Big Cat Rescue

Black Footed Cat
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Common Name: Black Footed
Cat Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata (Vertebrata)
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora

Family: Felidae
Genus: Felinae (Felis)
Species: Nigripes

Some sources list a southern subspecies, Felis nigripes thomasi, but today many authorities question the validity of this subspecies.
Life Span

When cornered they are quite fierce. Because of that sometimes called *miershooptier* when translated means ‘anthill tigers’.

Captive black footed cats have lived up to 13 years.
The black-footed cat is perhaps the smallest species of wild cat in Africa, black-footed cats average only 2.4 lb. to 4.2 lb. when fully grown. As with many other animals the females are usually smaller than the males.
**Length:** Head and body length (not counting tails): The males are around 14 to 17 inches long. Their tails are about 6 to 8 inches long. Again females are normally smaller than the males.

**Height:** The males are usually around 8 to 10 inches tall when measuring that the shoulder.

**Coat Coloration:** Overall they are buff-colored with heavy black oblong spots, and the legs have thick dark stripes or “ring bars” on the legs, the tails and the neck of this fascinating little wild cat.

**Paw Coloration:** The underside of the paw and the paw pads are black. That is where their name comes from.

**Skin Coloration:** The skin of these cats are different from other wild cats because their skin is pink.

**Ear Coloration:** The back of their ears are has the coloration as the background of their coats do.

**Eyes:** They have really big eyes.
Habitat

Black-footed cats are nocturnal inhabitants of the arid lands of southern Africa, and are typically associated with open, sandy grassy habitats with sparse scrub and tree cover. Although poorly studied in the wild, optimal habitat seems to be savannah areas having long grass with high rodent and bird densities. During the day, they live in abandoned burrows dug or in holes in termite mounds.

During the course of a year males will travel up to 8.5 sq. mi. while females travel up to 4 sq. mi. A male’s territory overlaps the territories of one to four females.
Black-footed cats are native to arid regions of the southern parts of Africa like Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola but not is the driest or sandiest parts of the Namib or Kalahari deserts. Before its numbers decreased so much it had once been known to inhabit Botswana. Sadly, none have been seen in Botswana for a long time.
Females reach sexual maturity at about 8 to 12 months. They are in estrus for only a day to two at a time during which on a few hours of that are they receptive to mating. They can have two litters a year.

Females usually have 2 kittens but sometimes have three kitten or just 1 kitten. It is quite rare but it happened that there were four kittens in a litter. Gestation is about 63-68 days.
Kittens weigh about 2 to 3 ounces at birth and are blind and totally dependent on their mothers.

Black-footed kitten develop more quickly than domestic kittens. They have to because the environment they live in can be dangerous. They start walking at about two weeks of age. When they are about a month old they start eating solid food and are weaned at about two months of age.

Kittens are born and raised is a burrow type den. Mothers will often move the kittens to new locations after they are about a week old.

They are independent when they are four or five months old. They may remain in their mother's territory for a while after becoming independent.
Behavior
Social System Behavior and Communication

Little is known about this species but like most other small cats, black-footed cats are solitary and come together only for breeding.

Black footed cats are extremely unsocial. These cats are rarely ever seen. They will flee and take cover at the smallest hint of something or someone coming.

Their calls are louder than those of other cats of their size, presumably to allow them to call over relatively large distances. However, when close to each other, they use quieter purrs or gurgles. If they feel threatened they will hiss and even growl.

It is believed they are strictly nocturnal being active between sunset and sunrise. During the daylight hours they rest is densely covered areas.

They have been known to spend the daytime hours in unoccupied burrows of springhares, porcupines and aardvarks. They will dig in the sand to adjust those burrow and dens to get them just the way they want them.

They have been found resting in hollow termite mounds during the day.

If a black footed cat is corner they can be quite fierce. Because of that behavior they are sometimes called miershooptier when translated means ‘anthill tigers’.

They mark their territories with scent by spraying urine. Males may spray up to a dozen times in an hour.

They also scent mark by clawing and rubbing on things. They will also mark their territories by leaving their poop where others can easily see it.
9

Hunting & Diet
In nature, their diet consists mainly of small mammals and birds, insects, arachnids, and reptiles.

It is not their preferred prey they are capable to taking down white quilled bustards. Even though the Cape hare is larger than the black footed cat it can take one down.

