Catopuma temminckii, Asiatic Golden Cat

Assessment by: McCarthy, J., Dahal, S., Dhendup, T., Gray, T.N.E., Mukherjee, S., Rahman, H., Riordan, P., Boontua, N. & Wilcox, D.

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**Taxonomy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Phylum</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animalia</td>
<td>Chordata</td>
<td>Mammalia</td>
<td>Carnivora</td>
<td>Felidae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Taxon Name:** *Catopuma temminckii* (Vigors & Horsfield, 1827)

**Synonym(s):**
- *Felis temminckii* Vigors & Horsfield, 1827
- *Pardofelis temminckii* (Vigors & Horsfield, 1827)

**Common Name(s):**
- English: Asiatic Golden Cat, Golden Cat, Temminck's Cat
- French: Chat de Temminck, Chat doré D'Asie
- Spanish: Gato Dorado Asiático

**Taxonomic Source(s):**

**Taxonomic Notes:**
Taxonomy is currently under review by the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group. The Asiatic Golden Cat resembles the African Golden Cat, but on the basis of genetic analysis it was grouped with the Marbled Cat in *Pardofelis* (Johnson et al. 2006, O'Brien and Johnson 2007). However, an evaluation of skull morphology by Sicuro and Oliveira (2011) revealed that skull structure in *Pardofelis* is quite different to that of *Catopuma*. Moreover, *Pardofelis* has a flexible ankle joint and elongated tail as adaptations to arboreality, which are lacking in *Catopuma*. Based on these differences, the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group retains Asiatic Golden Cat in *Catopuma*.

**Assessment Information**

**Red List Category & Criteria:** Near Threatened ver 3.1

**Year Published:** 2015

**Date Assessed:** April 20, 2014

**Justification:**
The Asiatic Golden Cat is assessed as Near Threatened. However, there is a general paucity of data for this species, with no density estimates or population data, making an assessment of the true status of the species difficult. The data that we do have indicate that the species has likely experienced population declines of over 20%, and approaching 30% in recent years due to extensive habitat loss and poaching across their range. This pattern is likely to continue in the future, and indicates that the Asiatic Golden Cat is very close to qualifying for a Vulnerable status under criterion A.

The Asiatic Golden Cat has been documented from twelve countries in Southeast Asia. Yet, despite this...
fairly wide distribution, its presence in India, Bangladesh and Nepal is limited and patchy (Datta et al. 2008, Khan 2008, Ghimrey and Pal 2009, Bashir et al. 2011, H. Rahman pers. comm.). It is reported infrequently from eastern Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and south China, with records in both China and Viet Nam declining drastically in recent years (Duckworth et al. 1999; Johnson et al. 2007; Gray et al. 2012, 2014; Wilcox et al. 2014; P. Riordan pers. comm.). It has not been recorded in Viet Nam since 2005, and extensive surveys carried out in Yunnan, Sichuan, Guanxi and Jiangxi Provinces of China have recorded Asiatic Golden Cat on only three occasions (Wilcox et al. 2014, Beijing Forestry University unpublished data, Chinese State Forestry Administration unpublished data). It is likely to be extirpated from these two countries in the very near future. The Asiatic Golden Cat is distributed more widely throughout Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, but the is thought to be experiencing population declines in these areas as well (Linkie and Ridout 2009, Sunarto 2012, McCarthy 2013, McCarthy et al. 2015, K. Kawanishi pers. comm., S. Dahal pers. comm).

The most significant threats to the Asiatic Golden Cat are thought to be habitat loss and poaching. Although the species has occasionally been recorded from degraded or altered habitats, it is primarily a forest dependent species, and thus is threatened by the significant habitat loss and fragmentation throughout its range (Nowell and Jackson 1996, Holden 2001, Grassman et al. 2005, Choudhury 2007, Wang 2007, McCarthy 2013, McCarthy et al. 2015). Although deforestation rates in Southeast Asia have slowed slightly, they are still among the highest in the world at roughly one million hectares/year between 2000 and 2010 (FAO 2011). Land conversion is also a threat to the Asiatic Golden Cat, and even in countries such as Bhutan, where the species is thought to enjoy a relatively protected status, an increase in hydropower projects has the potential to negatively impact the species. Poaching of the species is thought to be increasing in many areas, as it is often targeted for the sale of its pelt and body parts (Nowell and Jackson 1996, Duckworth et al. 1999, Lynam et al. 2006, Khan 2008, Aiyadurai et al. 2010, Pusparini et al. 2014, H. Rahman pers. comm., P. Riordan pers. comm., S. Mukherjee pers. comm., T. Gray pers. comm., S. Dahal pers. comm., A. Datta pers. comm., D. Willcox pers. comm.). Increasingly, the species may be targeted as a substitute for Tiger pelts and bones. In Viet Nam, there have been several incidences of confiscated Asiatic Golden Cat pelts that were painted to resemble that of a Tiger (D. Willcox pers. comm.). It is also the victim of indiscriminate snaring and hunting in some areas (Holden 2001, Khan 2008, D. Willcox pers. comm.). Finally, there are indications that the species is increasingly being killed in retribution for preying on livestock (mainly poultry) (Sunquist and Sunquist 2002, McCarthy 2013).

