

Enact Change: Clouded Leopards

Sanjana Paulson



Clouded Leopard at the Nashville Zoo

Courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clouded_leopard

The Earth is like a true friendship: people realize its value only after it's gone. So many people love the world we live in, yet they deplete and damage the resources that come from it for their own benefit. Practices such as deforestation and pollution harm the planet that we call home. Because of them, many species of plants and animals become more at risk of endangerment or even extinction. However, if people can destroy what's around them, then they can restore it as well. When people decide to come together for a certain cause, change of unexpected sizes can occur. The people that can help solve problems don't need any qualifications or specialties; even the standard person can do something that, in turn, achieves change. Anyone can contribute to change by providing whatever they can give, including their finances and time.



Bengal Tiger

Courtesy: en.wikipedia.org

In today's world, many species are at risk of becoming endangered and are considered vulnerable. Among this group is the clouded leopard, a species of medium-sized cat that calls the "dry tropical forests and mangrove swamps" of South China, Southeast Asia, and the Himalayas their home ("Clouded Leopards"). Also referred to by its scientific name "*Neofelis nebulosa*", the clouded leopard is estimated to have a total population of 10,000, with no single population having more than 1,000 individual animals ("Clouded Leopard", Smithsonian's National Zoo; "Clouded Leopards"; "Clouded Leopard Status").

Known as the Tree Tiger in some parts of Asia, clouded leopards are considered to be "one of the most arboreal of all cats", meaning that they spend a lot of their time in the branches of trees ("Clouded Leopard", ISEC; "Clouded Leopard Status"). Sadly, the needs of humans are now leading to the elimination of the living spaces of these animals. The deforestation of rainforests in Malaysia and Indonesia have greatly affected the population and living conditions of this species; since many areas are being logged for the creation of agricultural plantations, these big cats are being driven away from their ruined homes more and more every year ("Clouded Leopard Status"). As a result, clouded leopards are "often killed as retaliation for killing livestock" by local farmers ("Clouded Leopards").

Because they have no choice but to find new homes in the developing areas of Asia, they face a greater chance of being attacked by people, decreasing their population and making them more vulnerable. Clouded leopards are now being hunted for their beautiful, unique fur, as well as for their meat and bones; the products from this animal serve a variety of purposes, including fashion and traditional medicine ("Clouded Leopard Status"). They are also captured to be traded as illegal pets ("Clouded Leopard", ISEC). Although these innocent creatures are being used in a plethora of ways for the selfish benefits of the human race, many people are working to improve the population of these animals.

Even though several efforts are being made to help save the species in the wild, there have been some obstacles regarding the conservation of the clouded leopard. Because of high crime rates, "corruption in the ranks of law enforcement", as well as "a strong cultural tradition

of consuming wildlife” in Southeast Asia, it has been somewhat difficult for organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to enforce tighter laws regarding the illegal poaching of clouded leopards (“Clouded Leopard Status”). The mentality that many people have kept for years cannot easily be changed. This only makes it harder for groups to effectively reach out to the people regarding this subject. Nonetheless, organizations in several Southeast Asian countries are doing all they can to “establish anti-poaching units and strengthen anti-poaching law enforcement”, and they are “setting up a compensation fund for local farmers whose livestock is often killed by...leopards” as well (“Clouded Leopards”). While several larger groups are doing a great job in helping the clouded leopard population increase in number by meeting the needs of people and animals alike, a similar change can begin through the work of just one person.

There is some good news from some countries like India. Apart from active voluntary activist groups, the Central (Federal) as well as the State agencies seem to work hard not only to preserve the green but also wild animals including tigers in India. The recent news reports indicate that there is indeed significant increase in the endangered population of tigers in India. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03267-z>

India always had a special place for the wild animals. Uma Athale presents an interesting report “Tigers in Indian Mythology”. She writes “Animals play a significant role in mythology. Here’s how the tiger has been one of the most prevailing figures in some Indian religions!” (<https://jeevoka.com/tigers-in-indian-mythology/s#:~:text=As%20the%20Vehicle%20of%20Durga,can%20fight%20evil%20without%20fear>)

For example, tiger is depicted to be the holy vehicle of powerful goddess Kali or Durga.

Even though animals were/are given importance, there was a decrease and annihilation of tigers, etc. in so many ways. Presently for the last several decades deliberate effort by government agencies (Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_Life_\(Protection\)_Act,_1972](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_Life_(Protection)_Act,_1972)) such as the Forest Departments and activists has resulted in overall social consciousness to preserve and protect the territories occupied by wild animals.

[\(https://www.wfindia.org/about_wwf/priority_species/bengal_tiger/faq/\)](https://www.wfindia.org/about_wwf/priority_species/bengal_tiger/faq/)

People can take part in conservation efforts by “donating your [their] time, money, or goods” (“Clouded Leopard”, Smithsonian’s National Zoo). For instance, one can make a change with their money by donating to organizations such as the WWF or by “adopting” an animal, such as a clouded leopard, to support the conservation of vulnerable and endangered species all over the world (“Clouded Leopards”). People can also enact change with their time; one can help by spending their time volunteering for a certain cause. Thirdly, one can donate their possessions by giving things that belong to them away for a better cause, therefore enacting change.

To conclude, things are slowly but surely looking up for the clouded leopard, despite all of the horrible occurrences that are affecting the status of this creature. People are starting to figure out that their impacts on the environment are more negative than they think. Whenever people stop focusing on their wants and on the well-being of the world instead, it benefits themselves, others, and their environment. If just one person is willing to give up a moment of their time or a few dollars or even a few of their things for a good cause, they have the potential to change the world and make it a better place, all while inspiring others to do the same.

Works Cited

“Clouded Leopard.” *International Society for Endangered Cats (ISEC) Canada*, 2020, wildcatconservation.org/wild-cats/asia/clouded-leopard/. Accessed 27 Oct. 2020.

“Clouded Leopard.” *Smithsonian's National Zoo*, Smithsonian’s National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute, 16 Sept. 2020, nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/clouded-leopard. Accessed 29 Oct. 2020.

"Clouded Leopards." *WWF, World Wildlife Fund*, 2020, wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/endangered_species/clouded_leopard/. Accessed 27 Oct. 2020.

“Clouded Leopard Status.” *The Clouded Leopard Project*, 2011,
www.cloudedleopard.org/about_status. Accessed 27 Oct. 2020.

Uma Athale, 2019. Tigers in Indian Mythology. <https://jeevoka.com/tigers-in-indian-mythology/s#:~:text=As%20the%20Vehicle%20of%20Durga,can%20fight%20evil%20without%20fear>.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03267-z>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_Life_\(Protection\)_Act,_1972](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_Life_(Protection)_Act,_1972)

https://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/priority_species/bengal_tiger/faq/

Sanjana Paulson

C/o. Language in India

www.languageinindia.com