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Pakistan Confirms 167 Wild Snow Leopards Exist

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Pakistan has released its first-ever scientific estimate of the snow leopard population, confirming that 167 of these elusive big cats inhabit the country's northern mountainous regions. This landmark announcement marks a major advancement in Pakistan's conservation science and places the country fourth among the 12 snow leopard range nations, following China, Mongolia, and India.

The official figure was unveiled during the Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards 2025, an event jointly hosted by the Snow Leopard Foundation and the Ministry of Climate Change

and Environmental Coordination. The estimate is the result of several years of field research involving camera traps, on-the-ground tracking, and genetic sampling of scat and other biological material. Officials and conservationists hailed the data as a critical step forward in understanding and protecting one of the world's most elusive and endangered predators.

The awards ceremony also featured the debut screening of a new documentary titled *Beyond Borders: The Heartbeat of Chitral Rangers*. The film provides an inside look at the daily lives and hardships of wildlife rangers tasked with safeguarding high-altitude ecosystems, particularly in the remote valleys of northern Pakistan. It aims to highlight the dedication of these frontline conservation workers who endure extreme conditions to protect rare species such as the snow leopard.

Representatives from the Ministry and the Snow Leopard Foundation reiterated their commitment to expanding conservation efforts and deepening research into vulnerable species across the country. They stressed that reliable data is essential for designing effective conservation strategies, particularly in light of increasing threats such as habitat loss, prey depletion, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict.

Snow leopards are classified as “vulnerable” on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. Globally, the species faces a range of challenges, including climate change, infrastructure development, and livestock encroachment in its native habitats. In this context, the confirmation of 167 individuals within Pakistan gives the country a significant role in the regional and global effort to preserve the species.

China is estimated to have the largest population of snow leopards, with numbers ranging between 2,000 and 2,500 due to its vast high-altitude ranges such as the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Mongolia follows with approximately 1,000 snow leopards, while India is believed to host between 500 and 700, primarily in its Himalayan belt.

Globally, between 3,500 and 7,000 snow leopards are thought to survive across 12 countries in Central and South Asia. With a confirmed 167 individuals, Pakistan emerges as a key player in the long-term survival of the species and a growing leader in scientific wildlife conservation.

This milestone not only enhances Pakistan's standing in global conservation efforts but also underlines the importance of continued investment in research, ranger support, and community-based initiatives to protect the country's fragile mountain biodiversity.