The lack of reliable density estimates severely limit our ability to accurately assess the population status and trend of the species. However, the decrease, or sudden absence, of Asiatic Golden Cat records from many areas, in combination with an apparently increased level of poaching, lead us to believe that the population is declining across its range. More rigorous scientific data for this species is needed, and may provide a strong basis on which to base change in status to Vulnerable.

Previously Published Red List Assessments


2002 – Vulnerable (VU)

1996 – Lower Risk/near threatened (LR/nt)

1994 – Indeterminate (I)
1990 – Indeterminate (I)

1988 – Indeterminate (I)

1986 – Indeterminate (I)

**Geographic Range**

**Range Description:**
The Asiatic Golden Cat has been recorded rarely and patchily from the Northeastern states of India (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim), through eastern Bangladesh (Northeast and the Chittagong Hill Tracts) and eastern Nepal (Datta *et al.* 2008, Khan 2008, Ghimrey and Pal 2009, Bashir *et al.* 2011, Lyngdoh *et al.* 2011, Lalthanpuia *et al.* 2012, Borah *et al.* 2013, Velho 2013, H. Rahman pers. comm.). It is reported infrequently from eastern Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and south China, and records in Viet Nam and south China have decreased drastically in recent years, with strong indications that the species may face extirpation there in the next several years (Duckworth *et al.* 1999; Johnson *et al.* 2006; Gray *et al.* 2012, 2014; Wilcox *et al.* 2014; P. Riordan pers. comm.). It is distributed more widely throughout Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia (Tempa *et al.* 2013, T. Dhendup pers. comm., K. Kawanishi pers. comm., S. Dahal pers. comm.). It is widely reported from the island of Sumatra, but not present on other Indonesian islands (Ridout and Linkie 2009, Sunarto 2011, McCarthy 2013, McCarthy *et al.* 2015).

This distribution may be somewhat generous, particularly in China and Viet Nam. In Viet Nam there have been several Asiatic Golden Cat pelts confiscated recently in local markets, however, they are of undetermined origin. A live individual has not been recorded in the country since 2005, despite numerous camera trap studies. It is likely that the species has been extirpated from most of the country due to widespread and indiscriminate snaring. In China, extensive surveys carried out with local protected area and provincial government teams in Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangxi and Jiangxi provinces have recorded the Asiatic Golden Cat on only three occasions (Beijing Forestry University, unpublished data, Chinese State Forestry Administration, unpublished data). It is likely that the species is, or will soon be, extirpated from large areas of its range in south China as well.

**Country Occurrence:**

Native: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; India; Indonesia (Sumatera); Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Myanmar; Nepal; Thailand; Viet Nam

http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2015-4.RLTS.T4038A50651004.en
Distribution Map

Catopuma temminckii

Range

- Extant (resident)

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International Union for the Conservation of Nature

http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2015-4.RLTS.T4038A50651004.en
Population

A lack of density estimates across the range makes it difficult to accurately assess the true population status of the species. Owing to somewhat similar camera trap encounter rates, the Asiatic Golden Cat is thought to have comparable abundances to those of sympatric felids (e.g. *Neofelis nebulosa*, *Neofelis diardi*, *Pardofelis marmorata*). However, some surveys have recorded the Golden Cat more frequently than sympatric felid species, while others have recorded the it less frequently, so their relative abundance likely varies significantly across their range (Holden 2001, Duckworth et al. 2005, Rao et al. 2005, Lynam et al. 2006, Mishra et al. 2006, Bashir et al. 2011, Sunarto 2012, McCarthy 2013, McCarthy et al. 2015). In addition, it is important to consider that the Asiatic Golden Cat is thought to be mainly terrestrial, which may influence the number of camera trap photos recorded in comparison to more arboreal felid species such as *Neofelis diardi*, *Neofelis nebulosa* and *Pardofelis marmorata*.

