



Snow Leopard

Why in News

Just days before celebrating [Earth Day](#), the internet was going viral over a photo of a snow leopard.

Key Points

▪ 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.

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