

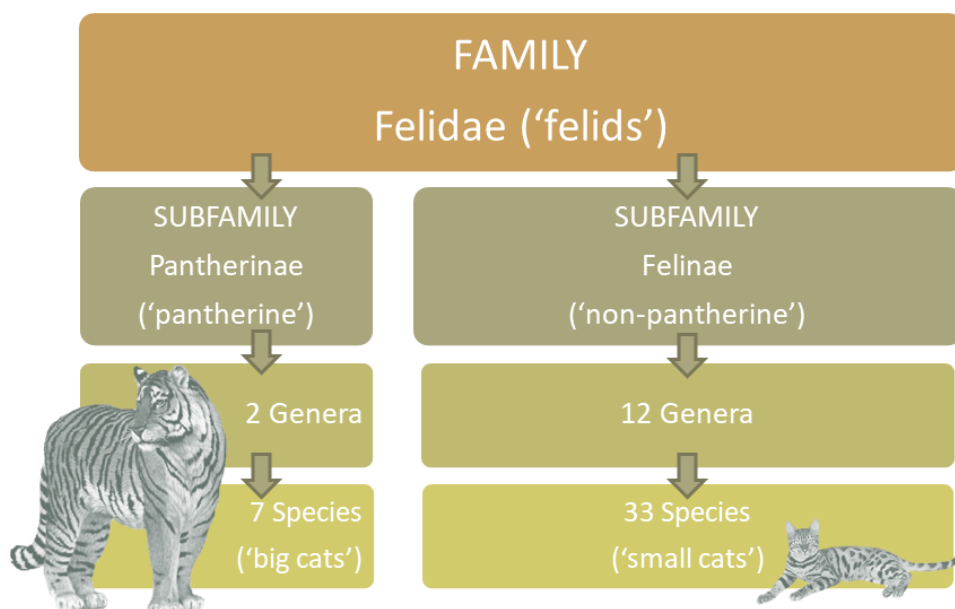
## Small Cats and its Significance

### Why in news?

Recently, Global Tiger Forum (GTF) has launched small wild cats conservation programme in India for the protection of small cats.

To know more about big cats, click [here](#)

### What are small cats?



- **Evolution** -The evolution of small wild cats started some 35 to 28.5 million years ago.
- **Family** -Small wild cats are member of the cat family (Felidae).
- **Uniqueness** -Small cats are distinguished from the big cats by their ossified hyoid bones.
- The ossification of bones linked to the sound box permits small cats only to “purr” and not roar like their larger relative.
- **Weight** -Small in size with a maximum weight of 25 kg.
- **Gestation period** - 70 to 90 days.
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** -The IUCN red listing for India’s small cat species ranges from “least concerned” to “near threatened”.
- **Distribution** -Globally 41 species of small wild cats are recognized and 11 of these are from India.

**11 species of small wild cats in India**

|                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Clouded leopard   | Eurasian lynx        |
| Leopard cat       | Fishing cat          |
| Rusty-spotted cat | Jungle cat           |
| Asian golden cat  | Caracal              |
| Asiatic wild cat  | Marbled cat          |
|                   | Pallas's cat (manul) |

### What is the significance of small cats?

- **Mid position** -In the ecological food web, mid position makes them closer to both plants as well as top predators.
- **Transfer** - Ex-situ to in-situ transfer is easy and effective.
- **Indicators** -Great surrogate indicators of biodiversity.
- **Sentinels of global change** -Recognized as sentinels of global change.
- **Adaptations** - Show all adaptations typical to all felids except clouded leopard which has acrobatic capability for an arboreal mode of life.
- **Unique role** -Their role in ecosystem is equal to apex predator.
- **Ecologically diversity** -Helps in protecting ecological diversity.
- **Habitats and niches** -Have more species diversity as it occupies varied habitats and niches.
- **Stressors** -The short lifespan, shorter gestation and high reproductive rates of small cats respond readily to stressors operating in a habitat.
- **Managerial interventions** -Small cats along with other mesopredators act as a zoom lens for fine-scale managerial interventions.

### What factors affect the population of small cats?

- Loss of habitation
- Increasing poaching
- Revenge killing
- Lack of protection by government
- Lack of regulation bodies

### What measures were taken for the conservation of small cats?

- **Landscape approach** -Engagement with all stakeholders such as government as well as non-governmental operating in the envisioned landscape to protect small cats.
- This approach needs mutually-gainful reciprocal commitments based on a master plan.
- This approach will bring in gains to both people and the ecosystem through a centrifugal approach.

#### Quick facts

#### Global Tiger Forum (GTF)

- The GTF was formed in 1993 on recommendations from an international symposium on Tiger Conservation in New Delhi.
- It is an international intergovernmental body exclusively set up for the conservation

of tigers.

- Out of the 13 tiger range countries, ***7 are currently members*** of GTF which are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam besides non-tiger range country U.K.
- The secretariat is based in ***New Delhi, India.***

## References

1. [The Indian Express | Small Cats](#)
2. [Wild Cat Family | Picture](#)

