



SHAN

This summer has seen SLC-IT work in different projects, participate in festivals and workshops. Right from on-going snow leopard monitoring programs in Western Ladakh, to strengthening of homestay program in the Zaskar Valley, to celebrating wildlife week and on-going education programs. Its been a exciting summer for us up in the mountains with the snow leopards!



Snow Leopard Captured

SLC-IT also started with new initiatives in Leh with Snow Leopards Corner and Snow Leopard Treks. Read on the know more about the SLC-IT work in high mountains of Ladakh.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to thank the Department of Wildlife Protection (J&K), Animal Husbandry Department (J&K), Education Department (J&K) and Tourism Department (J&K). Our program partners Panthera, International Snow Leopard Trust, Snow Leopard Conservancy (USA), NABARD, Kalpavriksh, Rufford Small Grants, WWF-India, Create Foundation, Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI), INTACH, Nature Conservation Foundation, PAGIR, Eco-Sphere, Wildlife Conservation Network, Mountain Initiatives, Friends of Lingshed, Druk Padma Karpo, Australian Himalayan Foundation and Islamia Public School.

IN THIS EDITION

- Camera Trapping on Snow Leopards
- Community Conservation Initiatives
- Environmental Education
- High-Altitude Festivals
- Workshop and Training
- The Gyalwang Drukpa Award
- Snow Leopards Corner
- Snow Leopard Treks

MISSION

Since its inception in 2000, the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust (SLC-IT) has been dedicated to promoting community based stewardship of the endangered snow leopard, its prey and habitat to the benefit of local people and the environment in the trans-Himalayan regions of Ladakh and Zaskar.



REMOTE CAMERA TRAP SURVEY IN WESTERN LADAKH

Period: In the period May-July 2011 a team of Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust (SLC-IT) along with its partners conducted a Snow Leopard population estimation survey based on remote camera traps captures and identification of separate individuals inhabiting the study area.

Collaborations: The pilot study on the remote camera traps has been designed by Dr. Koutubh Sharma (International Snow Leopard Trust) with inputs from Dr. Rodney Jackson (Snow Leopard Conservancy USA) and Jigmet Dadul (Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust.) The Reconyx Cameras have been provided by Panthera, and field implementation is a collaborative effort of Department of Wildlife Protection (J&K) and SLC-IT.

Objective of the study: The study is to serve as a pilot for setting up a greater monitoring program. It should serve also to help validate the skills of field personnel in aging scrapes or pugmarks that will make a crucial component of the large scale monitoring program in future using occupancy estimation on the basis of indirect signs.

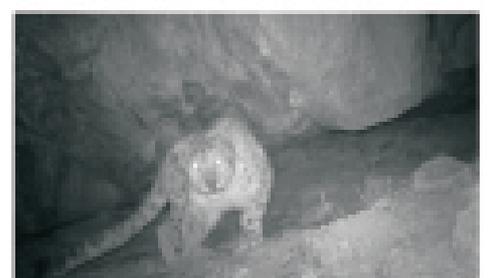
Study area: The study area is situated in the vicinity of Saspochey and Ulley villages. Its total surface is 100 square kilometers. The elevation of the study area varies between 3900 and 4800 m a.s.l.

Methods: For the purposes of the study there were situated 15 camera traps of model Reconyx HC-500. Five of them were committed by the Department of Wildlife Protection. During field trips for installation of the cameras they were set in chosen areas in the study area known to be regularly visited by Snow Leopards. Part of the cameras was placed in different valleys and others in the mountain ridges known to be frequently visited by the Snow Leopards. After that there were field visits for removing the cameras. During the setting of the cameras and after that during removing them all the information gathered in the field was accurately led in special forms developed for the needs of the survey. All the sign marks (scats, scrapes, rock scent) were entered in the form as well as the landscape details, signs from other animals, weather conditions, etc. GPS points of all camera sets were taken. All the observations of prey species and others were accurately entered in the forms developed for the purposes of the study.

Participants: Coordination of the activity was led by Mr. Jigmet Dadul from SLC-IT responsible for the study and with the participation of the volunteers Kezia Yephthomi and Manasi Saikia from Ambedkar University Delhi and Tsvetomira Yotsova from Bulgaria.

