

119 Conservation of clouded leopards (*Neofelis nebulosa*, *Neofelis diardi*) (IUCN VU) as a top priority umbrella species for south and southeast Asia

RECOGNISING that there are two different species of clouded leopards (*Neofelis nebulosa*, *N. diardi*) with distinct conservation needs across Asia;

CONCERNED that populations of both clouded leopard species have declined by approximately one-third over the past 21 years;

AWARE that ecologically, clouded leopards are small “big cats”, not large “small cats”, as their population characteristics are consistent with other large felids;

FURTHER CONCERNED that there are likely no more than 5,000 individuals of each clouded leopard species, fewer than tigers, making them the two rarest big cats in the world;

OBSERVING that because clouded leopards are largely dependent on tropical evergreen and subtropical deciduous forests, they are also effective flagship and umbrella species for the many smaller co-occurring felid and other carnivore species of equal or higher threatened status, as well as potential prey species;

CONCERNED that indiscriminate snaring and other forms of poaching, urban expansion and development, and the conversion of tropical forests for unsustainable agricultural practices, present the direst threats to clouded leopards and most southeast Asian mammals;

FURTHER CONCERNED about the growing illegal trade in clouded leopard populations for their parts, including pelts, teeth, skulls, claws and other bones;

NOTING that much illegal trade occurs regionally close to the Myanmar border, and thus officially goes unnoticed or unreported; and

BEARING IN MIND that the conservation of clouded leopards should:

- a. be guided by the best available science;
- b. be collaborative amongst local peoples, governments and conservation practitioners;
- c. directly involve the participation and knowledge of diverse Indigenous nations that share their ranges; and
- d. whenever possible, directly benefit Indigenous forest peoples, and rural communities;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. CALLS ON the Director General and IUCN Commissions to request all current and former range states to conserve clouded leopards by:

- a. recognising their unique ecological role as key indicator, umbrella, keystone and flagship species;
- b. establishing effective conservation and law enforcement programmes to end poaching, illegal live trade, and illegal trade in their parts;
- c. promoting sustainable agroforestry and other biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices;
- d. empowering Indigenous peoples with more governance autonomy to protect tropical forest ecosystems;
- e. strengthening integration of protected areas with sustainable working landscapes to create more buffer zones and biological corridors;

- f. enhancing protection and restoration of key prey species;
- g. investing in critical ecological research;
- h. developing national conservation action plans; and
- i. partnering with conservation scientists, practitioners and ex situ breeding facilities, to rewild clouded leopards to suitable habitat; and

2. URGES the Director General, IUCN Members and multi-lateral development organisations to protect clouded leopards by:

- a. establishing joint agendas with conservation action;
- b. incorporating safeguards into public development and infrastructure investments; and
- c. sponsoring an event that convenes range states, experts, practitioners and Indigenous nations, to create a Conservation Road Map for Asia.