

# Conservation News

## New record of *Leopardus guigna* in Chile expands its range northwards

The guiña *Leopardus guigna* is the smallest felid in the Americas. The species is categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, with a restricted distribution limited to the central and southern regions of Chile, some offshore islands and some areas of south-west Argentina. Two subspecies are recognized: *Leopardus guigna tigrillo* (in central and north-central Chile) and *Leopardus guigna guigna* (in south Chile and south-west Argentina). It inhabits sclerophyll forests and Mediterranean matorral in its northern range, and temperate rainforest in its southern range in Chile (particularly *Nothopagus* spp. forest) and Andean Patagonia Forest in Argentina. Threats to the guiña include habitat loss and fragmentation, and direct persecution by people.

Although some individuals of the Chilean endemic *L. guigna tigrillo* have recently been reported in the Coquimbo region (Napolitano et al., 2020, *Revista Chilena de Historia Natural*, 93, 7), there are no previous records north of Cerro Palo Colorado.

On 21 May 2024, during camera-trap surveys to monitor carnivores, we recorded the species for the first time in Huentelauquén, in the Coquimbo region, in a native forest patch on the southern bank of the Choapa River. The site is close to agricultural crops and c. 300 m from the Ramsar site Las Salinas de Huentelauquén. Although the diverse coastal ecosystems of this Ramsar site support a range of biodiversity, there are no previous records of the species in the area and this new record extends the range of *L. guigna tigrillo* c. 43 km northwards. The main threats to the guiña in this area are habitat loss and fragmentation caused by agriculture



Camera-trap image of *Leopardus guigna* on 21 May 2024, expanding its known range northwards.

(primarily avocado crops), and rural poultry farms and domestic pets.

During our surveys we also recorded the pampas cat *Leopardus colocolo* and culpeo fox *Lycalopex culpaeus*. We noticed alopecic patches on one fox, an indicator of sarcoptic mange.

A genetic study described the guiña population at the northernmost limit of the species' distribution range as genetically unique and isolated from other groups (Napolitano et al., 2014, *Conservation Genetics*, 15, 631–653). Further research must focus on this border population to determine appropriate conservation actions.

RICARDO PINO RIFFO  ([leopardusaustral@gmail.com](mailto:leopardusaustral@gmail.com)) and  
LUNA PINO AEDO  
Proyecto *Leopardus Austral*, Santiago, Chile

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