



Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

The [National Board for Wildlife](#) meeting in New Delhi witnessed the release of the **report on the Status of [Snow Leopards](#)** in India by the **Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.

- This report is a result of the **Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program**, a significant scientific exercise that provides crucial insights into the snow leopard population in India.

What is the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program?

- The SPAI Program is the **first-ever comprehensive scientific exercise** aimed at assessing the population of snow leopards in India.
 - The [Wildlife Institute of India \(WII\)](#) served as the National Coordinator for the SPAI, with support from snow leopard range states and conservation partners, the **Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Mysuru and World Wildlife Fund(WWF)-India**.
- The SPAI systematically covered over **70% of the potential snow leopard habitat across the trans-Himalayan region**, including UTs of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, and states such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The assessment was conducted from 2019 to 2023 using a meticulous two-step framework, including **evaluating snow leopard spatial distribution** and **estimating snow leopard abundance using [camera traps](#)**.

Note

- The **Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF)**, Mysore is a non-governmental organisation that focuses on the conservation of India's wildlife and ecosystems.
- WWF-India, established as a Charitable Trust on 27th November 1969. It is a science-based organization which addresses issues such as the **conservation of species and its habitats, [climate change](#), water and environmental education**, among many others.
 - WWF-India Secretariat is an autonomous office based in New Delhi. It is part of [WWF International](#).

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Findings:**
 - The SPAI exercise recorded a **snow leopard population of 718 individuals** in India, providing crucial data for conservation efforts.
 - The report detailed the estimated presence of snow leopards in different states: **Ladakh (477), Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51), Arunachal**

Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9).

▪ **Conservation Efforts and Recommendations:**

- The report emphasises the need for establishing a **dedicated Snow Leopard Cell at WII** under the **MoEFCC** to focus on **long-term population monitoring**.
- Consistent monitoring through periodic population estimation is proposed to ensure the long-term survival of snow leopards and to identify challenges, address threats, and formulate effective conservation strategies.

Snow Leopard

Panthera Uncia

Often referred to as the "ghost of the mountains"

HABITAT

- Mountainous regions of **Central and Southern Asia**
- **12** Range Countries
- In India:
 - **Western Himalayas:** Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh
 - **Eastern Himalayas:** Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh

MAJOR SITES

- Hemis National Park, Ladakh
 - **Snow leopard capital of the world**
- Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh
- Gangotri National Park, Uttarakhand
- Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim

PROTECTION STATUS

- **Vulnerable:** IUCN Red List
- **Appendix I:** CITES
- **Schedule I:** Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972

THREATS

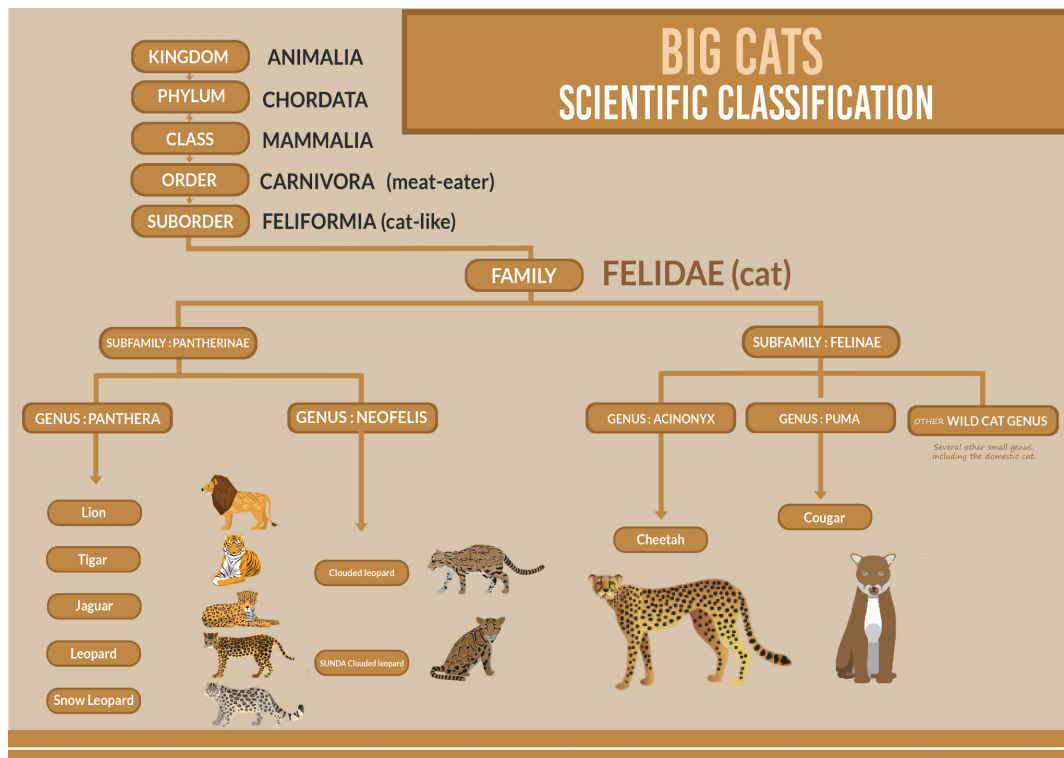
- Human Snow Leopard Conflict
- Climate Change
- Loss of Prey and Habitat
- Poaching

CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme
- Himal Sanrakshak- Community Volunteer Programme
- Project Snow Leopard
- Snow Leopard Conservation Breeding Programme- Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, West Bengal

National Board for Wildlife

- The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is the **apex body in India for all wildlife-related matters**.
- It is a **statutory body constituted under Section 5A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- It advises the government on policy matters concerned with wildlife conservation and preservation, and approves projects in and around national parks and other protected areas.
 - The NBWL is **chaired by the Prime Minister** and comprises 47 members, including three Members of Parliament, five NGOs, and 10 eminent ecologists, conservationists, and environmentalists.



UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following: (2012)

1. Black-necked crane
2. Cheetah
3. Flying squirrel
4. Snow leopard

Which of the above are naturally found in India?

- (a)** 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (b)