

Project Update: February 2012

Just a decade after the spectacularly picturesque mountains of Kargil District in India's Jammu and Kashmir saw rifle drawn soldiers in battle camouflages against the backdrop of flying machines and big guns, the relative peace since then has helped the same valleys and passes in the Himalayas shelter some of the most elusive cats on earth. Two adult snow leopards (*Panthera uncia*) have been identified from pictures captured using infrared camera traps in the district by WWF-India's field team led by researcher Mr. Aishwarya Maheshwari, a few kilometres from the line of control separating India from its neighbour Pakistan. This is the first time that camera trap pictures of snow leopard have been obtained from the Kargil District since they were installed here in mid-2010.

Earlier a photograph of a snow leopard preying a herd of Asiatic Ibex (*Capra ibex sibirica*) on mountain slopes north of Kargil town was taken on 13 June 2009.

The camera traps set-up in mid-2011 have since captured images of all the co-predators of snow leopard except brown bears and include red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and Tibetan wolf (*Canis lupus chanco*). However, the snow leopard was captured only now.

The support we have received from the Rufford Small Grants, Department of Wildlife Protection, Government of Jammu & Kashmir and WWF-India as well as local communities in this endeavour is deeply appreciated.



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