



Neotype of *Neofelis diardi* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae)

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Abstract

The recent recognition that the clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) is, in fact, two different species, which differ substantially with respects to craniodental and pelage morphology and genome characters, and the confusion about the initial descriptions of this taxon prompt designation of a neotype of *Neofelis diardi*. In this paper a neotype specimen consisting of a mounted skin, a skull, and a mandible (RMNH1981) is designated, which are housed at the National Museum of Natural History (Naturalis), in Leiden, the Netherlands. The type locality of *Neofelis diardi* is fixed as Palembang, Sumatra, under Article 76 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, rather than the original and erroneous locality of Java by Cuvier.

Key words: *Neofelis diardi*; neotype; skull and mandible; mounted skin; type locality; craniodental morphology; pelage morphology

Introduction

The clouded leopard is an unusual, elusive, medium-sized pantherine felid inhabiting forest tracts in Southeast Asia, and in comparison with other pantherines, little is known about its ecology or evolution (Sunquist & Sunquist 2002). It used to be held that there was one species, *Neofelis nebulosa*, Griffith 1821, and four subspecies, *N. n. diardi* Cuvier (Borneo, Sumatra; and the Batu Islands), *N. n. macrasceloides* Hodgson (Bhutan; Burma; India; Nepal), *N. n. nebulosa* (Cambodia; China; Laos; Malaysia; Thailand; and Vietnam), and *N. n. brachyura* Swinhoe (Taiwan) (see e.g., Ellerman & Morrison-Scott 1951; Nowell & Jackson 1996). Recent studies on molecular data (Buckley-Beason *et al.* 2006; Wilting *et al.* 2007), pelage morphology (Kitchener *et al.* 2006), and craniodental morphology (Christiansen 2008b) have strongly supported the elevation of *Neofelis nebulosa diardi* to full species, *Neofelis diardi* Cuvier 1823. The taxonomic history of *Neofelis* Gray 1867 is complex, and below is given only the most relevant facts concerning the discovery of *Neofelis diardi*.

In 1821 Edward Griffith produced a short note on a new species of felid, which had lived for a few months in a menagerie in London. It was named *Felis nebulosa*, owing to the beautiful coat pattern, which Griffith thought bore resemblance to the irregular shapes of passing clouds. Around this time, several other authors were beginning to raise awareness of the existence of a new species of large felid from Southeast Asia, although most were unaware of each others' work, and did not realise that the animals they were describing, most often in brief notes, were the same species, or rather, as is evident today, two closely related species. Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles was the first westerner to acquire personal knowledge of a hitherto unknown species of big cat today recognised as *Neofelis diardi*, and during his stay as Lieutenant-Governor on Sumatra became well acquainted with the animal and even raised several cubs himself. His first brief note appeared in 1822 and he believed it to be leopard-sized and entirely arboreal, hence the local Malay name of *Rimau Dahan*, where *Rimau* signified the word "tiger", and was a term commonly applied in Malay to great cats, such as the Sumatra tiger (*Rimau mang'in*); and *Dahan* implied the fork made by large branches; the name is