

Spring, 2026

SACC NEWSLETTER



Southern Africa Cat Council eNews

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HELLO AGAIN

Well COTY is done and dusted and the Cat Clubs have already had a few shows which will qualify for COTY 2027!

For the first time SACC held a show in George at the Agricultural Show - thanks to our President Jan van Rooyen for organizing this first.

Sadly, one of Cat World's prominent judges passed away on the 8th September. Pam Delabar from Finland, a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the US Army, was a force to be reckoned with, was a passionate advocate

for cats and the cat world, was an incredibly knowledgeable lady and as well as being the CFA Delegate to WCC she was also the Chairperson of the WCC Legislative Commission. She was married to fellow judge Satu Hämäläinen, who judged at COTY 2026. She will be missed greatly throughout the world of cats.

SACC sends condolences to Satu and family as well as to World Cat Congress and Cat Fanciers Association (CFA).



RIP Pam Delabar 29.06.1948 - 08.09.2026

EU Welfare legislation for dogs and cats



From the Official Journal of the
European Union

The EU has adopted new legislation on the welfare and traceability of dogs and cats, applicable in all Member States from 2028. It represents the first EU wide framework introducing minimum harmonised standards for their protection.

By 558 votes in favour, 35 against, and with 52 abstentions, MEPs gave their final green light to the first ever EU standards for the breeding, housing, traceability, import and handling of cats and dogs.

The new regulation, already agreed with Council, introduces an obligation for all dogs and cats kept in the EU, including those in private ownership, to be identifiable with microchips and registered in interoperable national databases. Sellers, breeders and shelters will have four years from the entry into force of the legislation to prepare for this. For pet owners who do not sell animals, the obligation will kick in after 10 years for dogs, and after 15 for cats.

Ban on commercial practices leading to abuses and health risks

Breeding between parents and their offspring, grandparents and grandchildren, as well as between siblings and half-siblings, will be forbidden. The breeding of dogs or cats to give them exaggerated or excessive traits that lead to significant health risks will also be banned.

The new measures include a prohibition on the mutilation of dogs and cats for shows, exhibitions, or competitions. Tying a dog or a cat to an object (tethering), except when necessary for medical treatment, and the use of prong and choke collars without built-in safety mechanisms, will also be prohibited.

Dogs and cats from non-EU countries

To close loopholes that allow dogs and cats to enter the EU as non-commercial pets only to be subsequently sold, the new legislation covers not only imports for commercial purposes but also non-commercial animal movements.

Dogs and cats imported from non-EU countries for sale will have to be microchipped before they enter the EU, and then registered in a national database. Pet owners entering the EU will be obliged to pre-register their microchipped animal on a database at least five working days before arrival, unless it is already registered in an EU country's database.

Access the full regulation by visiting:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2026/1818/oj>

It's a long but very interesting read.

New Wildcat Species

By Jason Bittel NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Published September 17, 2026

In 2016, Paola Nogales-Ascarrunz, a biologist and National Geographic Explorer working in Bolivia, received a call from a local wildlife sanctuary that had just been given what they described as “a weird cat.” It came from a local man who found it as a kitten on a road near a forest. The man took the animal home, believing it to be a domestic breed. But after about a year of living with the clearly wild animal, he realized it would be better off at a sanctuary.

As the lead scientist and founder of the Bolivian Felids Research Program (Programa de Investigación de Félidos Bolivia), Nogales-Ascarrunz was intrigued. The animal had a small, scrunched-up face, short and round ears, and long whiskers. It was, indeed, too small to be a housecat, and, most notably, it was covered in leopard-like spots. So she went to visit the creature at the Senda Verde wildlife sanctuary on the subtropical flank of the Bolivian Andes.



*An individual of the newly-discovered species *Leopardus tilcayo* which resides at Senda Verde Animal Refuge in Bolivia’s Yungas region. Credit: Fernando Faciole/National Geographic*

“I took a hundred pictures of it,” remembers Nogales-Ascarrunz. “I was so fascinated.”

What she couldn’t know at the time was that this curious cat had a secret. It would become the first new species of felid (i.e. the cat family) discovered in over 100 years, according to a study published today in the journal *Current Biology*. What’s exciting is the discovery is not a validation of a species proposed in the distant past, nor a previously recognized subspecies raised to species status—which are both more commonly reported and important findings. No, this cat was something totally new to science.

