

# ARABIAN LEOPARD DAY

10<sup>th</sup> February, 2022

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Arabian  
Leopard  
Day  
10<sup>th</sup> February



الهيئة الملكية لمحافظة العلا  
Royal Commission for AIUla







# INTRODUCTION

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A unique environmental conservation initiative with a strong regional focus, **Arabian Leopard Day** directs the world's attention to the plight of the Arabian Leopard as well as far-reaching plans to save the species.

Being held for the first time in 2022, Arabian Leopard Day is fully aligned with the commitment of Saudi Arabia and the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) to safeguard the future of the Arabian Leopard as an animal of national and regional importance.

This document outlines the recommended approach for schools to mark the inaugural Arabian Leopard Day, helping to raise awareness and support of efforts to conserve the Arabian Leopard as a symbol of national pride and heritage.



## **1. How long have leopards existed in Arabia?**

The story of the Arabian Leopard began almost 500,000 years ago when it emerged out of Africa, journeying via the Great Rift Valley to reach the mountains of northern Arabia where it made its home.

## **2. What is the cultural significance of the leopard in the Arabian Peninsula?**

For the region's inhabitants, the Arabian Leopard – known in Arabic as An Nimr Al 'Arabi' – has long represented beauty, tranquillity, physical strength, fearlessness and freedom. The animal has occupied a special place in the imagination for millennia and is found in ancient rock art, stories and even everyday expressions. A common Bedouin saying 'ana anmar minnak' means 'I am more courageous than you are'; literally 'more of a leopard'. A strong and brave man may be called Nimr or Nimran and a clever and courageous woman Nimrah.

## **3. How many Arabian Leopards are left in the wild?**

The total adult population probably numbers fewer than 200 in the wild. The remnant populations are small, isolated, fragmented and under threat.

In Saudi Arabia there are probably fewer than 50 adult Arabian Leopards remaining.

Therefore, a need for urgent action to save the species from extinction has been recognised by Saudi Arabia and across the wider region. The Arabian Leopards' habitat, which formerly spanned the Arabian Peninsula and reached into the Levant, is now restricted to three countries: Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen.

## **4. What are the causes of the species' decline?**

Humans are driving the species to extinction. The expanded human presence has reduced and fragmented the Arabian Leopards' habitat. Overgrazing by domestic livestock causes prey species to decline – and increases the risk of leopards preying on herders' goats and sheep. This creates conflict with local communities, who attack leopards and other carnivores. Leopards and their prey are also the target of hunters.

## **5. What does it mean when they say the Arabian Leopard is Critically Endangered?**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species has assessed the Arabian Leopard as Critically Endangered.

This level of risk is more severe than Vulnerable or Endangered. If the Arabian Leopard population continues to decline, the next stages on the Red List are Extinct in the Wild and, lastly, Extinct.





## **6. What is RCU doing to preserve the species?**

RCU will adhere to a doctrine of best practice conservation science, applying a rigorous standard for the management of species and environment.

Our core objectives in Nature and Wildlife are:

1. Create and activate nature reserves to conserve ecosystems, fragile habitats and biodiversity.
2. Restore and enhance degraded ecosystems and ecological processes for the benefit of present and future generations.
3. Conserve and reintroduce native species.

In September 2021 we announced a three-year cooperation agreement with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Our allies also include organisations such as Panthera Catmosphere that concentrate on saving wild cats. Our relationship with Panthera will span the next 10 years to recover the critically endangered species. Our work includes scientific research, long term conservation strategies, workshops and training to help prepare for the reintroduction of Arabian Leopards. Further, we collaborate with

## **7. How can schools help the conservation efforts?**

Support Arabian Leopard Day on 10th February 2022 and create awareness about the national importance of the Arabian Leopard as well as its dwindling numbers.

Create a sense of pride in the next generation for this nationally important animal and inspire them to become part of the movement to bring the Arabian Leopard back from the brink of extinction.

It's not too late.



# TEN FACTS ABOUT ARABIAN LEOPARDS

1. Cubs are born after a gestation period of 100 days, with one or two cubs in a typical litter.

2. Cubs stay in the den during the first weeks of life. After the suckling period has finished, their mother leads them to kills and teaches them to hunt. They remain with their mother for a year or more – until they are ready to fend for themselves.

3. The Arabian Leopard is the smallest member of the leopard family. Its top weight of about 30kg is half that of its African cousin.

4. It arrived in Arabia almost 500,000 years ago when it emerged out of Africa, journeying via the Great Rift Valley to reach the mountains of northern Arabia where it made its home.

5. Originally it was a mountain animal but as desertification spread over a period of centuries, it became the only true desert leopard.

6. Historically its diet included the Nubian ibex, a type of mountain goat; the Arabian tahr, also a goat-like creature; the diminutive rock hyrax; and when these were not to be found it would eat partridges, hares, hedgehogs, beetles and even porcupines.

