

Bengaluru Emerges as India's Leopard Capital

Posted at: 12/06/2025

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Context

Urbanisation in India has often led to habitat loss and biodiversity decline. However, Bengaluru presents a rare case of wildlife thriving on the urban fringe. A recent camera-trap survey conducted between 2024 and 2025 by the Holématti Nature Foundation (HNF), under the leadership of conservationist Dr. Sanjay Gubbi, has identified Bengaluru as the Indian metro with the **highest number of free-ranging wild leopards**, surpassing Mumbai.

Survey Findings

According to the study, **80 to 85 leopards** currently inhabit the forested outskirts and scrublands around Bengaluru. The **Bannerghatta National Park (BNP)** alone is home to **54 leopards**, up from **40 in 2019**, while the remaining **30 or so** are distributed across adjoining green spaces.

The survey covered an area of **282 square kilometres**, using over **250 camera traps**. It documented **34 species of mammals**, including several protected and threatened ones.

Major Areas Covered

The survey included key forest patches and wildlife corridors such as:

- Turahalli
- B.M. Kaval
- U.M. Kaval
- Roerich Estate

- Gollahalli Gudda
 - Sulikere
 - Hesaraghatta
 - Marasandra
 - Manduru and adjoining landscapes
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Key Biodiversity Insights

- **8 species** documented are on the **IUCN Red List**, including **4 Endangered** and **4 Near Threatened**
 - **22 species** are protected under **Schedule I** and **5 species** under **Schedule II** of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**
 - Bengaluru remains one of the few metropolitan regions where **apex predators and large mammals** coexist with urban sprawl
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Reasons for Leopard Population Growth

- **Stricter protection and monitoring** in Bannerghatta National Park
 - **Improved prey availability** due to ecological management
 - **Positive interaction and coexistence** with nearby human communities
 - **Historical translocation** of conflict leopards possibly contributing to current population
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Recommendations by HNF

- Declare **B.M. Kaval, U.M. Kaval, Roerich Estate**, and **Gollahalli Gudda** as **Conservation**

Reserves

- Integrate **Durgadakal RF, Bettahalli RF, and deemed forests of J.I. Bachahalli and M. Maniyambal** into the **Bannerghatta National Park**
 - Protect the **Muneshwarabetta-Bannerghatta corridor**, a crucial wildlife movement path
 - Avoid future translocation of leopards into BNP to maintain ecological balance
 - Increase **community awareness** to mitigate human-wildlife conflict and support corridor conservation
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Significance of the Study

This study establishes Bengaluru as a rare model of urban-wildlife coexistence. It shows that **large predators like leopards can survive and thrive in urban-adjacent areas**, provided there is scientific conservation planning, habitat connectivity, and local community cooperation. It reinforces the importance of integrating **urban development** with **biodiversity conservation**, aligning with **Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on Land)** and India's commitments under the **National Biodiversity Action Plan** and the **Wildlife Protection Act**.

