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For Immediate Release

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PANTHERA RELEASES FIRST KNOWN FOOTAGE OF ELUSIVE AFRICAN GOLDEN CAT IN GABON



A team in Gabon led by Panthera Kaplan scholar, Laila Bahaa-el-din, has captured the [first known footage](#) of one of the least known and most elusive wild cats on earth – the African golden cat. This exclusive footage was taken with cameras set as part of a Panthera research project to understand how African golden cats are affected by different levels of human activity, including logging and hunting.

In one captivating video, a young male African golden cat sits just inches from Panthera’s camera and looks directly into the lens, continuing to pose and groom itself. In the other sequence, what is believed to be the same cat is shown running and leaping as it hunts a bat at night. [Watch the videos and see camera trap photos of African golden cats.](#)

Despite this incredible footage, few western scientists have ever observed the living animal in the wild, and to Panthera’s knowledge, no African golden cats currently live in captivity. Almost all records of the species, which is listed as ‘Near Threatened’ by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, consist of photographs taken by remote camera traps or of dead animals.

“These videos have given Panthera and the scientific community a brief glimpse into the secret lives of the most understudied wild cat in Africa,” explained Laila Bahaa-el-din, whose PhD is being conducted through the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa in cooperation with Oxford University’s WildCru and supported in Gabon by the Wildlife Conservation Society. “Data obtained from the videos, including one filmed during the day, are already allowing us to question previously held beliefs about the species, such as the idea that these cats are nocturnal.”

This study is the first comprehensive analysis of the ecological status of the African golden cat and the threats affecting its survival. The team uses remote camera traps that snap photos of African golden cats passing by to estimate the species’ population density. Leopard and African golden cat scat is also collected to pinpoint what the animals are eating, and whether human hunting of leopard prey is forcing the two species to compete for food. While the new footage comes from one of Gabon’s more well-managed logging concessions, the research will extend to other areas subject to hunting and different logging regimes to better understand the effects of human activities on the African golden cat.

Panthera President and Laila's doctoral supervisor, Dr. Luke Hunter, explained that "These videos and data represent a turning point in the study of the African golden cat – a species so little known that we are not even certain of its distribution. Laila's project will produce the essential data we need to develop effective conservation plans for the species with governments, logging companies and local communities."

About Panthera

Panthera, founded in 2006, is the world's leading organization devoted exclusively to the conservation of wild cats and their ecosystems. Utilizing the expertise of the world's premier cat biologists, Panthera develops and implements global conservation strategies for the largest, most imperilled cats – tigers, lions, jaguars and snow leopards. Representing the most comprehensive effort of its kind, Panthera works in partnership with local and international NGOs, scientific institutions, local communicates and governments. Visit <http://www.panthera.org/>

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