



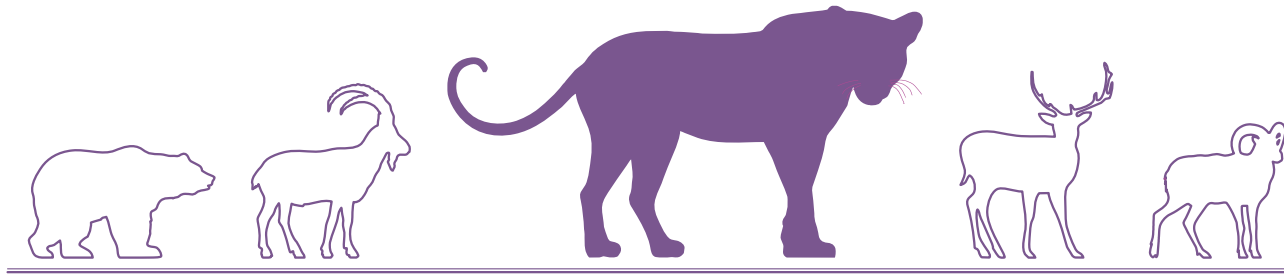
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THE CAUCASIAN LEOPARD IN ARMENIA



THE CAUCASIAN

LEOPARD IN ARMENIA



The Leopard and its Prey Species

Leopard is part of Armenia's biodiversity, one of the rare and valuable representatives of our country's Fauna. The number of Leopards in Armenia does not exceed 10 individuals.

The Leopard is found in the provinces of Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik. There is information that the Leopard also lived in the Tavush province in the areas of Berd and Ijevan.



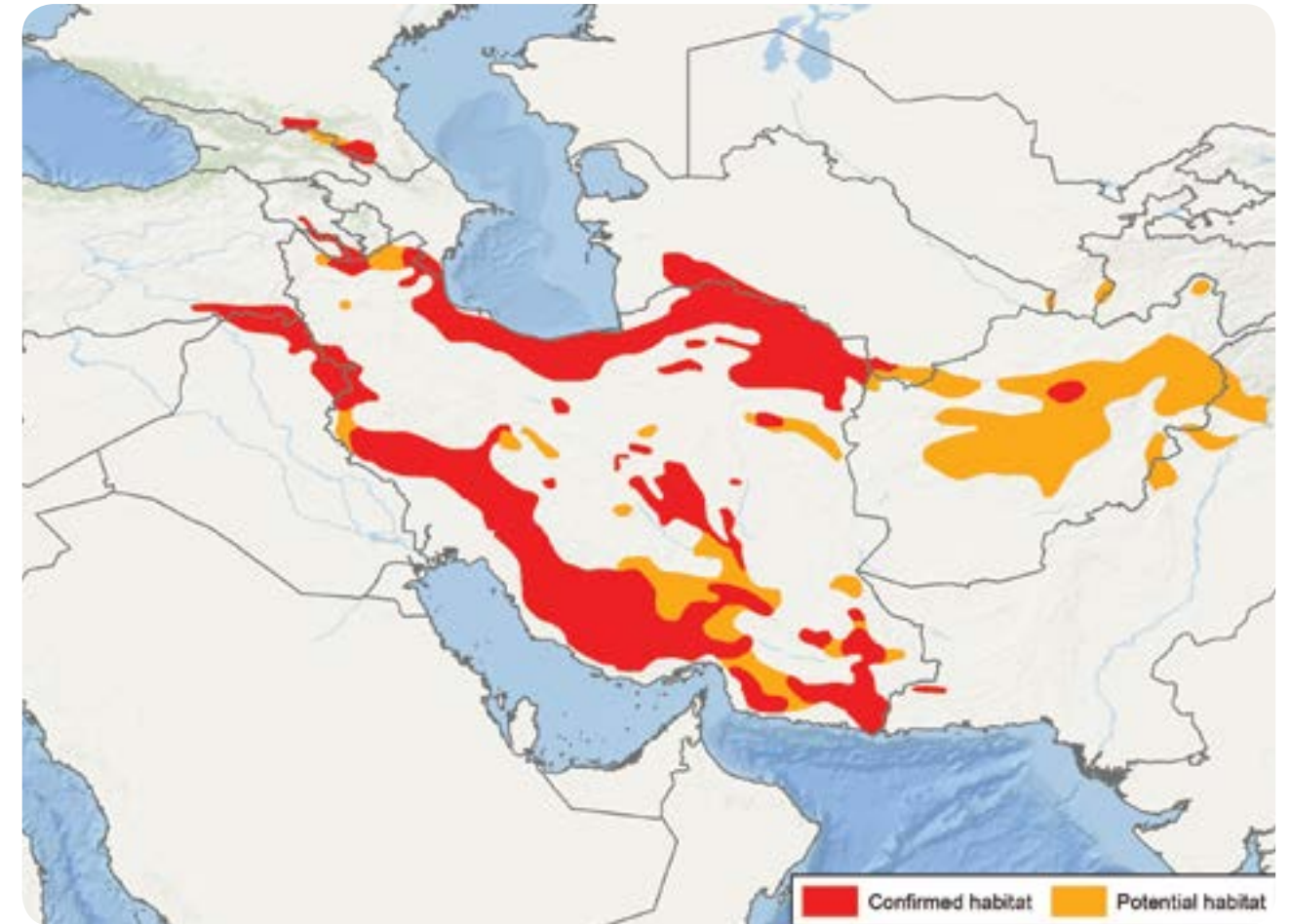
The Leopard has been known in Armenia since time immemorial, as evidenced by numerous carvings, ornaments and miniatures on historical monuments, literature accounts, however, as a result of reckless hunting in the second half of the last century, the animal went on the brink of extinction.



