

First Snow Leopard Census

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In news

Recently, first snow leopard census started in Uttarakhand

Who has initiated the census?

It is being carried out by the Uttarakhand Forest Department and Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

About the survey

- The scientific estimation will focus on sightings by residents of hilly areas, who migrate to the plains during the winter, and paramilitary personnel.
- As per WII, the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAII) is the national protocol for this exercise.

A brief note on snow leopard

- The snow leopard (**also called ounce**) is found in high mountains in 12 **countries of Central Asia**.
- In India, it inhabits the higher Himalayan and trans-Himalayan landscape in the **five states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- Snow leopards are not known to be aggressive toward humans.
- It is the **National Heritage Animal of Pakistan and Afghanistan**.
- IUCN status – **Vulnerable**
- According to a habitat-based estimate three years ago, there are 626 snow leopards scattered across a 1.2-lakh sq km area at heights of between 3,000 to 5,000 metres.
- As per that estimate, Ladakh has 130 snow leopards followed by Himachal Pradesh with 90 and Uttarakhand 86.