

Assessment and Mitigation of Human Conflict with Four Felid Species in Sumatra, Indonesia

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Introduction

Conflict between humans and the small to medium-sized felids in Sumatra has historically been thought to be low, as there are few reports of livestock depredation made to local authorities. However, there have been no formal surveys, no assessment of the amount of retribution killing that may be taking place, and the impact of conflict on the status of these populations is largely unknown.

In 2009, we initiated a study to assess the level and character of conflict between humans and four small to medium-sized felids in Sumatra; the Asiatic golden cat (*Catopuma temminckii*), the Sunda clouded leopard (*Neofelis diardi*), the leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), and the marbled cat (*Pardofelis marmorata*).

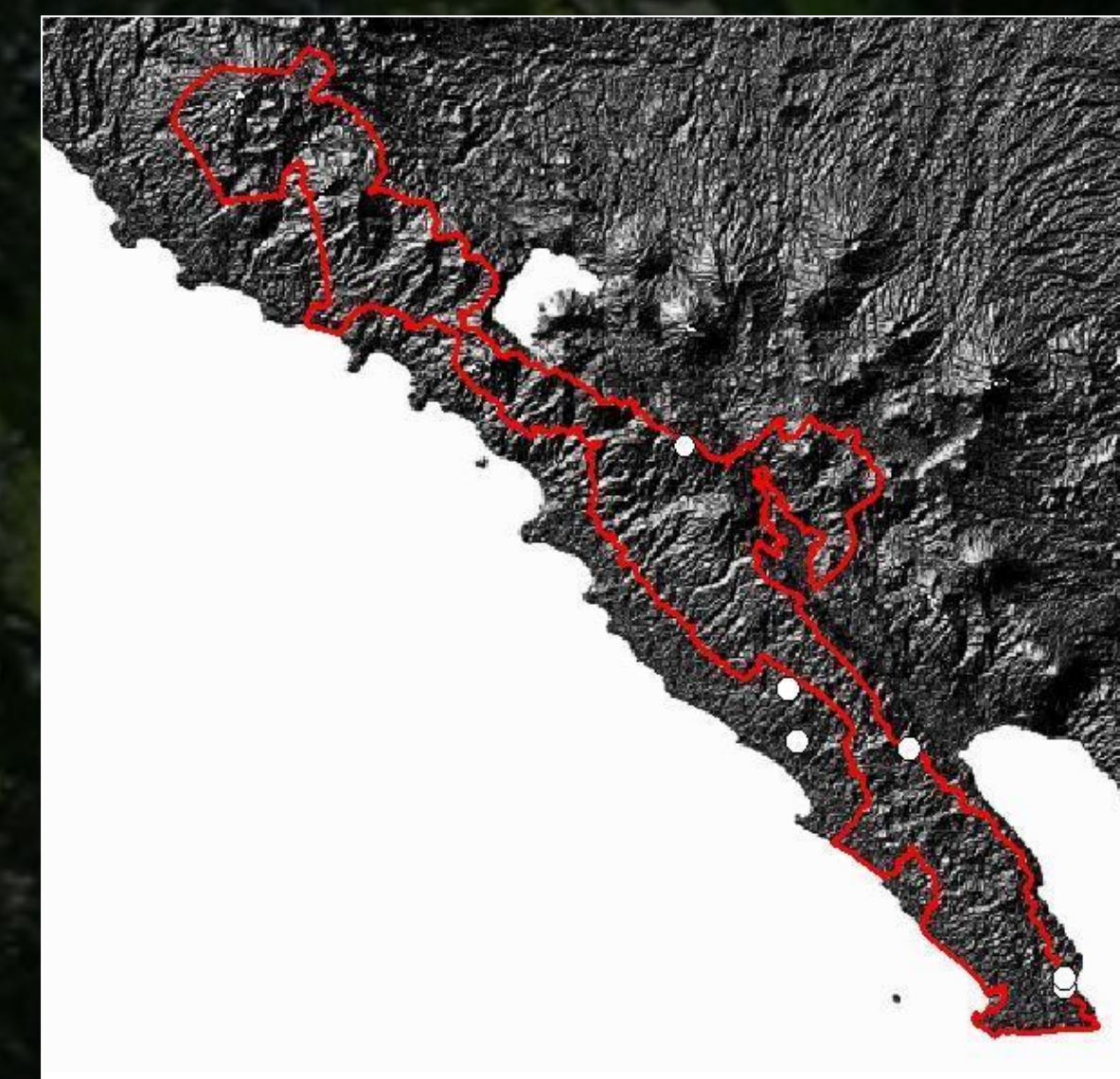


Study Goals

- Assess the level and character of conflict between humans and four of the small to medium-sized felids of Sumatra
- Determine whether retribution is commonly taken after incidences of predated livestock
- Obtain information on the perception of local villagers towards the conservation of the study species
- Develop effective interventions and educational strategies to mitigate conflict