Results: From the first fieldtrip a total number of 8 cameras from five different sites had Snow Leopard captures. And from the second field visit five cameras from four sites had captures Snow Leopards. In some of the sites there were set two and even three cameras in order to capture better and from different points the individuals passing by.

After the collection of the cameras and the downloading of the pictures, a rough estimate was prepared. A total number of 6 individuals were estimated to be captured by the camera traps placed by SLC-IT for the period May-July 2011. .

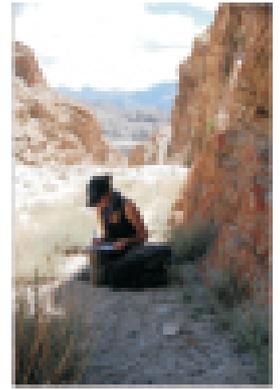


Snow Leopard Captured on in June and July, 2011



SIGN TRANSECT SURVEYS

As a part of the pilot study in summer this year, SLC-IT will continue its program in another site Skindiyang of Western Ladakh. The team carried out a sign transect near the village to determine whether or not the study area is frequently inhabited by Snow Leopards through conducting a sign transects survey. The field survey was conducted in August, 2011. Led by Jigmet Dadul, Tsering Angmo and accompanied by volunteers Tsvetomira Yotsova and Tamsin Ramgold



The study area is situated in the region of Skindiyang village and consisted of narrow steep rocky valleys and canyons as well as high mountain ridgelines. The altitude is between 3600 and 4500 m. a. s. l. The presence of the species was detected by implementing sign transects through following methodic. There were surveyed three large narrow valleys and one ridgeline for the study period. Starting from the first sign of animal presence (scats,



scrapes, pugmarks, rock scent) there were continuously described all other following signs of Snow Leopards, led in a special form and GPS coordinates and measures were taken as well as the age of the marks whenever possible. There was described the presence of other predators, domestic and wild prey, etc.



In all the surveyed valleys and ridge line there were found and described signs of a Snow Leopards presence as well as different wild and domestic prey species.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

CONCLUSION PREDATOR FRIENDLY HANDICRAFTS PROJECT

Jigmet Dadul along with SLC-IT team conducted final meeting under the Rufford Small Grants for conclusion of the program and signing of agreement on July 13th, 2011. It was also a chance to meet with the womens group and acquire the finish products for their sales.



The designing had drastically improved especially with the animals toys, socks and bags. There is still scope to better the products, improve designs and sizes of socks and wollen caps and hand gloves. The team also brainstormed with them for some more ideas in terms of bags and other products. Besides that it was also decided that individual women will be paid for their respective products and one representative will be selected to collect 5% conservation funds from the group.



In the end, Jigmet clearly read out the agreement and explain them the required terms and conditions. Later, their doubts and queries were also answered by the team. The agreements were signed by individual members of the group along with the team of SLC-IT that highlight conservation. Since it was the last phase in the project, the SLC-IT team emphasized continued support to the group, provided product orders and numbers were met with. We have seen an increased in interest and we to continue with the program. SLC-IT will be directly in contact with the community for procurement of their products and link them with marketing channels.



PREDATOR PROOF ENCLOSURES IN ZANSKAR

SLC-IT along with financial support from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is constructing predator proof enclosures in Zanskar's Sheila Phu and Zangla. The goal is to built predator proof enclosure to protect livestock from attacks from Snow Leopards and other predators and thereby protecting the livestock of the community. The SLC-IT team of Tashi Tundup and K.C Namgial conducted community consultation meetings with them, to determine the place and the number of small bodied livestock that will be placed in the enclosures. The community consented to give land and help in construction of enclosure. SLC-IT is providing technical assistance in the construction of the same, the materials have been purchased for the corral. Presently, the corrals are being built at the villages, and before, the roads close for Zanskar, SLC-IT will conduct a depredation survey at both the villages as a part of the monitoring phase.

