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National Parks and Utilization of Wildlife Resources

THE MAMMALS OF AFGHANISTAN
Their Distribution and Status

Felids

by

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Flesh Eating Mammals

CARNIVORA:

The Carnivora stand fourth in actual numbers of living types (species) being surpassed by rodents, the even-toed ungulates and the bats. In number of families they stand third. Six of the seven known families are represented in Afghanistan. The number of species are distributed on the following basis according to families:

Cats (<u>Felidae</u>) 10	Mongoose (<u>Viverridae</u>) 2
Mustelids (<u>Mustelidae</u>) 8	Bears (<u>Ursidae</u>) 2
Dogs (<u>Canidae</u>) 5	Hyaenas (<u>Hyaenidae</u>) 1

Owing to their different characteristics carnivores are able to survive under varying conditions and thus are widely distributed throughout the country. Species distribution in the life zones of Afghanistan is on the following basis:

Central Highlands: Species endemic to the Hindu Kush range are the snow leopard, lynx and Pallas's cat. Wolf and red fox are widely scattered in most parts of the highlands throughout the country also. Stone marten, ermine and weasel are characteristic mustelids of this region.

Steppes: The jungle cat, caracal and to some extent the desert cat are typical of the steppes. Jackal abound here while the corsac fox occurs in isolated pockets. Marbled polecat, striped hyaena, and red fox are other typical residents while the badger is sometimes encountered. The common otter is to be found along river banks of this region.

Southern semi-deserts: This region does not have a widespread carnivorous distribution. Cheetah, jackal, sand fox, small Indian mongoose and marbled polecat together with the more abundantly distributed wolf and red fox occur here.

Monsoon forests: The leopard cat, yellow-throated marten and the Asiatic black bear are species peculiar to the forests. The leopard, snow leopard, wolf, jackal and common otter also inhabit this region.

Panthera pardus

(Linnaeus, 1758)

Leopard

Local names:

Pashto: prang

Dari: palang

Distribution: Distributed in all of the major mountain ranges, the leopard inhabits the Hindu Kush, Kohe Baba, Kohe Paghman ranges of the central highlands, the Wakhan Corridor and Darkad peninsula of Badakhshan. Despite habitat destruction it has still maintained a foothold in the Khost Fereng and Salang mountains in northern Baghlan province (Sultani 1975. pers. comm.). A specimen shot by Kullman was taken from the Lataband Pass between Kabul and Sarobi. Other records from eastern sections of the country are from the Logar Valley, Dare Pech in Kunar and along the border zone near Torkham (Kullmann 1965). During a field trip to the Ajar Valley in October 1976 a hunting party encountered a leopard in the Surkhab bowl while looking for ibex. The animal however, escaped unharmed.

Habitats: 1500 - 4000 m. Rugged mountains, coniferous forests, plains, semi-deserts and hilly steppes.

Status: Endangered. A good market for furs has decreased numbers in most of their former habitats. Encountered rarely in some of the most remote and rugged montane regions. Considered a notorious killer of domestic animals leopards are chased by hunting parties when they cause considerable damage to livestock. Rodenburg (1977) estimates about 80 - 100 animals are taken annually to supply the burgeoning fur market.