7. Unlike the cheetah that relies on speed, the leopard is a stalk-and-pounce predator. Its slender build with elongated body, short but powerful legs and very long tail, used for balance, make it the perfect hunter in the mountains where it stalks to within a few metres of its quarry before pouncing.

8. The black rosettes of its coat serve as camouflage, melting into the shadows as it pads along.

9. One of the earliest depictions of the leopard (500 BCE), in alabaster, is from the ancient Sabaean Kingdom. It showed a leopard jumping down from rocks onto the back of an ibex.

10. Leopards from northern Arabia, or Arabia Petraea, caught the Romans' attention and were among the first exotic animals brought to Ancient Rome to fight the bestiarii – gladiators trained in fighting wild beasts.





# ARABIAN LEOPARD DAY SCHOOL PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

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- Encourage students to develop an awareness and understanding of the Arabian Leopard as an animal of national importance.
- Encourage students to develop an understanding that the Arabian Leopard is critically endangered.
- Instill a sense of urgency and pride amongst Saudi youth about safeguarding animals of national importance.

## Material provided

This document provides suggested ways in which schools can mark the first Arabian Leopard Day, ranging from KG 1 to Grade 2, Grade 3 to 6, intermediate and secondary school.

### KG 1 to Grade 2

Lesson plan

### G3 – 6

Lesson plan

### Intermediate & secondary school

Lesson plan

## Social media

Subject to parental approval, schools may share social content about Arabian Leopard Day using the following hashtags.

#ArabianLeopardDay

يوم\_النمر\_العربي\_#







## KG 1 – GRADE 2

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For early learners, Arabian Leopard Day will focus on arts and crafts. Within this section we have included ways for children to get creative and learn through art.

### **Lesson plan objective**

Encourage students to identify and describe the Arabian Leopard.

Encourage students to develop a sense of curiosity about big cats in Saudi Arabia e.g. the Arabian Leopard.

### **Lesson plan resources**

Get inspired by [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com).

### **Lesson plan activities**

Create mini-Arabian Leopards using recycled cardboard rolls or playdough.

Create Arabian Leopard dress-up faces using paper plates.

Create Arabian Leopard artistic faces using straws, paper and craft material.

Create a Sharaan Nature Reserve diorama using boxes, art and crafts.



## GRADE 3 TO GRADE 6

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For junior schools, teachers are encouraged to inform students about the plight of the Arabian Leopard. We want students to take away an understanding of why the animal is important to Saudi Arabia and why conservation efforts are important to creating a world in which we live in harmony with nature.

### Lesson plan objective

Students should be able to understand the plight of the Arabian Leopard and develop an understanding of ways to conserve endangered animals.

Encourage students to describe ways in which we can live in harmony with endangered animals.

### Lesson plan resources

Use our FAQ, top 10 facts, images and video content to inspire youth.

Encourage youth to visit online resources to understand more:

<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/wildlife-conservation>

<https://panthera.org/arabian-leopard-initiative>

### Lesson plan activities

Follow a learning session on the Arabian Leopard, create a quiz to test students' knowledge and understanding.

Create a class activity to do an A to Z of the Arabian Leopard with facts corresponding to each letter of the alphabet.

Following a learning session, ask the students to write a short story about an animal in captivity e.g. the Arabian Leopard, a ranger and a child who wants to help conserve the animal.





# INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY SCHOOL

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For intermediate and secondary schools, the focus is to encourage independent learning through online research with a focus on understanding the importance of conserving endangered species.

Teachers are encouraged to use informational resources to pique interest amongst the student body about the Arabian Leopard and engage them in self-study through key activities, such as competitions and storytelling.

## Lesson plan objective

Students should be able to understand the plight of the Arabian Leopard and search and identify ways to conserve endangered animals.

Encourage students to analyse and describe ways in which we can live in harmony with endangered animals.

## Lesson plan resources

Use our FAQ, top 10 facts, images and video content to inspire youth.

Encourage youth to visit online resources to understand more:

<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/wildlife-conservation>

<https://panthera.org/arabian-leopard-initiative>

## Lesson plan tasks and assessment criteria:

Task children to research the etymology of the words Nimr, Nimran and Nimrah to understand the significance of the Arabian Leopard to Bedouin culture and Saudi Arabia.

Task students to give a first-person account of the journey of the Arabian Leopard – from its journey across Africa into the Middle East; its days of plenty as well as the gradual depletion of its habitats and numbers. Tip: Print and share the FAQ section as thought-starters.

Task children to research the importance of conserving the full eco-system. Following their research, ask children to submit a two-page essay on the importance of environmental conservation or a visual mood board depicting a conservation campaign.



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