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EDITORIAL

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Editorial:
Small Carnivore Conservation and its contribution to the knowledge of rare small carnivores

Rarity in mammals is associated with different factors including local population density, geographical range, and variety of habitats occupied by a species (Yu & Dobson 2000). For small carnivores, which generally are cryptic and nocturnal, several species are considered "rare", mostly due to their ecological requirements and limited availability of reliable records. In other cases, some widely distributed species are considered "rare" in the limits of their distributional ranges. Although risk of extinction is generally increased by the rarity of a species, some additional factors on the biology of each species and habitats are required (Arita *et al*. 1990).

Most small carnivores are difficult to spot, influencing the amount of information known for most species, and therefore, limiting our capability to establish their distributional ranges, abundances, and more recently their conservation status. Less than ten species of small carnivores have been included in analyses of rarity, although carnivores in general exhibited relatively higher degrees of rarity in comparison with other mammalian orders (Arita *et al.* 1990).

In South America, for instance, the Patagonian Weasel *Lyncodon patagonicus* and the Colombian Weasel *Mustela felipei* are included among the rarest small carnivores of this continent due the scarcity of records (Prevosti *et al.* 2009, Ramírez-Chaves *et al*. 2012, Formoso *et al.* 2016, Ramírez-Chaves & Torres-Martínez 2016). In Asia, species such as Otter Civet *Cynogale bennettii* and Malabar Civet *Viverria civettina*, are also considered among the rarest carnivores, often undermining appropriate conservation planning for the species or region (Cheyne *et al.* 2010, Ross *et al.* 2015, Evans *et al.* this volume). Last but not least, for Africa most small carnivores are considered poorly known (Do Linh San *et al.* 2013), where species such as Pousargues's Mongoose *Dologale dybowskii* is highlighted as the least known African small carnivore (Stuart & Stuart 2013, Do Linh San *et al.* 2013).

In recent years, new records on small carnivore species considered rare have been published, mostly due the integration of traditional sampling efforts with new techniques, such as camera trapping. This information is helping to clarify the current status of species considered elusive to researchers for decades, and provides additional information on the biology of some species (e.g. Suzuki *et al.* this volume). It is important to highlight that

when rare or elusive species are recorded or even rediscovered, findings should be supported by strong evidence such as photographs, DNA samples, fragments of bones or skins, etc., so reliable information becomes available for such rare species (McKelvey *et al*. 2012).

SCC has strongly contributed to the publication of these records in areas as remote as the tropical forests or dry ecosystems in the Middle East (Baradarani *et al.* this volume) the Andes (Cardona *et al.* this volume), and Borneo (Evans *et al.* this volume). SCC aims to play a leading role in facilitating the diffusion of information that is used in risk assessments (including for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) and provides the basis for long-term monitoring efforts. In this issue, SCC presents information on eight species, most of them considered rare or elusive, thus highlighting the importance SCC has played for almost 27 years in advancing small carnivore research globally. With 577 articles published to date, SCC aims to continue improving and growing as one of the most reliable sources of information for small carnivores, and the Editorial team works continually to expand the reach and scope of the journal in order to not only support the continued work of the IUCN SSC Small Carnivore Specialist Group but broader improving and supporting small carnivore conservation globally.

We expect that for the coming years, and based on our new format and editorial process (González-Maya & Schipper 2015), our journal will expand and growth, and we invite researchers globally to contribute their small carnivore research to our journal, as we believe SCC to be an important tool for advancing the conservation and knowledge of this important group globally.

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