Methods

- Surveys were conducted in five villages on the border of Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park (BBSNP)



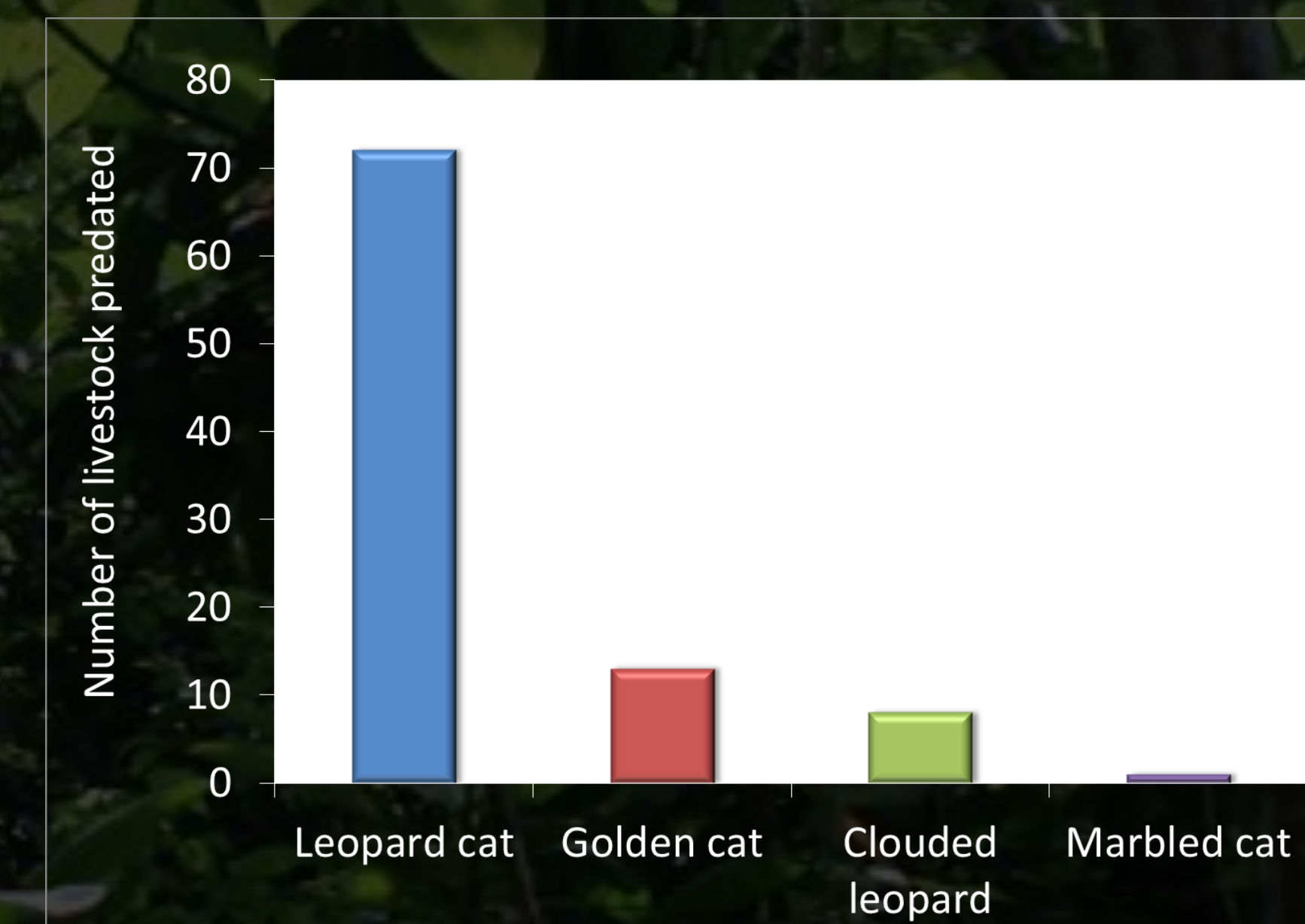
Locations of survey sites in white, with the park boundary in red

- Oral surveys were administered in Bahasa Indonesian to all willing participants in each of the five villages
- Respondents were shown high quality images of each of the study species while surveyors emphasized distinguishing characteristics for each species
- Our questions assessed the type of livestock taken, the responsible predating species, the economic value of lost livestock, the character of retribution taken, and the general perception of local villagers towards the conservation of the study species