In 1972 the Soviet authorities banned hunting of Leopards, setting a fine for poaching them.



In 1987 the Leopard was registered in the USSR Red Data Book.



The Distribution of the Caucasian Leopard

In Armenia, the Leopard lives in mountain with abundance of rocks, frequently in forested areas. It is a wonderful swimmer and an agile climber.

Caves, rocks and dense bushes serve as hideouts for the Leopard. The hard-to-reach rocks are also important to the animal as key areas for hunting. Its prey species includes the Bezoar Goat, Wild Boar, European Roe Deer, Indian Porcupine, and other animals.

In Armenia, there is a Caucasian also known as Persian Leopard (*Panthera pardus tulliana*) subspecies which is listed in the Red Data Book of Armenia and on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

As for the number of Caucasian Leopards, there are up to 800-1000 individuals remain in the wild.

The Leopard requires large territories and frequently moves from country to country. Because of this fact transboundary cooperation for the conservation of the Leopard is extremely important.

Since 2002, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Ministry of Environment of Armenia have been jointly implementing the Leopard Conservation Project in Armenia.

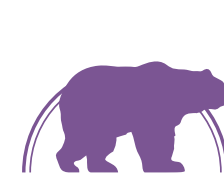


WWF Armenia and the Ministry of Environment of Armenia are jointly monitoring the Leopard and its prey species in order to organize their conservation in a most effective way.

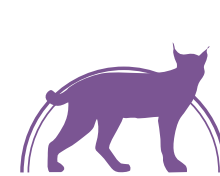
The main purpose of this monitoring system is to find out the dynamics of population size and the specifics of their movements. In addition to monitoring of the Leopard, the system enables the tracking of the Armenian Mouflon, Bezoar Goat, Brown Bear, Eurasian Lynx, European Roe Deer, Wild Boar and other animals.



Bezoar Goat



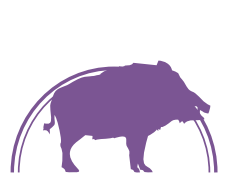
Brown Bear



Eurasian Lynx



Armenian
Mouflon



Wild Boar

Animals walk along the paths where we have installed trail cameras to study wildlife.

The localities of the Leopard and other threatened fauna are kept undisclosed on safety grounds to avoid possible poaching. Unfortunately, Leopard poaching has been reported in the past.

In addition to camera trapping, WWF Armenia specialists conduct field studies and monitor the target animals via direct observations.

Monitoring is carried out by the rangers of protected areas, members of the Leopard Caretakers Network, inspectors of the Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body of Armenia, etc.

