

## Snow leopard (Panthera uncia)

By IASToppers | 2024-02-01 15:10:00



### Snow Leopard

The first-ever population estimation exercise by the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program data has been published.



[Ref: India Today]

### **Key findings of the survey:**

- **Population Estimation:** Approximately 718 snow leopards are present in India.
- **Geographic Distribution:** Ladakh hosts the highest number (477), followed by Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51), Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9).
- According to the **Snow Leopard Trust**, there may only be between **3,920 and 6,390** snow leopards left in the wild.

### **About Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*):**

- The snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is a large cat species native to the mountainous regions of Central and South Asia, including countries like **India, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, and parts of Russia and China**.
- It is known for its striking appearance with a **thick fur coat, spotted pattern, and long tail**.

### **Physical Characteristics:**

- Snow leopards are known for their **thick fur**, which helps them **stay warm in cold climates**.
- Their fur is typically pale grey with **rosette-shaped spots** and a **white underbelly**.
- Their long tail aids in **balance** and acts as a **scarf for additional warmth**.

### **Reproduction:**

- Snow leopards have a **low reproductive rate**.
- Females give birth to a litter of usually two to three cubs after a gestation period of about **90 to 100 days**.

### **Habitat:**

- Snow leopards primarily inhabit rugged and high-altitude areas, such as the **Himalayas** and the **Tibetan Plateau**.
- They are adapted to cold, snowy environments and are often found at elevations of **3,000 to 4,500 meters** (10,000 to 15,000 feet) above sea level.

**Behavior:**

- Snow leopards are **solitary and elusive creatures**.
- They are known for their stealth and agility, which helps them navigate their **habitat's steep and rocky terrain**.
- They are **crepuscular**, being most active during **dawn and dusk**.

**Diet:**

- Their diet mainly consists of **blue sheep (bharal), ibex, marmots, and other small mammals**.
- They are excellent hunters, capable of taking down prey much larger than themselves.

**Threats:**

- Habitat loss,
- Poaching, and
- Human-wildlife conflicts.

**Conservation Status:**

- **IUCN Status:** Vulnerable