

The Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum

Twelve countries, one aim: To save a species

Background Information

The snow leopard's distribution area covers approximately 1.5 million square kilometres and spans twelve states (Kyrgyzstan, China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). In the past decades, due to habitat loss and poaching, the number of snow leopards living in the wild has steadily decreased. Because the large cats live in remote areas, exact data on the current size of the snow leopard population is unavailable. Scientific estimates assume that worldwide only 4,000 to 6,600 snow leopards still live in wilderness. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the species is critically endangered. The NABU has been successfully realising projects for the conservation of the snow leopard in Kyrgyzstan since 1998:

- In 1998, the country's first UNESCO biosphere reserve was established. The project was realised by the NABU following a long-standing partnership with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). The 44,000 square kilometre large Lake Issyk-Kul Biosphere Reserve also protects the snow leopard's habitat in the high mountain valleys.
- The NABU founded its unique conservation project in cooperation with the Kyrgyz government in 1999 and established the anti-poaching unit "Gruppa Bars" ("Group Snow Leopard"). Its balance: 200 poachers have been permanently stopped, and seven living snow leopards as well as hundreds of traps, weapons and snow leopard skins have been confiscated. Thus, the NABU has already achieved a significant decline in poaching in Kyrgyzstan. Poachers were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.
- On September 6th, 2001, the NABU and the Kyrgyz government signed the first comprehensive cooperation agreement on the conservation of the snow leopard. In 2011, this agreement was extended for a further ten years.
- In 2002, the NABU established its wildlife sanctuary "Snow Leopard" at Lake Issyk-Kul. It is the world's largest outdoor enclosure for snow leopards and currently home to three snow leopards that were injured by poachers and therefore cannot be returned to the wild. In August 2011, Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbajewa visited the snow leopard rehabilitation centre.

In 2011, the NABU submitted a proposal to the then Kyrgyz President Rosa Otunbajeva to organize a global forum for the conservation of the snow leopard. The Snow Leopard



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Forum is modelled on the "Global Forum on Tiger Conservation", which was held in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2010. On that occasion, the "Global Tiger Recovery Program" was signed. The Kyrgyz president agreed to support the NABU's initiative. Following this announcement, the NABU developed a "Strategy for the Conservation of Snow Leopards in the Kyrgyz Republic", which was later adopted by the Kyrgyz government as a national strategy.

Active preparations for the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum began in 2012, when World Bank president Robert Zoellick announced his support. The NABU is an active member of the Forum's organizing committee, which has been confirmed by the Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister. Thus, the NABU has participated in all preparatory conferences in Bishkek, New Delhi, Bangkok and Moscow, and financially supported their realisation.

In a meeting on July 5th, 2013, with NABU vice president Thomas Tennhardt and NABU chief executive officer Leif Miller, Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev reaffirmed Kyrgyzstan's conservation efforts: "Who shoots at snow leopards, shoots at Kyrgyzstan", Atambayev said. He also initiated the establishment of a global secretariat responsible for coordinating the worldwide conservation efforts.

Facts

Now, at the invitation of the Kyrgyz government and the Kyrgyz president and with the support of the World Bank's Global Tiger Initiative (GTI), representatives of all twelve snow leopard states will come together in Kyrgyzstan.

When and where?

October 22nd and 23rd, 2013, in Bishkek

To what purpose?

1. For the first time, representatives of state of all twelve snow leopard states will sign a global action plan for the conservation of the snow leopard.
2. The Bishkek Declaration on the Conservation of Snow Leopards will be signed.
3. It will be proposed that the UN declare the year 2015 the first international year of the snow leopard.
4. October 23rd shall be declared the annual "Snow Leopard Day".

Excerpts from the declaration

- The gathered states acknowledge that snow leopards are endangered throughout their distribution area due to loss of habitat, loss of prey, trophy hunting, direct persecution, poaching and illegal trade.
- The gathered states recognize that conserving snow leopards and their ecosystems is a national responsibility, and that greater transnational and regional cooperation between the countries is essential for the success of their conservation efforts. The states also acknowledge that protecting the species and its ecosystems is a global responsibility.
- The international community is requested to provide financial and technical support for the efforts to conserve the snow leopard.
- The gathered states confirm the importance of existing international agreements on the conservation of biological diversity and the protection of endangered species, including the snow leopard. These agreements include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Spe-



The current Kyrgyz president Almazbek Atambayev welcomes NABU CEO Leif Miller and NABU vice president Thomas Tennhardt.



Snow leopards are native to twelve Asian countries. They are counted among the world's most critically endangered big cats.

cies of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

- The gathered states officially recall and endorse the Bishkek Recommendations on the Conservation of Snow Leopards and their High Mountain Ecosystems, formulated in December 2012, as well as the "National Snow Leopard Ecosystem Priorities" and the "Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Program" (GSLEP).
- The gathered states pledge to cooperate on the conservation of snow leopards and their ecosystems, and to accord conservation efforts a higher priority on their national and regional agendas.
- Indigenous and local communities shall be constructively engaged in the efforts for the conservation of the snow leopard as a key species of biological diversity.
- Cooperation on improving the networking and management of conservation areas will be intensified.
- The states declare to combat poaching and illegal trade in wild animal products and to strengthen their national law enforcement systems as well as their responsible local, national and regional institutions. In addition, cooperation with other countries, with the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) and with Interpol will be intensified. For this purpose, a Central Asian "Wildlife Crime Enforcement Network" will be established.
- Scientific research on snow leopard populations will be intensified, and estimates of the species' population size will be updated.
- The states will convene annual high-level meetings in order to review the progress in the implementation of the GSLEP.



More information

Website of the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum:
<http://en.akilbirs.com>

The Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum on facebook:
www.facebook.com/TimeToSaveTheSnowLeopard

The Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum on twitter:
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