At the time though, Nogales-Ascarrunz assumed the unusual cat was a member of the species *Leopardus tigrinus*. Sometimes called tigrinas, oncillas, tigrillos, or little spotted cats, this species was described back in 1775 from a single illustration of an animal seen in French Guiana and was subsequently presumed to exist across Central and South America, including, at the time, Bolivia.



Leopardus tigrinus (oncilla)

Photo credit: Wild Cats

World

But then in 2019, while she was preparing a booklet about Bolivia's cat species, she realized the cat she'd photographed didn't look like a guidebook reference photo from neighboring Brazil. Her tiger cat had rosettes that were much larger than the ones across the border. "This is so wrong," she thought.

It would take another few years before Nogales-Ascarrunz developed her skills in genetic analysis to the point where she could investigate the mystery cat's genome with any accuracy. Then, working with Eduardo Eizirik, a geneticist at Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil, and study co-lead author Jonas Lescroart from the University of Antwerp, the team was able to find its distinct place on the cat family tree.

In their paper, the researchers propose the cat should be known as *Leopardus tilcayo*, in honor of the word local people know it by. "We asked the local people, 'Why do you call it *tilcayo*?'" says Nogales-Ascarrunz, who is herself from Bolivia. "And they said, 'I don't know! My grandpa called it *tilcayo*, so I call it *tilcayo*.'" (The name does not appear to mean anything particular in Spanish or the Quechua language spoken in Bolivia.)

So far, all scientists can say is that *L. tilcayo* lives in Bolivia's Yungas forest ecoregion, which lies on the eastern slope of the Andes Mountains. But as to what these cats eat or get eaten by, how they reproduce, and many other facets of their day-to-day lives, much mystery remains. "So many basic things are not known," says Nogales-Ascarrunz, who is co-lead author of the new study.

But the discovery is monumental, and not just because it's the first new cat discovered since the pampas cat in 1923. The new paper doesn't just name a new species; it redraws the cat family tree to have a lot more branches than previously thought. What's more, the researchers hope the methods used to identify *L. tilcayo* may soon be used to find even more cat species spread across the world, and even transform how we protect them.

While physical differences such as tail length, rosette size, or teeth shape are always important indicators for scientists looking to delineate species, genomic analyses are increasingly the gold standard, simply because they can tell a story hidden from the naked eye.

"We've been working on tiger cats for 25 years or so, trying to sort out the whole genus, *Leopardes*," says Eizirik. The deeper these scientists look into these cat's genomes, the more hidden variation they find.

In 2013, scientists provided evidence that *Leopardus tigrinus* — the species Nogales-Ascarrunz originally assumed the new cat to be a member of — were actually made up of two distinct species

Then in 2024, the landscape changed again with the proposal that another genetically distinct species be peeled off from the previous two. Now, the newest study makes five tiger cat species. “What we once thought to be a single species, we’ve started to see that it was actually a species complex,” Eizirik says.



Leopardus tilcayo. Photo credit: Fernando Faciole-National Geographic Cats

While this kind of confusion would be unheard of in, say, the *Panthera* genus — which includes cats such as tigers, snow leopards, and lions — the world’s small wild cats are much less studied. They are also exceptionally good at remaining out of sight. Even photos taken by remote trail cameras may not provide enough evidence to distinguish the species. For instance, one of the museum specimens included in the new study was originally thought to be another small, spotted cat called a margay, until it was later identified as a tiger cat (*L. tigrinus*) due to the direction of its nape hairs.

Modern genomics lets scientists see deeper differences photographs and fieldnotes miss. In the new study, when the researchers compared complete genomes from 38 individuals across the *Leopardus* genus, the results showed that not only was *L. tilcayo* different from the other tiger cat species, but it had diverged from them around 1.4 million years ago—an evolutionary distance comparable to that between modern lions and extinct cave lions.

While the discovery of yet another new tiger cat “is itself surprising news, the results obtained profoundly change how small cat specialists group small cat species in genus *Leopardus*,” says James Sanderson, founder and director of the Small Wild Cat Conservation Foundation who was not an author on the new publication. To that end, the study also provides evidence for a new sub-species of tiger cat in Peru, *Leopardus tigrinus antisuyo*, and according to Sanderson, its findings also hint that the margay—which scientists have assumed to be one species spread across Mexico through Argentina— is not one species, but four.

