

Zoological
Department

The book of INDIAN ANIMALS

S. H. PRATER, C.M.Z.S.

Curator, Bombay Natural History Society

THIRD (REVISED) EDITION, 1971

With 28 coloured plates by
PAUL BARRUEL
and many other illustrations

A. Anjale
1948



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Panthers living near human settlement, particularly outside forest areas, prey mainly on domestic animals, calves, sheep, and goats, on ponies and donkeys, and quite commonly on dogs. Very different must be the life of the game-killing Panther which lives by the killing of wild prey. It displays many of the habits and ways of tigers. Like the tiger the forest Panther follows roads or paths or the beaten tracks of animals through the forest, or waits for its prey in hiding. It seizes its quarry from the ground or leaps on it from a height such as an overhanging branch. The strength of the Panther is amazing. To find security for its kill a Panther has scrambled up a tree carrying a full-grown chital stag in its mouth. Familiarity with man and his ways makes the man-eating Panther more to be dreaded than the tiger.

Panthers breed all the year round. The intervals at which they breed in the wild state is not definitely known. In captivity a Panther produced 3 litters in 3½ years. The period of gestation is said to be 13 weeks; two to four cubs are usually produced.

THE SNOW LEOPARD, OR OUNCE

Panthera uncia (Schreber)

Plate facing p. 64

Local Names. Tibetan Bhotia *ikar, zig, sachak*; Hills north of Simla *barhal he*; Kunawar *thurwagh*; East of Kumaon *burhel haye* (*burhel* killer).

Size. Somewhat smaller than a panther with relatively longer tail. Head and body, 3 ft. 3 in.-3 ft. 8 in. (100-110 cm.); tail, 3 ft. (90 cm.).

Distinctive Characters. The Snow Leopard is distinctive in the shortness of its muzzle, its high forehead, and vertical chin. The ground colour of its coat is soft grey paling to pure white on the underside. The grey is sometimes tinged with buff. The spots are unbroken and distinct on the head, nape, and lower parts of the limbs. On the body they break up into larger, paler rosettes. These rosettes are less pronounced in the luxuriant winter coat. Except for a few black blotches the fur of the undersides is pure white. Newly born cubs are darker than the adults.

Distribution. In India Snow Leopards range along the whole Himalayan chain from Kashmir to Bhutan. Northwards their territory extends into Tibet, central Asia, and the Altai.

Habits. Little is known about the habits of this animal. The inaccessibility of its haunts makes observation difficult. Its home is the higher altitudes of the Himalayas, in that region of stupendous

rock and cliff above the tree-line, some 12,000-13,000 ft. (3660-3965 m.) above sea-level. Lying up by day, Snow Leopards hunt at night, preying on wild sheep and goats, on musk deer, hares, marmots, and other rodents, perhaps also on the larger birds. In summer when the upland pastures are open to grazing, they follow their prey to these higher reaches and find opportunity to take domestic goats, sheep, or ponies from the herdsmen. As with panthers and tigers, individuals establish territory near human settlements and take more or less habitually to preying on domestic stock. At the onset of winter, Snow Leopards follow the general downward migration of animals, coming down with them to altitudes as low as 6000 ft. (1830 m.). Like other beasts of prey their movements are wholly regulated by the movements of their accustomed prey.

The gestation period is about 3 months; young number 2 to 4. In common with all other creatures whom Nature has given a special endowment of beauty, Snow Leopards are persistently sought after and hunted for their valuable fur. Its soft colouring and luxuriant beauty is scarcely rivalled.

THE CLOUDED LEOPARD

Neofelis nebulosa (Griffith)

Plate facing p. 65

[RACE IN INDIA : *macrosceloides* (Hodgson)]

Local Names. Lepcha *pungmar, satchuk* ; Bhotia *kung* ; Nepali *amchita* ; Bur. *thit kyounng*.

Size. A large male measured, head and body with tail, about 6 ft. 5 in. (195 cm.). Weight, 40-45 lb. (18-20 kg.).

Distinctive Characters. The animal has a long body and tail and short limbs, rounded black ears relieved by a greyish patch in the centre. The structure of its feet is much like that of the panther and its near relatives, the tiger and the lion. It differs from the great Cats mainly in the structure of the skull and the set of the teeth. Very striking in the Clouded Leopard is the enormous relative development of the upper canine teeth, which present the nearest approach among living Cats to the great tusks of the extinct sabre-toothed tiger.

The markings of the Clouded Leopard give it a beauty and distinction equalled by few of its tribe. The general colour of the body varies from grey or earthy brown to pale or rich yellowish brown fading to white or pale tawny on the underparts. Indian animals