



# Conservation & Adaptation in Asia's High Mountains



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[worldwildlife.org/AHM](http://worldwildlife.org/AHM)

## Lessons from Mongolia: share knowledge regionally



A snow leopard expert from within the region trained staff in Mongolia on the latest techniques and technologies for estimating snow leopard populations.

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## Snow Leopard Day: activation across six countries



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

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## In the Press: the project garners coverage globally



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

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## The Ghost of the Mountains: documentary debuts in DC, Nepal



Film screenings help raise awareness of snow leopard conservation and the communities that are at the heart of the WWF/USAID projects in Asia's high mountains.

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## UPDATE FROM PARIS

### *Snow Leopard Conservation and Climate Adaptation at COP21*

Written by Matthias Fiechter, Snow Leopard Trust

The Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP), a joint initiative by all 12 Central and South Asian that are home to this endangered big cat, held a meeting in Paris on Monday, December 7 as part of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21). A main focus of the meeting was on the impacts of climate change on snow leopards, their ecosystems and the livelihoods of local villagers residing in snow leopard habitat.

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From left to right: Mr. Hairullo Ibodzoda, Head, State Committee on Environmental Protection, Tajikistan; Mr. Sabir Atadjanov, Director, Kyrgyz State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry, with his translator; and, Mr. Zahid Hamid, Minister for Climate Change, Pakistan

## (Continued)

In his opening address, Mr. Zahid Hamid, Minister for Climate Change of Pakistan and chair of the GSLEP steering committee, called the snow leopard a 'thermometer of the health of the mountain ecosystems', setting the stage for a discussion about linking community-based snow leopard conservation with efforts to improve climate adaptation capacity in this ecologically fragile region.

WWF's John Farrington updated attendees on how the current, rapid warming in the snow leopard's range is affecting glaciers, permafrost, precipitation, water resources, and weather phenomena, which in turn have large consequences for ecosystems, wildlife, and human livelihoods in these areas. He noted that glaciers in snow leopard range areas were already in retreat, particularly in the southern and eastern range areas.

With a mandate to secure at least 20 landscapes for snow leopards by the year 2020, the GSLEP program is currently in its management-planning phase, where countries specify concrete steps to be taken in order to secure the landscapes they've identified as priority areas.

Dr. Koustubh Sharma of the GSLEP Secretariat briefly outlined this process at the Paris meeting, presenting a set of Management Planning Guidelines designed to help countries with developing their plans.

An audience member, Ms. Zuhra Abaihanova of the Climate Change Centre of the Kyrgyz Republic, pointed out that these Management Planning Guidelines lacked explicit mention of climate change issues and adaptation. Following her suggestion, it was recommended that the Secretariat work with teams from partner organizations to include climate change related assessments and planning in the Management Planning Guidelines.

During the meeting, delegates and experts repeatedly highlighted the close link between the fate of the snow leopard and the future of the mountain communities who share the cat's habitat. It was only fitting then that Mr. Hamid and his co-chair, Mr. Sabir Atadjanov, Director of the Kyrgyz State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry, closed the meeting by reiterating that "the mountain-dwelling villagers will remain at the center of all conservation efforts."

## Lessons from Mongolia

*Regional experts share knowledge, technology across snow leopard range*

WWF snow leopard expert Rinjan Shrestha travelled to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in November to train Mongolian scientists on animal population data analyses as part of the Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountains (AHM) project. Participants, who represented WWF-Mongolia as well as government agencies such as National Park Services, learned how to employ cutting-edge computer programs to estimate snow leopard population size and density using capture-mark-recapture models. They also received manuals to use for reference.



The participants now have the knowledge and skills necessary to work independently and advance snow leopard research throughout Mongolia. Regional cross-fertilization and local experts helping local experts are core tenants of the AHM project.





In Kyrgyzstan, communities celebrated snow leopard day through dances and festivals.

## Across the Range

# Snow Leopard Day

On October 23, 2013, the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The delegates included high-level representatives of all 12 snow leopard range country governments, who came together for the first time to make a formal declaration to focus on snow leopard conservation, and to adopt the Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Plan (GSLEP), an ambitious, unified plan to protect the endangered cat and its habitat. It was also agreed this date would be celebrated hereafter as International Snow Leopard Day.

