

## Brief Description on Evolution and Habitat of Wild Cat

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### Commentary

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### DESCRIPTION

The European wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) and the African wildcat (*Felis africanus*) are two tiny wild cat species will complete the wildcat species complex (*F. lybica*). The European wildcat lives in forests throughout Europe. While the African wildcat lives in semi-arid environments throughout Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, Western India and China. The European wildcat has long hair and a bushy tail with a rounded tip. The smaller African wildcat is more faintly striped has short sandy-gray fur, a tapering tail and the Asiatic wildcat (*F. lybica ornata*) has spotted fur and a tapering tail. Around 10–15 million years ago, the wildcat and other members of the cat family shared a common ancestor. The European wildcat emerged during the Cromerian Stage and its direct ancestor was *Felis lunensis*. Around 173,000 years ago, the *silvestris* and *lybica* lineages diverged. In some range areas, however, both wildcat species are threatened by introgressive hybridization with the domestic cat (*Felis catus*) and disease transmission. Persecution and being hit by a vehicle are examples of localised threats. The relationship between African wildcats and humans appears to have originated with the Neolithic Revolution when mice attracted wildcats.

It was domesticated as a result of this association, the domestic cat is a direct descendent of the African wildcat. In ancient Egypt, it was one of the most revered cats. The wildcat belongs to the Felidae family which shared a common ancestor approximately 10–15 million years ago. Around 6-7 million years ago, *Felis* species separated from the Felidae. About 1.09 to 1.4 million years ago, the European wildcat split from *Felis*.

*Felis lunensis* which flourished in Europe throughout the late Pliocene and Villafranchian periods was the direct parent of the European wildcat. The shift from *lunensis* to *silvestris* was completed by the Holstein interglacial about 3,25,000 to 3,40,000 years ago, according to fossil evidence. Craniological differences between European and African wildcats suggest that the wildcat migrated from Europe to the Middle East during the Late Pleistocene

giving rise to the steppe wildcat phenotypic. According to phylogenetic analysis, the *lybica* lineage split from the *silvestris* lineage around 173,000 years ago.

In Europe, Turkey and the Caucasus, the European wildcat lives in temperate broadleaf and mixed woods. It can be found from sea level to 2,250 m (7,380 ft) in the Pyrenees on the Iberian Peninsula. Its European range became divided between the late 17th and mid-20th centuries as a result of large-scale killing and regional extinction. Though vagrants from Italy are spreading into Austria, it is possibly extinct in the Czech Republic and considered regionally extinct in Austria.

Except for rainforests, the African wildcat can be found in a variety of habitats throughout Africa's savannahs from Mauritania on the Atlantic coast eastwards to the Horn of Africa up to heights of 3,000 metres (9,800 ft). The Sahara and Nubian Deserts as well as the Karoo, Kalahari and Namib Deserts have small populations. It extends from the Arabian Peninsula to the Caspian Sea's perimeter, embracing Mesopotamia, Israel and Palestine. It extends into Xinjiang and southern Mongolia in Central Asia and into the Thar Desert and dry portions of India in South Asia.

Except during the breeding season and when females have offspring both wildcat species are mostly nocturnal and solitary. The extent of females and males home ranges varies depending on geography, food availability, habitat quality and the population's age structure. Male and female home ranges overlap but other cats avoid core areas inside territory. Females are more sedentary than males because they need a private hunting area to raise kittens. Wildcats spend the majority of their days in hollow trees, rock crevices or impenetrable thickets. It has also been observed to take refuge in abandoned burrows of other species including red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and European badger (*Meles meles*) setts in Europe and fennec fox (*Vulpes fennec*) burrows in North America.

Rather of climbing trees, it retreats into a burrow when attacked. When choosing a tree hollow to live in, it chooses one that is low to the ground. Dry grasses and bird feathers line dens in rocks or burrows. Dens in tree hollows usually have enough sawdust to eliminate the need for lining. The wildcat will move to another lair if the current one becomes contaminated with fleas. When snow prohibits the European wildcat from travelling vast distances in the winter, it stays in its den until the weather improves. Spraying urine on trees, foliage and rocks, depositing faeces in conspicuous areas and leaving scent imprints through glands in its paws are all examples of territorial marking. Scratching trees also leaves visible marks.