



SNOW LEOPARD (*Panthera uncia*)

Family: Felidae **Order:** Carnivora

Range: Alpine steppe and open coniferous forest in mountains (900 to 5500 m) of central Asia.

Diet: Blue sheep, alpine ibex, goats, deer, boar, yak, marmots, polkas and domestic livestock.

Status: Critically endangered with only 5,000 surviving in the wild. Although protected in many areas, expanded use of mountain pastures by people and livestock, and poaching for fur, bones and other body parts used in local medicines, are decimating populations.

Behavior: In the wild, the Snow Leopard is solitary, leaving about a 1-km-wide border between adjacent home ranges. Depending on the food resources of the area, the home range may vary from 20 to 1,000 km². Prey is ambushed at speeds up to 60 km/hr when it is about 35 metres away. The Snow Leopard overcomes their prey with a powerful bite to the neck or by strangulation.

The males and females come together in January and February for courtship and



Snow Leopard home ranges are found in 12 Central Asian countries:

- Afghanistan**
- Bhutan**
- China**
- India**
- Kazakhstan**
- Kyrgyzstan**
- Mongolia**
- Nepal**
- Pakistan**
- Russia**
- Tajikistan**
- Uzbekistan**

mating. Gestation period is 90 to 130 days. One to five cubs, weighing 450 g to 1 lb., are born in the spring in a rocky shelter, lined with the mother's fur. They remain with their mothers for almost two years. At full growth a male weighs about 50 kg and the females 40 kg.

Snow Leopards are well adapted to their home in cold mountainous regions. Their metre-long tails assist with balance while running and jumping on rough ground, and they can leap a distance of 6 m and a height of 3 m. A thick fur coat keeps them warm in temperatures as low as -40°C, yet this elusive big cat can survive summer temperatures as high as 40°C.

