



WWF

FACT SHEET

LIVING
HIMALAYAS

Fading Footprints

Snow Leopards of the Eastern Himalayas

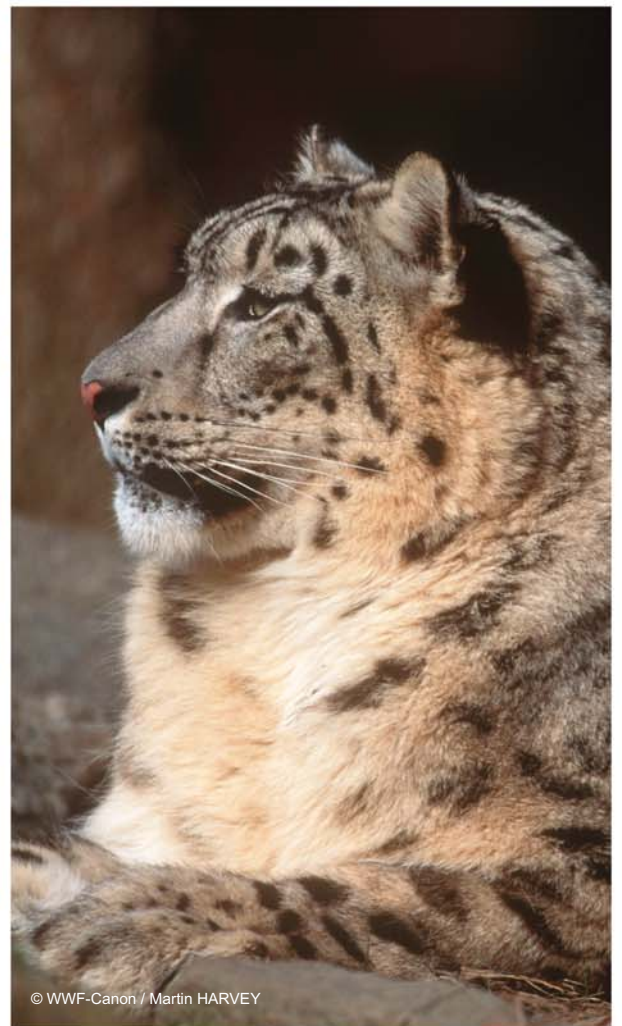
THE SPECIES

An expert at navigating the steep and rocky alpine regions of the Eastern Himalayas, the elusive snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*), with its smoky-grey fur and dotted-black rosettes, can still be spotted in parts of Bhutan, India and Nepal at elevations as high as 5,500m.

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the snow leopard population is estimated at between 4,000-6,500 throughout 12 countries in Central and South Asia. However, due to the secretive nature of the species, it is difficult to obtain accurate population figures.

In the Eastern Himalayas, there are

pockets of snow leopards found in the northeastern Indian states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. In Nepal there are numbered between 300-400 in several of the country's Protected Areas, with the largest number in the Shey-Phoksundo National Park and in the Annapurna Conservation Area. There are only 100-200 of them in the mountain kingdom of



© WWF-Canon / Martin HARVEY

© WWF-Canon / Martin HARVEY



© WWF-Canon / KLEIN & HUBERT

Bhutan, with the Jigme Dorji National Park and the Kulongchu Wildlife Sanctuary as the most important Protected Areas for this endangered mountain cat.

THE THREAT

Snow leopards are highly adapted to their harsh and remote habitat and can perfectly camouflage against the mountainous rocky terrain. But, sadly, this is not enough to save them from possible extinction.

Because of a shrinking habitat and decreased availability of prey, such as wild sheep and ibex, the snow leopard is seeing its population numbers continue to shrink. Human conflict is also a key factor affecting its survival. Snow leopards are often killed by local farmers because they prey on livestock. They are also hunted for their coveted pelts and bones that find their way into traditional Asian medicine.

Snow leopards are highly adapted to their harsh and remote habitat and can perfectly camouflage against the mountainous rocky terrain. But, sadly, this is not enough to save them from possible extinction.

Despite being protected by national law throughout its range states as well as under CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), which makes the international trade of the species in any form illegal, snow leopards continue to be hunted.

In the future, climate change is expected to become an additional threat to snow

leopards. As the climate gets warmer and the snowline decreases, climate change could well fragment its habitat and force the cats to migrate to even higher and more inhospitable terrain.

THE SOLUTION

To ensure their survival, WWF is researching and protecting snow leopards in the Eastern Himalayas, especially in the face of climate change impacts on their habitat. WWF is also working with local communities to help manage the human-snow leopard conflict and stop illegal trade.

- Bhutan's Biological Conservation Complex (B2C2) – a network of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, nature reserves and biological corridors covering 1,480 km² – allows snow leopards and other wildlife to migrate between Protected Areas. WWF is working with the Government of Bhutan and other partners to manage the complex to address a number of conservation threats, including poaching and human-wildlife conflict.
- In India, WWF has conducted surveys to collect baseline data on the snow leopard to learn more about its status and distribution in Sikkim. The information will contribute to a conservation plan to protect the species at a national level.
- In Nepal, WWF supported the development of the National Snow Leopard Conservation Plan. In the Kangchenjunga area WWF implemented a livestock insurance scheme, in which farmers are compensated if their animals are killed by a snow leopard. This has proven successful by deterring villages from killing the offending cat.



© WWF-Canon / Martin HARVEY

For further information please contact:
Name: Savita Malla
Title: Communications Manager-Living Himalayas Initiative
Email: savita.malla@wwfnepal.org
<http://wwf.panda.org/livinghimalayas>