New cat species ‘Tilcayo’

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Why in News?

Researchers have confirmed a new species of tiger cat in Bolivia named Tilcayo (Leopardus tilcayo), marking the first such feline discovery in the country in over a century.

- **Genetics & Evolution** – Genetic analysis confirms the Tilcayo lineage split from other tiger cats approximately 1.4 million years ago.
- Tiger cats are cryptic species, meaning they are visually indistinguishable by appearance alone and require DNA data for classification.
- **Habitat** – Inhabits the mountainous, lush Yungas forest of Bolivia.
- **Physical Features** – Smaller than a domestic cat, measuring about 18 inches (46 cm) in length and weighing around 3 pounds (1.4 kg).
- **Diet & Behavior** – Camera traps indicate nocturnal activity, while scat analysis shows small rodents form part of its diet.
- **Conservation Status** – The IUCN Red List currently categorizes tiger cats under two "**Vulnerable**" species with declining global populations.
- The research team also described a new tiger cat subspecies in Peru’s Yungas, naming it Leopardus tigrinus antisuyo after Antisuyu (region of the old Inca Empire).

Reference

The Hindu| New cat species ‘Tilcayo’

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