“This study hints that, having split from a common ancestor close to [one million years ago], four distinct margay species exist,” says Sanderson, who is also a member of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group, in an email. For his part, Eizirik says a more focused study of margay genetics will be needed before he’d make such a claim.

Sanderson says this is likely just the beginning of more discoveries. “It’s by no means a stretch of the imagination that the improved methods used in this study will reveal new species of small wild cats in Africa and Asia,” he says.

All of these additional branches on the cat family tree will have real world consequences for conservation.

One of the key factors to establish a species' conservation status is its geographic distribution. "If you think [the tiger cat] is a single thing from southern Brazil all the way to Costa Rica, you're going to find it's not endangered," says Eizirik. "But if we find that it's not a single thing, but actually five things, each of them must be assessed separately."

According to Sanderson, such distinctions add urgency to conservation efforts. "Once three species become five species, each population is reduced," he says. "Therefore conservation efforts must increase, perhaps urgently, depending on estimated population sizes." (For now, scientists are unsure of how many *tilcayos* exist in the wild.)

Genetics and questions of taxonomy aside, Nogales-Ascarrunz doesn't want to lose focus on the wonder. "Our world is extremely complex," she says. "Sometimes we think that most of it is known, that there's not a whole lot to discover, but in fact, it's the other way around."

It is now commonplace for scientists to announce the discovery of new species, though the description of new insects, microbes, and other small organisms dominates the literature. And that makes sense, because they are easily hidden, hard to find, and often evade our understanding. But a five-pound felid?

"Even in the cats, there are things out there that are undescribed, things that people haven't found yet," says Nogales-Ascarrunz. "So let's go out and find them and protect them."

Jason Bittel is a National Geographic Explorer and author of *Grizzled: Love Letters to 50 of North America's Least Understood Animals*.



Leopardus tilcayo. Photo credit: Fernando Faciole- National Geographic Cats

COTY 2026

The Western Province Cat Club presented Cat of the Year 2026 in the Mount Nelson Hotel, Cape Town.

It was a grand affair and was sponsored by Royal Canin. The décor was tasteful and the vibe was amazing.

Andri Swart and her Team of Wonder Women made everyone welcome and made sure everything ran like clockwork.

The day MC, Rita Wiseman, kept the steady stream of cats flowing so that all 6 judges could assess them properly.

The Official Photographer, Ahmed Dockrat, was in “his Studio” taking portraits of the wonderful and beautiful cats that represented the SA Cat Fancy country wide.

Scorekeeper, Jan van Rooyen and Auditor, Johan van Rooyen were secreted away in their own room, as per COTY custom. They worked together to ensure that the results were captured correctly and checked thoroughly so each cat got its rightful place as per the judges’ scores.

The 6 Judges, Brenda, Daniel, Paul and Ngaio from SACC, Anthony from WCF and Satu from FiFe Finland performed their given task happily.

The Stewards were amazing, calm and very professional.

The lovely Irene McCullagh took some day time photos which really showed the joy of both exhibitors and visitors.



Dottie van Dyk giving her young Maine Coon a reassuring kiss and I'm sure a promise of a bit of sushi when they got home. © Irene McCullagh

The qualifier Rosettes were a work of art and truly each one was a masterpiece from Leonard Ferreira and the staff of Rushford Rosettes.



Look at the deep pink tail and you will see an image of the qualifying cat with the name underneath.



The kitten line-up with Paul Prime. ©Irene McCullagh



The look on the childrens' faces says it all! ©Irene McCullagh

It's always good for the soul to see the wonder in a little one's face when she sees the cats!

©Irene Mc Cullagh



The Neuter line -up- serious business. ©Irene McCullagh



Winner of the Presidents Award, Dawn Keyter- waiting her turn with the judges©Irene McCullagh

And, of course, a Cape Town cat event wouldn't be the same without the presence of the "Grand Duchess of Silver Cats" - the one and only Ann McGregor Matthews.

Looking great as always!

©Irene McCullagh.



So the day judging was over and exhibitors went off to get glammed up for the Gala Dinner in the evening.

