



KEY SNOW LEOPARD FACTS

Known for its beautiful fur and elusive behavior, the endangered snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is found in the rugged mountains of Central and South Asia. The snow leopard's habitat extends through twelve countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Snow leopards are perfectly adapted to the cold, barren landscape of their high-altitude home, but human threats, including poaching, retaliation killing and the loss of habitat and prey have created an uncertain future for the cats. Despite a potential range of over 2 million km², experts estimate that there may only be between 3,920 and 6,390 snow leopards left in the wild. This number too, is at best a guesstimate since just about 2% of the snow leopard range has ever been sampled systematically to estimate their populations.

Snow Leopards are:

- Solo traveler: the snow leopard is usually solitary and highly elusive
- Crepuscular: dawn and dusk are the cat's most active times
- Living large: some snow leopards have home ranges of up to 1,000 square kilometers – larger than most protected areas in their range
- Cold and dry: the snow leopard primarily lives in arid, barren mountain areas
- Carnivorous: the cat's main prey are ibex, blue sheep, markhor, argali and other mountain herbivores.

Physical Features:

- Height: 55-65 cm (22 – 26 inches)
- Length (minus the tail): 90 – 115 cm (36 – 44 inches)
- Tail: ca. 100 cm (40 inches)

Interesting facts:

- Its extra-large paws keep the cat from sinking into the snow- like a pair of **natural snow shoes**.
- Its round, short ears **reduce heat loss**, and the wide, short nasal cavity warms the air before it reaches the cat's lungs.
- Its **extra-long tail** helps the cat keep its balance and provides extra warmth when it's wrapped around the body.
- The snow leopard has **soft, dense fur** that grows extra-thick during the winter to keep the cat's body warm.
- Snow leopards regularly patrol home ranges that can cover hundreds of square kilometers.
- Sometimes a male and female might be seen together during mating season, or we might see a mother with her young cubs.
- Once the cubs are about 2 years old, they begin to disperse from their mother and set out on their own.
- In order to communicate snow leopards leave markings at specific sites characterized by overhanging rocks, narrow canyons, or saddles on ridgelines that other cats can find.
- Snow leopards make sounds similar to those made by other large cats, including a purr, mew, hiss, growl, moan, and yowl. However, snow leopards cannot roar due to the physiology of their throat. Instead, they yowl.
- Snow leopards are not aggressive towards humans. There has never been a verified snow leopard attack on a human being. .

Behavior

- Snow leopards are shy, elusive cats known for their solitary nature.

