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Geographical range



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Amazing Species: Sand Cat

The Sand Cat (*Felis margarita*) is the only cat species found primarily in true desert, withstanding extreme temperatures between -25°C to 50°C across northern Africa and southwest and central Asia. Its thickly furred feet enable it to cope with sand surface temperatures up to 80°C. The Sand Cat does not need drinking water, as it can satisfy its water requirements through its diet of mainly small rodents.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Sand Cats, as they live at low population densities in inhospitable conditions that are often difficult to census. However, there are reports of local declines, and there are no recent records from several countries within the species' range. Major threats include habitat loss and degradation due to human settlement and disturbance activity, for example through fencing and livestock grazing. Declines in prey species, as livestock grazing reduces the natural vegetation small mammals live on, combined with competition for prey and disease transmission from feral and domestic cats and dogs, further threaten the Sand Cat.

Accurate surveys are urgently required to monitor this cat's population, and studies on its habitat and ecology are needed to promote effective conservation actions. Protection from hunting and trade, plus captive breeding, are important measures supporting this species.