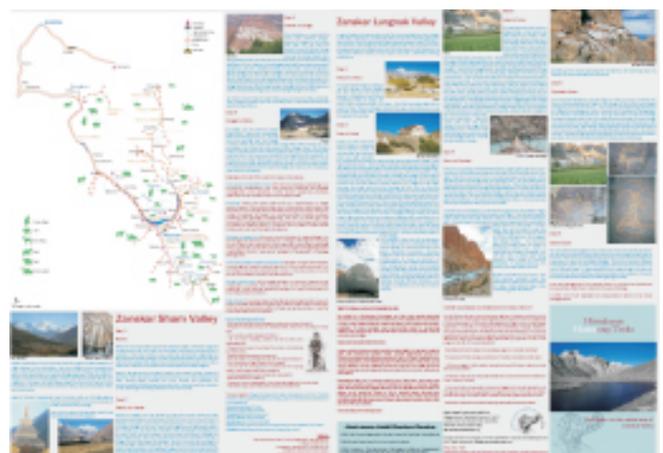


COMMUNITY BASED LIVESTOCK INSURANCE

SLC-IT has commenced with the community based livestock insurance program in three villages of Ulley, Yanthang and Tarutse. Proceeds from community based ecotourism, premium paid by livestock owners and SLC-USA have been collected and deposited in the respective banks of the village community. Also, keeping in mind the on-coming on winter, SLC-IT has been particularly informing and discussing with communities about better guarding practices. We are confident, about keeping this program sustainable and more important of developing better compensations schemes for the livestock losses and effective guarding practices.

STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITY BASED HOMESTAYS IN ZANSKAR VALLEY

As a part of the strengthening of the homestay in the Zanskar Valley of Ladakh, SLC-IT with support from SLC-USA has been implementing the project since May, 2011. This included developing new product is the existing homestay destinations, liaison with local departments and travel agencies for the promoting Zanskar Valley. These homestays have been developed in the human-wildlife conflict areas of Zanskar. As a part of product development, three eco-cafes have been developed, in Padum, Zangla and Purne. Along with the Pomo Tsogspa of the respective villages of Padum and Zangla and the guest house owners in Purne, these were set-up along the trekking trails in Zanskar. SLC-IT has handed over all Eco-café materials including the SK-14 solar heater. They women's group were also trained in basic hygiene and hospitality. Emphasize was given to refilling of water, rather than selling of water-bottles and on traditional food items. Solar shower was built at Anmu. The homestay operators will share the proceeds from the solar shower. Anmu falls on the way to Phuktal Monastery in Lungnak Valley of Zanskar which makes it an ideal destination. Signage for the homestays in Zanskar has also been an important for the development and promotion of the homestays in Zanskar, along with meeting with travel agencies and operators. All the concerned agencies were briefed about the new products and given new homestay files. They were approached for suggestions on better mechanisms for booking of homestays and maintaining standards at all the destinations. During the phase, maps specially designed for the Zanskar route have also been developed.





ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

Foundation Create and SLC-IT conducted a teacher training program on 21st of July and 1st of August at the Norboo Valad Guest house at Liker. The main objective of the teacher training was to familiarize teachers with Ri-Gyancha, an environmental education kit and how they could implement the program in their respective schools. There were more than 32 teachers on both days of the workshop from private schools around Leh. The day with highlighting the important aspects of the book, and brief introduction of SLC-IT education program and structure of the program.



To give them hands-on experience of the book, the SLC-IT conducted theory sessions as well as activities sessions with them. The idea of developing innovative education methods was successful through the use of the book. The different methods used in the training were very effective and the response from the participants was positive. The participants acknowledge and appreciated the program. All the feedback from the teachers was very encouraging. Since the teachers were from 10 different schools from Leh, the outreach of the program was successful. We hope to continue with such workshops with Foundation Create in the coming years and try to involve from teachers and schools to participate in the program.



ZANSKAR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

As a part of the program funded by SLC-USA, SLC-IT has been implementing the Environmental education based on Ri-Gyancha in Zanskar valley of Ladakh. The two-year program is being conducted in four schools of Phey, Zangla, Padum and Karsha. With more than 180 students educated on critical environmental issues and biodiversity of Ladakh. Since the opening of the roads to Zanskar, K.C Namgial, Environmental Education Assistant in Zanskar has conducted the orientation with the schools teachers of the respected schools, along with the first and second workshops. The first 2-day workshop was on introduction to biodiversity based on theory and activity and games sessions like web of life, tailing the snow leopard, talking fox etc. The second 2-day workshop was on birds and mammals of Ladakh, along with theory and games sessions.



