



## Status of Leopards in India 2022

**For Prelims:** International Big Cat Alliance, [Tigers](#), [Lions](#), [Leopards](#), [Snow Leopards](#), pumas, jaguars, [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

**For Mains:** International Big Cat Alliance, Conservation.

[Source: IE](#)

### Why in News?

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has released a report on the **Status of Leopards in India 2022**. The survey covered 20 States of India, and focussed on about 70% of the animals' expected habitat.

- Recently, the Union Government, while commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [Project Tiger](#), has approved the establishment of the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** with headquarters in India with a one-time budgetary support of Rs.150 crore for a period of five years from **2023-24 to 2027-28**.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Report on the Status of Leopards in India 2022?

- **Overall population:**
  - India's leopard population **rose by 8% from 12,852 in 2018 to 13,874 in 2022**.
  - About 65% of the leopard population is **present outside protected areas** in the Shivalik landscape. Only about a third of the leopards are within protected areas.
    - The Shivalik landscape refers to the **outermost range of the Himalayas, known as the Shivalik Hills** or the Shivalik Range. This range extends across several states in northern India, including Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, and parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Regional variation:**
  - Central India shows a stable or **slightly growing population** of leopards (2018: 8071, 2022: 8820), **Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains** experienced decline (2018: 1253, 2022: 1109).
    - In Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains, there is a 3.4% decline per annum, while the largest growth rate was in **Central India and Eastern Ghats of 1.5%**.
- **State-level distribution:**
  - Madhya Pradesh has the **highest number of leopards (3,907)**, followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.
    - In Odisha the number of leopards dropped from 760 in 2018 to 562 in 2022, and in Uttarakhand, the population declined from 839 in 2018 to 652 in 2022.
    - Kerala, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Goa too reported population declines.
- **Benefits From Tiger Conservation Efforts:**
  - The Central India and Eastern Ghats landscape is home to the largest population of

leopards, which is growing due to protective measures within the framework of tiger conservation.

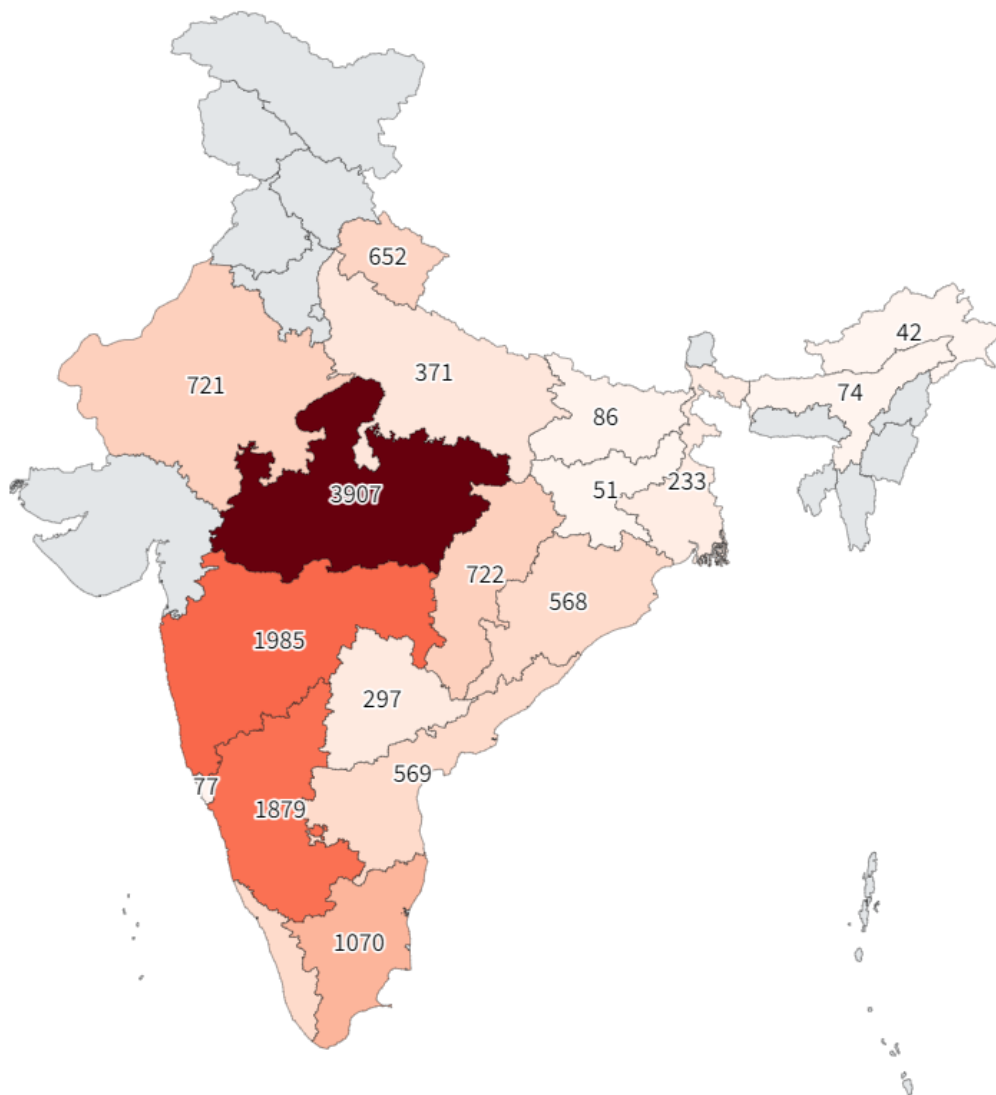
- The report highlights that **leopard densities are higher in Tiger Reserves compared to areas outside Protected Areas**, despite the regulatory pressure exerted by tigers on leopards.