Current Population Trend: Decreasing

Habitat and Ecology (see Appendix for additional information)

The Asiatic Golden Cat is primarily found in forested areas, particularly tropical and subtropical moist evergreen forests, mixed evergreen forests, and dry deciduous forests. (Nowell and Jackson 1996, McCarthy 2013, McCarthy et al. 2015). Two radio collared individuals (a male and a female) in Thailand occurred most often in closed forest habitats (Grassman et al. 2005). However, the species has also been recorded from open areas such as shrub or grasslands, or open rocky areas, and from degraded or fragmented forest landscapes (Duckworth et al. 1999, Holden 2001, Grassman et al. 2005, Choudhury 2007, Wang 2007, McCarthy 2013). A radio collared female in Sumatra was frequently recorded outside of a protected area in remnant fragments of forest located between coffee plantations (McCarthy 2013).

Records of the Asiatic Golden Cat have a wide altitudinal variation. The species was documented at elevations up to 3,960 m in the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve Sikkim, India, at 3,738 m in the Jigme Sigye Wangchuk National Park in Bhutan, at 2,896 m in Trongsa, and at 3,900 m in Wangduephodrang (Wang 2007, Bashir et al. 2011, S. Dahal pers. comm.). However, in some areas it appears to be more common in lowland forests. In Kerinci Seblat National Park in Sumatra, it was only recorded by camera traps at low elevations.

The Asiatic Golden Cat is remarkably polymorphic in its pelage. The most common coat color is golden or red brown, but it may also be dark brown or even grey. Melanistic individuals have been reported and may be predominant in some areas of its range (Holden 2001). There is also a spotted form which is called an “ocelot morph” due to its ocelot-like rosettes. To date, this form has been reported from China (in Sichuan and Tibet) and from Bhutan (Wang 2007). The most distinct features of this cat are the white lines bordered with dark brown to black running across the cheeks, from the nostrils towards the cheeks, at the inner corner of the eyes, and up the crown. The rounded ears have black backs with a grey spot. The chest, abdomen and inner side of the upper legs are white with light speckling. The legs and tail are grey to black at the distal ends. The terminal half of the tail is white on the underside and is often carried with the end curled dorsally. Males are larger than females.

Little is known about the ecology and behaviour of the Asiatic Golden Cat. It was once thought to be primarily nocturnal, however, recent data indicates that it may be more crepuscular or diurnal. Two radio-collared Golden Cats in Thailand’s Phu Khieu National Park showed mainly diurnal and crepuscular
activity peaks (Grassman *et al.* 2005). In addition, most camera trap photographs of Asiatic Golden Cats in the Kerinci Seblat and Bukit Barisan Selatan National Parks in Sumatra were taken during the day (Holden 2001, McCarthy 2013).

The home ranges of two radio collared Golden Cats in Thailand’s Phu Khiue National Park were 33 km² (female) and 48 km² (male) and overlapped in significantly (Grassman *et al.* 2005).

One confirmed scat contained the remains of Indochinese Ground Squirrel (Grassman *et al.* 2005). Scats from Sumatra contained rat and muntjac remains, and the stomach contents of a carcass in Thailand’s Kaeng Krachan National Park included the remains of a small snake (Grassman 1998).

**Systems:** Terrestrial

**Threats** *(see Appendix for additional information)*

As a forest dependent species, the Asiatic Golden Cat is threatened by habitat loss throughout it’s range. Although deforestation rates in Southeast Asia have slowed substantially, they are still among the highest in the world (FAO 2011). An increasing number of hydropower projects in countries such as Bhutan, also have the potential to negatively impact the species. In addition, the species is threatened by increasing levels of illegal hunting and poaching for consumption, and for the sale of pelts and body parts (Nowell and Jackson 1996, Duckworth *et al.* 1999, Lynam *et al.* 2006, Khan 2008, H. Rahman pers. comm., P. Riordan pers. comm., S. Mukherjee pers. comm., T. Gray pers. comm., S. Dahal pers. comm.). There is thought to be some level of poaching or hunting of the species in every country across its range. Pelts have been recorded being traded along the Myanmar-Thailand border, and in Sumatra (Duckworth *et al.* 1999, Pusparini *et al.* 2014), and skins are reported from several sites in northeast India (Aiyadurai *et al.* 2010, A. Datta pers. comm.). Poaching pressure is particularly high in China and Viet Nam, where the species may soon face extinction. In Viet Nam, there is some evidence that the species is increasingly targeted as a substitute for Tiger skins and parts, as Tigers become more difficult to obtain. There have been several incidences of confiscated Golden Cat pelts which were painted to resemble that of a Tiger (D. Willcox pers. comm.). Snaring appears to be on the rise across much of mainland Southeast Asia, and constitutes a major threat to the species D. Willcox pers. comm.). In Bangladesh, several recent specimens indicate that the species is commonly hunted by indigenous peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Conflict with humans due to livestock depredation is also thought to be an issue for the species. Retribution killing of the species in response to chicken depredation was recorded in Sumatra (McCarthy 2013).

