

Endangered Wildlife

Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia* syn. *Uncia uncia*)



- The carnivorous (meat eating) Snow Leopard is a large cat well adapted to its environment in the mountain ranges of central and south Asia.
- They are very rarely seen as they inhabit harsh terrain at an altitude of 3,000 to 4,500 metres and with an extreme climate. Their population is also spread across 12 different countries and a range of over two million square kilometres.
- The Snow Leopard has round short ears, extra-large paws, a long thick tail and soft dense fur. The fur is white, yellowish and smoky grey, speckled with dark-grey to black spots, which helps the animal blend into its natural surroundings.
- The animal, on average, is just over a metre in length with its tail only slightly shorter.
- Its short front limbs and long hind legs can launch the cat up to nine metres in a single leap.
- The Snow Leopard is listed as Endangered on the IUCN List of Threatened Species. It is estimated that there are currently between 4,000 and 6,500 left in the wild with this population declining.
- In the past 20, years Snow Leopard populations have declined by at least 20 per cent.
- Humans are responsible for the Snow Leopard's decline. Poachers hunt them for their spotted pelts (skin/fur) and their body parts which are used in traditional medicine. They are also killed by farmers who believe Snow Leopards prey on their herd animals.



Snow Leopard range



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What is being done?

A global breeding program has been established to help save the species. There are approximately 600 Snow Leopards in zoos around the world. The Australasian region contributes to the International Snow Leopard Trust and animals are currently housed at Melbourne Zoo and three privately owned zoos: National Zoo (Canberra), Mogo Zoo and Billabong Koala Wildlife Park (both in NSW). Cubs have been born at Mogo, Melbourne and Taronga (Taronga's breeding pair of Snow Leopards were moved to Billabong in 2015).

