

SNOW LEOPARDS

Panthera uncia

Known throughout the world for its beautiful fur & elusive behaviour, the endangered Snow Leopard is found in the rugged mountains of Central Asia. Snow leopards are perfectly adapted to the cold, barren landscape of their high-altitude home. Because of their huge territory range they have to cope with temperatures ranging from -40° Centigrade to $+40^{\circ}$ C.

DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT

The Snow Leopard's habitat extends through twelve countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, & Uzbekistan. Snow Leopards prefer the broken terrain of cliffs, rocky outcrops & ravines. This type of habitat provides good cover & clear views to help them find prey & sneak up on it.

DIET

The 3 most important prey species for Snow Leopards are the blue sheep (also known as Bharal), the Asiatic ibex (a large wild goat) & the Argali (another wild sheep species).

LIFE EXPECTANCY & BREEDING

Life in the wild is harsh & life expectancy is around 10 to 12 years. In captivity Snow Leopards have been known to live for as long as 22 years. They mate in winter & cubs are born in spring. The female is typically pregnant



for 93-110 days before retiring to a sheltered den site & giving birth to her cubs (usually 2 or 3). The diligent mother raises her offspring alone, providing food & shelter for her cubs.

CONSERVATION STATUS

ENDANGERED (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) Despite a range of over 2 million square kilometres, scientists estimate there maybe less than 4,000 Snow Leopards in the wild.

