



Rise in Leopard Poaching

[Source: DTE](#)

Poachers are **now targeting leopards** more often because strict protection laws make **tigers** harder to hunt, while leopards are easier to find and less protected, making them a common substitute for tiger body parts in the international market.

- According to [CITES](#), around **12,000 leopards and their parts** were traded between **2020 and 2023** worldwide.
- Leopards have been **eliminated from 75% of their natural habitat** across **Africa**, the **Middle East**, and **Asia** due to poaching and habitat destruction.
- **Leopards** are being **poached** and **mislabeled as tigers** in illegal wildlife trade, especially in **Asia**, to meet demand for **traditional medicine, luxury items, and trophies**.
 - **South Africa's weak laws** and **captive breeding industry** fuel global illegal big cat trade.
- **Leopard Population in India (2024):**
 - **Total: 13,874** (1.08% annual growth since 2018).
 - **Highest population: Madhya Pradesh**, followed by **Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu**.
 - **Conservation Status: [IUCN Red List](#)** (Vulnerable), [CITES](#) (Appendix-I) and [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#) (Schedule-I).



EAT

- True carnivores that are excellent ambush predators
- Feed on anything they can overpower, from mid-size ungulates, to domestic livestock, dogs, birds, and rodents

ACTIVITY

- Mostly solitary, nocturnal creatures, also seen at dusk and dawn in forests. Entirely nocturnal close to human presence
- Territorial.
- Leopard densities can reach 5 animals per 100 sq km in densely populated human landscapes like western India

BLACK PANTHER

- Dark morphs or black leopards, often called black panthers, are the same species, but with recessive melanistic genes
- Spots are hidden under the dark coat

PANTHERA PARDUS FUSCA

INDIAN LEOPARD

Highly adaptable big cat can live close to humans

POPULATION around 7,910 (2014 census in surveyed areas); thought to be around 12,000-14,000 across India	WEIGHT 50-77 kg (males); 29-34 kg (females)	GEOGRAPHIC RANGE Indian subcontinent (all states), Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, China	HABITAT Forest, shrubland, savanna, grassland, rocky areas, mountains, desert
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Coats have black rosettes

Each coat pattern is unique and makes individuals identifiable

Large head, powerful jaws

Have an easily recognisable sawing/rasping call



CUBS

- Females usually give birth to two cubs after a gestation period of 90-105 days
- Only the female cares for the cubs, who remain with the mother for about 1.5-2 years



AGILE CAT

- Excellent at climbing trees
- Can run down a tree head-first
- Can carry large prey up a tree to protect it from other carnivores including tigers and wild dogs

THREATS

- A TRAFFIC study reports that between 2001-2010 at least **2 leopards were killed each week** for the illegal wildlife trade in India
- Population has declined by **75-90%** in the last two centuries
- **Poisoning** and retaliatory killing
- **Poaching** for pelts and body parts.
- Become **roadkill** when roads and highways run through forests
- Conflict with **livestock herders**
- **Hunting**

PROTECTION STATUS:
VULNERABLE on the IUCN Red List

Read More: [Status of Leopards in India 2022](#)

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