



## Snow Leopard

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### Why in News

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Just days before celebrating **Earth Day**, the internet was going viral over a photo of a snow leopard.

### Key Points

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- **About:**
  - **Scientific Name:** Panthera uncia
  - **Top Predator:** Snow leopards act as an indicator of the health of the mountain ecosystem in which they live, due to their position as the top predator in the food web.
- **Habitat:**
  - Mountainous regions of **central and southern Asia**.
  - **In India, their geographical range encompasses:**
    - **Western Himalayas:** Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh.
    - **Eastern Himalayas:** Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.
  - **Snow Leopard capital of the world:** Hemis, Ladakh.  
**Hemis National Park** is the biggest national park in India and also has a good presence of Snow Leopard.
- **Protection Status:**
  - The snow leopard is listed as Vulnerable on the **IUCN-World Conservation Union's Red List** of the Threatened Species.
  - In addition, it is also listed in **Appendix I** of the **Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES)**.  
Making trading of animal body parts (i.e., fur, bones and meat) illegal in signatory countries.
  - It is listed in **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972**.
  - It is also listed in the **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)**, affording the highest conservation status to the species, both globally and in India.
  - It is also protected by several national laws in its range countries.

- **Conservation Efforts by India:**

- The Government of India has identified the snow leopard as a **flagship species** for the high altitude Himalayas.
- India is also party to the **Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme since 2013.**
- HimalSanrakshak: It is a community volunteer programme, to protect snow leopards, launched in October 2020.
- In 2019, **First National Protocol** was also launched on Snow Leopard Population Assessment which has been very useful for monitoring populations.
- **SECURE Himalaya: Global Environment Facility (GEF)-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** funded the project on conservation of high altitude biodiversity and reducing the dependency of local communities on the natural ecosystem.
- **Project Snow Leopard (PSL):** It was launched in 2009 to promote an inclusive and participatory approach to conserve snow leopards and their habitat.
- Snow Leopard is on the list of **21 critically endangered species for the recovery programme** of the Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change.
- Snow Leopard conservation breeding programme is undertaken at **Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling, West Bengal.**

### **Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme**

- The GSLEP is a high-level inter-governmental alliance of all the 12 snow leopard range countries.  
The snow leopard countries namely, India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Mongolia, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- It majorly focuses on the need for awareness and understanding of the value of Snow Leopard for the ecosystem.

### **Living Himalaya Network Initiative**

- Living Himalayas Initiative (LHI) is established as one of WWF's global initiatives to bring about transformational conservation impact across the three Eastern Himalayan countries of Bhutan, India (North-East) and Nepal.
- Objectives of LHI include adapting to climate change, connecting to habitat and saving iconic species.

**Source: TH**