

# CAT

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# news





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Original contributions and short notes about wild cats are welcome  
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Pendjari National Park, Benin  
Photo: Vincent Lapeyre



**African Golden Cat Conservation Alliance**

**Established:** 2019

**Members:** 38

**Mission:** To spearhead community-led conservation of the African golden cat across the species geographical range.

# AGCCA: Saving the African golden cat across its geographical range

destruction and wildlife hunting, threatening the long-term survival of the species. The AGCCA was created in 2019 to spearhead the conservation of the AGC across the species range, together with our local communities, through a two-pronged community-led conservation approach: 1) local community mobilization and 2) local community livelihood improvement, both initiatives aiming to mitigate hunting and its impact on the AGC (for an overview and summary of projects, see <https://arcg.is/0Wvaemn>). The AGCCA, a network of dedicated African nationals, currently has 38 partners in 19 of the 22 putative range countries, including Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and South Sudan, where the AGC has only been recently confirmed. Other AGCCA countries are Angola, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Uganda. The AGCCA is hosted by Embaka and an affiliate partner of the Small Wild Cat Conservation Foundation of the Wildlife Conservation Network, with financial support from re: wild, National Geographic Society, Panthera, Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Rufford Small Grants, Ark Wildlife Park, Big Cat Rescue and the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group. AGCCA partners are independent and spearhead conservation projects together with their local communities and country-protected area authorities. While registration as an international NGO in Uganda is ongoing, the AGCCA is currently hosted by Embaka - a Ugandan local community-based Conservation Organization CBO, which counts 14 years of successful community-based conservation and ecological research on the AGC in and around nine protected areas in Uganda, including Bwindi Impenetrable National Park— AGC strong-

hold habitat in Uganda. Embaka is the local Kikiga name for the AGC. The name reflects the CBOs approach to conservation to pragmatically engage local communities in mitigating threats to wildlife. In November 2023, Embaka hosted the AGCCA's second bi-annual summit in Uganda with a field trip to Minziro Forest Reserve in Tanzania (AGCCA 2023). Attended by 25 AGCCA and two donor partners representing 15 countries, the summit was a celebration of our conservation efforts. We shared lessons learned – both success and failure. An African storytelling experience. We also held a workshop on the forthcoming range-wide camera trap monitoring of the AGC, which the AGCCA is launching later in 2024. The camera trap grid, aimed at assessing and monitoring the population status of the species, will also allow us to evaluate the impact of our community-led conservation threat reduction initiatives.

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The African golden cat *Caracal aurata* (hereafter “AGC”) is restricted to the tropical rainforests of equatorial Africa, where habitat destruction and hunting – legal or illegal – of wildlife for consumption and trade are ubiquitous. Spanning 30 countries, the tropical rainforest of Africa covers 3.95 million km<sup>2</sup> – which is the second largest contiguous stretch of forest wilderness after the Amazon and a stronghold for conserving the AGC. However, this part of Africa is infested with snares, pitfalls, and nets that are indiscriminate, killing or injuring also non-target species, including the AGC (e.g. in Uganda). For example, in 2019, an estimated 71 cats were unintentionally caught and killed in snares in three Ugandan forests (Mugerwa & Byaruhanga 2019).

The AGC was last assessed for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species by Baha-el-din et al. (2015), listed the species as Vulnerable under criteria A2c+3c. The African Golden Cat Conservation Alliance AGCCA (est. 2019) has just completed a re-assessment, which is currently under review. The predicted growth in Africa’s human population, coupled with poverty, the lack of employment, and the need for animal protein, is likely to increase habitat



African golden cat in three morphs: reddish, melanistic (Photos Embaka), and grey, on camera traps in Uganda (Photo S. Kennerknecht).