

African Civet *Civettictis civetta*



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Namibian conservation status	Least Concern
Global IUCN status	Least Concern
Namibian range	Unclear from the few reliable records that exist. Certainly occurs in northern and north-eastern Namibia. Probably much more widespread but extremely thinly distributed
Global range	Throughout Africa from Senegal and Ethiopia down to northern Namibia, northern and western Botswana and north-eastern South Africa
Population estimate	Unknown
Population trend	Unknown
Habitat	Generally wooded areas, but in Namibia also found in more arid regions
Threats	Poison use on farmlands

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

African civets are short, heavily-built carnivores. They are predominantly brown with black markings. A broad black stripe runs along the top of the spine and tail, with additional stripes on the neck, parallel bands on the tail, and black spots on the torso. Although superficially similar to genets, the African civet is much bigger, and generally darker.

DISTRIBUTION

African civets are typically restricted to wooded areas, and the existing IUCN distribution data limits them to the far north and north-east of Namibia. There have, however, been a number of confirmed sightings in the Outjo and Mariental Districts (Berry 1988) and these are backed up by numerous reports from farmers in the Otjozondjupa, Khomas, Erongo and Omaheke Regions who were surveyed as part of the national leopard census (Environmental Information Service 2021). There are also confirmed sightings from Ongava Research Centre on the southern border of Etosha and

anecdotal sightings to the west of Etosha, with a few verified sightings on the Kunene River directly north of Opuwo. In the south, there are confirmed sightings from NamibRand in the east and anecdotal reports from farmers in the west on either side of the border between the Hardap and ||Kharas Regions. Considering these confirmed and anecdotal records, it is likely that civets occur throughout central Namibia, extending as far west as Opuwo in the north and the Namib-Naukluft in the south, and as far south as the Hardap-||Kharas border.

POPULATION ESTIMATE AND TREND

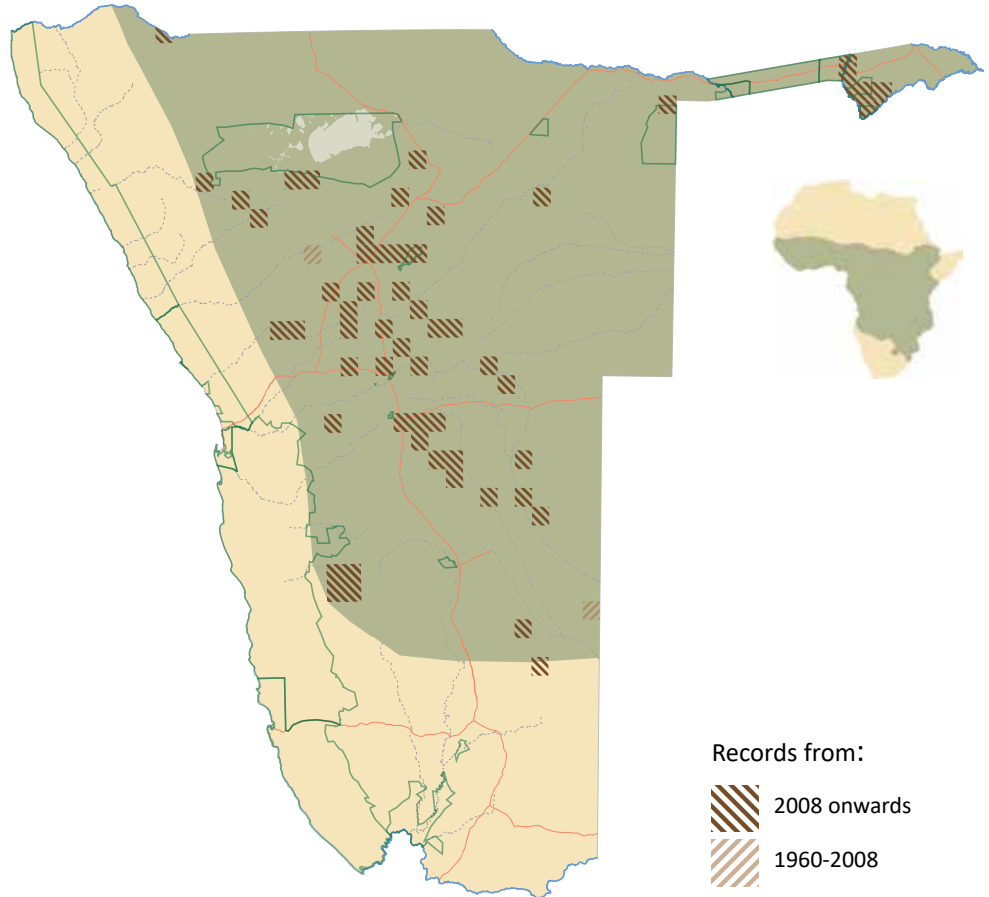
No density estimates have been made in Namibia. Studies in South Africa have indicated a range between 6.42 ± 1.99 to 14.11 ± 4.15 individuals per 100 km² depending on land-use, and the presence or absence of lions (Isaacs *et al.* 2021). As the Namibian distribution remains uncertain, we cannot estimate population numbers with current data.

