

# THE ROYAL NATURAL HISTORY

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WITH PREFACE BY

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SECRETARY OF THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

ILLUSTRATED WITH

*Seventy-two Coloured Plates and Sixteen Hundred Engravings*

BY

W. KUHNERT, F. SPECHT, P. J. SMIT, G. MÜTZEL, A. T. ELWES, J. WOLF,

GAMBIER BOLTON, F.Z.S.; AND MANY OTHERS

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parts and chin, as well as the lower surface of the tail, being whitish or white. There are some dark spots on the chest, while the face has some characteristic but variable markings.

The golden cat is found in the South-Eastern Himalaya, from whence it



THE MARBLED CAT ( $\frac{1}{5}$  nat. size).

extends northwards into Tibet; while in the opposite direction its range embraces Burma, and a considerable part of the Malayan region, although its exact limits are unknown. Nothing is known as to the habits of this cat, but from its coloration it would appear probable that it frequents sandy or rocky districts.

#### THE FISHING-CAT (*Felis viverrina*).

The fishing-cat of India, which is somewhat larger than the ordinary domestic cat, derives its name from its peculiar habit of living to a great extent upon fish, which it captures for itself. This species is a short-limbed, spotted cat, with a circular pupil to the eye, the tail about equal in length to one-third the length of the head, and the short and coarse fur lacking the beautiful shining gloss characteristic of most of the other members of the family. The head is somewhat elongated, and the ears are short and rounded. The general ground-colour of the

fur is usually some kind of grey, with a more or less brownish tinge; the back being darker and browner, and the under-parts, as usual, whitish. The spots, which may be either dark brown, or of a full black colour, have no light centres, and are always much longer than broad, although they are subject to considerable individual variations in shape and size; they cover the whole of the body. The head is marked by a number of longitudinal stripes, starting from the forehead and running to the nape of the neck; these becoming broken up on the shoulders, but reappearing along the back as a line of spots. The greyish-white cheeks are generally crossed by two dark streaks; and the limbs are usually barred and spotted, more especially on their outer sides, although occasionally uniformly coloured. The tail has its upper surface marked with more or less distinctly defined dark rings.



THE FISHING-CAT ( $\frac{1}{2}$  nat. size).—After Wolf.

Altogether, the coloration of the fishing-cat reminds us of some varieties of the domestic "tabby."

A fair-sized male of the fishing-cat will have a total length of about  $41\frac{1}{2}$  inches, of which the tail (the hair at its tip being included in the measurement) will take up about  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The height of such an animal at the shoulders will be about 15 inches.

The skull of the fishing-cat may be distinguished from that of any of the species yet mentioned by the circumstance that in fully adult individuals the socket of the eye is completely surrounded by bone in almost all cases. In this respect the skull resembles that of a monkey and differs from those of most other Carnivores, although a similar feature is displayed in the skulls of some of the other small Indian cats, and also in those of the ichneumons, noticed later on. We have occasionally seen the skull of an adult domestic cat, in which the bony ring behind the socket of the eye is almost complete.

The geographical range of the fishing-cat extends from India to Southern

China; but its distribution in the countries it inhabits appears to be somewhat local. Thus, instead of occurring all over India, this cat, according to Mr. Blanford, is unknown in the peninsula, except on part of the Malabar coast. It occurs, however, in Ceylon, and is found along the flanks of the Himalaya as far westward as the independent state of Nipal. Thence it extends into Burma, the Malay Peninsula, and the south of China; but, somewhat curiously, it appears to be absent from the great Malayan Islands, such as Sumatra and Borneo. The species is, however, said to reappear in the Island of Formosa; which, if confirmed, will show that its distribution will accord very closely with that of the clouded leopard.

This cat is found in the neighbourhood of thickets bordering lakes, swamps, and rivers, and is stated to be far from uncommon in the neighbourhood of Calcutta. It does not appear that it has been observed by any European in the act of catching the fish which form such a considerable portion of its diet, and an account of the mode in which the capture is effected would be of much interest. In addition to fish it has been stated on good authority that this cat is also a consumer of the large mollusks found so abundantly in the swamps of India, and one specimen is known to have eaten a snake. Probably, however, almost any kind of food is equally acceptable to the fishing-cat, which doubtless catches all the smaller animals that come within reach of its clutches. All writers who have seen it in the wild state bear testimony to the fierce and savage disposition of this species; and it is on record that it has been known to destroy not only sheep, calves, and dogs, but also to carry off native infants which have been left unguarded. In reference to these destructive habits, a correspondent, quoted by Mr. R. A. Sterndale, observes that the fishing-cat generally "takes up its quarters in low swampy jungle, where it often carries off calves, for which the leopard undeservedly gets credit. Lately, a couple of months ago, a pair of them at night broke into a matted house, and went off with a brace of ewes, which had half a dozen lambs between them. . . . I have caught this species in traps, and when let loose in an indigo-vat, with a miscellaneous pack of dogs, they have invariably fought hard. . . . Some years ago one got into my fowl-house at night, and just as I opened the door to enter it made a fierce jump at me from a perch on the opposite side." The most remarkable instance of the ferocity of this cat is, however, related by Blyth. In this case a newly-caught male of the fishing-cat was put into a cage separated by a thin partition from one containing a tame female leopard, which, although young, was about double the size of the fishing-cat. The latter succeeded, however, not only in breaking through the partition between the two cages, but in actually killing the leopard, although it made no attempt to eat its flesh.

#### THE LEOPARD-CAT (*Felis bengalensis*).

The pretty little cat from South-Eastern Asia, commonly known as the leopard-cat, is subject to such an extraordinary amount of individual variation in colour and markings that it has received no less than fifteen separate scientific names, such variations having been regarded as indicating distinct species.

In size it has been compared by Mr. Blanford to a rather small domestic