

MARKĚTA REJLKOVÁ^{1,2}  (marketa@sulawesikeepers.org) and MUHAMMAD IQRAM^{1,3} 

¹Sulawesi Keepers, Zeleneč, Czech Republic. ²Ostrava Zoo, Ostrava, Czech Republic. ³Biology Department, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

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First camera-trap record of caracal twin kittens in Saudi Arabia

The Asiatic caracal *Caracal caracal schmitzi* is one of the most widespread wild felids in Arabia, with a range that extends from Jordan in the north-west through the mountains of Saudi Arabia and Yemen and into the mountains of Oman in the south-east (Al Hikmani et al., 2017, *Cat News*, 66, 18). However, other than reports of twin kittens in Oman in February 2017 and in Yemen in 2012, information on the reproduction of the Asiatic caracal in Arabia is scarce.

In Africa and Asia the caracal breeds throughout the year, with a peak from October to February. Litters typically have 1–4 kittens and gestation is 75–81 days. The twins reported in Oman in February 2017 were probably born in November–December 2016. Another unpublished record was of a single caracal kitten photographed in Jabal Qamar, Oman, in March 2020; this kitten was probably born in January–February 2020.


We report here the—to our knowledge—first record of twin caracal kittens in Saudi Arabia. A series of camera-trap photographs taken on 6 August 2023 show a female caracal with her twin kittens on the southern escarpment in Al Namas area in the Asir region. We estimate the kittens were born in February or March 2023.

The caracal is categorized as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List, but is considered threatened or declining in



Mother and twin kittens of the Asiatic caracal *Caracal caracal schmitzi* captured by camera trap on 6 August 2023 in the Asir region of Saudi Arabia. Photo: Royal Commission for AlUla/ Abdullah Alshehri.

regional assessments for North Africa and West and Central Asia. In Saudi Arabia, the caracal is regarded as rare, but recent camera-trap surveys conducted by the Royal Commission for AlUla in collaboration with NGO Panthera recorded caracals in nine of 14 surveyed sites in Saudi Arabia (Dunford et al., 2023, *Oryx*, published online 27 November 2023). These records together not only confirm the continued presence of the caracal, but also that the population is breeding in south-west Saudi Arabia and that caracal births probably occur during the winter and spring months of November–March.

HADI AL HIKMANI  (hadidofar@gmail.com), KHALID AL HIKMANI and ABDULLAH ALSHEHRI
Royal Commission for AlUla, Taif, Saudi Arabia

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