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the major river. Records of tigers using the dry river bed to cross over from forests in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh suggest that this forest might have been an important tiger habitat as well. In the north the forest is contiguous with the Simbalwada Wildlife Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh. In this setting KNPS is an important habitat island at the extreme end of the Terai Arc Landscape that needs urgent conservation efforts.

An interesting finding from this study is that the forest of Kalesar supports three small cats: jungle cat, leopard cat and the rusty-spotted cat. It would be interesting to investigate further the niche segregation and the level of competition among these felids in a small forest like Kalesar. Niche segregation has been a popular topic in studying the big cats like the tiger and leopard in Indian forests, but there is almost no data available on the resource use and partitioning in small cats. KNPS provides an excellent location to study small cats and their intraguild interactions which are little known.

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Detection of a snow leopard population in northern Bortala, Xinjiang, China

We substantiate the presence of snow leopards Panthera uncia using camera traps within the Dzungarian Alatau range in Bortala Mongolia Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang Province, China. A total of 13 camera trap stations were set up in 2012 and a total of 14 camera trap stations in 2013 within an area of 192 km². A total of 11-15 individual adult snow leopards and two sub adults were identified from photo captures of sufficient quality. A range of human activities were noted within the area of 192 km². The average distance between camera traps was 1.1 km (SD=1.08; Range 0.25 -2.6 km). Cameras were left active for 20 days in 2012 from April-May and for 26 days in 2013, from June-July. This resulted in a total of 146 trap days in 2012 and 488 trap days in 2013. Capture incidences were reviewed independently by three separate observers to identify individual snow leopards (Fig. 2 & Fig. 3).

Using photos of sufficient quality from both years 11-15 individual adult snow leopards and two sub adults were identified within the area of 192 km². The precise total was uncertain as on some occasions the frontal or rear features only were captured and we could not therefore be sure that the four
snow leopard in northern Bortala, Xinjiang, China

Fig. 1. Location of Santai National Forest, along the boundary of Bole and Jinghe counties (44.32° N / 81.18° E). The black dots indicate the camera trap locations of 2012 and 2013.

Fig. 2. Snow leopard photographed in Bortala on 24 April 2012 (Photo Wildlife Institute BFU).

Fig. 3. Snow leopard photographed in Bortala on 15 June 2013 (Photo Wildlife Institute BFU).

captures were distinct separate individuals. One family group of presumably an adult female and two sub-adults were captured three times together in 2013, confirming that the population is breeding. Snow leopard photographs were taken at elevations of 2,000–2,600 m. In addition a range of different species were captured on camera including potential prey such as Himalaya marmot Marmota himalayana, ibex Capra ibex, yak Bos mutus and red deer Cervus elaphus, as well as other carnivore species such as grey wolf Canis lupus and red fox Vulpes vulpes.

Within the survey area limited human activities are permitted, including livestock herding and tourism. Livestock herders seasonally migrate across pastures with their families and livestock. Local livestock herders and the local forestry staff have reported that snow leopards are responsible for relatively few livestock predation events. They however raised concerns about the potential threat posed by mining and road building activities within the area to snow leopards and other species.

This new information substantiates the presence of snow leopards in a part of Xinjiang Province China that offers a number of mountain ranges with favourable habitat and that borders with Kazakhstan where monitoring and conservation efforts are currently improving. We are now undertaking more long-term ecological surveys across larger areas together with a social survey in order to build a more detailed understanding of potential human wildlife conflict and snow leopard population dynamics.

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