

Three Cases of Hunting Snow Leopards in Tianshan Mts. of Xinjiang, the Western China from 2009 to 2010

By Ma Ming, Hu Baowen, Chen Ying

Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Urumqi 830011, China; International Snow Leopard Trust, Seattle, WA 98103, USA

E-mails: maming@ms.xjb.ac.cn, maming3211@yahoo.com, maming3211@sina.com

1. Kazak herdsman were given a heavy sentence for killing snow leopard in Manas County, Xinjiang

To prevent the sheep flock from being attacked by wild animals and revenge on the livestock predation, one Kazak herdsman set up traps in predation hotspots which lie in the mountains at the back of Qingshuihe Village of Manas County (43°50'N, 86°10'E), around August 10th 2009 he set up traps in the mountains (Tianshan Mts.), at next day one snow leopard was trapped by the hunting tools, for the snow leopard's ferocity, the herdsman wouldn't dare kill the animals, therefore he ask the other herdsman for help, finally the snow leopard was stoned to death by them, whereafter the harslet, fur and bone were given another people named Mr. Ye for hiding, the meat was fed to dogs. Although the herders knew the snow leopard was a protected animal in Chinese Law, they still killed it by big stones.

On February 22nd 2010, according to the Chinese Wildlife Law, the two herdsman received sentences of 10 year and 8 year in prison respectively, and were given penalty of 20,000 RMB and 10,000 RMB for the illegal hunting and killing the endangered animals. The two herdsman are 27 and 37 years old respectively.



The bones, head and skin of the snow leopard (photo from Iyaxin)

2. The big cat was winter-killed ?

---- Snow leopard was dead of coldness and starvation, although the Government tried their best to save its life

On February 25th 2010, the herdsman named Mr. Aihemait Abulait an Uygur found extreme weakness big cat which was nearly dying in his pasture. It was right place that we used infrared camera to capture snow leopard in Muzat Valley (Tianshan Mts., 80°35'~81°00' E, 42°00'~42°10' N) of Xinjiang from October to December 2005. When the village head got the news from Aihemait, he arranged for local villagers to wrap the animal's head in bed-quilt and transfer it to warm place the village office-room, reporting the news to the Forestry Administration of Wensu County and Aksu City by phone. Firing a furnace, the villagers prepared milk and fresh mutton for the snow leopard, leaved the house for keeping a quiet condition. Through window, people watched activity of the big cat, hoping it could be recovery. Gradually, it stood up little by little and began to take some food.

Several hours later, officials with a veterinarian arrived at the locale. The result of physical examination showed the age of leopard was more than 10 years old, suffering from the skin disease, cardiac muscle debility and also had not fed for long time, therefore, the body was very weak. The officials decided to move the big cat to Aksu City for further curing. Unfortunately, the cat died in the process of carrying for extreme weakness, although the veterinarian tried his best to save the painful life.

The reason that snow leopard was winterkilled, we presumed that the snow leopard had difficulty predation due to standing heavy snow this year, together with old age and weakness, it couldn't withstand cold weather in the end.

This kind of misery case in Muzat River was not firstly reported. There had been another cases that villagers of Aksu Region ministered the snow leopards.

On April First 2006, one snow leopard hunting livestock was injured by 8 shepherd dogs and dodged into a tree, which occurred in Zhongyangchang Village (in Muzat Valley) of Baicheng County. Lastly, it was sent to the Administration of Wildlife Conservation in Aksu and dead later.

On May Third 2007, another snow leopard was also injured for hunting livestock in Laohutai Village (near Muzat Valley) of Baicheng County and sent to the Administration of Wildlife Conservation in Aksu and dead later.

Although these snow leopards were dead in the end, the correlative administration had made them into specimen.

3, Five guys killed two snow leopards in Luntai County, Xinjiang

It's reported in January 26th, 2010, Luntai Police Bureau had uncovered a case of hunting snow leopards, which belongs to National Protection I Class Animals in China. The poachers used local guns and iron clamps to killed 2 snow leopards and 3 ibexes in quick succession in December 2009. Till now, all five criminals had been brought to justice.

The commissar of Luntai Police Bureau disclosed that in January 20th 2010, some policemen from the police station of Tierekebazha Village in Luitai County (42°10'N, 84°15'E) of Xinjiang went to the countryside to do the regular interview, and some clues were unexpectedly obtained that several villagers had hunted snow leopards one month ago. Immediately, Luntai Police Bureau formed a Special Case Team to Tierekebazha Village to scout. At 11 o'clock pm, local villager Tu (an Uygur ?) as a suspect was captured.

Mr. Tu confessed that he and four other villagers went to the north mount of Tianshan Mts. in Luntai County twice in December 2009 and killed 2 snow leopards and 3 ibexes by using local guns and iron clamps. Two snow leopards were sold in 5900 and 7000 Yuan (RMB) respectively and three ibexes were eaten by them.

In January 21st 2010, other four suspects Mr. Ar, Mr. Wu, Mr. Yu and Mr. Ai (Uygur men) were captured. Till press time Luntai Police Bureau had organized polices hurry to the North Mount to confiscate local guns and iron clamps.

Prof. Ma Ming

Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Urumqi, China 830011

Tel: +86 991 7885363 (O), +86 991 6622791 (H), Fax: +86 991 7885 320

E-mails: maming@ms.xjb.ac.cn, maming3211@yahoo.com, maming3211@sina.com