

## NOTES ON THE WILD CAT *FELIS SILVESTRIS* IN TURKEY (MAMMALIA, CARNIVORA)

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### ABSTRACT

There was no specimen report on wild cat from Turkey for approximately 20 years. We are providing information on two specimens, both obtained in 1990's from the north-western Anatolia: a subadult male from Aydinpinar (skin and skull) and an unsexed skin from the vicinity of Yenice. In both cases the habitat was mixed or deciduous forest. Based on skull dimensions, Aydinpinar male appears too small for the subspecies *F. s. caucasica* but falls within the range of the nominate subspecies.

**Key words:** *Felis silvestris*, Turkey, status

Of the eight cat species as occurred in Turkey within historical times, three of the largest species already became extinct. The lion *Panthera leo* and the cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* survived until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Danford & Alston, 1880; Harper, 1945) while the last reliable report for the tiger *Panthera tigris* dates back to early 1970's (Kock, 1990). Of the remaining five species, the wild cat *Felis silvestris* Schreber, 1777 is the smallest and also the most widespread. Besides, it is the only wild cat occurring in Asiatic, as well as European Turkey.

Very scanty data on the wild cat occurrence in Turkey are scattered through mammological literature (Blackler, 1916; Pocock, 1935; Çağlar, 1953; Haltenorth, 1953, 1957; Kumerloeve, 1955, 1975; Misonne, 1957; Bodenheimer, 1959; Alkan, 1965; Huş & Göksel, 1981); in addition, a tentative distribution map was provided by Turan (1984). Already Mursaloglu (1964) warned against overhunting throughout the country which, in her opinion, was threatening the existence of the wild cat. Recently, a similar opinion was expressed also by Serez & Başkaya (1997). They found the wild cat population to be considerably below the estimated

capacity of the environment which is said to include 11 million hectares of forested areas which are suitable for the wild cat. In spite of fairly high penalties (approximately 1400 German Marks) pouching is considered to be the main clue for such unfavourable condition. The species is under total protection since 1976, but the law is evidently not enforced (Serez & Başkaya, 1997).

In this communication we are reporting on two wild cat specimens recently obtained from north-western Anatolia. They seem to be the first specimen records after 20 years (compare Kumerloeve, 1975).

The first specimen (subadult male) entered a trap in April 1993 in the village of Aydinpinar near Düzce (district of Bolu). The trap, set near a poultry house, was intended for a marten. The village is situated at the foothills of a mountain covered by deciduous forests. The skin and skull are housed in the Mammal Collection at the Department of Biology, University of Ankara. The back of this specimen is dirty yellowish grey with vertical black stripes and the belly is dirty whitish yellow. The tail is bushy with a black tip and indistinct rings. The rhinarium is pinky. External measurements (in mm): head & body length 480; tail length 300; hind foot



**Fig. 1:** Distribution of the wild cat *Felis silvestris* in Turkey. Tentative range, as proposed by Turan (1984), is shaded. Given are also published records (dots) as well as the localities obtained through inquiry (circles). The origin of the two specimens, reported in this communication, is indicated by triangles.

**Sl. 1:** Razširjenost divje mačke *Felis silvestris* v Turčiji. Približen areal (senčeno) je povzet po Turanu (Turan, 1984). Označeni so objavljeni podatki (pike), kot tudi nahajališča dobljena s pomočjo ankete (krožci). Izvor dveh primerkov, ki ju obravnava članek, je označen s trikotnikoma.

length 140; ear length 60; weight 2500 grams. Skull measurements (in mm): greatest length 89.7; condylobasal length 82.9; zygomatic breadth 61.2; interorbital constriction 16.0; braincase breadth 45.4; mastoid breadth 40.3; height of skull 46.0; maxillary tooth-row 30.3; mandibular tooth-row 31.3; mandible length 59.0.

Another specimens is a skin, which was purchased on July 2nd, 1994, from local people near Devrek, 8 km north-west of Yenice in the district of Zonguldak. It was said to originate from the vicinity of a village. The habitat there is comprised of well preserved deciduous forests (*Platanum* sp., *Fagus orientalis*, *Quercus* spp., and occasionally *Alnus* sp.) in a river valley. Simultaneous small mammal trapping revealed a high density population of rodents (mainly *Apodemus* spp.) and the presence of the bank vole *Clethrionomys glareolus* indicates fairly mesic conditions. The skin (now in the private collection of B.K.) is 74 cm long; length of the tail is 31 cm. A greyish back has a black longitudinal stripe, but no transverse stripes. The belly is dirty whitish with shades of yellowish. There are two broad and additionally two indistinct bands on the tail; its tip is black. The rhinarium is pinky.

Both localities are within the range as proposed by Turan (1984). The same applies to the records published so far (see references above), as well as for the new localities which I.A. obtained through the inquiry (Fig. 1). Populated are mainly wooded mountainous regions

in Thrace, as well as in western, northern and southern Anatolia. On the other hand, the species is entirely absent from the deforested central Anatolian plateau.

