



Pampas Cat

Pampas Cat ^[1]	
	
Conservation status	
<i>Not evaluated</i> (IUCN 3.1)	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Carnivora
Family:	Felidae
Genus:	<i>Leopardus</i>
Species:	<i>L. pajeros</i>
Binomial name	
<i>Leopardus pajeros</i> (Desmarest, 1816)	
	
crude range map	

The **Pampas Cat** (*Leopardus pajeros*) is a small feline from Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador,^[1] and possibly far southwestern Colombia.^[2] It is named after the Pampas, but occurs in grassland, shrubland, and dry forest at elevations up to 5000 metres (16000 ft).^[3]

It has traditionally been included in the Colocolo (*L. colocolo*), but was split primarily based on differences in pelage colour/pattern and cranial measurements.^[3] The split is not supported by genetic work,^{[4] [5]} leading some authorities to maintain it as a subspecies of the Colocolo.^{[2] [6]} Confusingly, when the Colocolo includes the Pampas Cat and

Pantanal Cat as subspecies, the "combined" species is sometimes referred to as the Pampas Cat.^[7]

Pampas cats have not been studied much in the wild and little is known about their hunting habits. There have been reports of the cat hunting rodents and birds at night, and also hunting domestic poultry near farms.

Subspecies

In 2005, *Mammal Species of the World* recognised 5 subspecies of the Pampas Cat.^[1]

- *Leopardus pajeros pajeros* (nominate) – southern Chile and widely in Argentina.^[6]
- *Leopardus pajeros crespoi* – eastern slope of the Andes in northwestern Argentina.^[3]
- *Leopardus pajeros garleppi* – Andes in Peru.^[3]
- *Leopardus pajeros steinbachi* – Andes in Bolivia.^[3]
- *Leopardus pajeros thomasi* – Andes in Ecuador.^[3]

Based on two specimens of the subspecies *steinbachi*, it is larger and paler than *garleppi*. However, this is labelled with uncertainty due to the very small sample,^[3] and some treat it as a synonym of *garleppi*.^[6] Uncertainty also exists for the subspecies *budini*, which appears to resemble *crespoi* and was described from lowlands of northwestern Argentina, but may actually be from humid forests in the region.^[3] Some recognise it,^[6] while other do not.^[1] Finally, populations in southern Chile and the southern half of Argentina, included in the nominate in the above list, have been recognised as the subspecies *crucinus* based on the large size (the largest Pampas Cats) and dull pelage (third type, see *Description*).^[3]

Habitat

Despite being named after the Pampas, the Pampas Cat occurs in a wide range of habitats. In northwestern Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador it is found at altitudes between 1800 and 5000 metres (5900 and 16000 ft) in páramo, marginally also in puna and locally in dry forest.^[3] Where its range overlaps with the Andean Mountain Cat in northwestern Argentina, it occurs at lower altitudes on average.^[8] In central to northwestern Argentina the Pampas Cat is found at altitudes below 1240 metres (4070 ft) in grassland, mesophytic and dry forest, and shrubland.^[3] In southern Argentina and far southern Chile it is found in Patagonian steppes and shrubland at altitudes below 1100 metres (3600 ft).^[3]

Description

The Pampas Cat is a small, but heavy-set cat. There are significant geographical variations in its size, but the body length is 46 to 75 centimetres (18 to 30 in) and the relatively short tail is 23 to 29 centimetres (9.1 to 11 in).^[3] There are three main variants of its pelage, but all have two dark lines on each cheeks:

- 1) The flanks have large, reddish-brown rosette-shaped spots with darker borders, there are numerous rings on the tail (of the same colour as the flank spots), and the stripes on the legs and spots/stripes on the underparts are very dark brown (almost black).^[3] In colour and patter this group closely resembles Colocolos of the subspecies *wolffsohni*.^[3]
- 2) Resembles the previous, but the background colour is paler, and the body markings, stripes on the hindlegs, and rings on the tail are paler and less distinct.^[3]
- 3) Overall greyish with distinct dark brown stripes on the legs and spots on the underparts, a plain tail (no clear rings), and *at most* indistinct dark lines on the flanks.^[3]

Only the first type occurs in the north (around 20th parallel south and northwards), and only the third type occurs in the far south (around 40th parallel south and southwards).^[3] In between the majority are of second type, but the first type has been recorded as far south as 29th parallel south, and the third type as far north as 36th parallel south.^[3] At latitudes where both the first and second type are found, the former tends to occur in highlands and the latter in lowlands.^[3]

There have also been reports of melanistic Pampas Cats.

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