The Hotel staff jumped into action and within minutes a show hall was transformed into a Banquet Hall.

As the guests arrived, Ahmed Dockrat made sure to capture everyone with his camera.

Ahmed Dockrat and Natasja Burger - the Best Dressed in Theme Male and Female

©Ahmed Dockrat



And then it was time for the evening to start off with an amazing piece of otherworldly music and a cosmic video presentation- quite breathtaking!

The evening MC, James Gain (husband to committee member Ingrid van Eck Gain) took control of the evening presentations with charm, elegance and just the right amount of humour.

Our Registrar Johan van Rooyen presented the Breeder Awards for 2026- and it was a full house for Rindi and Clint Fourie of Purrbridge Cattery.

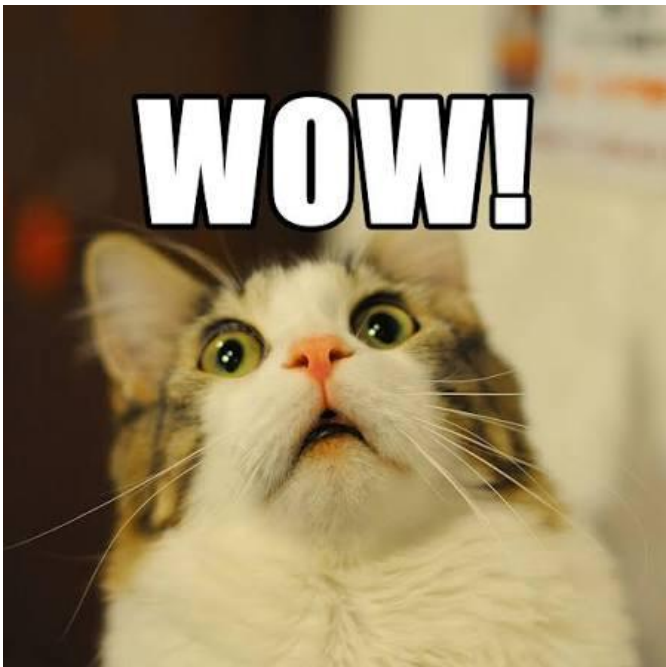
Breeder of the Year, Owner of Stud and owner of Brood Queen of the Year.

Runner up Breeder of the year and Runner up Stud of the Year Owner was Beverly Smullen of Crescendo Cattery and Runner up Brood Queen of the Year owner was Marlene van Dyk of Muttis Cattery.



A very happy Rindi Fourie with her Breeder of the Year Trophy.©Ahmed Dockrat

The countdown had started and then we were down to only 3 cats per section.



PET SECTION (All images ©Ahmed Dockrat)

3rd: Bea/Christelle Rossouw



2nd: Beyers/Hein & Juliet Meyer



PET of the YEAR: Zachery/ Irene Sommerfeld



KITTEN SECTION (All images ©Ahmed Dockrat)



3rd: Tres Jolie Tesoro Mio
Deon Viviers & Travis Moore

2nd: Moulin Rouge Alchimie of Abyzula
Adri Swart



KITTEN of the YEAR: Abrielle Amun Ra/ Ahmed & Ateeyah Dockrat



NEUTER SECTION (All images ©Ahmed Dockrat)



3rd: Purrbridge
Dream Again Darling
Lilani Botha

2nd: Feline Retreat Simba
Ishtiaque Mohammed



NEUTER of the YEAR: Crescendo Frank 'N Furter/ Bronwyn Adendorff



ADULT SECTION (All images ©Ahmed Dockrat)



3rd: Abrielle Asteroid

Ahmed & Ateeyah
Dockrat

2nd: Great Fate Alex
of Aristocub (Imp)

Yusuf Dawood



ADULT of the YEAR: Pearl Tinkerbelle / Penny Steyn



Tinkerbelle was also crowned **CAT of the YEAR 2026**



A very happy and proud moment for Penny Steyn of Pearl Cattery as she lifts the Cat of the Year Trophy above her head.

Well done Penny!

From the Provinces

The Cat Fanciers Club of South Africa held a Championship Show on the 15th August which was followed by the very popular Gauteng Top Cat.

Ingrid de Wet and her team put on a relaxing and friendly show and of course, this was the first Gauteng Show to count for COTY 2027.



