

Country Profile: Afghanistan



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OVERVIEW

Project Title: Conservation of Snow Leopards and their Critical Ecosystem in Afghanistan

Project Sites: Wakhan Corridor (Pamirs, Karakorams, Himalayas, Altai, Kunluns, and Tien Shans)

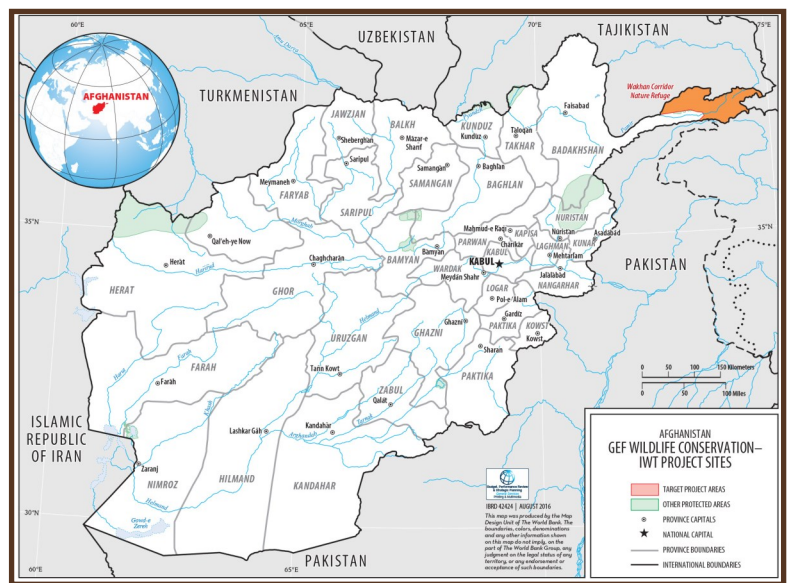
Species Focus: Snow Leopards

Total Project Cost: \$2.7 million

Executing Partner: National Environment Protection Agency; Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock; and Wildlife Conservation Society

GEF Implementing Agency: UNDP

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CONTEXT

Afghanistan is a land-locked country of sweeping plains and high mountains with an incredible variety of wildlife and biodiversity. Unfortunately, many species are now considered globally or regionally threatened or near threatened, including the snow leopard. The IUCN estimates that snow leopard populations have declined by at least 20% over the past 16 years, with the wild population currently assumed to be between 4,500 and 7,500 individuals and declining as a result of poaching, illegal wildlife trade (IWT), and loss of prey. Additionally, human-wildlife conflict (HWC), overharvest of forests, and climate change are putting severe pressure on Afghanistan's natural resources.

Afghanistan already has various laws and regulations in place to manage and protect wildlife, including a Presidential Decree banning hunting, a Protected Species List (149 species) making it illegal to hunt specific species, and environmental legislation requiring a permit system for trade. The Wakhan is a global priority Snow Leopard Conservation Unit, and it was identified by the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) as one of the 20 critical snow leopard landscapes in 2013.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

The GWP Afghanistan project aims to strengthen conservation of the snow leopard and its critical ecosystem in Afghanistan through a holistic and sustainable landscape approach that addresses existing and emerging threats.

The project components are:

1. Reduce illegal take and trade of snow leopards and human-wildlife conflict through greater community involvement
2. Apply a landscape approach to conservation of snow leopards and their ecosystem by taking into account drivers of forest loss, degradation, and climate change impacts