Our cameras first captured the Leopard in 2005 in the Meghri Mountains.

MONITORING





Since then, other Leopards have also been regularly recorded through trail cameras. Individual Leopards can be distinguished in the pictures by their spot patterns: the spot patterns of each animal are as unique as human fingerprints.

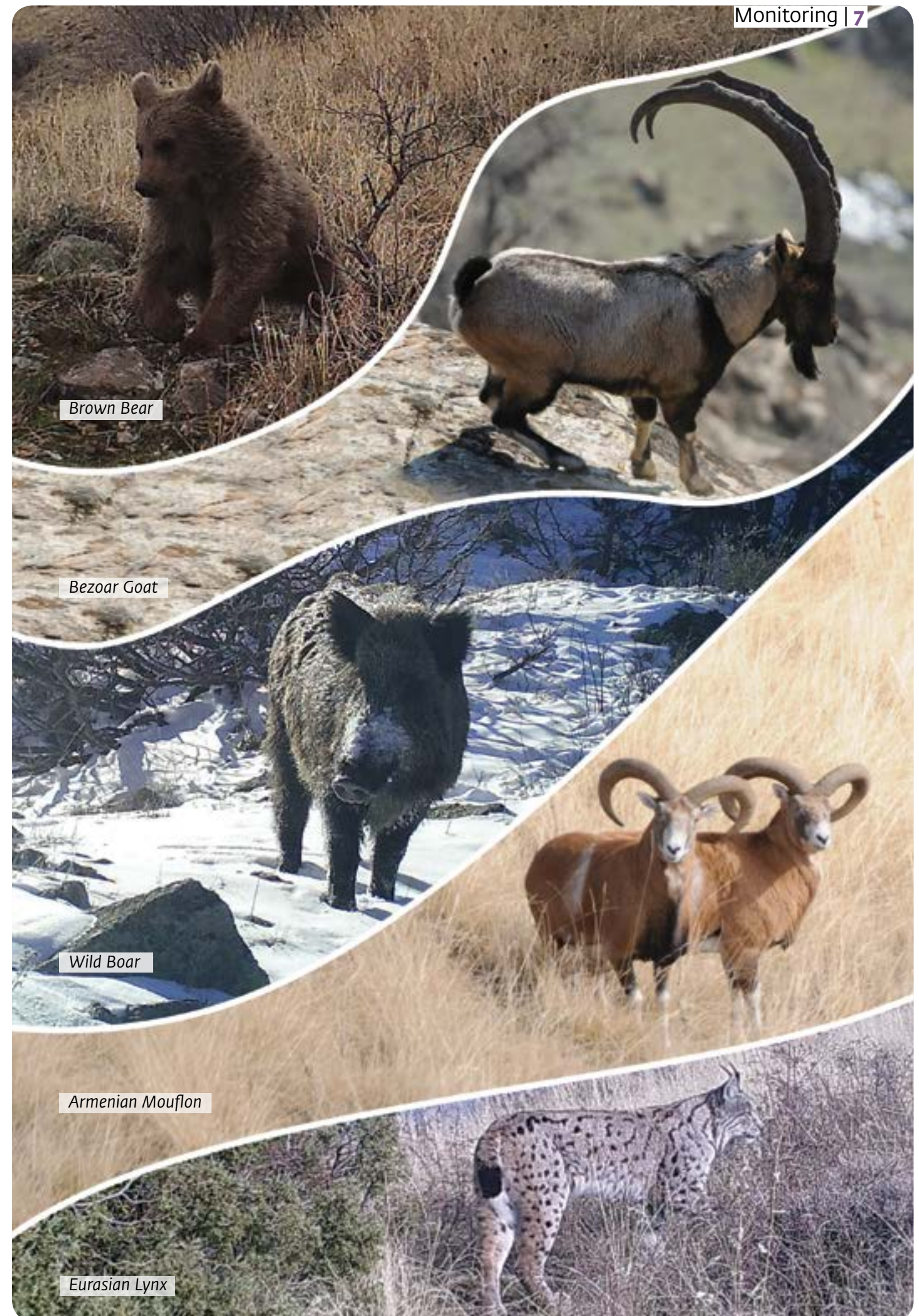
In the beginning of winter 2018, for the first time in the Khosrov Forest State Reserve, WWF Armenia trail cameras have photographed a Caucasian Leopard.



