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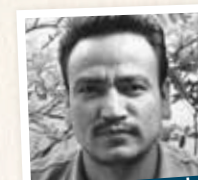


At a ceremony attended by representatives from Nepal's Shey Phoksundo National Park, the Nepalese army and Jagadulla Rural Municipality, a women's cooperative group was presented with a computer provided by WWF. The hardware will help the group teach financial literacy and other skills to the local community



# Hello!

## Welcome to your latest snow leopard update



**Chandra Jung Hamal,** research and field programme officer, WWF-Nepal

Nepal's Shey Phoksundo National Park is a snow leopard stronghold – and home to thousands of people. These mountain communities are the guardians of the

landscape, and it's vital we support them through our conservation efforts. Thanks to you, we've donated a computer to assist a women's conservation committee in their work, and enhance their digital literacy skills. We've also provided solar energy to 36 households in Ku village – one of the Himalayas' most remote settlements and a snow leopard hotspot. Turn over to read how we've helped achieve a key milestone in protecting these magnificent cats across the border in India. **Pheri bhetaula!**

*(This means 'see you again' in Nepali!)*

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## FIELD NOTES

India is home to 10-15% of the global snow leopard population

# COUNTING GHOSTS

### With your help, India has surveyed its snow leopard population for the first time

**E**lusive by nature and inhabiting the remote, lofty peaks of central and south Asia, the snow leopard is famously mysterious. It's the least-studied big cat in the world, and research projects have so far covered only 22% of its global range. While the northern reaches of India were known to be home to this secretive feline, just how many cats roamed the country remained a mystery.

For the first time, a rigorous population survey has now been carried out across all potential snow leopard habitat in India. And, at last, we know that more than 700 individuals live within the country's

borders – that's roughly 10-15% of the global population.

The survey was an enormous undertaking. Dedicated survey teams, with technical support from WWF-India, trekked across 13,450km of rugged terrain – equivalent to three times round the England Coast Path – to record signs of snow leopards and set up camera traps. Photographs from across 1,971 locations documented 241 individual leopards, but evidence including fur and faeces brought the population estimate up to 718.

Almost five years in the making, the groundbreaking survey was part of the Population Assessment of the World's

A snow leopard's home range varies from 200 to 2,000 sq km



Finding prey species can help guide the search for snow leopards

Looking for prey



Local community volunteers, known as Himal Rakshaks, played a huge part in the survey



The teams trekked more than 13,000km

Covering new ground!

Snow Leopards (PAWS for short), a global effort to robustly estimate the total population. India joins Bhutan and Mongolia as one of the first countries to achieve this milestone.

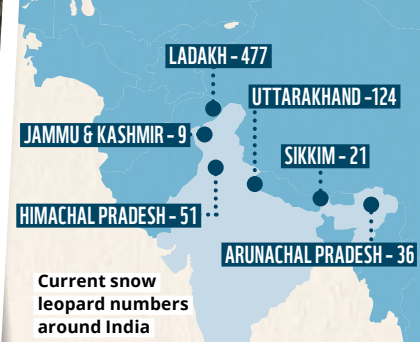
Understanding where snow leopards are found and

how many there are – and assessing the abundance of their natural prey – is vital for developing conservation strategies to combat threats such as habitat loss, poaching and conflict with local communities. And by establishing a baseline population against which we can monitor numbers in the future, we can identify which of our efforts are working best and how the species is coping with ever-changing threats.

But this isn't just good news for snow leopards. As apex predators at the top of the food chain, these big cats act as indicators of the health of their high-altitude habitat. By monitoring them, we can identify emerging pressures and understand the impacts of climate change on this delicately balanced ecosystem.

Thanks to you, we've taken a major leap in understanding the world of these vulnerable big cats. It's just one piece of the snow leopard puzzle, but it's a significant step towards working out how to best protect them.

## Chandra



## MARMOT MUNCHIES

In Nepal's eastern Dolpa region, a snow leopard carrying a freshly killed Himalayan marmot has been filmed on a camera trap – the first time it's been recorded here.

Marmots are rodents the size of a domestic cat, and hibernate for up to eight months. When they emerge in spring, they're a crucial snack for snow leopards, thought to make up nearly a fifth of their diet. Local herders report fewer attacks on livestock when marmots are abundant.

These burrowing rodents are also vital to the health of alpine meadows. Their digging aerates the soil and encourages grasses that feed the wild sheep and goats that snow leopards eat – and the livestock that support local people.

This snow leopard caught a snack



Marmot