



FACTSHEET

PAK

2014

## Species

# Common Leopard Conservation Project



**Donor:** Human Welfare and Nature Conservation Society

**Duration:** January 2012 - October 2014

The common leopard is associated with moist temperate, mixed deciduous and coniferous forests. Historically, four sub-species of the leopard have been listed in the mammals of Pakistan. However, it is difficult to differentiate between the sub-species as leopards are restricted to northern Pakistan and other areas have occasional reports of vagrant leopards.

According to the Conservation and Assessment Management Plan (CAMP) conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) the common leopard is *endangered* in Pakistan. The northern parts of Pakistan including the Margalla Hills, Murree, Ayubia and Thandani, Azad Jammu and Kashmir are the last stronghold of the species. The common leopard is a top predator and helps in maintaining populations of other animals by consuming sick or otherwise unfit animals.

The project works to conserve the common leopard in Pakistan according to the following strategies:

### Identification of leopard trails

At the beginning of the project, regular leopard trails were identified and mapped and a regular itinerary followed to track the movement of the animal and collect scats for DNA and food habit analysis.

### Scat analysis for food habits and population

Leopard scats were collected from different selected tracks and sent for DNA analysis to Italy. The DNA analysis will give information on the number of animals and the ratio of males to females.



Preliminary analysis has provided information on the food habits of leopards which confirm that the predominant food source is domestic animals while wildlife species such as foxes, civet, marten, wild boards, galliforms, and rhesus monkeys also constitute about 40 per cent of their diet.

### Common leopard tagged with radio collar

The key achievement for the project has been the collaring of a common leopard for the first time in Pakistan. A GPS collar was fixed on an adult male leopard in Baragali, Abbottabad district, in close collaboration with the Khyber Paktunkhwa Wildlife Department in cage designing, track selection for cage installation and release point selection after collaring. The animal was tranquilised by the staff of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department before collar fitting.

The collar regularly transmits data and GPS/GSM data from the collared animal is received. This data is then processed and analyzed in the WWF-Pakistan GIS lab. The total area covered by the leopard has helped determine the home range of this particular animal to be 40 km<sup>2</sup>. Recent photographs taken through camera traps also show that the animal is in good health.

### Camera trap findings

The project acquired six camera traps to monitor the of movement of the common leopard and also to assess the number of individuals. This is the first time that camera traps have been used to study this species in Pakistan. Camera traps were installed on selected tracks where the collared leopard was captured on camera three days before trapping.

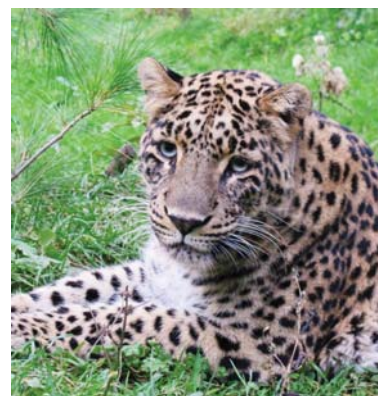
The traps have also helped in recording various other species in the Ayubia National Park (ANP) such as foxes, porcupines, yellow throated marten, civet, and pheasants.

### Livestock Management

The project conducted a survey in villages around the national park to access livestock losses. Results showed that losses per year due to leopard killings were far less than losses due to diseases. However, leopards are perceived as a greater threat than diseases and there is a need to change this. The majority of the local community is poor and is highly dependent on their livestock. Therefore, proper management can help in reducing the human-leopard conflict and interactive community awareness raising sessions are organized to promote improved livestock management practices around ANP.

### Awareness and Education

The project's community initiatives include awareness raising sessions for students, livestock deworming campaigns, and livestock management training sessions. Signboards, in English and Urdu, were installed on the pipeline track and Lalazar track to display key information on the biodiversity of ANP. A storybook was also developed in Urdu for students and distributed in schools to provide students with a perspective of the leopard to help communities understand the animal's behaviour.



### WWF-Pakistan Species Goal

To conserve the minimum viable populations of selected indigenous, endemic and/or keystone species.



All photos © Common Leopard Conservation Project / WWF-Pakistan

### Threats

- Habitat degradation (timber, fuelwood, unruly development, solid waste and pollution etc.)
- Encroachments on protected forest areas
- Alarming decrease in the leopard's natural prey base
- Conflicts between humans and leopards with increasing depredation on both livestock and humans that lead to retaliatory killing by livestock owners and communities
- Poaching, removal of cubs by animal dealers and trade of body parts, pelts in particular
- Non-existent policy framework to compensate or support livestock owners for the long term survival of the common leopard and/or other carnivore species (snow leopard, Eurasian lynx, Asiatic wolf, etc.) in general