International Snow Leopard Day 2026 – 23 October

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News

International Snow Leopard Day is observed every year on 23 October. It marks 23 Oct 2013, when 12 range countries adopted the 'Bishkek Declaration' in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and launched the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP). On 12 Dec 2024 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution officially proclaiming 23 October the 'International Day of the Snow Leopard'; 61 countries, including India, co-sponsored it. India's first scientific count, SPAI (2019–23), reported 718 snow leopards on 30 Jan 2024.

Key facts

Day	23 Oct – Bishkek Declaration, 2013; UNGA recognition 12 Dec 2024
Scientific name	Panthera uncia; 'ghost of the mountains'
Status	IUCN – Vulnerable; CITES Appendix I; Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 – Schedule I
India (SPAI)	718 – Ladakh 477, Uttarakhand 124, Himachal 51, Arunachal 36, Sikkim 21, J&K 9
12 range countries	India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Mongolia, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
State animal	Ladakh (2021), Himachal Pradesh

Background

- Biology–geography: the snow leopard is a solitary cat of the high mountains of Central and South Asia (about 3,000–5,500 m); it cannot roar. Its main prey are blue sheep (bharal), Himalayan ibex and marmots. It is an 'indicator species' of high-mountain ecosystem health.
- Indian conservation: Project Snow Leopard – 2009; the GEF–UNDP 'SECURE Himalaya' project (Ladakh, Himachal, Uttarakhand, Sikkim); listed among 21 critically endangered species for recovery. Hemis National Park, Ladakh, is called the 'snow leopard capital of the world'.
- SPAI survey: the Wildlife Institute of India (WII, Dehradun) was national coordinator, with NCF (Mysuru) and WWF-India as partners. Camera traps at 1,971 sites; about 70% of the habitat lies outside protected areas. A dedicated Snow Leopard Cell at WII and a count every fourth year were recommended.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu has no snow leopards, but its counterpart in mountain-species conservation is the State animal, the Nilgiri tahr. CM M.K. Stalin launched the ₹25 crore 'Project Nilgiri Tahr' on 12 Oct 2023; 7 October, the birthday of Dr E.R.C. Davidar, who did a pioneering tahr study in 1975, is 'Nilgiri Tahr Day'. Mukurthi National Park in the Nilgiris was created to protect the tahr.

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