



Uttarakhand: Home to 2nd Largest Snow Leopard Population

Why in News?

According to the **Snow Leopards Population Assessment in India (SPAI)**, Uttarakhand has documented a notable population of **124 snow leopards**, securing the **second position after Ladakh, which boasts 477**.

Key Points

- The recently released report, titled '**Status of Snow Leopard in India**', represents the **first-ever scientific effort estimating** the presence of **718 snow leopards in [the Indian Himalayan territories](#)**.
- A team at the **[Wildlife Institute of India \(WII\)](#)**, conducted a comprehensive scientific assessment, highlighting **[Gangotri National Park](#)** as a pivotal area for conservation.
- According to authorities, **[Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve](#)** has also emerged as a promising habitat for snow leopards.
- **The survey spanned six snow leopard range states** with Himachal Pradesh leading with 51 elusive cats, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9), resulting in a total of 718 across these states.

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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

THREATS

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

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



Gangotri National Park

- It was **established in 1989** and is situated in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand in the upper catchment of **Bhagirathi River**.
- **Gaumukh at Gangotri glacier**, the origin of river Ganga, is located inside the park.
- The park area forms a viable continuity between **Govind National Park and Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- **Flora:** The park is enveloped by dense coniferous forests that are mostly temperate. Chirpine, deodar, fir, spruce, oak and rhododendron are the common vegetation.
- **Fauna:** Various rare and endangered species like **bharal or blue sheep, black bear, brown bear, himalayan monal, himalayan snowcock, himalayan tahr, musk deer and snow leopard** are found in the park.

The Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve

- It was **established in 1988** and was **declared a [UNESCO World Heritage site](https://www.unesco.org/en/whl/1988) 1988**. The reserve is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including several endangered species such as the **snow leopard, Asiatic black bear, Himalayan musk deer, and blue sheep**.
- The reserve is also known for its rich cultural heritage and is home to several indigenous communities such as the **Bhotiyas and the Joharis**. These communities have been living in the area for centuries and have developed a unique way of life that is closely tied to the natural environment.

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