▪ **Common Threats:**

- Common threats are **poaching of prey for bush meat**, targeted poaching for tiger and leopard skins and body parts and habitat loss due to mining and other human activities.
  - In Odisha, as many as **59 leopard skins were seized from wildlife smugglers** between 2018 and 2023.
- Additionally, **road accidents** are a significant cause of leopard fatalities.

**Leopard count in states**

The estimated leopard population in 2022 is 13,874



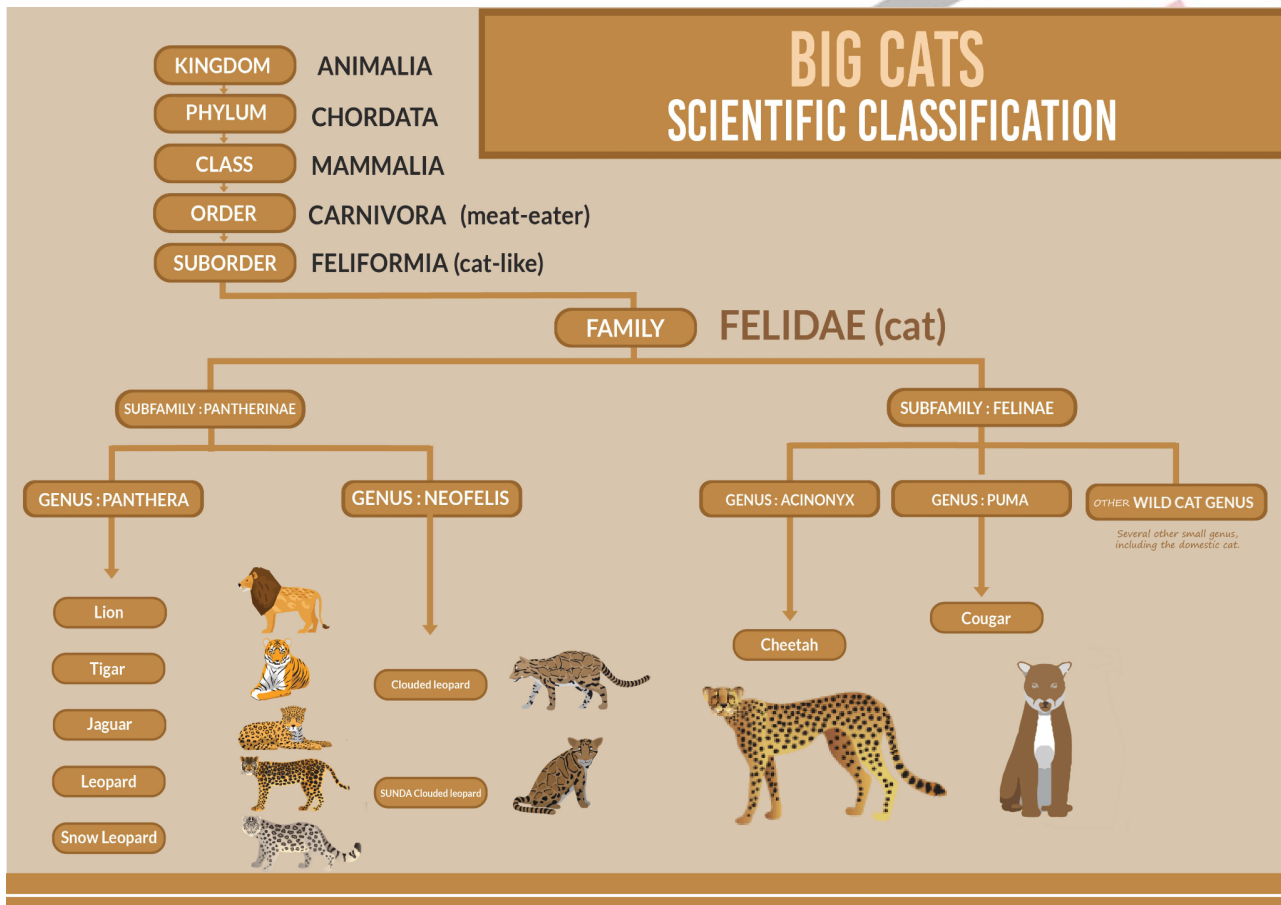
**What is the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)?**