Caucasian Leopard

By the way, the animal pictured in the photo is one of the cubs born in the southern foothills of the Zangezur mountain range in 2016 who is named Neo. As soon as he matured and separated from his mother, Neo crossed more than 170 kilometers and reached the Khosrov Forest State Reserve, avoiding many dangers along the way.

The Government of the Republic of Armenia declared 2019 as the Year of the Caucasian Leopard and this year another Leopard was photographed by our partner the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC) in privately-owned protected area in Ararat and Vayots Dzor provinces. The first case has been registered in Armenia when a Leopard was photographed by a human, by the Arpa Protected Landscape rangers.



Brown Bear

Bezoar Goat

Wild Boar

Armenian Mouflon

Eurasian Lynx



PROTECTION

The main goal of the Leopard Conservation in Armenia project is to restore the population of the Caucasian Leopard from the verge of extinction, to protect the habitat of the Leopard and its prey species as well as the protection and stabilization of ecological processes in the region.

The main Leopard habitats in Armenia are found in the southern parts of the country.

The Leopards, especially males require large individual territories which can range from 5,000 to 20,000 hectares.

In 2017, a working group of more than 100 specialists from the WWF, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), representatives of the governmental, scientific and non-governmental organizations developed a new Regional Strategy of Leopard Conservation in the Caucasus Ecoregion, outlining the joint efforts of regional countries towards Leopard conservation.

Since 2002, WWF Armenia has been collaborating with the Ministry of Environment (MoE), protected areas of MoE, the Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body of Armenia, the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF), local communities, NGOs and scientific institutions aiming to promote Leopard conservation in the southern parts of Armenia.



Protected areas (PA) play a crucial role in the conservation of the Leopard: Khosrov Forest and Shikahogh State Reserves, Arevik National Park, Zangezur and Khustup State Sanctuaries and community conserved areas.

For the protection of Leopard, as well as other animal and plant species, four new protected areas have been established in the southern parts of Armenia: Arevik National Park, Zangezur and Khustup State Sanctuaries, and Arpa (formerly Gnishik) Protected Landscape, and existing protected areas have been reinforced: the Khosrov Forest and Shikahogh State Reserves. All together, these PAs cover the main Leopard habitats with a total area of 76,687 ha.

To increase the efficiency of Leopard conservation, WWF is constantly supporting protected areas by providing equipment, designing and refurbishing infrastructure, providing vehicles, fuel, as well as monitoring and protection equipment.

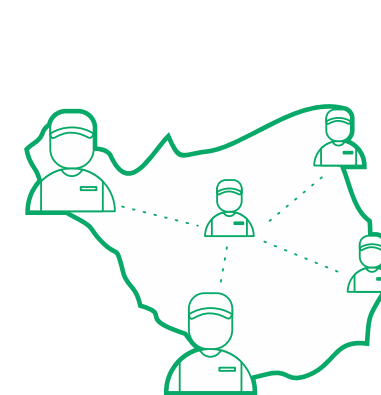
The WWF has also provided logistical support to the Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body of Armenia's territorial divisions of Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik for the protection of the Leopard outside of the PAs.



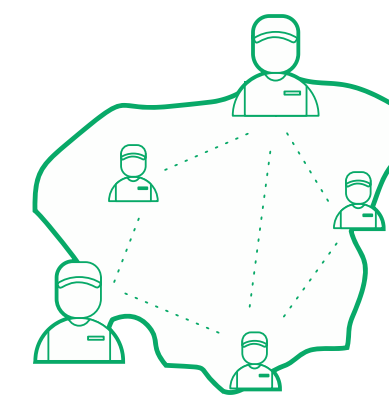


LEOPARD

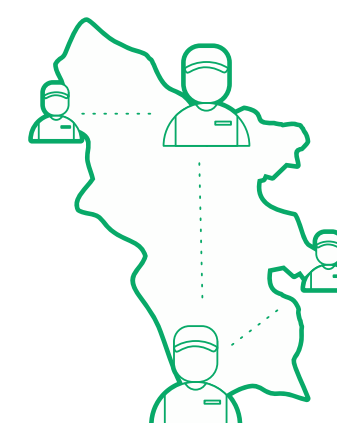
CARETAKERS NETWORK



Ararat province



Vayots Dzor province



Syunik province

Within the framework of the Leopard Conservation Project, WWF is implementing the Leopard Caretakers Network initiative, which aims to unite public and to protect the Leopard and its prey species by strengthening the conservation mechanisms. Currently, the network consists of 20 local people from different target areas.

