

Bhutan Survey: first snow leopard population count in Bhutan.



Results are in from Bhutan's first ever snow leopard population survey in WCNP, which trained park staff who eventually worked for the national snow leopard survey in the country.

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Snow Leopard Day: celebrations across six countries



October 23 marked the third annual Snow Leopard Day and spurred festivities across the range to promote protection of the cat and its precious habitat.

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Social Media: project stories in social media



Select highlights from social media coverage of USAID/WWF activities across the snow leopard range.

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Participatory Art Event: high participation at event held in Kathmandu



People from all walks of life came to Patan Durbar Square for a USAID/WWF Nepal participatory art event on Snow Leopard Day.

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UPDATE FROM NEW YORK

Snow Leopard Day at the UN Headquarters

By Matthias Fiechter, Snow Leopard Trust

To mark International Snow Leopard Day, the Permanent Mission of the Kyrgyz Republic and UNDP invited conservationists and other interested parties to a high-level panel discussion on Snow Leopard and High Mountain Ecosystem Conservation at the United Nations' Headquarters in New York City.

The event was opened by Ms. Adriana Dinu, Executive Coordinator, UNDP - Global Environment Finance, and Mr. Adylkalyk Rustamov, Director of the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Rustamov thanked attendees for their interest in snow leopard conservation, highlighting the role of this endangered cat as an ambassador of Central Asia's mountain ecosystems. He also stressed the importance of integrating climate-smart conservation efforts with the interests and needs of the local communities who share the snow leopard's habitat - a point that was shared by Peter Zahler, coordinator of WCS's snow leopard program.

WWF shared other innovative community-based conservation approaches, such as a recent drive to trade steel jaw traps for useful household goods, initiated by local children in Mongolia's



Mr. Adylkalyk Rustamov, Director of the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic, and Ms. Adriana Dinu, Executive Coordinator, UNDP - Global Environment Finance at the meeting.

Results from Bhutan's first ever snow leopard population survey in WCNP

To mark Bhutan's National Snow Leopard Day celebration, the results of the first ever effort to count snow leopards in Bhutan's largest protected area was released. This survey was conducted in Wangchuk Centennial National Park (WCNP) over a three-year period and consisted of snow leopard camera trapping, sign surveys, and prey species counts. Survey results confirmed the presence of 14 adult snow leopards in areas of the park that were surveyed. This landmark survey was led by WWF in partnership with the staff of Wangchuck Centennial National Park and Bhutan's Department of Forest and Park Services.

Through this effort, a robust methodology for monitoring snow leopards in Bhutan was developed and a core team of Bhutanese field researchers were trained who played an instrumental role in leading Bhutan's subsequent national snow leopard survey. Funding for this survey was provided by the USAID-funded WWF Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountains Project, Robert and Mary Litterman, the Jeremy and Hannelore Grantham Environmental Trust, and the Cornelia and Michael Bessie Foundation.

A report of the survey is now available online.

(Continued)

Altai Mountains, as part of the USAID supported Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountains program.

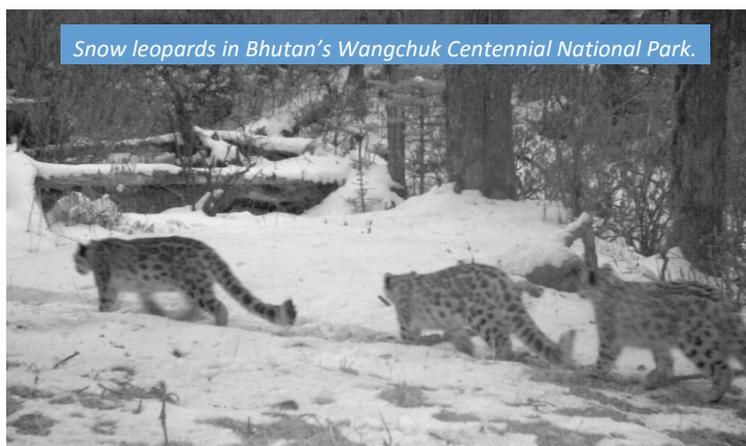
Midori Paxton, Head of Biodiversity at UNDP, spoke of the close linkages between snow leopard conservation, and the United Nations development goals. "The snow leopard is not just an icon of Central Asia's mountain ecosystems. A healthy snow leopard population is also a very good indicator of healthy ecosystems - and thus of sustainable development per se."

At the event, UNDP and the Government of Kyrgyzstan announced a GEF financed Transboundary Cooperation for Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation project. The four-year UNDP project, funded with US\$ 1 million from the GEF and \$US 4.196 million in co-financing will be implemented by the Snow Leopard Trust to strengthen global trans-boundary efforts to conserve snow leopards and their high mountain ecosystems.

"The project results will be relevant not only for snow leopard and high-mountain communities in Central Asia, and for the protection of these magnificent species, but also for all 12 snow leopard range countries who have committed to the objectives of the GSLEP programme," stated Magdy Martínez-Solimán, UN Assistant Secretary General and Director of UNDP's Bureau for Policy and Programme Support.

