

RESEARCH NOTE

First Photographic Evidence of the Central African Oyan in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Arboreal camera trap photographs were captured of the Central African Oyan *Poiana richardsonii* in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda. In total, 10 photographs were obtained from three sites in the park in 2019. This is likely the furthest east record of this species.

1 | Introduction

The Central African Oyan *Poiana richardsonii* (Thomson, 1842) also known as the African Linsang, Central African Linsang or Richardson's Linsang (Kingdon and Largen 1997) is a nocturnal and arboreal small carnivore with a striking resemblance to the genet with a small slender and muzzled appearance (Kingdon and Largen 1997). The Central African oyan is classified as a species of Least Concern by the IUCN Cites, Appendix 11. According to the IUCN Red List, the species' population trend is unknown though it is reported to have a considerably wide distribution throughout six African countries: Cameroon; Central African Republic; Democratic Republic of Congo; Equatorial Guinea and Gabon (Gaubert and Do Linh San 2015) and more recently was recorded in Rwanda (Moore and Niyigaba 2018). There is little known about the ecology of the species besides its habitat preference for lowland and montane forests (Gaubert and Do Linh San 2015). Here, we present the first photographic evidence of the Central African Oyan from Uganda in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, which would be a range extension for the species northeast into Uganda from the current projected range.

2 | Methods

Ground and arboreal camera traps were set up in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (Bwindi), a UNESCO World Heritage site (Figure 1). The 321 km² national park is primarily montane forest, with elevation ranging from 1190 m to 2607 m. The park is in southwestern Uganda (0°53' to 1°08'S, 29°35' to 29°50'E) bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. During the study, camera traps were deployed at 20 sites with 10 sites in the Southern sector of Bwindi and 10 sites in the Northern sector of Bwindi. The cameras were deployed between August 7 and September 12, 2019, in the Southern sector and then moved and deployed between September 27 and November 5, 2019, in the Northern sector. Cameras were active at a site for at least 30 days within the time period for each sector. At each site, three camera traps were deployed within the same tree, one deployed at ground level (~50 cm), one deployed in the low canopy (~5 m), and the last deployed in the higher canopy (~10 m). All were Reconyx HC500 camera traps, with three successive photographs taken each time the camera was triggered, with the camera set to high sensitivity.

