

**WOOLLY FLYING SQUIRREL *EUPETAURUS CINEREUS*:  
A NEW ADDITION TO THE DIET OF SNOW LEOPARD *PANTHERA UNCIA*<sup>1</sup>**

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The Snow Leopard *Panthera uncia* is the apex predator and flagship species for conservation of high altitude mountain regions of South Asia. Studies on the diet of Snow Leopard, carried out in different parts of its distribution



Fig. 1: Woolly Flying Squirrel, photographed in Srikant and Harsil valleys in Upper Bhagirathi Basin near Gangotri National Park; can be identified from its dark-coloured dense fur, bushy tail, and large size



Fig. 2: Snow Leopard in Chorgadh area of Upper Bhagirathi Basin with the kill of Woolly Flying Squirrel

(Anwar *et al.* 2011; Bashir 2013; Oli 1993; Shehzad *et al.* 2012), revealed that snow leopards rely on a limited number of large prey species, including wild and domestic ungulates, and small prey such as weasels, hares, marmots, squirrels, and birds. In this note, we present the first report of the presence of the rare and Endangered (Zahler 2010) Woolly Flying Squirrel *Eupetaurus cinereus* in the diet of Snow Leopard.

The Woolly Flying Squirrel is one of the largest gliding mammals (Zahler 2001; Zahler and Woods 1997) and can be easily distinguished from the other flying squirrel species based on grizzled-grey fur and cylindrical tail (Zahler 1996). Based on camera trapping, we confirmed the presence of Woolly Flying Squirrel in temperate, subalpine, and alpine regions of Bhagirathi Basin in Uttarakhand, India (Pal *et al.* 2018). A camera-trap was deployed in the subalpine habitat of Chorgadh Valley at 3,500 m above msl, in the buffer zone of Gangotri National Park, a transition zone between the moist and dry alpine areas of Greater and Trans Himalaya. On November 24, 2017, at 04:00 hrs, a Snow Leopard carrying a freshly killed, dark-coloured, large flying squirrel was camera trapped (Fig. 2). The squirrel was identified as Woolly Flying Squirrel based on dark-coloured dense fur; cylindrical, bushy and grizzled-grey tail (not flattened); and considerably large size (Zahler 1996). Woolly Flying Squirrel has been captured in camera traps earlier in the adjacent Srikant and Harsil valleys (Pal *et al.* 2018) (Fig. 1). This incident reports the presence of the Woolly Flying Squirrel *Eupetaurus cinereus* in the diet of Snow Leopard *Panthera uncia*.

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