



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Indian Leopard

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Why is in news? Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officials seized 4 Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) Skins in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir

An operation was launched by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) after it developed specific intelligence over a period of time that a few gangs in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) are **involved in the illegal wildlife trade and, were searching for prospective buyers for the sale of leopard skins.**

About:

Scientific Name: *Panthera pardus*

The leopard is the **smallest of the Big Cats** (Of genus *Panthera* namely the Tiger, Lion, Jaguar, Leopard, and Snow Leopard), and known for its ability to adapt in a variety of habitats.

A **nocturnal animal**, the leopard hunts by night.

It **feeds on smaller species of herbivores** found in its range, such as the chital, hog deer and wild boar.

It occurs in a **wide range in sub-Saharan Africa, in small parts of Western and Central Asia, on the Indian subcontinent to Southeast and East Asia.**

The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*) is a leopard widely distributed on the Indian subcontinent.

In India, the leopard is **found in all forest types**, from tropical rainforests to temperate deciduous and alpine coniferous forests.

It is also found in dry scrubs and grasslands, the **only exception being desert and the mangroves of Sundarbans.**

It shares its territory with the tiger in 17 states.

Its range stretches from the Indus river in the west, the Himalayas in the north, and all the way to the lower course of the Brahmaputra in the east.

As per a recent **report 'Status of leopards in India, 2018'** released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, there has been a "60% increase in the population count of leopards in India from 2014 estimates".

The 2014 estimates placed the population of leopards at nearly 8,000 which has increased to 12,852.

The largest number of leopards have been estimated in Madhya Pradesh (3,421) followed by Karnataka (1,783) and Maharashtra (1,690).

Conservation Issues:

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The biggest threats facing the common leopard in India are increasing **conflict with humans**, **poaching for illegal trade** in body parts and **loss of habitat**.

Leopards also die **due to accidents on roads** passing through and around protected areas.

Conservation Status:

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

CITES: Appendix-I

Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule-I