

Student Essay on Snow Leopards

Snow Leopards

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Essay

The Endangered Snow Leopards

The snow leopard is an endangered and threatened animal of the wild. This large to medium-size cat is apart of the Animalia kingdom. It's main difference from most large cats like it is, that they cannot roar which places them in the *Uncia Uncia* genus. These felines can weight between about 60 to 120 pounds. Snow leopards live in some of the most remote habitat in the world. They call the Himalayan Mountains home, from Myanmar moving west through China, Nepal, India, Pakistan and back east again through Kazakstan, Mongolia and the Gobi Desert. Total area of distribution is about 1,900,000 square kilometers. Estimates run from 6,000 to 14,000 snow leopards left in the wild. It is very difficult to get a good estimates of how many snow leopards are left in the wild because of the large area they can be found and the remoteness of that same area.

Currently the scientific community believes there are only one sub-species of snow leopard. In the most simple type of classification the snow leopards are one of three cats that biologist have a difficult time classifying the genera as a big cat or small cat. The big cats are considered *Panthera* and the small cats *Felis*. The snow leopard does not fit very well in either classification and are classified *Uncia*.

The snow leopard primary prey species are the sheep and goat native to the reign, (blue sheep, ibex, markhor, and argali). They have also been know to prey on the smaller mammals and birds in the area.

Snow leopards are listed in CITES as Appendix 1 animals. They are protected over most of their range but are still killed by sheep ranchers because of the losses snow leopards inflect on livestock. The Snow Leopard Stewardship Project was developed to address those predator-livestock issues. Visit our friends at the Snow Leopard Conservancy for more information.