# Ghost of the Mountains

Snow Leopard

Written by Jack 3rd Spitzer

## Introduction

Did you know there is a kind of cat that can jump 50 feet in the air? A snow leopard can! Did you know the people that live in the Himalayan mountains call them the gray ghost...they are so rare and hard to find if you spot one, legend has it you will be blessed with a lifetime of happiness and good fortune. I hope by reading this report on snow leopards you will experience some of those feelings!

## Diet

Snow leopards quietly stalk its prey before it pounces on it and bites it on the neck killing it almost instantly. Snow leopards normally eat wild sheep and goats but they kill three times their size. They also eat smaller prey named marmots. Snow leopards eat their prey slowly because they can't eat a wild sheep or a goat in one or two bites. They also eat hares and game hirds

## Habitat

Snow leopards live in the mountains of Central Asia and they live in twelve different countries. They like a cold and dry climate with a rocky terrain of ledges, cliffs, and caves. They live above the treeline with very little plants. The snow leopards habitat is the size of Greenland! They don't have permanent homes and sleep in different places every night.

#### Structural Characteristics

Snow leopards are well built for cold weather they have long hair and a thick under coat. They have long well coated tail so when their sleeping they wrap it around them so it can keep them warm in the night. Their paws are like snow shoes so they never get cold toes and it helps them walk easily on snow and silent when they are stalking their prey. Snow leopards have an amazing tail it's the longest tail of any cat, it keeps them warm like a scarf, but most important it helps them stay balanced when jumping between rocks. They have blue eyes when they are cubs which turn light green or gray as they get older. This is unusual as all other big cats have yellow or gold eyes.

#### **Behavioral Characteristics**

Snow leopards never have a family kind of sad right? But they are solitary animals they only come together when they want to have a baby then the dad leaves the mom and the baby. Also snow leopards never have an official home. Snow leopards just find a cave and sleeps in it then the next day they go adventuring off and find another home for the night. Snow leopards leave pee-mail funny right? That means that Snow leopards pee somewhere to mark not to go here I have been here and to keep track where they have been.

# **Complete Life Cycle**

Cubs are small and helpless when they are born and do not even open their eyes until they are about a week old. At 2 months old, babies are ready to eat real food. Then the babies begin following their mother and start to learn hunting. When they are about two then they leave their moms. The dad isn't around at all.The girls can become moms when they are three but the boys aren't ready to be dads until four. When snow leopards live in zoos they can live over 20 years but the mountain living is harder

and no one knows for sure but the

scientists think they only live until they are

about 10 or maybe 12.

### SIX Fascinating Facts

- 1. Did you know that in 1961 Moscow is assa gifted two snow leopards and eight seals to a zoo here in the United States, during the Cold War.
- 2. Unlike all the other big cats these cats do not roar.
- 3. Snow Leopards are the least of gressive of all big cats.

- 4. Each leopard has its own pattern and no two patterns are the same.
- 5. There are about six hundred snow leopards in zoos today.
- 6. No one was ever able to take a picture of a snow leopard until the 1970s! That is how hard it is for people to ever see them in their own land!

# Conclusion

Thank you for reading my report on Snow Leopards! I hope we can protect them from going extinct. You don't have to but you can Donate to Snow Leopard Trust. Thank You!



Can you find the snow leopard in this picture?

## Hand Drawn Sketch

Jack Ritchie, Researcher

And

Author

