Bolivia names new tiny wild cat

LEVEL B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. What wild cats live in your region or country?
2. How do scientists decide if an animal is a new species?
3. Why is protecting small animals sometimes difficult?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

species
a group of living things that are similar and can breed

genetic
related to DNA and how living things are built

sanctuary
a safe place where animals are protected

specimen
a single example used for study

vulnerable
at risk of harm or decline and needing protection

subspecies
a smaller group within a species with special features

lineage
a line of ancestors from which a species comes

humidity
the amount of water vapour in the air

III. READING

Scientists have identified a new wild cat in Bolivia's Yungas cloud forest, the first living cat species to be formally named in more than a century. Locals call it tilcayo; its scientific name is Leopardus tilcayo. It is about 46cm long and 1.4kg, smaller than a domestic cat, with light brown fur and rosettes.

Researchers have been analysing genetic data and confirmed it as a separate species. Paola Nogales-Ascarrunz and Jonas Lescroart said little is known about its lifestyle. Camera-trap images suggest it is often active at night, and scat shows it eats small rodents.

One 10-year-old male now lives at the Senda Verde Wildlife Sanctuary after being kept by a family. The Yungas is a mountainous forest, with frequent cloud and high humidity. The team studied DNA from 38 cats, including eight museum specimens. They found tiger cats are five species, not one.

The tilcayo lineage split about 1.4 million years ago. The researchers also named a new tiger cat subspecies in Peru's Yungas. The IUCN currently lists tiger cats as two vulnerable species; a new review will assess five lineages.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "New cat species identified in Bolivia for...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where was the new cat species found?
2. What is the cat's scientific name?
3. How big is the tilcayo compared to a domestic cat?
4. What suggests the cat is active at night?
5. How many tiger cat species did the DNA study find?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Why might a small cat be hard for scientists to study?
2. What could Bolivia do to protect the tilcayo?
3. Should museums collect animal specimens? Why or why not?
4. How can DNA help conservation in your country?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Present perfect continuous

Use have/has + been + verb-ing for activities that started in the past and are still continuing or have recently stopped. It shows ongoing actions with a connection to now.

*"Researchers **have been analysing** genetic data."*

*"Field teams **have been searching** the Yungas for specimens."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence using the present perfect continuous.

1. Researchers (study) ___ the museum specimens for months. _____
2. Since its discovery, scientists (try) ___ to study the tilcayo. _____
3. One male tilcayo (live) ___ at a sanctuary for some time. _____
4. Researchers (compare) ___ DNA from many samples over the past year. _____
5. Camera traps (record) ___ the cat's night activity for months. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: species, genetic, sanctuary, specimen, vulnerable. Use photos of cloud forests to set context and the size comparison.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist (what, where, how big), then detail (numbers, names). Pair-check answers before a brief whole-class review.
- For discussion, start in pairs so quieter students speak. If the class stalls, show a simple map of Bolivia and ask how place and humidity affect wildlife.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Elicit field challenges (size, camouflage). Then ask for low-tech and high-tech study ideas.
2. Board concrete actions (habitat rules, funding, sanctuaries) and have students rank them.
3. Prompt ethics and science benefits; split pairs to argue for and against before sharing.
4. Get examples like tracking or ID. Push for one risk and one benefit for each idea.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Research: In pairs, make a 5-slide mini-brief on the Yungas and why its humidity shapes wildlife.

Writing: Write a 90-word news update announcing the IUCN review of the five tiger cat lineages.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Present perfect continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where was the new cat species found?
   In Bolivia's Yungas cloud forest.
2. What is the cat's scientific name?
   Leopardus tilcayo.
3. How big is the tilcayo compared to a domestic cat?
   It is smaller; about 46cm long and 1.4kg.
4. What suggests the cat is active at night?
   Camera-trap images.
5. How many tiger cat species did the DNA study find?
   Five species.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use have/has + been + verb-ing for activities that started in the past and are still continuing or have recently stopped. It shows ongoing actions with a connection to now. (Example 2 constructed.)

"Researchers **have been analysing** *genetic data."*

"Field teams **have been searching** *the Yungas for specimens."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence using the present perfect continuous.

1. Researchers ___ the museum specimens for months. **have been studying**
2. Since its discovery, scientists ___ to study the tilcayo. **have been trying**
3. One male tilcayo ___ at a sanctuary for some time. **has been living**
4. Researchers ___ DNA from many samples over the past year. **have been comparing**
5. Camera traps ___ the cat's night activity for months. **have been recording**