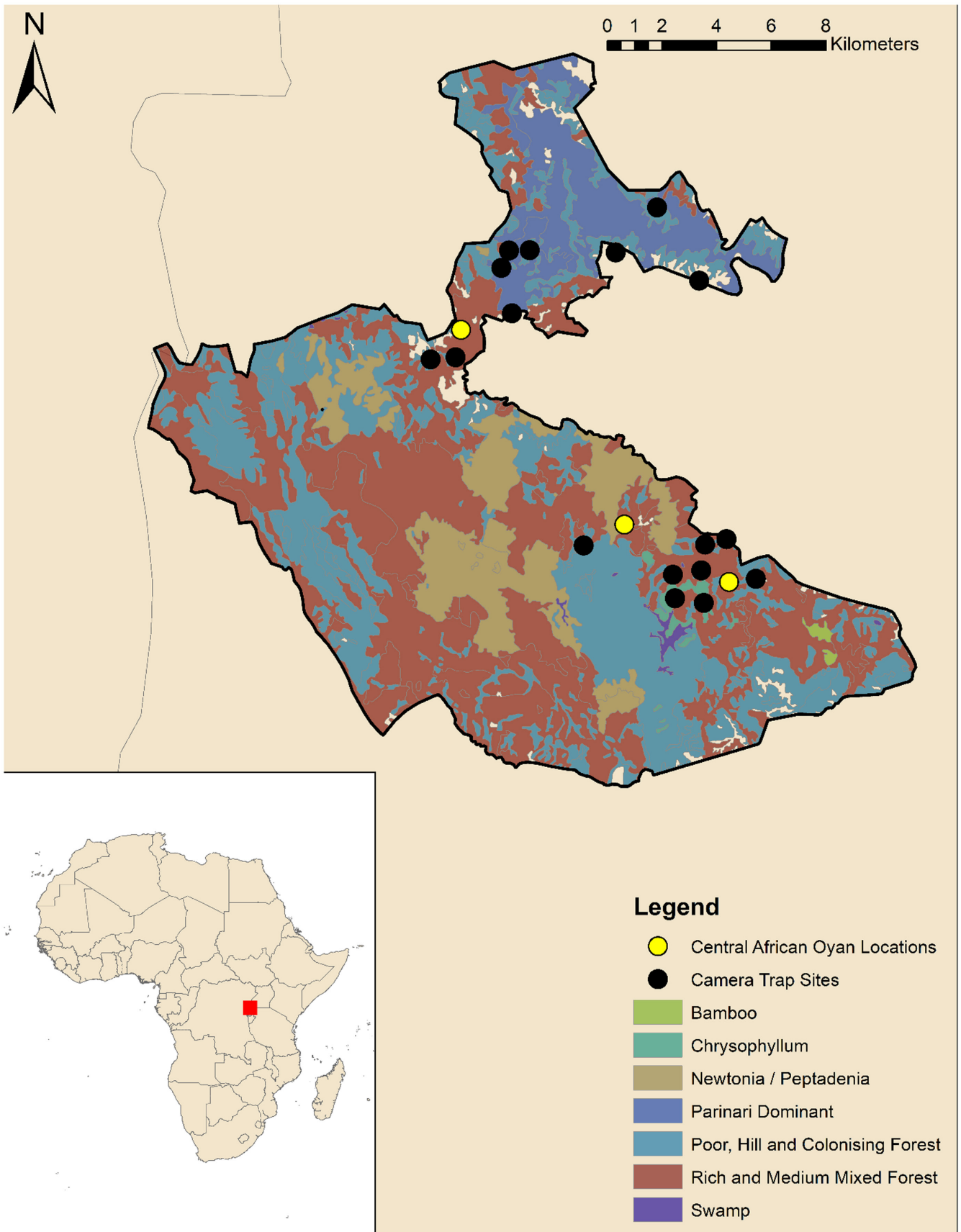


FIGURE 1 | Map of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park showing habitat type, camera trap sites and locations of Central African Oyan sightings.



FIGURE 2 | Photograph of the Central African Oyan from Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.

3 | Results and Discussion

We captured 10 photographs from three sites of the Central African Oyan (Figure 2). The first three photographs were from Site 22 (location: $-1.057222, 29.774656$) on August 17, 2019, between 3:00 AM and 5:57 AM. The photographs were taken at a height between 10 m above the ground. The next six photographs were from Site 5 (location: $-0.973651, 29.6867$) on October 7, 2019, at 3:44 AM, at a height of 5 m. And the last photograph was from Site 30 (location: $-0.933222, 29.75113$) on November 13, 2019, at 1:32 AM. The photograph was taken at a height of 10 m from the ground. Based on the time stamps, this is likely a single individual at each location. These photographs were all taken during the night with the camera sites at 1548, 1647 and 2291 m. The two sites where the Central African Oyan was sighted in the southern sector of the park are high-elevation submontane forest, whereas the site in the north sector is medium elevation moist evergreen forest. These sites are similar habitat to other places where this species is found. The species can be differentiated from similar species like the genets, based on the low number and density of spots, the lack of a dorsal stripe and the wide white stripes on the tail (Van Rompaey and Colyn 2013).

This is the first study using arboreal camera traps in Bwindi, but ground camera traps have been deployed in the national park since 2010. It has likely never been sighted before with ground camera traps because of the arboreal nature of the species, and thus by employing arboreal camera traps, we were able to detect the species for the first time. This was also true in Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, where the first sightings also were from arboreal camera traps (Moore and Niyigaba 2018).

The Central African Oyan recorded by Moore and Niyigaba (2018) in Nyungwe National Park was the furthest east record of this species, extending the IUCN range map. This new record from

Bwindi extends the range even further east (~50 km). In addition, it is possible that this species might also be found in other montane forest of Uganda such as Kibale and Semuliki forests extending the range even further in the Albertine Rift region.

Camera traps studies in Bwindi also recorded other carnivore species within the park including similar-sized arboreal species like the servaline genet (*Genetta servalina*), the large-spotted genet (*Genetta maculata*) and the African palm civet (*Nandinia binotata*) as well as terrestrial carnivore species like the African civet (*Civettictis civetta*), African golden cat (*Caracal aurata*), Common mongoose (*Herpestes sanguineus*), Marsh mongoose (*Atilax paludinosus*), Serval (*Leptailurus serval*) and the Side-striped jackal (*Canis adustus*). Like many of these other species Central African oyan are threatened by bushmeat hunting as well as logging (Gaubert and Do Linh San 2015). Their presence in another protected area, Bwindi National Park, extends their range and provides another refuge for the continued survival of the species.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data are available upon reasonable request.

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