 kg¹⁴⁰

DESCRIPTION: This is one of the most easily recognized cats in its range, with an olive-grey coat, unlike other spotted cats, which are tawny. It has short legs set on a stocky body. Black elongated spots run in parallel lines over its back, merging into longitudinal stripes on its neck. Its pale cheeks have two darker stripes, and there are two stripes on the inside of its forearm as in many small cats. The ears are short and have a white spot on its back. This cat is larger than the Leopard Cat and Desert Cat (with which it could be confused by the uninitiated) by at least a foot and it has a shorter, more muscular tail. The tail is ringed with black and has a black tip. The feet are webbed but the webs do not cover the claws fully.

BEHAVIOUR: The most adept Indian cat in water, it preys on fish and waterfowl. It is also a skilful hunter of small prey on land.

DISTRIBUTION: Recorded discontinuously from the Terai, Bharatpur in Rajasthan,¹⁴¹ southern Western Ghats, West Bengal (Sunderbans) and the North-East. Also recorded in Odisha (Chilika Lake).¹⁴²

HABITAT: Found in wetlands, marshes, tidal creeks, mangroves, dense jungle and scrub but dependent on water. It dens in tree trunks and ground near water.

COMMON NAME: RUSTY SPOTTED CAT

Family: Felidae **Subfamily:** Felinae **Latin Name:** *Prionailurus rubiginosus* l. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1831¹⁴³ **Subspecies:** *Pr. rubiginosus* l. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1831¹⁴⁴ **Local Names:** *Bitari billi* (Gujarati), *Chiruta pilli* (Telugu), *Kaadu bekku* (Kannada), *Namali pelli* (Tamil), *Thurumban poocha* (Malayalam) **Best Seen At:** Mundanthurai NP, Tamil Nadu; Gir NP, Gujarat **IUCN/WPA/Indian Status:** Vulnerable/ V Uncommon; **Social Unit:** Solitary **Size:** HBL: 35–48 cm; TL: 15–30 cm, Wt: 1.5–1.6 kg (male); 1.1–1.5 kg (female)¹⁴⁵

DESCRIPTION: The smallest cat in the world (half to three-quarters the size of a domestic cat), the Rusty Spotted Cat has a fawn coat with rusty brown spots arranged in neat lines on its back, head and flanks. Its forehead has two longitudinal, black-edged, white stripes. Its eyes are ringed with white, and its lips, chin and undersides are white, too, but may be marked with spots. Tail is faintly ringed with rusty bands.

BEHAVIOUR: It is visible after a shower when it emerges from its tree hideouts to feed. Very tolerant of human habitation, there are multiple records of it giving birth to kittens on rooftops.

DISTRIBUTION: Throughout southern and central India, west to Saurashtra and parts of Rajasthan. The northern boundary is unknown. Sariska is the northernmost confirmed record of the cat¹⁴⁶ although literature records it as having an isolated population in Jammu & Kashmir.¹⁴⁷

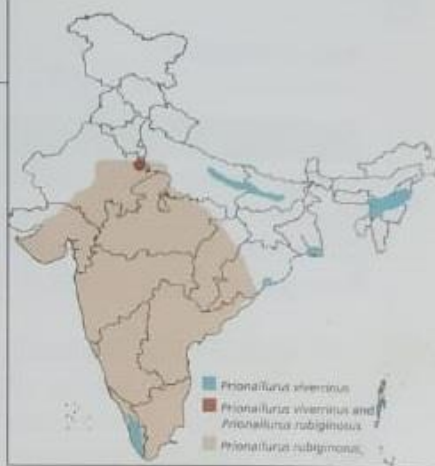
HABITAT: Rocky areas, scrub, dry and open forests, and human habitation. This cat is not a dense forest creature, yet it is overlooked.

Olive-grey coat **SP**

ANGAR KHAN



Large size **SP**



Partially webbed toes **SP**

Prionailurus viverrinus, Keoladeo Ghana NP, Rajasthan



RAHUL RAO

P. viverrinus, Sunderbans NP, West Bengal



BHOLU KHAN

P. viverrinus young, Keoladeo Ghana NP, Rajasthan



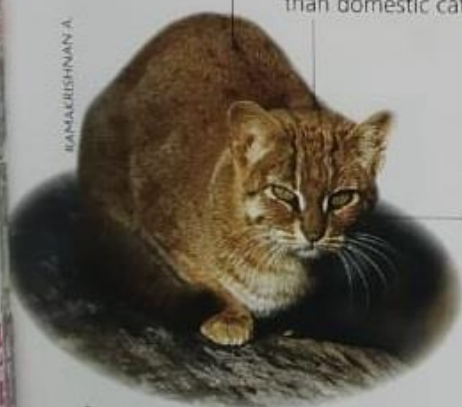
CHAITRA-RAJESH

Prionailurus rubiginosus cub, Bandipur NP, Karnataka

Rusty, spotted coat **SP**

Small size (smaller than domestic cat) **SP**

KAMAKSHI NANA



White face-markings **SP**

P. rubiginosus, Bandhavgarh NP, Madhya Pradesh



NIRAV BHATT

P. rubiginosus, Jambughoda, Gujarat