**Conservation Actions** *(see Appendix for additional information)*

The Asiatic Golden Cat is listed under Appendix I of CITES (as *Catopuma temminckii*), and is officially protected over most of its range by national legislation. Legal hunting is prohibited in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Peninsular Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam, and is regulated in Lao PDR. However, there are indications of increasing illegal hunting and poaching in many range countries. Research on the ecology of this species is essential in order to understand population trends and implement effective conservation strategies.

**Credits**
Bibliography


Wang, S.W. 2007. A rare morph of the Asiatic golden cat in Bhutan’s Jigme Singye Wangchuck National


**Citation**


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**External Resources**

For [Images and External Links to Additional Information, please see the Red List website](http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2015-4.RLTS.T4038A50651004.en).
Appendix

Habitats
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

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<tr>
<th>Habitat</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Suitability</th>
<th>Major Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Forest -&gt; 1.5. Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Dry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Forest -&gt; 1.6. Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Moist Lowland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Forest -&gt; 1.9. Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Moist Montane</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Savanna -&gt; 2.2. Savanna - Moist</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shrubland -&gt; 3.5. Shrubland - Subtropical/Tropical Dry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shrubland -&gt; 3.6. Shrubland - Subtropical/Tropical Moist</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Shrubland -&gt; 3.7. Shrubland - Subtropical/Tropical High Altitude</td>
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<td>Suitable</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grassland -&gt; 4.5. Grassland - Subtropical/Tropical Dry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grassland -&gt; 4.7. Grassland - Subtropical/Tropical High Altitude</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Threats
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
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<th>Threat</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>Impact Score</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Residential &amp; commercial development -&gt; 1.1. Housing &amp; urban areas</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stresses:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ecosystem stresses -&gt; 1.1. Ecosystem conversion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ecosystem stresses -&gt; 1.2. Ecosystem degradation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agriculture &amp; aquaculture -&gt; 2.1. Annual &amp; perennial non-timber crops -&gt; 2.1.1. Shifting agriculture</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ecosystem stresses -&gt; 1.2. Ecosystem degradation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agriculture &amp; aquaculture -&gt; 2.1. Annual &amp; perennial non-timber crops -&gt; 2.1.2. Small-holder farming</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ecosystem stresses -&gt; 1.2. Ecosystem degradation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agriculture &amp; aquaculture -&gt; 2.1. Annual &amp; perennial non-timber crops -&gt; 2.1.3. Agro-industry farming</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stresses:</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1. Ecosystem stresses -&gt; 1.2. Ecosystem degradation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agriculture &amp; aquaculture -&gt; 2.2. Wood &amp; pulp plantations -&gt; 2.2.1. Small-holder plantations</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

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Conservation Actions in Place
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

Conservation Actions in Place

In-Place Land/Water Protection and Management

Occur in at least one PA: Yes

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### Conservation Actions in Place

**In-Place Education**

- Included in international legislation: Yes
- Subject to any international management/trade controls: Yes

### Conservation Actions Needed

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

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<th>Conservation Actions Needed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Land/water protection -&gt; 1.1. Site/area protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Land/water management -&gt; 2.1. Site/area management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education &amp; awareness -&gt; 4.2. Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education &amp; awareness -&gt; 4.3. Awareness &amp; communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Law &amp; policy -&gt; 5.4. Compliance and enforcement -&gt; 5.4.2. National level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Law &amp; policy -&gt; 5.4. Compliance and enforcement -&gt; 5.4.3. Sub-national level</td>
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</table>

### Research Needed

(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
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<td>1. Research -&gt; 1.2. Population size, distribution &amp; trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Research -&gt; 1.3. Life history &amp; ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Research -&gt; 1.5. Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Research -&gt; 1.6. Actions</td>
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</table>

### Additional Data Fields

**Distribution**

- Estimated extent of occurrence (EOO) (km²): 1633537
- Continuing decline in extent of occurrence (EOO): Yes
- Extreme fluctuations in extent of occurrence (EOO): Unknown
- Lower elevation limit (m): 0
- Upper elevation limit (m): 3738
### Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing decline of mature individuals</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme fluctuations</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population severely fragmented</td>
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</table>

### Habitats and Ecology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing decline in area, extent and/or quality of habitat</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Length (years)</td>
<td>6</td>
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