



Animal of the Month:  
**Snow Leopard**

September 2012

**PGAV** DESTINATIONS

10/5/2012

# Snow Leopard *Uncia uncia*

1. Conservation Status: Endangered
2. Size
  - Weight: 60 to 120 lbs (27 to 54 kg)
  - Height at shoulder: 24 in (60 cm)
  - Length (from head to rump): 3 to 4.75 ft (0.9 to 1.15 m)
  - Length of tail: up to 40 in (1 m)
  - Males are approximately 30% larger than females
3. Social Structure:
  - Solitary: like most cats, they tend to travel alone
  - Males and females may be seen together during mating season
  - Cubs leave mother at age 2
4. Reproduction:
  - Mate in late winter, with gestation period of 90-100 days, with cubs born between April and June
  - Litter size: varies from 1-5 cubs; 2.2 average
  - Cubs open eyes at 7 days, walk at 5 weeks, are fully weaned by 10 weeks and become fully independent at 18-22 months
5. Behavior
  - Nocturnal vs. Diurnal: crepuscular (most active at dawn and dusk); may become primarily nocturnal if living near humans
  - Shy vs. Curious: very shy
  - Jumping Ability: 50 feet (15 meters)
  - Land speed: up to 40-50 mph
  - Water speed: can swim, but top speed unknown (not a typical behavior)

# Snow Leopard *Uncia uncia*

- Unique Behaviors:
  - Regularly patrol home ranges that can cover hundreds of square miles. They tend to follow low ridge lines or the bases of cliffs.
  - Leave signs and markings for other snow leopards: scraping the ground, leaving markings on trees and boulders, spraying urine and leaving feces
  - Cannot roar. Instead, make a non-aggressive puffing sound called a ‘chuff’. Other vocalizations include hisses, mews, growls, and wailing.
  - Non-aggressive towards humans. There have been no verified attacks on humans.
  - Among the world’s most elusive and rarely seen large animals. They are well-camouflaged and shy, avoiding contact with humans and moving quietly (with the help of extra fur between their toes). The first photograph of a snow leopard in the wild was taken in 1970.

## 6. Captivity

- Frequency in captivity: There are approximately 600-700 snow leopards in zoos around the world.
- Noteworthy exhibits:
  - Leopards in the Mist, Bronx Zoo
    - Size: The exhibit was built at a cost of \$10.6 million. There are two main pavilions containing 3 cats.
    - Opening date: July 12, 2009
    - Number of Animals: 3 Total : 1 male-Bo (3 years old), 2 females-Zoe (3 yrs old) and Chocolate (12yrs old)
- Studies:
  - Snow leopards in the wild are generally solitary animals. Many times in captivity they are kept with other leopards. The advantage to this social enrichment is apparent. The animals will better cope with the stress of being viewed by humans when they have a companion.
  - Maternal Behavior and Behavioral Development in The Captive Snow Leopard. Teresa O’Conner and Helen Freeman

# Snow Leopard *Uncia uncia*

## 7. Recommended or Required Husbandry Guidelines:

- AZA Recommended (1998)
  - Min. Size Dry: 200 sf per first animal + 100 sf per additional animal
  - Min. Size Pool: None required; Snow Leopards are not avid swimmers
  - Barrier: Full enclosure as snow leopards are agile climbers
  - Air Temp Range: Cold hardy, but may be sensitive to extreme heat
  - Other: Native to rocky, mountainous terrain. Verticality of exhibit is important.

## 8. Enrichment Techniques:

- Zoo Approved Enrichment Techniques
  - Hunting Enrichment:
    - Irregular shaped gourds
    - Rattles with seeds inside
    - Scent: fresh herbs, spices, perfume, and even elephant dung enrich the cat's noses! Snow Leopards enjoy about any scent they encounter.
    - Food on zip-lines for motion
    - Piñatas for working to get food
    - Animal Decoys
  - Harvest Enrichment (Foraging Enrichment):
    - Animal Carcasses for more realistic natural feeding. Idea is for the cats to get into the bone and get some meat and some marrow.
    - “Puzzling out” where the Pray “feeding devices” are at.

# Snow Leopard *Uncia uncia*

- Sensory Enrichment:
  - Scent: fresh herbs, spices, perfume, and even elephant dung enrich the cat's noses! Snow Leopards enjoy about any scent they encounter.
  - Sights and sounds to the zoo exhibit habitat
- Habitat Enrichment:
  - Scent
  - Climbing Tree
  - Lookout Mounds
  - Lair
  - Logs
  - Water areas
  - Feeding areas using unique feeding devices



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