



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Counting Before Conserving: The Clouded Leopard Action Plan

4 August 2026 ·

ENVIRONMENT

GS3

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotesFree UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com →

ADVERTISE

Advertise with Ujiyari

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Counting Before Conserving: The Clouded Leopard Action Plan

4 August 2026 · 6 min read ·

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

On August 4, 2026, International Clouded Leopard Day, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change publicised India’s first dedicated Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan. The plan was released at the 91st meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife at Coimbatore in July 2026, and was prepared under the Government of India, GEF and UNDP initiative.

THE SPECIES

ATTRIBUTE	DETAIL
Scientific name	<i>Neofelis nebulosa</i>
IUCN Red List	Vulnerable
CITES	Appendix I
Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	Schedule I , the highest degree of protection
Indian range	Northeast India, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and parts of North Bengal and Sikkim
State animal	Meghalaya
Distinguishing feature	The longest canine teeth relative to skull size of any living cat; exceptional arboreal ability, including the capacity to descend trees head-first

The clouded leopard is **not** a member of the genus *Panthera*, so it is not a “big cat” in the strict taxonomic sense. It occupies an intermediate position between the big cats and the small cats. The **Sunda clouded leopard**, *Neofelis diardi*, is a separate species found in Borneo and Sumatra and does not occur in India, a distinction that is a plausible Prelims trap.

WHAT THE PLAN CONTAINS

PILLAR	CONTENT
Landscapes	14 priority conservation landscapes identified across Northeast India
Habitat	Landscape-scale restoration and corridor conservation to reconnect fragmented forest
Monitoring	Standardised scientific protocol using camera traps, occupancy surveys, genetic analysis and environmental DNA (eDNA)
Community	Empowerment and livelihood linkage for communities within the landscapes
Funding architecture	Prepared under the Government of India, GEF and UNDP framework
State response	Meghalaya launched Mission Clouded Leopard on the same day, announced by Chief Minister Conrad Sangma

THE DESIGN LOGIC WORTH UNDERSTANDING

The most interesting feature of the plan is what it puts first. It **front-loads a monitoring protocol before target-setting**, which is unusual and, for this species, correct.

The clouded leopard is nocturnal, arboreal, solitary and lives in dense evergreen forest. It is therefore among the hardest Indian carnivores to survey. Population estimates for it have historically been weak, and a conservation plan that opened with a numerical target would be setting a target against a baseline nobody can defend.

Environmental DNA is the technically notable inclusion. eDNA methods detect genetic material shed by an organism into soil, water or air, allowing presence to be established without sighting or capturing the animal. For a **cryptic** forest species this is a substantial advance over camera trapping alone, which depends on the animal walking past a fixed point at ground level, precisely the behaviour an arboreal cat is least likely to display.

Occupancy surveys, similarly, estimate the proportion of a landscape occupied rather than the absolute number of individuals, and are statistically more defensible than density estimates when detection probability is low.

WHY THE NORTHEAST FOCUS

The plan's geography follows the ecology. Northeast India sits at the junction of two of the world's biodiversity hotspots:

HOTSPOT	RELEVANCE
Indo-Burma	Covers most of Northeast India, Myanmar, and mainland Southeast Asia
Eastern Himalaya	Covers the eastern Himalayan arc, including Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan and parts of Nepal

The conservation problem in this landscape is not principally reserve management but **connectivity**. Forest in the Northeast is fragmented by shifting cultivation cycles, plantation expansion, linear infrastructure and settlement, and a substantial proportion of it lies under **community and clan ownership** rather than state forest departments, particularly in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram. That is why the plan's community pillar is not decorative: in much of this landscape, conservation without community consent is not administratively available.

THE CRITICAL QUESTION

India's conservation architecture is heavily tiger-centric. Project Tiger commands the budget, the institutional attention and the political **salience**, and species without comparable charisma have historically received action plans without corresponding funding lines.

The test for this plan, therefore, is whether the 14 landscapes attract dedicated financing and staffing, or whether the document becomes another entry in a list. The GEF and UNDP involvement provides initial resourcing but is time-bound by design; sustaining the effort requires domestic budget commitment.

