

Letter to the Editor

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Carvalho, W.D., Rosalino, L.M., Dalponte, J.C., Santos, B., Adania, C.H., Esbérard, C.E.L., 2015, Can footprints of small and medium sized felids be distinguished in the field? Evidences from Brazil's Atlantic Forest. *Tropical Conservation Science* 8, 760-777.

de Carvalho et al. [1] demonstrate the difficulty in identifying or differentiating feline footprints, mainly between species with similar body measurements [1]. However, the authors imply, citing our study published in 2014 [2], that our analysis relied solely on footprints for the identification of felids: "Many investigations have reported occurrence and distribution range extensions for felids in the Brazilian Atlantic Tropical Forest, based on footprint identification [...33-39...]" [1] (n.b., our study was referenced as number 36 in this paper). The authors also state, "...none of the above-mentioned studies have used other complementary approaches to confirm their results..." [1].

We would like to emphasize that footprints were not used to identify felines in our study, as this was not the aim of our investigation. Footprints, in addition to myriad other data, were used as evidence to help identify feces collected as outlined: "...the presence of footprints and scarifications and other indications that would help to characterize the excrements were also recorded and identified based on comparisons made using identification guides...linked to other characteristics of the samples that also served to identify them, such as the behavior of burying feces and presence of scarification, the characteristic odor of the feces of domestic cats and the proximity to anthropic areas" [2].

Furthermore, contrary to what was stated in this paper, we also used other methods to identify the fecal samples (the focus of our study): "Microscope slides were prepared of the hairs...to confirm the species to which the fecal sample belonged...we attributed the fecal samples to their origin via the microstructure of 'guard hairs' triage from fecal samples...to distinguish samples from wild felines" [2].

We share the opinion of the authors regarding the difficulty in using this procedure for species identification, and agree that identification should not be made based solely on this methodology. Thus, we are writing to express our concern regarding the aforementioned misinterpretations of our manuscript and hope to resolve this misunderstanding. We consider the information in this study [1] to be extremely important, both to the scientific community and to the development of precise techniques for the identification of these species in natural areas.

[1] de Carvalho, W. D., Rosalino, L. M., Dalponte, J. C., Santos, B., Harumi Adania, C. and Lustosa Esbérard, C. E. 2015. Can footprints of small and medium sized felids be distinguished in the field? Evidences from Brazil's Atlantic Forest. *Tropical Conservation Science* 8:760-777.

[2] Ferreira, G. A., Nakano-Oliveira, E. and Genaro, G. 2014. Domestic cat predation on neotropical species in an insular Atlantic Forest remnant in southeastern Brazil. *Wildlife Biology* 20:167-175.