A publication titled 'Silent Roar: The UNDP and GEF in the Snow Leopard Landscape' was also launched at the event. It gives an overview of several on-going and upcoming projects supported by GEF and UNDP across the snow leopard range.

Mr. Rustamov extended an invitation to all participants to join him in Kyrgyzstan in 2017 for a proposed snow leopard conservation summit, before the panel discussion was closed by Mr. Zhaparkul Raimbekov, an elder from Kyrgyzstan, who chanted a traditional blessing that invoked the inherent value and dignity of the snow leopard.





Snow Leopard Day celebrations in full swing in the village of Ak Shyrak in Kyrgyzstan.

Across the Range

Snow Leopard Day

Mountain communities in AHM project countries celebrated the snow leopard with various awareness events. In the Kyrgyz Republic, residents of three mountain villages bordering the Sarychat Ertash State Nature Reserve enthusiastically participated in a series of contests that included singing songs about the snow leopard and nature's treasures, a puppet show narrating emotional tales that warned against poaching, snow leopard themed dance numbers, and a drawing competition to draw a snow leopard blindfolded. Participants ranged from toddlers to seniors, with the all three villages in a close competition for first place.

Similarly, in India, remote communities in North Sikkim came together for a program organized with the participation of local authorities, Forest Department field staff, community representatives, and students wherein they were made aware of the distribution of snow leopards and key conservation challenges in North Sikkim through a photo presentation and discussions. Children in Bhutan participated in art competitions, and other awareness events. By advocating for the need to preserve snow leopards in their speech, song, dance, and art, communities' Snow Leopard Day celebrations are helping shape a better future for snow leopards.

A poster advertising Snow Leopard Day celebrations in Nepal.



In Social Media...

Participatory Art: Lend a Hand for the Snow Leopard

WWF Nepal

on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/wwfnepal/videos/vb.294611720558716/1318209661532245/?type=3&theater>

Snow Leopard Day: Celebrating Snow Leopards

USAID Nepal

on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/USAIDNepal/photos/a.133202276729989.50640.122462567803960/1288332037883668/?type=3&theater>

Ten Snow Leopard Facts

WWF US

on Facebook

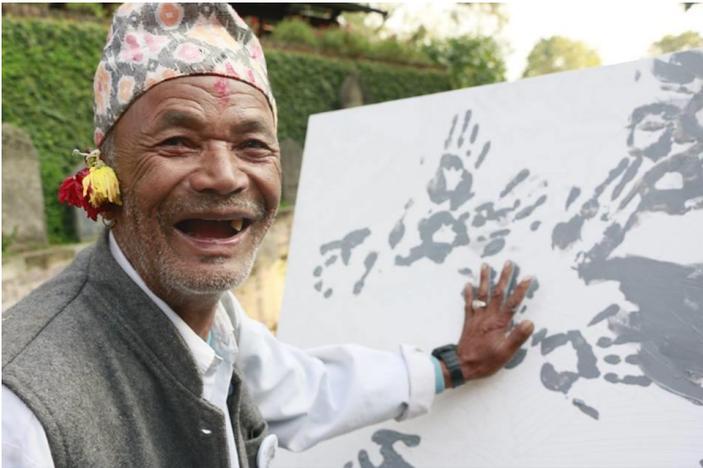
<https://www.facebook.com/worldwildlifefund/posts/10154208903949794>

Snow Leopard Research in Bhutan

WWF US

on Twitter

https://twitter.com/World_Wildlife/status/790197351126274048



Above: A local resident contributes his handprints at the participatory art event.

Below: The final artwork is revealed.



Lend a Hand for the Snow Leopard

Participatory Art Event Held in Nepal

WWF Nepal joined the global celebration of International Snow Leopard Day by organizing a participatory art event in Patan’s historic Durbar Square. The awareness event, organized under the theme “Lend a Hand for the Snow Leopard,” saw participation of people from all walks of life who came together to contribute their hand prints to paint a stunning panel portrait of a snow leopard on four canvases to symbolize their solidarity with this elusive cat.

“Nepal has been leading the way in snow leopard conservation, pioneering new approaches that have become global models for the conservation of the snow leopard and high mountain ecosystems,” said Dr. Ghana S. Gurung, Sr. Conservation Program Director at WWF Nepal. “We will continue to build on our work with local communities by increasing capacity and awareness to lead conservation efforts for protecting the snow leopard.”

In Nepal, WWF and government partners have fitted three snow leopards with GPS tracking collars in the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area, revealing new insights into the snow leopard’s transboundary habitat and ecology. Innovative conservation activities have transformed herding communities in the mountains from being enemies of the snow leopard to its protectors. And the country is currently working on an ambitious GSLEP landscape management plan to ensure snow leopards and their wild prey can thrive, along with the people who reside in Asia’s magnificent high mountains.

“We are glad to be a part of this important effort to save the endangered snow leopard and its beautiful home,” said Dr. Karl Wurster, Environment and Energy Team Leader at USAID-Nepal. “Being part of this unique event with the active support of people for the snow leopard has given us hope for the continued success of conservation efforts in Nepal, and elsewhere.”

This awareness event was organized by WWF Nepal, as part of the USAID-funded WWF Conservation and Adaptation in Asia’s High Mountains (AHM) Project.

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