

## Guigna (*Leopardus guigna*)



**Also known as:** Chilean cat, guiña, huiña, kodkod  
**Synonyms:** *Felis guigna*, *Oncifelis guigna*

**French:** Guigna  
**Spanish:** Guina

**Kingdom:** Animalia  
**Phylum:** Chordata  
**Class:** Mammalia  
**Order:** Carnivora  
**Family:** Felidae  
**Genus:** *Leopardus* (1)  
**Size:** Head-body length: 374 – 510 mm (2)  
 Tail length: 195 – 250 mm (2)  
**Weight:** 1.5 - 2.8 kg (2)

### STATUS

The guigna is classified as Vulnerable (VU) on the IUCN Red List (1) and listed on Appendix II of CITES (3).

### DESCRIPTION

The secretive guigna (*Leopardus guigna*) is the size of a tiny house cat, earning itself the distinction of being one of the smallest cats in the southern hemisphere, joined only by the oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*) (2). Its diminutive body is covered with buff to greyish-brown fur, heavily patterned with small black spots that sometimes form broken streaks on the head and neck (2) (4). Its small head bears low-set ears, the backs of which are black with a white spot in the centre. The short tail is bushy and marked with narrow, black bands (2), and the rather large feet hint at this cat's proficient climbing abilities (4).

### RANGE

The guigna is found only in Chile and Argentina. It occurs in the central and southern regions of Chile, including the islands of Chiloé and the Guaitecas Archipelago, and in a small region on the eastern slopes of the Andes in Argentina (2).

### HABITAT

A forest-dwelling cat, the guigna inhabits the moist, montane forests of the southern Andes, generally at elevations below 2,000 metres (2) (4).

## BIOLOGY

Stalking through the thick vegetation of its forest habitat, this secretive predator feeds on a variety of birds, including domestic geese and chickens, and also consumes rodents and small lizards (2) (4). Although it hunts its prey on the ground, the guigna is an excellent climber (2), and will climb trees when escaping the pursuit of a predator or to take temporary shelter in the branches (4).

The guigna is primarily a **nocturnal** cat, although it can also be active during the day (2) (4), and it spends its periods of rest in dense vegetation, often hidden amongst almost impenetrable bamboo (2).

Male guignas occupy large areas, which overlap the smaller ranges of one or more females (2). Female guignas give birth to litters of one to four young, after a **gestation** of 72 to 78 days. These small cats are thought to live for up to 11 years (4).

## THREATS

The guigna is most threatened in central Chile, where forest habitat has been cleared for agriculture and logging, resulting in a decline in guigna numbers (4). Elsewhere, the guigna's habitat is less threatened; for example, the forests in the southern part of its range are well protected and less inhabited by humans (4). However, hunting poses a threat in all areas. Fur of the guigna has been seen for sale in local markets and in some areas the guigna may be killed in the belief it attacks poultry and livestock (2).

## CONSERVATION

The guigna is fully protected in Argentina and Chile, and also occurs in a number of protected areas including Nahuel Huapi National Park in Argentina (4) and Nahuelbuta National Park in Chile (5).

## FIND OUT MORE

For further information on the conservation of the guigna see:

- Small Cat Conservation Alliance:  
[www.smallcats.org](http://www.smallcats.org)

## AUTHENTICATION

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## GLOSSARY

- **Gestation:** the state of being pregnant; the period from conception to birth.
- **Nocturnal:** active at night.

## REFERENCES

1. IUCN Red List (October, 2007)  
<http://www.iucnredlist.org>
2. Sunquist, M. and Sunquist, F. (2002) *Wild Cats of the World*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
3. CITES (October, 2007)  
<http://www.cites.org>
4. Nowell, K. and Jackson, P. (1996) *Wild Cats Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.
5. Acosta-Jamett, G., Simonetti, J.A., Bustamante, R.O. and Dunstone, N. (2003) Metapopulation approach to assess survival of *Oncifelis guigna* in fragmented forests of central Chile. *Mastozoologia Neotropical*, **10**(2): 217 - 229.