So far, the response from the schools have been very positive, and the school authorities are keen on taking the program ahead. Over all we really got excellence response from the students and teachers. This is the first time, the schools and students have been learning about different environmental issues of Ladakh. With a more two workshops slated for the next year, along with student-parent workshop and school conservation projects, the students are looking forward to participate in the future workshops. SLC-IT also showcased films on climate change and wildlife of Ladakh, as a part of the program in the workshops. More than 200 students from the present for the film screening.





WORLD WILDLIFE WEEK

As a part of the wildlife week, Reglam School and Lamdon School invited SLC-IT for conducting a 1-day workshop and a nature field visit respectively. At Reglam school, the Tsering Angmo conducted a brief session on wildlife and biodiversity of Ladakh, along with games with the students. There more than 55 students for the workshop.



With Lamdon School, Tsering Angmo lead the group of 40 students and 2 teachers to the Hemis High Altitude National Park. She brief students on various techniques of wildlife, bird watching and identifying plants. The students were very enthusiastic, since for many this was the first time they were entering the national park, just about 1 hour from Leh.



SLC-IT continued the workshops at Lingshed hostel as well. The topic for the third workshop was biodiversity and ecosystems of India and Ladakh. The response there too has been exceptional. Before the end of



the academic session and the winter break, SLC-IT will complete its fourth workshop at the hostel.

HIGH- ALTITUDE FESTIVALS

ARMY PARIYAVARAN MELA

This summer saw Leh witness of number of fetivals. Among which the Army Eco-Mela which was held from 14th – 17th July, 2011. SLC-IT along with Department of Wildlife Protection, other NGO's like WWF, People's Action Group for Inclusion of Rights (PAGIR), Ladakh Ecological and Health Organisation (LEHO), Women's Alliance etc. were invited to display information on various environmental and social issues of Ladakh. It was organised by the Army Wing of 19-JAK RIF.



It was inaugurated by Mr. Rigzin Spalbar, CEC of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. This is was very good platform for SLC-IT to spread awareness about snow leopards and other wildlife issues of Ladakh. Also, highlighting the work undertaken by SLC-IT since its beginning. It was the first time, we got to talk with participants and visitors alike one on one on important snow leopards conservation issues in Ladakh.



The mela had a foot-fall of 12,000 people. Coupled with exhibitions, competitions, nature wish trees and talks, the first of its kind mela was well-received. SLC-IT also sponsored gifts Photo Competition and Debate Competition. Film screening were also organised during the festival.



We are glad to have been a part of this festival, and assure support to the mela in the coming years. We'd also like to acknowledge the support during the festival of the CO and officers at 19-JAK RIF. We'd also like congratulate Mr. Jigmet Takpa, who received the 'Environmental Hero' Award and our colleague Jigmet Dadul, who received the 1st prize for his photograph 'The Flight to Heaven' featuring Black Necked Cranes.



LADAKH FESTIVAL

Ladakh Festival was celebrated in from 1st - 15th September, 2011. As a part of the tourism season, Ladakh hosts the festival every year for thousands of visitors from across the globe. The fun lasted till late September, when winter starts setting in again; but before that happens, there's one final round of partying, in the form of the Ladakh Festival. The 2- week long Ladakh Festival highlighted extravaganza of dances, music, handicrafts and sports. The festival began with a long procession, of local leaders, school children and dancers, which made its way through Leh. What followed was seven days of mask dances, yak dances, craft stalls, excellent local food and plenty of the heady barley beer known as chang! Archery contests were held at Chubi, Chuchoot and Skara (near Leh), Photo exhibition in indoor stadium, Polo matches, white-water rafting expeditions, handicrafts exhibition near main market and treks are organized as well.

SLC-IT on its part, participated in the handicrafts exhibition, where we showcased handicrafts from our project sites. The predator-friendly handicrafts were greatly appreciated by visitors and locals alike. Since it was a tourism festival, this was also a great opportunity to promote the homestays in Ladakh.



WORKSHOP AND TRAINING

PRACTISING RESPONSIBLE ECOTOURISM

The Ecotourism Society of India, WWF-India and Jammu and Kashmir Tourism organised a 2 – day workshop from 30th September – 1st October, in Leh. The objective was to showcase good practices and sharing experiences by ecotourism practitioners in Ladakh. It also included community participation and case studies from Ladakh and other regions.

