



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)