Local enthusiasts were selected from the communities adjacent to Leopard habitats, which carry out monitoring and field studies to support nature conservation. Both theoretical and practical trainings are regularly organized for the caretakers. They are also provided with the necessary field equipment.

The Leopard Caretakers Network is an innovative approach in the field of nature protection and is aimed at promoting community engagement in biodiversity monitoring and conservation.

There are currently Leopard Caretakers groups operating in a number of communities in the provinces of Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik. The caretakers make regular site visits to conduct field studies and observations, install trail cameras, and more.





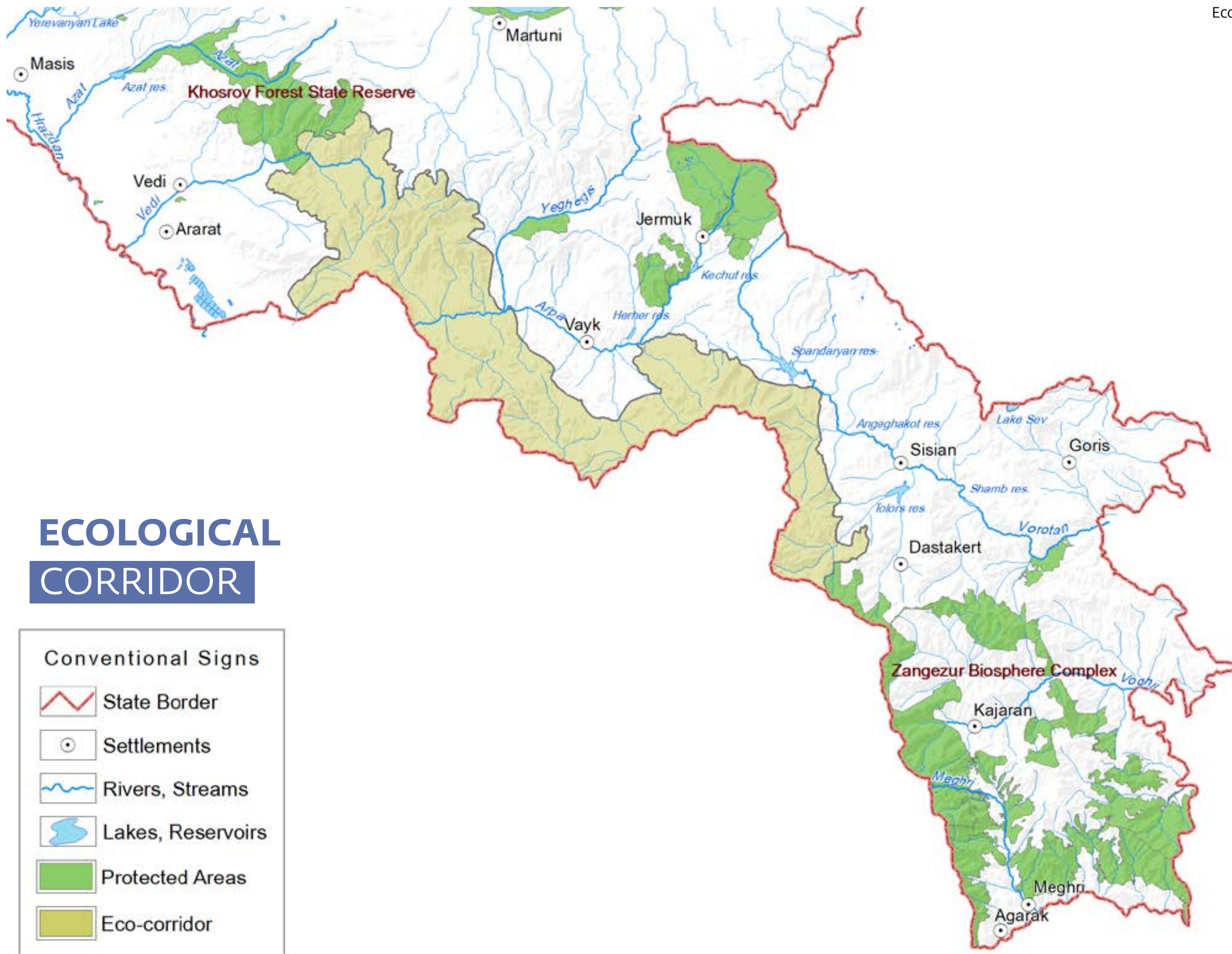
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

