

## In search of the Snow Leopard 2013 Trip Report

Dates: 5th - 19th March 2013  
Sites covered: Hemis National Park with Ulley Valley extension  
Leader: Aniket Sardana

A total of 7 days were spent in Hemis National Park (HNP) with an extension of 2 days at Ulley Valley (UV). In addition 2 days were spent acclimatising in Leh upon arrival and a few local birding sites were visited. Hikes were mostly twice daily depending on wildlife activity and prevailing weather conditions and on occasion a full day was spent in the field with lunch brought out by porters. Temperatures ranged from -5°C to a maximum of 10°C.

## Sightings

### MAMMALS

#### Snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*)

Eight different individuals were sighted over a 24 hour period - probably a record! First a female with 2 sub-adult cubs were seen near Rumbak monastery for over an hour. The following morning a female with a small cub was sighted on a peak right above our campsite! The cub was soon out of site, but the female was seen well as she intermittently disappeared and then reappeared from the rocks. Later that evening a hike to Husing valley was extremely fruitful. First with the appearance of a female with a very small cub. Both were seen for about 20 minutes, as they passed from left to right on the opposite side of the valley. Then from behind the ridge, and third cat appeared followed by a fourth. This pair were then seen mating on a rock before they disappeared from view. An exhilarating day! The following day 2 sets of snow leopard tracks, a mother followed by a cub, were found descending the valley.

#### Himalayan red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Seen on the first night in camp, but heard frequently at night and many tracks seen throughout the trip.

#### Blue sheep (*Pseudois nayaur*)

Common throughout the park. First seen whilst hiking up to the camp, but small groups were sighted daily.

Ladakh urial (*Ovis vignei*)

2 groups sighted during the transfer from Hemis to Ulley Valley.

Asiatic ibex (*Capra ibex sibirica*)

Seen well at Ulley where they are locally common.

Royle's pika (*Ochotona roylei*)

Seen twice in Husing valley, darting between boulders.



Anticlockwise from above right:  
*Woolly hare, Snow Leopard with  
subadult cub, Royle's pika and  
Ladakh urial*



## BIRDS

|                         |              |                                 |          |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Upland buzzard       | Leh          | 23. Citrine wagtail             | Leh      |
| 2. Golden eagle         | HNP          | 24. White-winged redstart       | Leh      |
| 3. Lammergeier          | HNP          | 25. White-capped water redstart | Leh      |
| 4. Himalayan griffon    | HNP          | 26. Brown dipper                | UV       |
| 5. Eurasian sparrowhawk | HNP          | 27. Rock pigeon                 | Leh      |
| 6. Carrion crow         | Leh          | 28. Hill pigeon                 | HNP      |
| 7. Eurasian magpie      | Leh, HNP, UV | 29. Snow pigeon                 | HNP      |
| 8. Red-billed chough    | Leh, HNP, UV | 30. Great tit                   | Leh, HNP |
| 9. Yellow-billed chough | Leh, HNP, UV | 31. House sparrow               | Leh      |
| 10. Himalayan snowcock  | HNP, UV      | 32. Robin accentor              | HNP      |
| 11. Chukar              | HNP, UV      | 33. White-browed tit warbler    | HNP      |
| 12. Common merganser    | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 13. Mallard             | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 14. Common coot         | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 15. Northern pintail    | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 16. Eurasian widgeon    | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 17. Common pochard      | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 18. Common greenshank   | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 19. Common redshank     | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 20. Green sandpiper     | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 21. Ibisbill            | Leh          |                                 |          |
| 22. White wagtail       | Leh, HNP     |                                 |          |



Above: *Robin accentor*  
Left: *Chukar*





Top left: *Scanning for the snow leopard, Hemis National Park*  
 Middle left: *Glaciers dominate much of the Ladakhi Himalaya*  
 Right: *Meeting of the Zaskar and Indus rivers*  
 Bottom: *Our starlit camp in Hemis National Park*