



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Wakhan Snow Leopards Get Tagged

USAID helps a remote community in northeastern Afghanistan protect its livelihood and this big cat



Photo Credit: USAID/WCS

In a first for Afghanistan, three snow leopards were fitted with satellite collars, thereby helping local herders track the animals and avoid their habitats

In the remote Wakhan corridor in northeastern Afghanistan, efforts to protect the endangered snow leopard have proved so successful that the region now boasts a robust population of the magnificent big cats. With USAID support and some funding from the National Geographic Society, the Wildlife Conservation Society has been helping the local community in Wakhan to fit satellite-collars on the snow leopards in order to track the animals and their preferred habitats. This helps the community to understand which areas to avoid when grazing livestock, thereby minimizing conflict between snow leopards and herders, who increasingly view the cat as a threat to their livelihood.

The project has helped Wakhan's livestock herders as well as snow leopard conservation, with all the potential knock-on benefits for the area such as media and tourist interest.

The Wildlife Conservation Society, which started working in Wakhan in 2006, focuses on training local veterinarians, paravets and rangers to capture snow leopards, tranquilize and collar them, as well as data management, reporting and field monitoring. The Society's 'Improving Livelihoods and Governance through Natural Resource Management' program focuses on community training.

In a first for Afghanistan, three snow leopards were recently fitted with satellite collars. The entire process was documented by a National Geographic film crew and the world will get to watch the extraordinary story on television as part of special programming during Big Cat Week, which is an extension of a campaign to save the world's big cats.