

## Borneo bay cat (*Pardofelis badia*)



**Also known as:** bay cat, Bornean bay cat, Bornean marbled cat

**Synonyms:** *Catopuma badia*, *Felis badia*

**French:** Chat Bai

**Spanish:** Gato Rojo De Borneo

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum:** Chordata

**Class:** Mammalia

**Order:** Carnivora

**Family:** Felidae

**Genus:** *Pardofelis* (1)

**Size:** Male head-body length: 45.5 - 67 cm (2)  
 Female head-body length: 45.2 - 62 cm (2)  
 Male tail length: 32.5 - 38.5 cm (2) (3)  
 Female tail length: 32 - 40.3 cm (2)  
 Estimated weight: 3 - 4 kg (3)

### Top facts

- Fewer than 25 Borneo bay cats have ever been recorded, making it one of the rarest and least-studied cats in the world.
- The Borneo bay cat is rather unusual-looking for a wild cat, as it is only the size of a large house cat, but has a relatively long tail.
- There are two different colour variations of the Borneo bay cat, with the red-brown form being more common than the grey-black form.
- Little is known about the Borneo bay cat's preferred habitats, but it has been observed in dense forest and along watercourses.

## STATUS

The Borneo bay cat is classified as Endangered (EN) on the IUCN Red List (1) and is listed on Appendix II of CITES (4).

## DESCRIPTION

The Borneo bay cat is one of the rarest and least-studied cats in the world (2) (5) with fewer than 25 individuals having ever been recorded (2).

The Borneo bay cat has an unusual appearance for a wild cat, being only around the size of a large house cat (3), but with a relatively long body and tail (3) (5) (6) and short, rounded ears low on the sides

of the head (5).

The Borneo bay cat occurs in two colour types, grey-black or red-brown (5), although the red-brown form seems to be more common (2) (3). The colouration of this species is relatively uniform across its back and flanks (5) (7), but is usually paler on the underparts (5), with the belly being golden-brown and the underside of the chin being white (3). Two faint brown stripes can be seen on the Borneo bay cat's cheeks, while the back, belly and limbs may be covered with pale black specks and spots (3) (5). Interestingly, the hair on the **nape**, sides of the crown, cheek and front of the throat grows forwards rather than backwards in the Borneo bay cat (5).

The Borneo bay cat has very particular facial markings, including pale brown patches at the sides of the mouth (7) and pale marks at the inside edge of the upper eyelids (5) (7). This species has a dark brown 'M' shaped marking on the back of its head, and the top of the head is dark greyish-brown (3). The ears of the Borneo bay cat are black-brown on the outside, but paler on the inside (7), and the distinctive long tail becomes narrower at the tip and has a white stripe on the underside, running from about halfway down to the tail tip (5) (7).

Only one weight measurement has ever been taken of a Borneo bay cat, and this was of a very thin female which had been captive for a long period of time, with scientists estimating that a healthy adult would weigh more (3).

## RANGE

As its name suggests, the Borneo bay cat is found exclusively on the island of Borneo (1). Although this species is believed to have historically been found island-wide (1), it has mostly been spotted on the northern half of the island (2). The elusive Borneo bay cat has only been recorded in two out of the three countries that make up the island of Borneo, having been seen in Malaysia and Indonesia, but not in Brunei (2).

## HABITAT

Initially, the Borneo bay cat was believed to live only in densely forested areas (8). However, more recently this species has been observed by riversides and close to other watercourses, with multiple reports from local fishermen of its presence in such habitats (2) (3).

It has also been suggested that the Borneo bay cat may be **arboreal** due to sightings of the species in low branches (2). Although supported by the fact that the cat has a long tail and body, which are ideal for climbing (6), this theory is only speculation. Observations of the Borneo bay cat are rare and often based on the memory of locals, making it difficult to be sure of the exact habitat this species lives in (2).

