

# Snow Leopard

*Panthera uncia*



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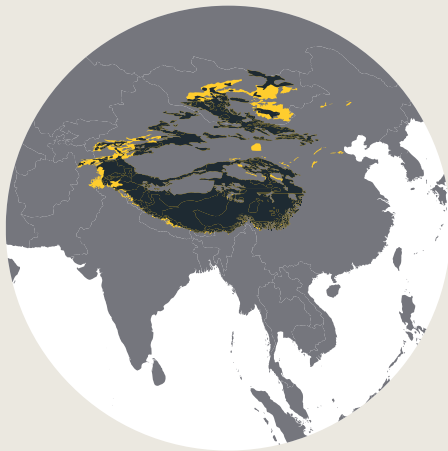
Photo by: Christian Spetka



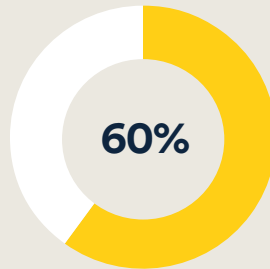
SNOW LEOPARDS ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO BY LOCALS AS “MOUNTAIN GHOSTS” GIVEN THEIR SECRETIVE NATURE AND HOW RARELY THEY ARE SEEN. ONE OF THE MOST ENIGMATIC SPECIES ON THE PLANET, THE SNOW LEOPARD REMAINS ONE OF THE LEAST UNDERSTOOD OF THE BIG CATS.

#### SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern      Near Threatened      Vulnerable      Endangered      Critically Endangered



**CURRENT** Snow Leopard Range      **HISTORIC** Snow Leopard Range



Sixty percent of snow leopard habitat is found in China alone.

~ 2,500 – 5,500 m

SNOW LEOPARDS INHABIT EXTREME LANDSCAPES APPROXIMATELY 2,500 – 5,500 METERS ABOVE SEA LEVEL

12

SNOW LEOPARD RANGE SPANS 12 COUNTRIES ACROSS 2 MILLION KM<sup>2</sup>

## Threats to the Snow Leopard

- 1 The capture and killing of snow leopards for the illegal wildlife market is a primary threat to the species' survival. Live snow leopards or their body parts can sell for thousands of US dollars; their distinctive fur is highly coveted and their bones are used in traditional Asian medicine.
- 2 Snow leopards are often killed by humans in retaliation for – or to prevent – preying on livestock, which increasingly populate snow leopard habitat.
- 3 Snow leopards are experiencing a loss of prey – primarily wild mountain sheep and goats – from both illegal and legal hunting by humans.

### POPULATION

There are believed to be between 4,500 and 10,000 snow leopards living in the wild today; the exact number is unknown as they are extremely elusive and challenging to survey. However, new research, including camera trapping, is starting to indicate there may be more cats than previously thought.

The snow leopard is listed as “Endangered” on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, but improved population estimates may indicate the species is “Vulnerable.”

### SAVING THE SNOW LEOPARD

Panthera currently leads or supports conservation activities in 5 of the 12 snow leopard range countries. Using new and improved techniques for monitoring low-density populations in remote rugged habitats, Panthera's Snow Leopard Program is collecting a wealth of data to better understand this enigmatic species and how best to protect it.

Program activities include conducting surveys, training national biologists, assessing threats, securing habitat, mitigating human-wildlife conflict by collaborating with local communities, and helping governments establish and implement National Snow Leopard Action Plans.

Panthera is rapidly expanding conservation efforts in China – where at least half of all wild snow leopards are thought to exist – to better address imminent threats to their survival.