Fishing Cat

Why in News?

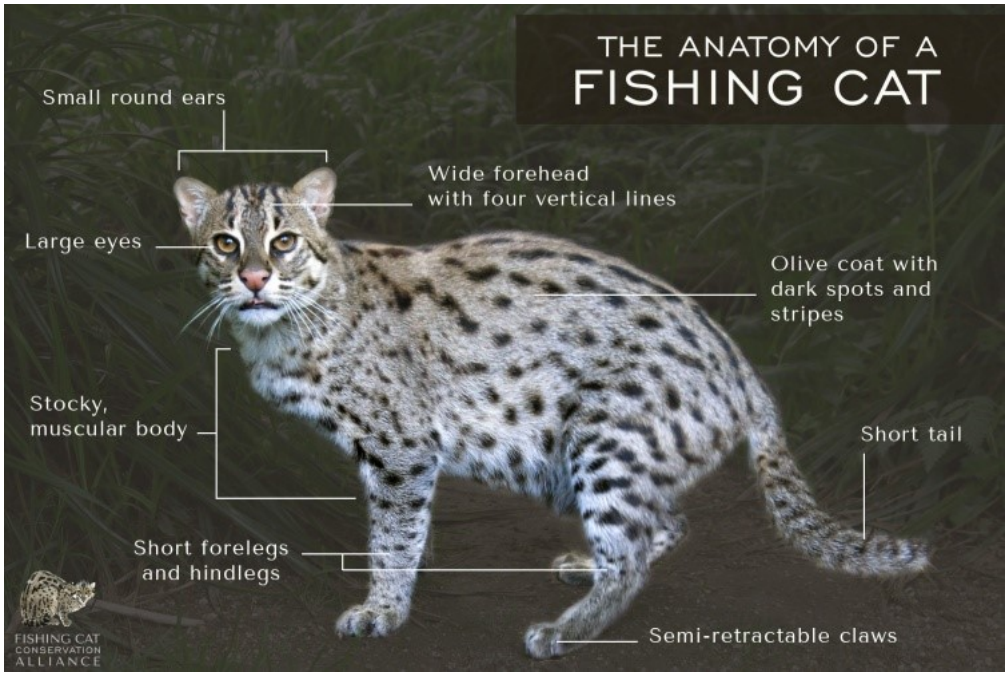
The 2nd fishing cat census is expected to be completed within a few weeks.

- **Fishing cat** – It is one of the *largest of the 28 species of small cats* and is about twice the size of a typical house cat.
  - **Scientific Name** – Prionailurus viverrinus.
- **Habitat –** Wetlands, cultivated grasslands and agricultural areas.
- **Global distribution** – Mainly in *Southeast Asia* comprising India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Mekong Delta of Vietnam and Thailand, Pakistan, East Cambodia and northern Himalayan foothills.
- **Distribution in India**
  - Mangrove forests of the Sundarbans
  - River valleys of Ganga & Brahmaputra along the Himalayan foothills
  - Western Ghats

*The **Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS)** which is India's 2nd largest mangroves, is home to larger number of fishing cat. It is part of the Godavari estuary, where the Coringa river confluences into the Bay of Bengal in the state of Andhra Pradesh.*

***Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary** in the Krishna estuarine forest area in Andhra Pradesh is another place where these endangered cat species live.*

- **Morphology** – Medium-sized, gray-brown with distinctive black spots, stocky legs, black lines run from the cat's forehead to its neck.
- Its cheeks are white with black marks, nose is pink while its lips, chin, belly and throat are white with gray spots.



- **Other features** – It is an *adept swimmer* and enters water frequently to dive and catch the fish.
- It is a *nocturnal* animal which preys on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and *scavenges on carcasses* of larger animals.
- It is capable of *breeding all-round the year.*
- **Uniqueness** – Its *muscular tail is shorter* than a domestic cat's and is ringed with 6 or 7 incomplete dark bands which are distinct from leopard.
- **Threats**
  - Destruction of wetlands
  - Human settlements
  - Pollution
  - Poached for its skin
- **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN** – Endangered.
  - **CITES** – Appendix II.
  - **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** – Schedule I.

Fishing Cat Collaring Project
• It is a *3 year collaring project*, to be completed by March/April 2025. • **Aim** – To study the species' home range, behavior, habitat ecology, feeding habits, and space use. • **Project** – Fishing cats will be captured and collared with lightweight equipment containing the Geographical Information System (GIS). • **Executed by** – *Wildlife Institute of India* (WII) at Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary. • **Funded by** – Yanam-based Vedanta Limited. • **Census** – As a part of this 1st fishing cat collaring project, fishing cat census is also carried out.

As per the 1st survey of fishing cats, the population of fishing cats was 115 in 2018 but the number has increased significantly over the past 5 years.

References

1. The Hindu| Fishing Cat Collaring Project
2. National Zoo| Distribution and Habitat of Fishing Cat
3. World Wildlife Fund| Threats and Conservation of Fishing Cat

