

Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan (CAP), Key Features

August 6, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



India launched the **Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan (CAP)** on **International Clouded Leopard Day (4 August 2026)** to strengthen the long-term conservation of the species across Northeast India.

About Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan (CAP)

The **Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan (CAP)** is India's first dedicated national strategy for conserving the Clouded Leopard.

- Prepared by the **Wildlife Institute of India** under the **Government of India-Global Environment Facility (GEF)-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** initiative.
- It was released during the 91st meeting of the Standing Committee of the **National Board for Wild Life** held at Coimbatore in July 2026.
- The Action Plan adopts a landscape-based approach that integrates habitat protection, scientific monitoring, technology, community participation and climate-resilient conservation to secure the species across Northeast India.

Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Key Features

The Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan provides a comprehensive framework for conserving the Clouded Leopard. Its key features include:

- **Identifies 14 priority conservation landscapes** across Northeast India to focus conservation efforts in the species' key habitats.
- **Promotes habitat restoration and wildlife corridor conservation** to reconnect fragmented forests and improve ecological connectivity.
- Includes the Clouded Leopard under the **Species Recovery Programme of the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH) Scheme**, strengthening institutional support for conservation.
- Introduces standardised **scientific monitoring** using camera traps, occupancy surveys, genetic analysis and **environmental DNA (eDNA)** to improve knowledge of the species and its habitat.
- **Strengthens species protection** through anti-poaching measures, wildlife crime prevention, capacity building of frontline staff and the use of the **M-STrIPES** application.
- **Promotes community participation, transboundary cooperation and climate-resilient management** to ensure the species' long-term survival.

Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Significance

The **Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan** marks an important step towards strengthening species conservation through an integrated and long-term approach.

- Provides India's first dedicated roadmap for the long-term conservation and recovery of the Clouded Leopard.
- Strengthens conservation of Northeast India's forests by protecting habitats and improving ecological connectivity.
- Promotes science-based wildlife management through modern monitoring techniques and technology-driven conservation.
- Empowers local communities by linking wildlife conservation with sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- Enhances cooperation with neighbouring range countries for coordinated conservation of this transboundary species.
- Builds climate-resilient conservation landscapes through adaptive management and long-term habitat protection.

About Clouded Leopard

The **Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*)** is one of Asia's most evolutionarily distinct and least-studied wild cats. Belonging to the **genus *Neofelis***, it is a separate species from the common leopard and is often regarded as an evolutionary link between the big and small cats.

- **Distribution:** Found across South and Southeast Asia. In India, it occurs mainly in the Northeastern States, inhabiting dense tropical and subtropical forests.
- **Habitat:** Prefers evergreen and semi-evergreen forests but is also found in secondary forests, mangroves and Himalayan foothill forests up to about 2,700 m (9,000 ft).

- **Physical Features:** It has distinctive cloud-shaped markings, proportionately the longest canine teeth among all wild cats, short powerful legs, large paws, a long tail and specialised footpads for gripping branches.
- **Exceptional Climber:** Specialised ankle joints enable it to climb down trees headfirst, hang upside down from branches and move easily through the forest canopy, making it one of the most arboreal cats in the world.
- **Behaviour:** It is primarily solitary, nocturnal and crepuscular (most active at dawn and dusk). Although highly adapted to life in trees, most hunting takes place on the ground.
- **Diet:** A carnivorous ambush predator that feeds on monkeys, gibbons, slow lorises, deer, wild pigs, birds and rodents.
- **Reproduction:** It attains sexual maturity at around 2 years of age. The gestation period is about 85-93 days, and females usually give birth to 1-5 cubs (commonly 2-3), with cubs becoming independent after about 1.5-2 years.
- **Unique Characteristics:** It can open its jaws to nearly 100°, wider than any other wild cat, allowing it to capture relatively large prey. Unlike big cats, it cannot roar, and unlike small cats, it cannot purr.
- **Ecological Role:** As an apex forest predator, it regulates prey populations and serves as an indicator of healthy, well-connected forest ecosystems.
- **Major Threats:** Habitat loss, forest fragmentation, poaching, illegal wildlife trade and declining prey populations are the major threats to its survival.
- **Conservation Status:** IUCN Red List – Vulnerable; CITES Appendix I; Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, providing the highest level of legal protection in India.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/clouded-leopard-conservation-action-plan/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.