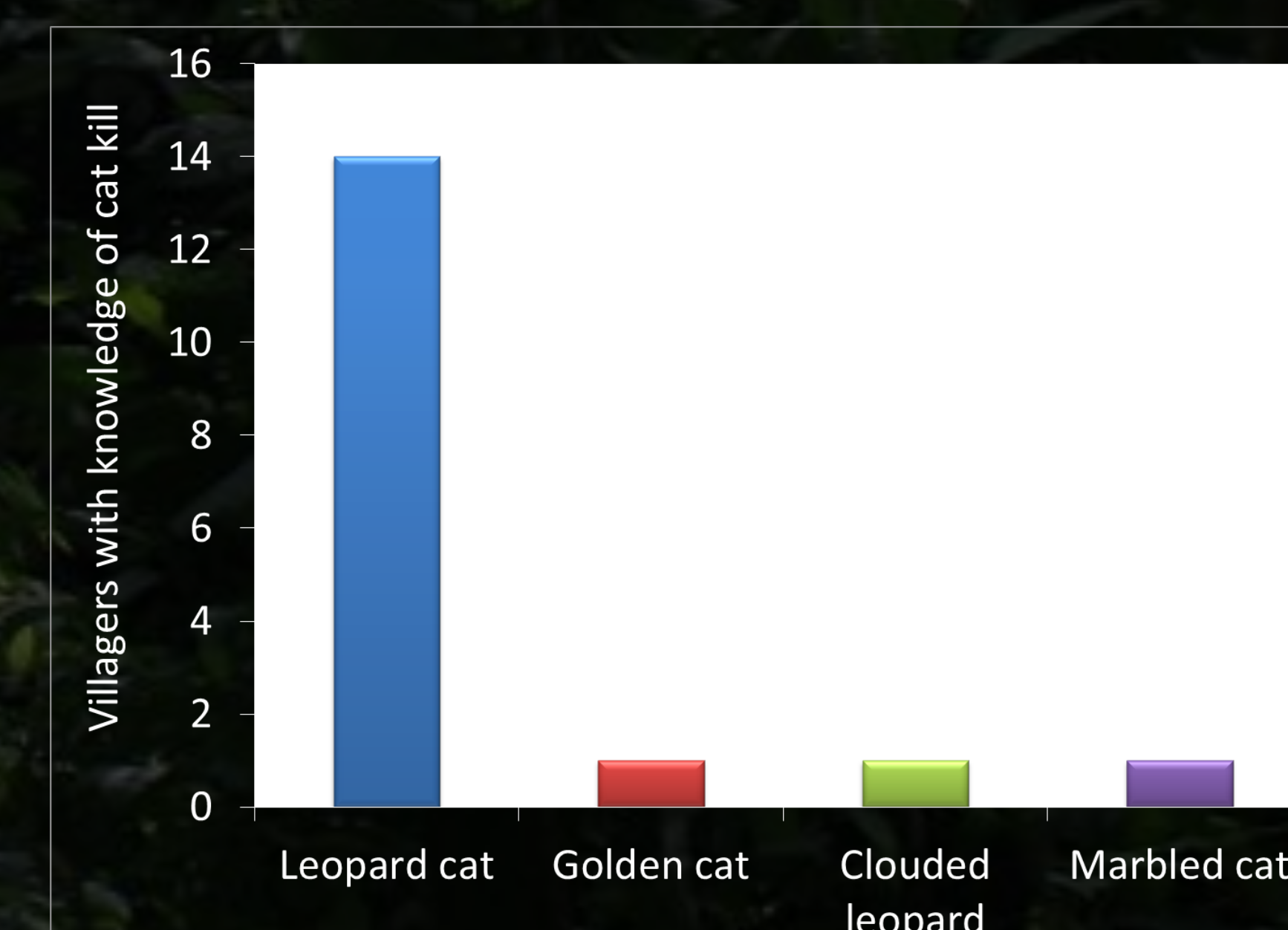


Results

- In five villages, a total of 168 respondents were interviewed, 51% of whom reported livestock depredation by the study species



The number of livestock predated by each of the study species



The number of villagers with knowledge of a retribution event

- Livestock was important to the livelihood of respondents with 82% maintaining some number of livestock, most commonly chickens and goats
- The majority of respondents had a neutral disposition towards the study species, neither exhibiting a strong "dislike" nor a strong "like"
- The majority of respondents felt that the study species should be protected in Indonesia, but many commented that the felids should be maintained in a zoo rather than in the wild

Discussion

The present study is ongoing, but already raises significant concerns in regards to the actual character and level of conflict between humans and the small to medium-sized felids of Sumatra. Although we initially expected the rates of livestock depredation for our species to be low, all species were identified as having depredated some amount of livestock. In addition, nearly 10% of people surveyed were aware of incidences of retribution killing. This information must be considered in the assessment of the species status in the region, particularly in light of the fact that there are few reports of conflict to local authorities.

The Next Steps

We are currently building chicken coops, reinforcing goat pens and educating villagers on the ecology and conservation of the study species. Surveys will be repeated to evaluate the efficacy of mitigation.



Acknowledgements

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