Two subspecies of wild cat of the "*silvestris*" group are of interest when considering subspecific taxonomy of the Turkish wild cats. The nominate subspecies *F. s. silvestris* (Type locality is Germany) is reported for Europe, and the Caucasian subspecies *F. s. caucasica* Satunin, 1905 (Type locality is Borzhom in the Caucasus) is restricted to the Asiatic part of the "*silvestris*" range (e.g. Corbet, 1978; Heptner & Sludskij, 1980; Hemmer, 1993). As a matter of fact, differences between the two races seem to be scanty. According to Ognev (1962), who was unable to differentiate between them by pelage coloration, the nominate race is smaller. Heptner (1980) gave the following ranges for the condylobasal length in males: nominate subspecies 81.2 - 104 mm; the Caucasian subspecies 88.0 - 102.6 mm. The male from Aydinpinar seems to be referable to the nominate subspecies (condylobasal length amounts 82.9 mm). From the zoogeographical point this is not surprising, having in mind that northern Anatolia is populated also by other mammals of European origin. They presumably crossed the Bosphorous land-bridge at one of the Pleistocene Black Sea low stages (Hosey, 1982). Anyhow, this conclusion is necessarily tentative and needs to be confirmed in a more representative sample as well as by other data sets.

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ZAPISKI O DIVJI MAČKI *FELIS SILVESTRIS* V TURČIJI (MAMMALIA, CARNIVORA)

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## POVZETEK

Zadnjih dvajset let ni iz Turčije novejših podatkov o divji mački, ki bi temeljili na primerkih. Avtorja poročata o dveh primerkih, dobljenih v 90-ih letih v severozahodni Anatoliji: nedorasel samec iz vasi Aydinpinar (koža in lobanja) in koža (spol ni znan) iz okolice mesta Yenice. Habitat je bil v obeh primerih listopaden oz. mešan gozd. Primerek iz Aydinpinarja je, sodeč po lobanjskih dimenzijah, premajhen za podvrsto *F. s. caucasica*, vključuje pa se v variacijsko širino nominatne podvrste.

**Ključne besede:** *Felis silvestris*, Turčija, status

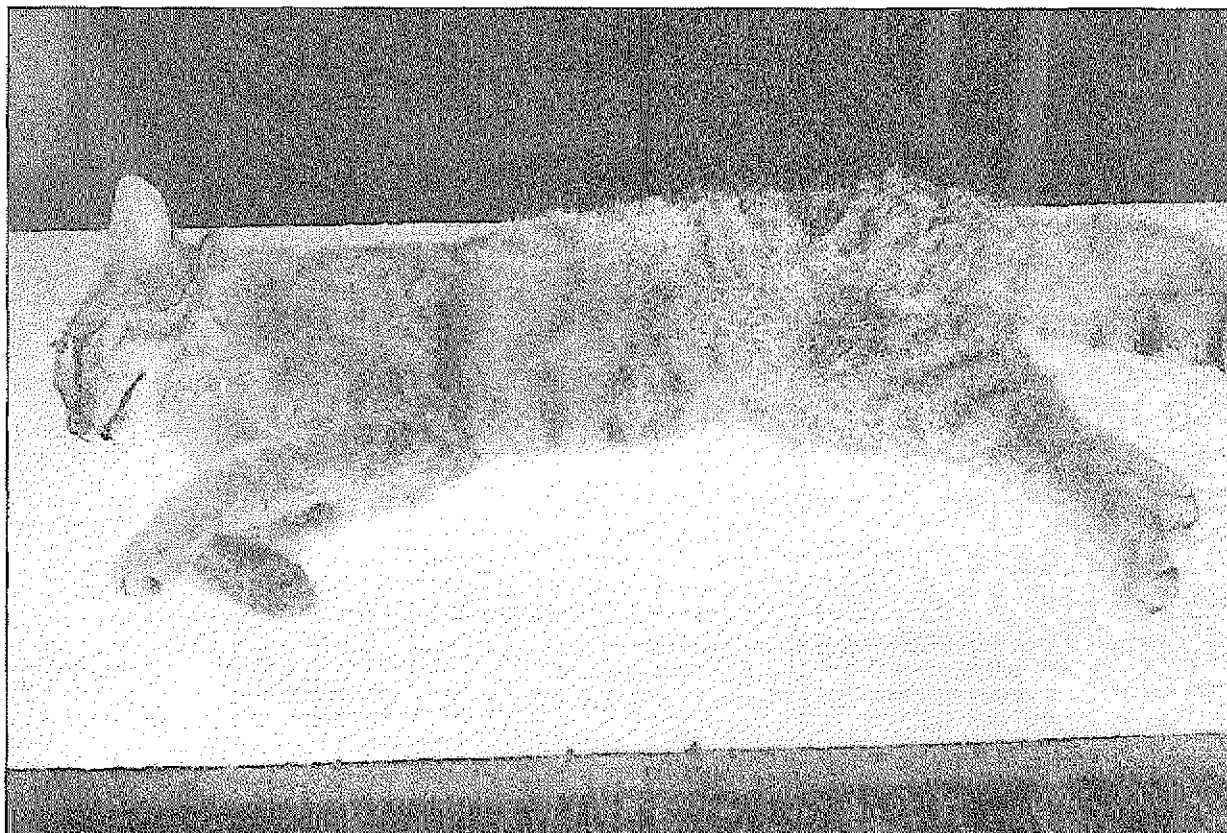


Fig. 2: Subadult male wild cat from Aydinpinar, reported in this contribution.  
Sl. 2: Nedorasel samec divje mačke iz Aydinpinarja, ki ga obravnavamo v tem prispevku.

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