Pet of the Day was Karen Pepler's Kumquat.



Entire of the Day was Efim Precious Amulet of Abrielle (Imp) owned by Ahmed & Ateeyah Dockrat



Neuter of the Day was Crescendo Frank ' N Furter owned by Bronwyn Adendorff.



Kitten of the Day was Tres Jolie Lady Million owned by Gail Chirnside.



Lady Million was also crowned CAT of the DAY.

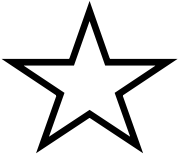
Gauteng Top Cat followed the CFC Championship Show.



GAUTENG TOP PET 2026

Kumquat

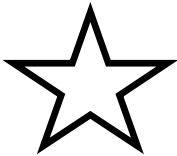
Owned by Karen Pepler.



GAUTENG TOP KITTEN

Tres Jolie Lady Million

Owned by Gail Chirnside

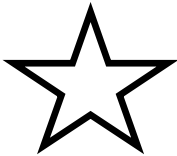


GAUTENG TOP NEUTER

Purrbridge Dream Again

Darling

Owned by; Lilani Botha



GAUTENG TOP ENTIRE

GeeDee Easy on the Eye

Owned by Athylle Caw



GAUTENG TOP CAT: GeeDee Easy on the Eye.

The Eastern Cape Cat Club held a show at the George Agricultural Show on the 29th August. The show manager was Jan van Rooyen.

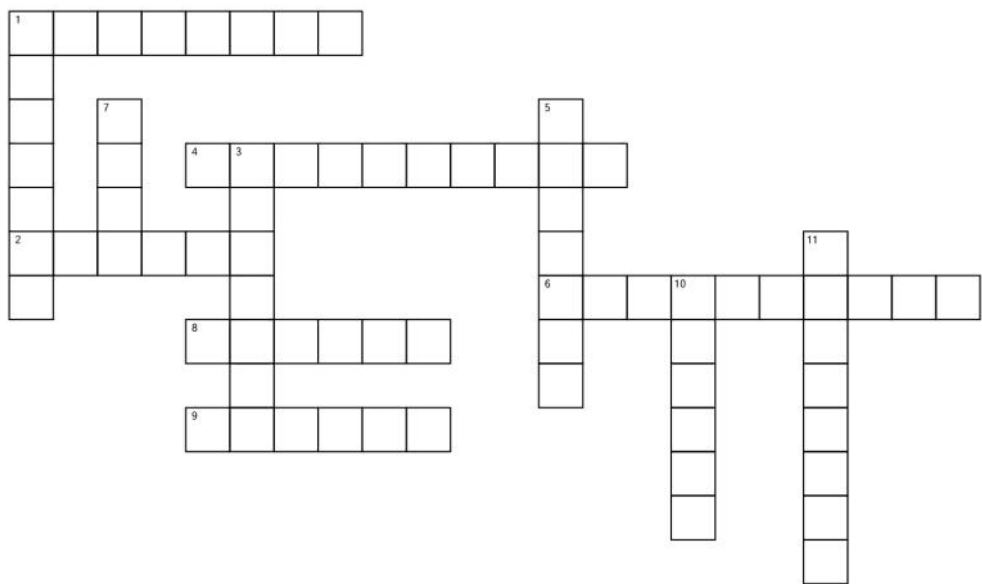
No results were received by the time of publishing this Newsletter.

There are still 2 more cat events left in the 2026 Calendar- The Western Province Cat Club Championship Cat Show on the 26th September and the Cape Top Cat event on the 31st October. Both will be held in Cape Town.

NB: The Governing Council AGM will take place at the beginning of November. Please contact your club’s delegate with suggestions and/or concerns soon, so that the committee can attend to your queries

CROSSWORD TRIVIA

ANATOLIA



Down:

- 1. Native of Thailand?
- 3. Resident of Myanmar!
- 5. A floppy doll cat?
- 7. Can be black or brown!
- 10. Has a namesake in Egypt.
- 11. Legs shorter than your average cat.

Across:

- 1. A cold country cat.
- 2. Sparkling coat!
- 4. Named after a country near Egypt.
- 6. Hello old blue eyes!
- 8. A marble cat?
- 9. Cat curls?