Radhika Kothari from SLC-IT participated in the workshop as a resource person. She gave a presentation on 'Lessons from the Homestay Programme in Ladakh.' Her presentation included brief introduction to SLC-IT's homestay project highlighting the important issues of local community participation, local benefits and conservation. Since SLC-IT's homestay are based in human-wildlife conflict areas, importance of conservation was of critical importance. She also pointed the importance of different stakeholders role in development of these products.

SLC-IT was a pioneer to start with the homestays in Ladakh. SLC-IT alongwith WWF and concerned governmental authorities will be working closely with the industry to make Ladakh Tourism more sustainable.



HERITAGE INTERPRETERS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR GUIDES

The Ministry of Tourism, INTACH and ALTOA organised the 'Heritage Interpreters Training Program for Guides from 22nd to 27th September, 2011 at J&K Academy for Art, Culture and Language in Leh. The week long workshop was involved selected participants to discuss and interact with them on various issues and aspects of Ladakh's cultural diversity. The workshop was led by Tara Sharma from INTACH and Robinson Robert, Professional Guide and Expert on Heritage and Culture.

SLC-IT's Radhika Kothari and Tsering Angmo were invited to conduct a session on Geography and Environmental aspects of Ladakh. Radhika sessions highlighted the various aspects of the geological diversity of Ladakh, the landscapes and the beautiful interconnection of natural and cultural aspects of the Ladakhi lifestyle. Angmo's session highlighted briefly touching floral and faunal diversity of Ladakh.

All in all, the workshop was a resounding success. Many participants were keen on integrating cultural and natural history tours in their respective travel plans. The workshop also ended in combining forces for advance training for guides on cultural and natural diversity of Ladakh.

SLC-IT RECEIVES THE GYALWANG DRUKPA AWARD

The Gyalwang Drukpa Foundation celebrated Ladakh Universe to promote Universal Peace, Harmony, Love & Happiness on 6th August, 2011. The program included an award ceremony to honour selected individuals and organisation from different parts of the world. It also culminated into a prayer with hundred thousand Ganachakra to increase positive fortune, offering one million lights to dispel darkness and other surprises to bring everyone together, to appreciate, respect and love the world and the universe.

In the individual category, Mr. Jigmet Takpa, Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Ladakh received the award for his contribution to conservation in Ladakh. We congratulate him for the same. And in the organisational category, SLC-IT won the award for its work in the field of conservation and wildlife in Ladakh. The award was given by His Holiness Gyalwang Drukpa.



SNOW LEOPARDS CORNER



SLC-IT started with the 'Snow Leopards Corner' that included an Interpretation Centre, Weekly Movie Screening and Shop in Leh. Based on the theme of natural diversity of Ladakh, the interpretation centre highlights the amazing diversity of life found in this high-altitude mountain region of Ladakh Himalayas. The movie shows are based on Ladakh's wildlife and snow leopard conservation. And the shop, is selling merchandise on snow leopards and handicrafts from our project sites.



We will be upgrading the interpretation centre this winter. The idea is to have more interactive and computer based resources that run on solar energy. We invite experts, technical associates and volunteers to help us develop this into an innovative and informative interpretation centre in Ladakh.

SNOW LEOPARDS TREKS

Mountain Initiatives and SLC-IT started with the Snow Leopard Winter Treks. The first trek members camped at Rumbak in the Hemis High Altitude National Park. On 15th September, the group trekked to Kharlung, where they had the first glimpse of the Snow Leopard in the wild. It was seen coming down the mountain. The group set up their spotting scopes and saw the big cat for more than 2 hours. It was time well-spent trekking and constantly searching for the snow leopard!



 **mountain**
INITIATIVES
www.mountaininitiatives.com

CONTACT

Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust

Shangara House Tukcha Main Road Leh 194 101, Ladakh Jammu & Kashmir, India.
Tele/fax: 0091 1982 257953; email: info@snowleopardhimalayas.org

www.snowleopardhimalayas.org; www.himalayan-homestays.com

To know more about the work, memberships or contributions to Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust contact Ms. Radhika Kothari (Deputy Director), radhikarvk@gmail.com

Follow us on  Blogger  facebook