The more constructive framing is that a species-specific plan built on **landscape connectivity rather than reserve boundaries** is exactly the direction Indian conservation policy needs to travel, and connects directly to the debate on **Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures** and the 30x30 target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. A clouded leopard moving through community forest between two protected areas is the precise case that OECM recognition exists to address.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation; biodiversity; **environmental impact assessment**.

Prelims pointers:

- **International Clouded Leopard Day: 4 August.**
- ***Neofelis nebulosa*:** IUCN **Vulnerable**, CITES **Appendix I**, **Schedule I** of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **State animal of Meghalaya.** Not a *Panthera* species; the Sunda clouded leopard (*Neofelis diardi*) is a separate species not found in India.

- The Action Plan identifies **14 priority landscapes** in Northeast India and was released at the **91st SC-NBWL meeting** at Coimbatore.
- Prepared under the **Government of India, GEF and UNDP** framework.
- **Meghalaya launched Mission Clouded Leopard** on International Clouded Leopard Day 2026, announced by Chief Minister **Conrad Sangma**, which is consistent with the state holding the species as its state animal.
- Monitoring toolkit: **camera traps, occupancy surveys, genetics and eDNA**.
- Northeast India spans the **Indo-Burma** and **Eastern Himalaya** biodiversity hotspots.

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

THE PLAN:

India's first Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan, publicised on International Clouded Leopard Day, 4 August 2026.

Released at the 91st Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife, Coimbatore, July 2026.

14 priority conservation landscapes in Northeast India.

Four pillars: landscapes, habitat and corridors, standardised monitoring, community empowerment.

Government of India, GEF and UNDP framework.

Meghalaya launched Mission Clouded Leopard on the same day, announced by Chief Minister Conrad Sangma.

THE SPECIES: *NEOFELIS NEBULOSA*. IUCN VULNERABLE; CITES APPENDIX I; SCHEDULE I OF THE WPA 1972. STATE ANIMAL OF MEGHALAYA. LONGEST CANINES RELATIVE TO SKULL SIZE AMONG LIVING CATS; CAN DESCEND TREES HEAD-FIRST. NOT A *PANTHERA*; DISTINCT FROM THE SUNDA CLOUDED LEOPARD, *NEOFELIS DIARDI*.

THE MONITORING POINT: EDNA DETECTS GENETIC MATERIAL SHED INTO SOIL, WATER OR AIR, ESTABLISHING PRESENCE WITHOUT SIGHTING. OCCUPANCY SURVEYS ESTIMATE THE PROPORTION OF LANDSCAPE OCCUPIED, WHICH IS MORE DEFENSIBLE THAN DENSITY ESTIMATES WHERE DETECTION PROBABILITY IS LOW.

HOTSPOTS: NORTHEAST INDIA LIES AT THE JUNCTION OF THE INDO-BURMA AND EASTERN HIMALAYA BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS.

Sources: Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, IUCN Red List

Source: Counting Before Conserving: The Clouded Leopard Action Plan — Ujjayari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

RELATED EDITORIALS

INDIAN EXPRESS

[Fires That Make Their Own Weather: Europe's New Fire Regime](#)

3 Aug

THE HINDU

[Beyond the Fence: OECMs and the Case for a National Conservation Estate](#)

3 Aug

DOWN TO EARTH

[Every Degree Costs a Harvest: Rice Yields and the Arithmetic of Warming](#)

1 Aug

INDIAN EXPRESS

[Built and Blocked: How Transmission Bottlenecks Are Curtailing India's Renewable Energy](#)

31 Jul

RELATED KEY TERMS

KEY TERM

[Access and Benefit Sharing \(ABS\)](#)

The framework for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising...

KEY TERM

[Agasthyamalai BR](#)

A UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve in the southern Western Ghats...

KEY TERM

[Agri-Photovoltaic](#)

A dual land-use technology that integrates elevated solar panels with...

KEY TERM

[Agroforestry](#)

A land-use system that deliberately integrates trees and shrubs with...



CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/08/04/clouded-leopard-conservation-action-plan-2026/>

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing → bharatnotes.com](#)

📌 OPPORTUNITY

Advertise with Ujiyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

Ideal for: Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujiyari.com · bharatnotes.com