

# Snow Leopard

*Panthera uncia*



**Class:** *Mammalia*

**Order:** *Carnivora*

**Family:** *Felidae*

## Characteristics:

The snow leopard is well adapted to its alpine and sub-alpine environment. Its paws are large, effectively acting as snow shoes. Its coat is thick year round with some hairs being 5 inches long. Its nose and sinuses are arranged so that the air is warmed before passing into its lungs. The pattern of its coat often matches the grey colors of the Himalayan landscape. Its tail and legs are well adapted for scaling high rocky cliffs. The tail is long so as to help the snow leopard achieve better balance. The hind legs are longer than its front legs, making it possible for snow leopards to jump 30 feet into the air (Snow Leopard Trust).

## Behavior:

Snow Leopards are reclusive, often living on their own except for during the breeding season. Because they are so elusive, it's hard to know the exact number of Snow Leopards left in the wild. The easiest time to spot them is when they are most active, which is around sunset and sunrise. The altitude at which these cats can be found depends upon the location of its prey, meaning they will be high in the mountains during the summer and lower during the winter (Snow Leopard Trust).

## Reproduction:

Snow Leopards come together to breed from January to March. The male will stay with the female for about a week before going out on his own again. After a gestation period of 93 -110 days, litter size ranges from 1 to 5 (but usually 2 to 3). Cubs will stay with mom for 18 to 22 months.

## Diet:

Wild: Opportunistic hunters: goats, birds, mice, and pika (Schaller et al. 1988).

Zoo: Feline diet, varying meats, bones

## Conservation:

Snow leopards are an endangered species. The main reason for their decline is human activity such as poaching, retribution killings, loss of habitat, and insufficient resources to enforce Snow Leopard Protection (Fading Footprints).

## FYI

- Snow Leopard have a call that sounds like they are yelling, "Help!"



## **Range & Habitat:**

Rugged mountains near cliffs, slopes and rocky outcroppings in Northern China, Kazakhstan and Mongolia



Orange: definite range  
Yellow: Probable range (IUCN)

**Lifespan:** Wild: 10 to 13 years

Captive: 22 years

**Special Adaptations:** Thick fur, large paws, long tail make it perfectly adapted to harsh, cold environments

**IUCN Conservation Status:**

Endangered