In captivity many cats are fed commercial feline diets and mice, and further investigation into their nutritional requirements is warranted.

They hunt by a stalk, run and pounce method, or they wait outside of rodent holes for their prey.

They can travel up to 5 miles a night while hunting.

They have higher energy requirements than the other African cats because of this they may kill and eat 14 small prey animals in a night.

They will occasionally hide some of their dinner for later.

These cats hunt by stalking and sneaking up on their prey. Sometimes, instead of stalking they will flush their prey out of their cover and pounce on it.

They have been observed waiting quietly with their eyes closed outside of rodent dens and burrows. Their eyes may be closed but they are not sleeping. Every sense is awake and alert just waiting for the slighted sound or movement of the emerging prey animal.

They get all the moisture they need from their prey, but will drink water when it’s available.

The black footed cat is known for its bravery and tenacity.
Little is known about their real status in the wild, and farmers seldom report capturing black-footed cats in problem animal surveys. Indiscriminate methods of predator control may be a significant threat as poison baits and traps set for African wildcat and jackal could easily be a threat because black-footed cats readily scavenge. A similar threat is poisoning locusts which are a preferred food.

They have few natural enemies in agricultural areas except jackals and caracal, and may be more common than originally suspected. The loss of grassland due to overgrazing by livestock is prevalent throughout the species’ range may well be their biggest threat, as may be habitat deterioration that led to reductions of the cat’s small vertebrate prey base.
Status: Is listed as Vulnerable by IUCN since 2002. The black-footed cat is one of the lesser studied wild cats of Africa. Felis nigripes is included on CITES Appendix I and protected by national legislation across most of its range. Hunting is banned in Botswana and South Africa.

Felid TAG 2003 recommendation: Black-footed cat (Felis nigripes). One of the most popular small-sized felids, the black-footed cat has unique renal concerns that may be stress or diet-related. These problems may be detrimental to longevity in zoos. Recent research holds promise for this species, and additional importations are possible. With both a regional and international studbook in place, an SSP is recommended with a target population of 80 individuals.
How rare is this cat? The International Species Information Service lists 21 worldwide, with 21 being in the U.S. There are 0 living on Easy Street.

Something that is different about black-footed cat is that they are poor climbers. They are not interested in tree branches. The reason for that is their stocky bodies and short tails make tree-climbing awkward.
Big Cat Rescue
Big Cat Rescue is the largest accredited sanctuary in the world dedicated entirely to abused and abandoned big cats. We are home to over 100 lions, tigers, bobcats, cougars and other species most of whom have been abandoned, abused, orphaned, saved from being turned into fur coats, or retired from performing acts. Our dual mission is to provide the best home we can for the cats in our care and educate the public about the plight of these majestic animals, both in captivity and in the wild, to end abuse and avoid extinction.

- Big Cat Rescue is the largest accredited sanctuary in the world dedicated entirely to abused and abandoned big cats.
- The sanctuary began rescuing exotic cats in Nov. 4, 1992.
- The non profit 501c3 sanctuary is home to more than 100 exotic big cats
- The cats at Big Cat Rescue are here for a variety of reasons, including:
  - Abandoned by owners who wrongly thought they would make good pets
  - Abused by owners in order to force them to perform
  - Retired from performing acts
  - Saved from being slaughtered to make fur coats
  - Rescued as babies after hunters killed their mothers. See our Bobcat Rehab and Release work
- Big Cat Rescue has 14 species of cats, many of whom are threatened, endangered or extinct now in the wild, including:
  - Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Cougars
  - Bobcats, Lynx, Serval, Ocelots, Caracals, Jungle Cats, Leopard Cats, Sand Cats, and a Geoffroy Cat
• Big Cat Rescue’s dual mission is to provide the best home we can for the cats in our care and educate the public about the plight of these majestic animals, both in captivity and in the wild, to end abuse and avoid extinction.

• The non-profit organization is:

• Accredited by the Global Federation of Sanctuaries

• Certified by Independent Charities of America as a “Best in America Charity”

• Member of the World Society for Protection of Animals

• Rated 4 Stars by Charity Navigator (their highest rating) and has one of the highest scores of any animal based charity

• The sanctuary is situated on 55 acres in the Citrus Park area of north Tampa.

www.BigCatRescue.org

www.BigCatBan.com

www.BigCatfun.com