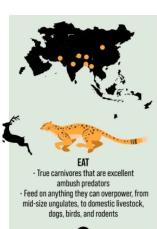


Rise in Leopard Poaching

Source: DTE

Poachers are **now targeting <u>leopards</u>** more often because strict protection laws make <u>tigers</u> 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 <u>CITES</u>, 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: <u>IUCN Red List</u> (Vulnerable), <u>CITES</u> (Appendix-I) and <u>Wildlife</u> (<u>Protection</u>) <u>Act</u>, <u>1972</u> (Schedule-I).



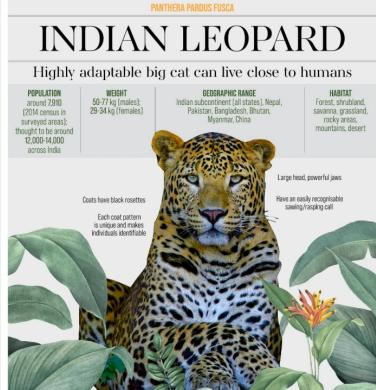
0 **ACTIVITY**

·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



· 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





· 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



 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

PDF Refernece URL: https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/rise-in-leopard-poaching