



# International Snow Leopard Day 2024

[Source: DTE](#)

## Why in News?

[International Snow Leopard Day](#) is every year celebrated on **23rd October, 2024**.

## International Snow Leopard Day

- It came into being in **2013**, following the adoption of the **Bishkek Declaration** in Kyrgyzstan where **12 countries** that host snow leopard populations agreed to **collaborate** in their **conservation efforts**.
  - **Countries Hosting Snow Leopards:** Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, **India**, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

## What are Facts About Snow Leopards?

- **About:** Snow leopards (**Panthera uncia**) are considered **medium-sized cats** that are known for their **elusive nature** and ability to thrive in **harsh, high-altitude environments**.
- **Habitat:** They are native to the mountains of **Central and South Asia** and typically found at elevations between **9,800 and 17,000 feet** in mountain ranges, including the **Himalayas**.
  - Population estimates range between **3,500 and 7,000 individuals** in the wild.
- **Adaptations:** They are known as "**ghosts of the mountains**" due to their elusive nature and ability to blend into their surroundings.
  - They possess **thick, greyish-white fur** that provides **camouflage** against snow and rocks.
- **Behaviour:** Snow leopards **do not roar**. They communicate through **growls, hisses, meows**, and a unique sound called a "**chuff**."
  - The animal is most active at **dawn and dusk**.
  - Like most species of cats, snow leopards are **solitary animals**.
- **Reproduction:** They usually mate between **January and March**, a time when both sexes **mark their territories** intensively leaving signs such as **scrapes, faeces, urine and scent-spray** in prominent locations along their travel routes.
- **Ecological Importance:** Serve as **top predators** and **Indicator species**, as their presence **reflects the health** of their **high-altitude ecosystems**.
  - Their kills provide **food for scavengers** like **vultures** and wolves, supporting other species.

## Snow Leopard Population in India

- As per the [Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India \(SPAI\) Program](#), the Snow leopard population is **718 individuals** in India.
  - The estimated population in different states are as follows: **Ladakh (477), Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51)**, Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9).
- The Government of India has identified the snow leopard as a **flagship species** for the **high-altitude Himalayas**.

- **Hemis National Park** in Ladakh is called the **Snow Leopard capital** of the world.

# Snow Leopard

*Panthera Uncia*

*Often referred to as the "ghost of the mountains"*

## HABITAT

- Mountainous regions of **Central and Southern Asia**
- **12** Range Countries
- In India:
  - **Western Himalayas:** Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh
  - **Eastern Himalayas:** Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh

## MAJOR SITES

- Hemis National Park, Ladakh
  - **Snow leopard capital of the world**
- Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh
- Gangotri National Park, Uttarakhand
- Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim

## PROTECTION STATUS

- **Vulnerable:** IUCN Red List
- **Appendix I:** CITES
- **Schedule I:** Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972

## CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme
- Himal Sanrakshak- Community Volunteer Programme
- Project Snow Leopard
- Snow Leopard Conservation Breeding Programme- Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, West Bengal



## THREATS

- Human Snow Leopard Conflict
- Climate Change
- Loss of Prey and Habitat
- Poaching



**UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

**Q. Consider the following statements: (2024)**

1. Lions do not have a particular breeding season.
2. Unlike most other big cats, cheetahs do not roar.
3. Unlike male lions, male leopards do not proclaim their territory by scent marking.

**Which of the statements given above are correct 2**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 2

**Ans: (a)**

**Q.Consider the following: (2012)**

1. Black-necked crane
2. Cheetah
3. Flying squirrel
4. Snow leopard

**Which of the above are naturally found in India?**

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans: (b)**