

Villagers Release Captured Snow Leopard

On April 11, 1998, a young female snow leopard attacked a herd of goats in Jamalabad, a village in

Pakistan's Northern Areas. Herders working in the nearby fields saw their goats running in panic. Approaching the scene, the herders saw that a snow leopard had injured two of the goats and was entangled in a tussle with a third. The villagers subdued the snow leopard, tied it up, and brought it to their village.

The Gilgit office of the World Wide Fund for Nature - Pakistan was informed of the incident and rushed a team to the village where the snow leopard had been placed in a makeshift cage. The snow leopard was being fed on the meat of the goats she had killed. After careful visual inspection with the assistance of a veterinarian, it was decided that the snow leopard was fit for release. The snow leopard was released on April 15 in the Khunjerab National Buffer zone, approximately 15 kilometers from the location where it was caught. A group of 30-40 villagers gathered for the release.

A fond farewell for captured snow leopard.

This story is a heartening one for conservation efforts to protect the endangered snow leopard. As ISLT's Hillard said on the CNN report, we are thrilled "that this villager, watching his livelihood disappear down the throat of a snow leopard, had the presence of mind not to kill it." The village response shows that the intensive educational campaign by ISLT, WWF-Pakistan, and other conservation groups is working. As Ulfat Karim said, "We could have hit it with something and killed it. But we decided to let it go. There are very few in the area."

Villagers prepare to release captured snow leopard.

In May, CNN Television broadcast a report on the capture and release. With video and interviews shot at the scene by WWF-Pakistan, and interviews by CNN of ISLT's field conservation staff, Rod Jackson and Daria Jillard, the report was broadcast throughout the world.

WWF-Pakistan and ISLT presented special certificates of appreciation to Ulfat Karim and the village of Jamalabad. ISLT also presented a small cash award to