

SNOW LEOPARD

(*Panthera uncia* syn. *Uncia uncia*)

FACT SHEET



PHYSICAL FEATURES

Medium sized cats with tails that can be as long as their bodies! They have thick, smoky-gray fur patterned with dark gray open rosettes. In the mountains they blend perfectly with the rocky slopes, making them practically invisible.

WEIGHT:

60-120
POUNDS

BODY LENGTH:

39-51
INCHES

POPULATION

Researchers estimate that there are between

3,500 - 7,000

SNOW LEOPARDS
LEFT IN THE WILD

No one has an exact count because snow leopards are so elusive and inhabit such harsh and remote habitat that they are rarely seen.

NUMBER OF
SNOW LEOPARDS
IN ZOOS
AROUND THE WORLD:

600

ADAPTATIONS



FOR LIFE ON THE MOUNTAIN

- LONG HIND-LIMBS FOR LEAPING
- LONG FLEXIBLE TAIL FOR BALANCING
- WELL-DEVELOPED CHEST
- SHORT FORELIMBS WITH LARGE PAWS FOR WALKING ON SNOW



FOR LIFE IN THE COLD

- THICK FURRY TAIL FOR WRAPPING AROUND BODY AND FACE
- ENLARGED NASAL CAVITY
- LONG FUR WITH WOOLY UNDERGROWTH

BEHAVIOR



Snow leopards are usually **solitary**, except when females are raising cubs. Mating occurs in late winter and 1 to 5 (usually 2 or 3) cubs are born 90-100 days later. The cubs remain with their mother until they become independent—normally after about 18-22 months.

These cats are most active at dawn and dusk. They may stay in an area for several days and then abruptly move many miles.

RANGE

Snow leopards live throughout the mountains of Central Asia in Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Snow leopard range covers 2 million square kilometers, about the size of Greenland or Mexico, but is spread across the twelve countries. China contains as much as 60% of snow leopard habitat. The cats have already disappeared from some areas where they formerly lived, such as parts of Mongolia.



PREY

Snow Leopards are predators, which means they eat other animals. The diet varies across snow leopard range.



BLUE SHEEP aka **BHARAL**
(*Pseudois nayaur*)



ARGALI SHEEP
(*Ovis ammon*)



IBEX
(*Capra siberica*)

In the Himalayas they eat mostly **blue sheep**, which are also known as **bharal**. In the Karakorum (Pakistan), Tian Shan (China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) and Altai (Russia and Mongolia) Mountains, their main prey is **ibex**, a wild goat and wild **argali** sheep.

Across their range Snow leopards also take small prey including marmots and hares, and they hunt larger birds like snow cock and chukor. Snow leopards are opportunistic hunters, and they attack livestock that are in their range.

POACHING

Illegal hunting for the fur trade, and trade in bones for traditional Asian medicine.

LOSS of PREY

A decline in numbers of wild prey due to hunting and competition with livestock for grazing.

PROBLEM ANIMALS (DEPREDATORS)

Snow Leopards kill livestock and are killed by herders in retribution.

THREATS

LOSS of HABITAT

More people and livestock move into snow leopard range, fragmenting habitat, so snow leopards become isolated and vulnerable.

LACK of EFFECTIVE PROTECTION

Most protected areas are too small to protect the home range of even a single snow leopard, and many countries cannot afford to pay rangers living wages.

LACK of AWARENESS & SUPPORT

Herders living with snow leopards sometimes do not understand why they are important elements of the ecosystem and why they need to be protected.

EXTINCTION IS FOREVER

There are many ways you can help save these amazing cats. One of the best ways is just by raising awareness about the plight of the snow leopards.

You can also get involved by becoming a member of the Snow Leopard Trust, donating money towards conservation work, or volunteering your time. To find out more, please visit us at:

www.snowleopard.org



**Snow
Leopard
Trust**