The global population and current trend are unknown.

Distribution records of African civet, and present estimated area of distribution in Namibia.

Inset: African distribution of African civet according to IUCN (Do Linh San *et al.* 2015c).

The Namibian distribution in the main map is more up to date and does not necessarily agree with the distribution shown in the inset.



ECOLOGY

The African civet is omnivorous, with a diet that includes fruit, insects, invertebrates, small mammals, reptiles, birds, and carrion (Apps 2000, Bekele *et al.* 2008). Aside from the breeding season (June–November) they are solitary, with litter sizes of up to four cubs, and a two-month gestation period (Apps 2000).

Almost entirely nocturnal, they sleep in thick wooded areas, abandoned burrows or rock crevices (Apps 2000, Ray 2013). Although typically found in woodland regions, they also inhabit areas that have been partially cleared through logging or cultivation (Bahaa-el-din *et al.* 2013, Ray 2013).

In Ethiopia the home ranges of collared individuals range from 0.74 km² (Ayalew *et al.* 2013) to 11.1 km² (Admasu *et al.* 2004a).

The widely scattered but very sparse distribution records in Namibia suggest that these animals occur at an incredibly low density, and probably wander much more widely than others in wetter habitats elsewhere in Africa.

THREATS

There are currently no known threats to the species in Namibia. In Ethiopia male civets are removed from the wild and farmed for civet musk, which is used by the perfume industry (Swanepoel *et al.* 2016). In West Africa they are commonly found in bushmeat markets (Bahaa-el-din *et al.* 2013), and in South Africa they are often caught in snares or struck by vehicles (Collinson *et al.* 2015).

CONSERVATION STATUS

The African civet was listed in the 2015 global IUCN Red List as Least Concern (Do Linh San *et al.* 2015c), which is unchanged from the 1996 and 2008 assessments (Ray *et al.* 2008). A regional assessment for South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland (Swanepoel *et al.* 2016) confirms this status. The Namibian situation for this species is very poorly understood but there is no evidence for a conservation status that differs from the other southern African countries. This species is therefore classified here as Least Concern.



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ACTIONS

There have been no studies of the ecology of the species in Namibia. Civets in Namibia appear to occur in much drier areas than they do elsewhere, so research should focus on establishing their distribution and studying their ecology in semi-arid and arid areas.

It is likely that there are sporadic records of civet caught on camera traps. Farmers, lodge owners, biologists and any others who set camera traps are urged to send in their animal observations to the EIS. Such records can help to build a stronger picture of the distribution and ecology of the country's carnivores, which in turn contributes to helping people co-exist with carnivores with reduced conflict.

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