

On the current status and distribution of the Jungle Cat, *Felis chaus*, in Jordan (Mammalia: Carnivora)

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Abstract. The current status and distribution of the Jungle cat, *Felis chaus*, in Jordan is reviewed based on recent field observations and specimen collections. In 1998, two specimens were found poisoned in the upper reaches of Jordan River. Skull illustrations and cranial morphometric data are given on the basis of these specimens.

Kurzfassung. Auf der Basis von neueren Beobachtungen und Aufsammlungen wird der Status und die Verbreitung der Rohrkatze, *Felis chaus*, in Jordanien dargestellt. 1998 wurden im Oberlauf des Jordan zwei vergiftete Tiere gefunden. Sie wurden für Schädeldarstellungen und morphologische Angaben verwendet.

Key words. Felidae, morphology, Palestine, Middle East, conservation.

Introduction

The occurrence of the Jungle Cat, *Felis chaus* GÜLDENSTÄDT, 1776, in Jordan was a matter for debate until recently. KOCK et al. (1993) reported on a specimen collected from the Jordan Valley near the Jordan River. Since then, very little has been known about its status and current distribution in Jordan.

The Jungle Cat is one of the rare wild cats in southwest Asia. Its known distribution extends from Vietnam, Thailand, China, Nepal and India to the Eastern Mediterranean region and Egypt (LAY 1967, HASSINGER 1973, CORBET 1978, OSBORN & HELMEY 1980, HARRISON & BATES 1991, QUMSIYEH 1996, AMR 2000). In the Levant, its distribution extends from Palestine, Jordan, southern Lebanon and western Syria to Turkey and around the Tigris and the Euphrates (KOCK et al. 1993). The Jungle Cat is a riparian feline, and is mostly associated with dense vegetation around river beds. Regionally, very little information is known on the biology of this wild cat. SCHAUBENBERG (1978) reported on its reproduction, DAL (1954) and RATHORE & THAPAR (1984) gave notes on its feeding behaviour. Habitat selection and seasonal changes in body weight were outlined by HAPTENR & SLUDSKII (1972) and ROBERTS (1977).

On 10.2.1998, two dead specimens of the Jungle Cat that had been poisoned were found at Al Baqurah, northwestern Jordan. In this account, we communicate this record and review the current distribution, morphology, habitat description and conservation issues on this rare feline in Jordan.