## BIOLOGY

Very little is known about the biology of the Borneo bay cat as it has not been possible to observe it in its natural habitat, despite numerous camera traps being set up (2). Captive Borneo bay cats have either not survived long enough to confirm their biology (3) or have had no observations of their biology yet documented (2).

Although nothing is known about the Borneo bay cat's natural diet, this species has been reported to attack poultry (2).

## THREATS

The Borneo bay cat continues to be an exceptionally rare species (2). As this cat seems to prefer a forest habitat to some extent (2) (8), the large-scale deforestation occurring in parts of Malaysia (9) is likely to be threatening its numbers further (2). For example, certain areas of Malaysian forests are decreasing at five percent per year (9).

Opportunistic hunting and trapping are also key threats to the Borneo bay cat (2) (3), and smuggling of this species is also known to occur (2).

## CONSERVATION

The Borneo bay cat is currently listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) (2) (4) and has been recommended for inclusion under Appendix I, which means that all commercial international trade in the cat would be stopped (2). There is legal protection of the Borneo bay cat within Borneo, but enforcement to actually stop trade is minimal (2).

Recent suggestions have been made to help conserve the Borneo bay cat, including making improvements to any captive areas used to hold the cat, reducing habitat destruction, and conducting surveys to increase knowledge of the precise range and habitat of this species. In addition, recommendations have been made to set up captive breeding programmes to increase the population numbers of this elusive species (2).

No further known conservation action is being taken to conserve the Borneo bay cat, which leaves the future of this mysterious cat as uncertain as the life history of the species itself.

## FIND OUT MORE

Find out more about the Borneo bay cat and its conservation:

- Sunquist, M. and Sunquist, F. (2002) *Wildcats of the World*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Wild Cats World - Borneo bay cat:  
<http://www.wildcatsworld.org/borneobaycat.html>

Learn more about cat conservation:

- International Society for Endangered Cats:  
<http://www.wildcatconservation.org/>

- Small Cat Conservation Alliance:  
<http://wildlifeconservationnetwork.org/wildlife/smallcats.html>

Find out more about conservation in Borneo:

- WWF - Heart of Borneo Forests:  
[http://wwf.panda.org/what\\_we\\_do/where\\_we\\_work/borneo\\_forests/](http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/borneo_forests/)
- Borneo Conservation Trust:  
<http://borneotrust.com/borneotrust/>

## AUTHENTICATION

This information is awaiting authentication by a species expert, and will be updated as soon as possible.

If you are able to help please contact:

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## GLOSSARY

- **Nape:** the back of the neck.
- **Arboreal:** an animal which lives or spends a large amount of time in trees.

## REFERENCES

1. IUCN Red List (July, 2013)  
<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>
2. Mohd-Azlan, J. and Sanderson, J. (2007) Geographic distribution and conservation status of the bay cat *Catopuma badia*, a Bornean endemic. *Oryx*, **41**: 394-397.
3. Sunquist, M., Leh, C., Hills, D.M. and Rajaratnam, R. (1994) Rediscovery of the Bornean bay cat. *Oryx*, **28**: 67-70.
4. CITES (July, 2013)  
<http://www.cites.org/>
5. Sunquist, M. and Sunquist, F. (2002) *Wildcats of the World*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
6. Johnson, W.E. *et al.* (1999) Molecular genetic characterization of two insular Asian cat species, Bornean bay cat and Iriomote cat. In: Vasser, S.P. and Nevo, E. (Eds.) (1999) *Evolutionary Theory and Processes: Modern Perspectives: Papers in Honour of Eviatar Nevo*. Springer, Berlin.
7. Grey, J.E. (1874) Description of a new species of cat (*Felis badia*) from Sarawak. *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, **42**(1): 322-325.
8. Hose, C. (1893) *A Descriptive Account of the Mammals of Borneo*. Edward Abbott, London.
9. Miettinen, J., Shi, C. and Liew, S.C. (2011) Deforestation rates in insular southeast Asia between 2000 and 2010. *Global Change Biology*, **17**: 2261-2270.