



Fishing Cat Collaring Project | Uttarakhand | 30 Dec 2024

Why in News?

- [The Wildlife Institute of India-Dehradun](#) is set to launch **India's first Fishing Cat Collaring Project** at [Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary](#).

Key Points

- **Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary:**
 - Spanning 235 square kilometres, Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS) is **India's second-largest mangrove habitat**.
 - It is **home to the endangered fishing cat**.
 - Located in the [Godavari](#) estuary, the sanctuary lies at the confluence of the Coringa River and the [Bay of Bengal](#) in **Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh**.
 - [Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary](#) in the Krishna estuarine forest area is **another habitat** for the fishing cat.
- **Fishing Cat Population Trends:**
 - The [first fishing cat survey in 2018](#) recorded a population of 115 individuals.
 - Sightings have **increased significantly over the past five years**, suggesting population growth in and around the sanctuary.
- **Mangrove Conservation and Community Role:**
 - Local communities, through **the Environment Development Committees (EDCs)**, actively conserve the mangrove ecosystem.
 - A total of 420 locals are part of the EDCs, which also manage [Community-Based Eco-Tourism \(CBET\)](#) for alternative livelihoods.
- **India's First Fishing Cat Collaring Project:**
 - The Wildlife Institute of India-Dehradun is **executing India's first Fishing Cat Collaring Project as part of the second fishing cat census**.
 - This three-year project **aims to study the species' home range, behaviour, habitat ecology, feeding habits, and space use**.
 - The project plans to **collar 10 fishing cats with lightweight GIS-equipped devices**.
 - The collaring is expected to be completed by March or April 2025.
- **Ramsar Convention Site Proposal:**
 - The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department is striving to secure [Ramsar Convention Site](#) status for Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary due to its rich biodiversity and ecological significance.

Wildlife Institute of India

- It is an autonomous institution **under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.
- It was **established in 1982**.
- It is based in **Dehradun, Uttarakhand**.
- It offers training programs, academic courses, and advisory in wildlife research and management.

Fishing Cats

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- **Scientific Name:** *Prionailurus viverrinus*.
- **Description:**
 - It is twice the size of a house cat.
 - The fishing cat is **nocturnal (active at night)** and apart from fish **also preys on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and scavenges on carcasses of larger animals.**
 - The species **breed all year round.**
 - They spend most of their lives in areas of dense vegetation close to water bodies and are excellent swimmers.
- **Habitat:**
 - Fishing cats have a patchy distribution along **the Eastern Ghats**. They abound in estuarine floodplains, tidal **mangrove forests** and also inland freshwater habitats.
 - Apart from Sundarbans in West Bengal and Bangladesh, fishing cats inhabit the **Chilika lagoon** and surrounding **wetlands** in Odisha, **Coringa and Krishna mangroves in Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Threats:**
 - A major threat for fishing cats is the **destruction of wetlands**, their preferred habitat.
 - **Shrimp farming** is another growing threat to **mangrove habitats** of the Fishing Cat.
 - This unique cat also faces threats from **hunting for meat and skin.**
 - Tribal hunters indulge in **ritual hunting practices** throughout the year.
 - It is also occasionally **poached for its skin.**
- **Protection Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
 - **CITES:** Appendix II
 - **Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I