

Flora & Fauna in Spain

EUROPEAN WILD CAT - GATO SILVESTRE - FELIS SILVESTRIS

The European wild cat is almost extinct in most parts of Europe, but there are still areas where they thrive. One of them is Catalonia in north-eastern Spain.

The European wild cat does not look unlike our domestic cat, but has a much more robust constitution. Its feeding habits and behaviour are very similar to those of the domestic cat. This is not surprising seeing as it is thought that the African wild cat is the ancestor of most domestic breeds of cat.



Physical characteristics

The wild cat has a robust body and is between 72 and 115 cm long and 35-40 cm tall. It has long limbs and a square head. Its tail is shorter and thicker than the domestic cat's.

It has small ears and the eyes are amber or green with vertical pupils. Like all felines it has exceptional sight and hearing. The fur is long, soft and thick, normally grey/sandy tabby of colour.

Behaviour

The wild cat mainly comes out at night, although it is also active in the hours just before and after. It is a solitary animal and it defends its territory from its own species with ferocity.

It usually lives on the ground although it climbs perfectly well. Its diet consists of a variety of rodents and rabbits, reptiles, fish and insects. It has even been known to catch small wild boar. It does not eat its prey where it has caught it but takes it to another place. It hunts alone.

It hunts by stalking its prey, and once it is within reach it jumps out and catches it with its paws. It bites the neck of smaller prey and kills bigger animals by asphyxiation.

The wild cat prefers living in forested areas. It does not make a den; it tends to stay in very inaccessible places such as forest thickets or rocky places.