

Amur Leopard

Panthera pardus orientalis



Physical Characteristics

- Males are typically larger than females.
- The hairs of its summer pelt are 1 in. (2.5 cm) thick but in winter they are replaced by a thick coat of hair that is 2.75 in. (7 cm) long.
- Its winter coat is lighter yellow in color than its more reddish-yellow summer coat.
- The Amur leopard's spot pattern is easily distinguishable from other leopard subspecies by its widely spaced rosettes with thick borders.
- It typically has longer legs than other subspecies of leopards which is thought to be an adaptation for walking through snow.

Size

- Length: 3.5-4.5 ft.
- Weight: 80-200 lbs.

Lifespan

- In the Wild: 10-15 years
- In Zoos: Up to 20 years

Behaviors

- Activity cycle: Mainly nocturnal.
- Social structure: Predominantly solitary.

Diet

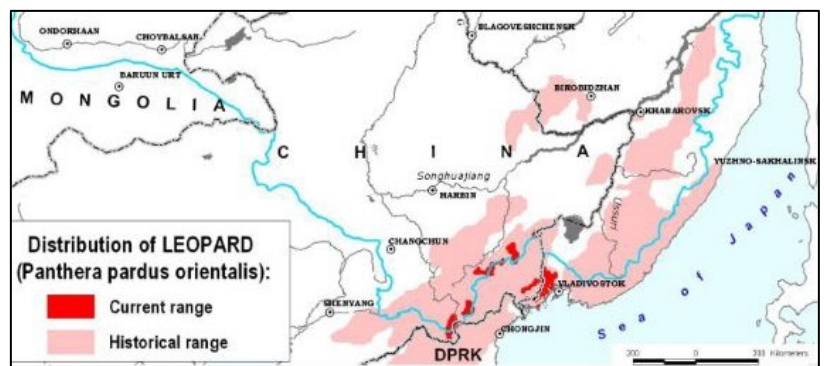
- In the Wild: The main prey species are roe deer and sika deer, small wild boars, along with hares, badgers and raccoon dogs.
- In the Zoo: Feline diet, formulated for zoo cats which includes different proportions of beef and horse meat. Each cat's daily diet is weighed out and specific to that cat's dietary needs. They may also get rabbit or venison on occasion.

Reproduction

- Gestation Period: 92-95 days
- Parenting: The cubs are weaned when they are three months old, and leave their mother when they are 1 ½ - 2 years old.
- Litter Size: 1-4 cubs
- Breeding Behaviors: Attains sexual maturity at 3-4 years and breeds in spring and early summer. Some males stay with females after mating, and may even help with rearing the young. Several males sometimes follow and fight over a female.

Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Temperate forests of Far Eastern Russia (this means they experience harsh winters with extreme cold and deep snow, as well as hot summers).
- Range: Russian Far East and Northeast China. (Previously included the Amur River basin, the mountains of northeastern China and the Korean peninsula.)



Conservation

- **IUCN Status:** Critically Endangered
- Extremely compromised due to illegal poaching, habitat loss, and prey scarcity as these are hunted by local villagers. These problems would need to be addressed before a wild release program was in place.
- The forests where these cats live is very accessible due to the villages and agricultural lands surrounding them. Sadly, this accessibility makes poaching of the cats and their prey that much easier.
- The Amur leopard is considered to be one of the most critically endangered big cats in the world with only 34 remaining in the wilds of the Russian Far East in 2001.
- In 2012, the Russian government set aside nearly 650,000 acres to include all of the Amur leopard's breeding areas and about 60 percent of its remaining habitat. This area is called Land of the Leopard National Park.
- In 2018, Land of the Leopard National Park announced that within its borders, the Amur leopard population had increased to 84 adults with 19 cubs or adolescents for a total of 103 cats. This was the first time in decades that the Amur leopard population exceeded 100 animals.

Classification

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Subphylum: Vertebrata
- Class: Mammalia
- Order: Carnivora
- Family: Felidae
- Genus: *Panthera*
- Species: *P. pardus*
- Subspecies: *P. p. orientalis*

Interesting Facts

- Their tongue has tiny rasps or hooks, called denticles, which are used to scrape the meat off of the bones of their prey.
- Their small wild population makes them extremely susceptible to natural catastrophes such as fires, and inbreeding problems (compromised genetics).
- Captive breeding programs plan far in advance for genetic diversity, often times before cubs are even born.