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Cover: Indian Grey Wolf *Canis lupus pallipes* and Smooth-coated Otter *Lutrogale perspicillata* sharing the territory in Chambal basin. Digital art on Procreate by Aakanksha Komanduri.



Small Wild Cats Special Series

Striped Hyena *Hyaena hyaena* (Linnaeus, 1758) carrying a carcass of a Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* (I. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1831) in Rajasthan, India

Akshay Jain¹ , Debashish Panda² , Rajasekar Rajaraman³ , Sanjeev Sharma⁴ , Sugna Ram Jat⁵
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From April to May 2024, we conducted a camera trapping survey in the Indergarh Range of Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan (Image 1). This survey yielded two photographs of a Striped Hyena *Hyaena hyaena* carrying a carcass of a Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* at an elevation of 358 m (Images 2 & 3).

Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve harbours tropical dry deciduous forest, with dominant tree species including *Acacia catechu*, *Anogeissus pendula*, *Butea monosperma*, *Lannea coromandelica* (Champion & Seth 1968; Prasad 2014). Our study area in the reserve's buffer zone encompassed about 200 km² (Jain et al. 2025). We deployed camera traps at 55 locations in pairs positioned opposite each other to record both flanks of mammals. We considered each pair as a single sampling location.

During our total sampling effort of 1,696 camera trap days, the Striped Hyena was recorded at 23 locations (42% of all) and the Rusty-spotted Cat at eight locations (15%). The camera traps also photographed the Leopard

Panthera pardus, Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*, Afro-Asiatic Wildcat *F. lybica*, Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*, Bengal Fox *Vulpes bengalensis*, Sloth Bear *Melursus ursinus*, Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica*, and Honey Badger *Mellivora capensis* (Jain et al. 2025).

The Striped Hyena was also photographed carrying carcass remains of an Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* and a Chital *Axis axis*. The Chital carcass was identified based on the white spots on the golden-rufous body (Menon 2023). However, none of the photographs show a killing event. This corroborates the notion that the Striped Hyena is a facultative scavenger of carrion (Alam & Khan 2015; Bhandari et al. 2020; Panda et al. 2023a,b; Mwebi et al. 2024). Possible explanations for the dead cat are that it died due to a natural cause or was killed and abandoned by other carnivores. It may also have been a roadkill (Nayak et al. 2017).

Our record contributes to the understanding of the opportunistic feeding behaviour of the Striped Hyena and complements the limited documentation of interaction between carnivores.

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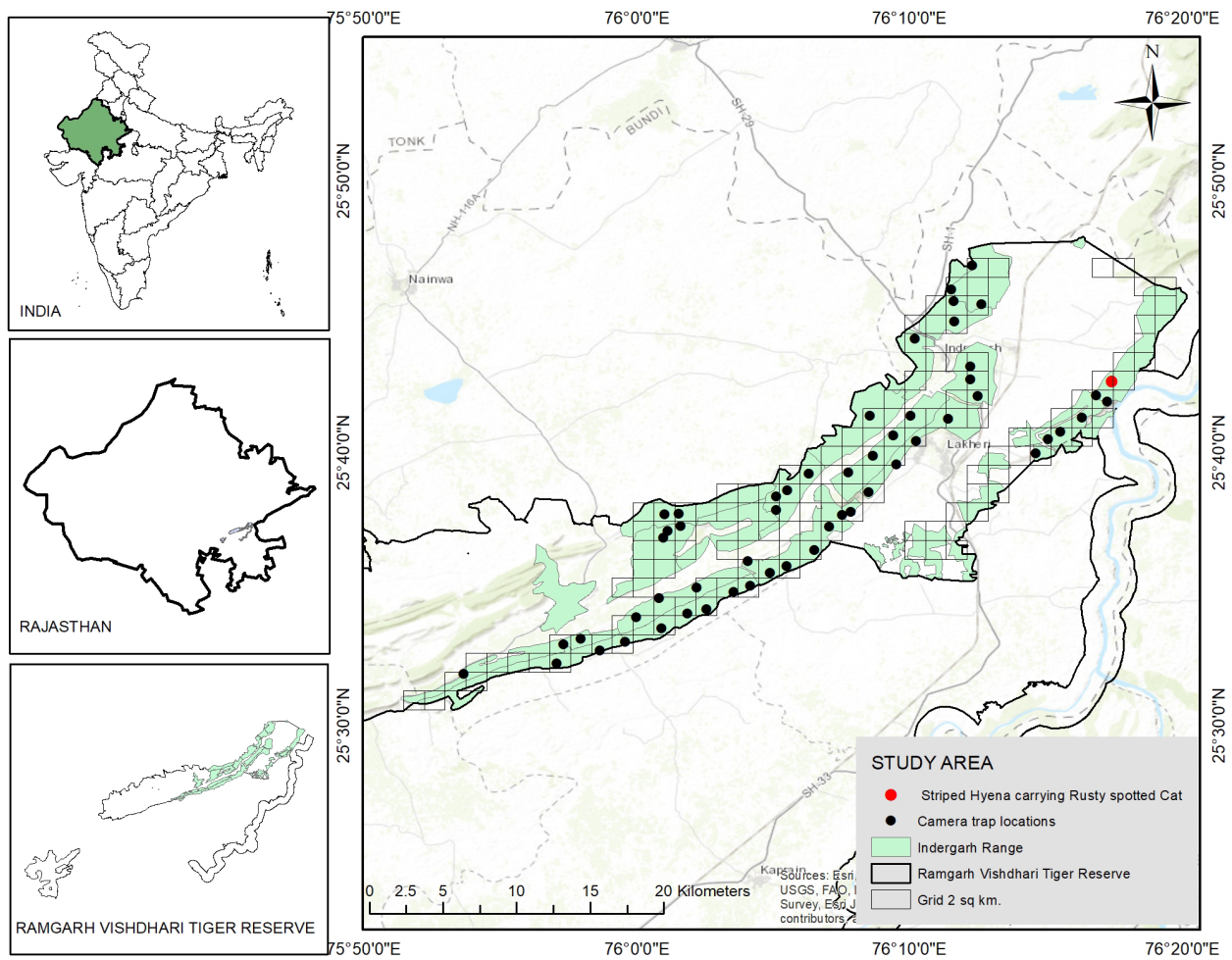


Image 1. Map showing the study area in Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan.



Images 2 & 3. Striped Hyena with the carcass of a Rusty-spotted Cat on 5 May 2024. © WWF India and Rajasthan Forest Department.

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