

## Highlanders in Bhutan share camera-trap footage of the elusive cats on International Snow Leopard Day!



*Ranger Dagey with four members of the Snow Leopard Conservation Committee setting up camera traps at 14,900 feet.*

### International Snow Leopard Day

International Snow Leopard Day is celebrated every year on October 23 in different countries around the world with the core mission to conserve one of the rarest wild-cat species on the planet, the elusive snow leopard. Widely known in Bhutan as "Gangzi" (mountain leopard), the snow leopard is an apex predator and a flagship species. The global snow leopard population is under 10,000, spread out over 772,000 square miles of habitat across the mountains of the Himalayas and Central Asia, and spanning 12 countries. Bhutan is one of them, and the snow leopard is a sentinel of much of Bhutan's northern alpine regions along the Tibetan border.

### Jomolhari Snow Leopard Conservation Project

The **Jomolhari Snow Leopard Conservation** project is an integrated approach to conserve an important snow leopard region in Bhutan. We believe that bringing benefits from conservation to local communities will encourage residents to actively participate in snow leopard conservation, which in turn can only succeed with their support. Jigme Dorji National Park under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests and the communities of Soe, Yaksa, and Nubri started two snow leopard

conservation groups at Soe and Yaksa in 2012.

The objective of the initiative was to bring on board local yak herders who share the snow leopard habitat to realize benefits from having snow leopards literally living in their backyards. Since 2012, the project helped address various issues in the region, such as building capacity of the livestock officer and the herders in livestock management, introducing an annual festival, constructing a school building for the children of the Soe community, starting a pilot greenhouse project, developing resting areas on the Jomohari Trek, and building capacity of the snow leopard conservation group.

## Soe and Yaksa Snow Leopard Conservation Group



*Members of the Snow Leopard Conservation Committee learn how to use camera traps and act out how the images are captured.*

In August 2017, 35 members of the Soe and Yaksa group received hands-on training from the Jigme Dorji National Park (JDNP) on setting up camera traps. The highlanders used their extensive knowledge of the area to install camera traps at eight different locations, with elevation raging between 14,000 and 14,900 feet. The training also sought valuable knowledge of 35 young and old highlanders and their ideas in terms of conservation of various species, including snow leopards. On October 14 following this, the members excitedly showcased their camera-trap footage of snow leopards during the Jomohari Mountain Festival. Here's a video of our citizen scientists and what they have captured on camera:



The Bhutan Foundation and our partners are happy to empower the highlanders to become important players in conservation. The hands-on exercise to set up the camera traps at elevations of more than 14,500 feet, the impatient pause to retrieve the footage, and the thrill of seeing it have really ignited considerable excitement among the highlanders and strengthened their commitment to build a strong community of conservationists.

## **Our Community: Bhutan Foundation Annual Report 2017**

What is your definition of "community"? Is it a place, a group of people with like interests, a sense of belonging, of family? We've been talking a lot about community here at the Bhutan Foundation, and we think it's all of those things. In Bhutan, community--in every sense of the word--is important, as you will see in ***Our Community: Bhutan Foundation Annual Report 2017.***

In this year's edition, we focus on four communities in different regions of Bhutan, including the Jomdhari community featured above. But we think you'll see a common thread woven through them: a shared heritage and identity that is uniquely Bhutanese and shows Gross National Happiness in action.

As a supporter of the Bhutan Foundation, you are an essential part of our community and the reason we are able to make a difference across Bhutan. We hope you enjoy reading about just some of the ways your support is making an impact. Thank you for making it all possible.

Click on the image below to read our Annual Report.



# Our Community

## Bhutan Foundation Annual Report 2017

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