WWF Armenia implements a variety of community development activities in the target areas within the framework of the project.

Community involvement ensures the sustainability of conservation measures in the surrounding areas.

Implemented community activities include the provision of agricultural machinery to 7 communities, the rehabilitation and construction of drinking water infrastructure in 18 communities, the installation of street lighting in 8 communities, building a playground for children in the Karchevan settlement, setting up a solar power plant for Nrnadzor secondary school and so on.







WWF Armenia is implementing the Promotion of Eco-corridors in the Southern Caucasus regional project in Armenia. Ecological corridors are natural areas necessary for the safe movement of wildlife, linking the protected areas to each other.

Leopard conservation is impossible without protecting its prey species. The Leopard is not only flagship species, but it also stands as an umbrella species in relation to other animals coexisting with him in the same habitats.

The Ecological Corridors Project supports communities by promoting effective land management, conservation and socio-economic development.

More than 1.5 million Euros have already been invested in the current phase of the project. The communities were provided with logistical support, community conserved areas were created and residents were involved in the biodiversity conservation processes.



ECO-EDUCATION



Eco-education and raising conservation awareness are important components of WWF Armenia projects.

We regularly conduct various educational activities, including seminars in schools, field study visits for students and so on.

We also collaborate with universities, particularly Yerevan State University, Humboldt University Berlin, and other educational institutions, engaging students in research.

WWF Armenia's recent successful eco-education initiatives include the "Junior Ranger Program" educational initiative and the "Take a Photo With A Leopard" environmental information campaign.



In 2017, in partnership with X-TECH company, WWF Armenia launched the "Take a Photo With Leopard" environmental information campaign. A three-dimensional animated image of a Leopard was created and accessible with the ARLOOPA mobile app.

The use of Augmented Reality (AR) has been an innovative approach to raise public awareness about threatened species, and our successful experience has subsequently gained popularity abroad (Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, etc.).

You can also make a Leopard "come to life" and take a picture with it by scanning the image on the back of this brochure via the ARLOOPA mobile app.



In 2017-2018, for the first time in Armenia, WWF Armenia, Ayb School and Arpa Protected Landscape jointly implemented the Junior Rangers Program educational initiative. Schoolchildren from Areni and Khachik communities adjacent to the Arpa Protected Landscape were also involved in the program.

The purpose of the initiative was to involve young people in the environmental processes of our country, as well as to promote eco-education and ecotourism in protected areas.

The youth carried out field observations and research on their own, creating and blazing hiking trails, installing information signs, participating in awareness-raising activities in the surrounding communities, and so on.



ABOUT THE WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE

ARMENIAN BRANCH

The World Wide Fund for Nature was established in 1961 and has about 5 million permanent supporters. The goal of the organization is to prevent the degradation of the natural environment, to raise funds for nature conservation and to conserve the threatened species of flora and fauna.

WWF Armenia has been implementing projects in Armenia since 2002. WWF Armenia was officially registered in 2006.

The main directions of WWF Armenia activities are:



development of the Protected Area System,



conservation and restoration of threatened species and habitats,



the conservation of forest ecosystems,



mitigation of the impact of climate change,



raising the level of environmental awareness and education.



For more detailed information about our activities visit our website:

www.wwf.am or www.leopard.am

Address: 11/1 Proshyan str., Yerevan 0019, Republic of Armenia

Tel: +37410 54-61-56

Email: office_am@wwfcaucasus.org



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