
Clouded leopard 98 Fact Sheet (7/1/98)

Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*)

Description: The Clouded leopard is sometimes described as bridging the gap between large and small cats. The body is long with short legs and a long, bushy tail. The base coat varies in color from a pale to yellowish brown. There are two black bands on the cheeks and sides of the head. Ears are short, black and rounded with gray central patches. The body of the clouded leopard is covered with irregular dark stripes, spots and blotches. Blotches are darker in color than the background and are partially edged in black. The underside of the body is white with black spots. Black rings encircle the tail. There are reports in the literature of melanistic individuals. This leopard possesses relatively longer upper canine teeth (3.81-4.44 cm) than any other living feline. It does not roar like large cats but does possess an ossified hyoid making it possible for the cat to purr. Generally clouded leopards weight between 35 and 50 pounds and are 10 to 16 inches high at the shoulder. Males are generally much larger than females. One to four young are born after a gestation period of 85-100 days.

Range: Historically the Clouded leopard was found from Nepal to Indochina, Indonesia, southern China and Taiwan. Four sub-species are recognized:

Neofelis nebulosa brachyurus: Taiwan. Possibly extinct in the wild.

Neofelis nebulosa diardi: Sumatra, Borneo and Java

Neofelis nebulosa macrosceloides: Nepal to Burma

Neofelis nebulosa nebulosa: Southern China to East Burma

Habitat : Once thought to be highly arboreal recent evidence indicates the Clouded leopard does spend considerable amount of time on the ground. Its arboreal talents are numerous-it can hang upside down from branches by its hind feet, climb on horizontal branches with its back to the ground and run headfirst down tree trunks. These talents are most likely utilized to move into and out of the trees with trees used as resting sites with other activities (hunting, movement within home range) being terrestrial. Clouded leopards are most closely associated with primary evergreen tropical rainforest but do utilize other types of habitat such as secondary and logged forest, dry tropical forest, mangrove swamps, grassland and

scrub. Sightings at elevations as high as 1,450 meters in the Himalayans have been reported. Primarily nocturnal.

Diet: Birds, primates (proboscis monkey, pig-tail and other macaques, gibbons), muntjac and wild boar. Clouded leopards stalk from the ground and ambush from the trees.

Social Organization: Due to their highly secretive nature virtually nothing is known of the clouded leopard's habits in the wild. Knowledge of its social behavior is based on observations of this species in zoological institutions. In captivity they are typically housed with the same mate for life once they are paired. Mating pairs are most successful when animals are introduced by one year of age.

Conservation Status: The cat is listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red Data Book, Appendix I species under CITES and Endangered under the United States Endangered Species Act. The species is estimated to be in decline based upon the decreasing number of sightings of live clouded leopards by resident peoples within its range.

Threats to survival: Clear cutting of forests for use as agricultural lands is the primary threat to Clouded leopards in the wild as these cats require large tracts of land for hunting. The cat is also widely hunted for its pelt; teeth and bones are used in traditional Asian medicine. Clouded leopard pelts are commonly available in urban markets in some range countries. It has also been featured on menus in restaurants in China and Thailand.

Zoo Programs-SSP: There are 32 facilities managing 115 Clouded leopards in the SSP program. All animals are managed at the species level as no accurate information exists regarding sub-specific designation for most cats in the SSP population. Goals for the SSP program include stabilizing demographics, improving genetics via the introduction of new founders, developing projects to address captive management issues and developing in-situ programs.

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rev. 7/98

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