Two years later, Snow Leopard Day garnered attention across all AHM landscapes through various local activities, including community fairs, school events, social and traditional media, and releasing important scientific findings. As an example, WWF-Mongolia launched a short film entitled “The Spirit of the Mountain,” which was based on a true story about human-snow leopard conflict. During the launch festivities, more than two thousand people—including high-ranking members of the government—watched the film and participated in other conservation activities across the Altai-Sayan ecoregion and in Ulaanbaatar city.



Snow Leopard Day activities ranged from contests in schools in Bhutan (left) to the launch of *The Spirit of the Mountain* in Mongolia (right)

## In the Press...

### At the Top of the World

*World Wildlife*

By Andy Isaacson | Winter 2015

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/winter-2015/articles/at-the-top-of-the-world>

### Snow Leopards Caught on Camera: Photo Feature

*Discovery.com*

By Jennifer Viegas | Oct. 22, 2015

<http://news.discovery.com/animals/endangered-species/snow-leopards-caught-on-camera-photos-151022.htm>

### Climate Change Threatens Snow Leopards Habitats

*i4u.com*

By Sumayah Aamir | Oct. 26, 2015

<http://www.i4u.com/2015/10/96040/climate-change-threatens-snow-leopards-habitats>

### Why Snow Leopards are in Trouble

*CNN.com*

By Barney Long and Brad Rutherford | Nov. 13, 2015

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/13/opinions/long-rutherford-snow-leopards>



Left to right: Mr. Andrey Kushlin, World Bank; Mr. Shubash Lohani, WWF; Mr. Kailash Raj Pokharel, Embassy of Nepal; Mr. Jerry Bisson, USAID; Ms. Aakriti Khanal, Embassy of Nepal; Mr. Tom Dillon, WWF; Mr. Samir Jung Thapa, Clikman Productions; Mr. Matt Erke, WWF

## The Ghost of the Mountains Snow Leopard Documentary Debuts

The Embassy of Nepal and WWF co-hosted an event in November 2015 to screen a compelling 24-minute documentary directed by Samir Jung Thapa, a Nepalese filmmaker, titled 'The Ghost of the Mountains'. This film tells the story of a team of Nepali scientists, local community members, and conservationists who work together to place a satellite collar on a snow leopard in Kangchenjunga Conservation Area. The film provides a glimpse into the hidden world where snow leopards live, illustrates the challenges and opportunities related to protecting and securing snow leopard populations in Nepal, and shows the importance of applying science to save snow leopards.

This special screening was followed by a discussion with USAID, WWF, and the Government of Nepal about the connection between snow leopards, mountain livelihoods, and climate change impacts. The discussion highlighted how WWF and partners, with support from USAID, are working to better understand and address the impacts of climate change on this extraordinary species. This event highlighted the important and longstanding partnership between USAID, the Government of Nepal, and WWF, as well as USAID's support for the AHM project and its relevance to development.

The following month, in December 2015, 'The Ghost of the Mountains' was shown for the first time in Nepal. Part of an annual multi-day film festival, the premiere was organized in association with the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival. The event was very well attended, with not a seat open in the auditorium. University-age students in the audience, many of which are a part of The Generation Green Campaign, sat two to a stair to watch this groundbreaking film and to participate in the discussion. The premiere at the Kathmandu International Film Festival provided an excellent platform to showcase important interventions of the AHM Project, as well as to advance conservation among the next generation of environmental leaders in Nepal.

Similarly, a Mongolian documentary is currently on a domestic tour at schools and community centers as part of the AHM project.



### The Ghost of the Mountains



*Newsletter Photo Credits: Page 1: computer training in Mongolia, ©WWF-Mongolia/Munkhnast Dalanast; girl dressed up for Snow Leopard Day, ©WWF-Kyrgyzstan; media coverage of The Spirit of the Mountain launch, ©WWF-Mongolia; cover image for The Ghost of the Mountain dvd, ©Morten Koldby/WWF-US; event space at COP21, ©WWF. Page 2: speakers at the GSLEP event at COP21, ©Snow Leopard Trust; participants in the training in Mongolia, ©WWF-Mongolia/Munkhnast Dalanast. Page 3: community-based Snow Leopard Day celebration, ©WWF-Kyrgyzstan; student drawing, ©WWF-Bhutan; audience at film launch, ©WWF-Mongolia. Page 4: Key participants of DC screening, ©WWF-US; dvd cover and invitation imagery, ©Morten Koldby/WWF-US*