▪ **About:**

- The IBCA is a multi-country, multi-agency coalition aimed at conserving big cat species and their habitats.
- It brings together **96 big cat range countries**, non-range countries interested in big cat conservation, conservation partners, scientific organizations, and businesses.

▪ **Objective:**

- The primary goal of the alliance is to collaborate on efforts to secure the future of **big cats, including Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Snow Leopards, pumas, jaguars, and cheetahs**, and the landscapes they inhabit.
- IBCA would work towards **mitigating the adverse effects of climate change**. It will advocate for policy initiatives that **align biodiversity conservation efforts** with local needs and contribute towards the attainment of **United Nations**-mandated **Sustainable Development Goals** within member countries.
- **Structure:**
  - The grouping's structure will consist of an Assembly of Members, a Standing Committee and a Secretariat, **with its headquarters in India**.
- **Conservation Efforts of India:**
  - **Project Lion**
  - **Project Leopard**
  - **Cheetah Reintroduction Project**
  - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**
  - **Snow Leopard Conservation:**
    - Conservation efforts **include habitat protection**, community engagement, research, and anti-poaching measures.
    - Collaboration with neighbouring countries and international organizations helps in safeguarding this high-altitude predator.



## What are the Key Points Related to Leopards?

- **Scientific Name: Panthera pardus**
- **About:**
  - The leopard is the smallest of the Big Cat family (of **genus Panthera** namely the **Tiger, Lion (Panthera leo), Jaguar, Leopard, and Snow Leopard**), and is known for its ability to adapt in a variety of habitats.

- A **nocturnal animal**, feeds on smaller species of herbivores found in its range, such as the chital, hog deer and wild boar.
- Melanism is a common occurrence in leopards, wherein the entire skin of the animal is black in colour, including its spots.
  - A melanistic leopard is often called a **black panther** and is mistakenly thought to be a different species.
- **Habitat:**
  - It occurs in a wide range in **sub-Saharan Africa**, in small parts of Western and Central Asia, on the Indian subcontinent to Southeast and East Asia.
    - The **Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*)** is a leopard widely distributed on the Indian subcontinent.
- **Threats:**
  - Poaching for the illegal trade of skins and body parts.
  - Habitat loss and fragmentation
  - Human-Leopard conflict
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List: Vulnerable**
  - **CITES: Appendix-I**
  - **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule-I**

## UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

**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)**