

《Injured snow leopard cub rescued in Xinjiang》

URUMQI, May 4 (Xinhua) -- A snow leopard cub was rescued by forest police and workers in west China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, local sources said on Thursday.

The cub was discovered on Tuesday by a saltworks employee in Jinghe county. "I saw something hiding in the crevice of stones by a pool, wet with the salty water," said Kurban. "At first I thought it was a cat."

After a closer look, he realized the "cat" was much too big. Scared, he called the police who rushed to the scene.

"We saw that it was a snow leopard, a class A protected animal," said Xiang Hengzhi, vice director of the forestry police bureau of Jinghe.

They found it to be a female cub, with a laceration on her left hind leg.

"It may have been led to the place by a group of antelope it had been chasing," Xiang said.

A vet will examine the cub and it will be released when it recovers.

Snow leopards are classified as "endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. They live in the Himalayas of central and south Asia at an altitude of 2,500 to 4,500 meters. They have been spotted in China's Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, Tibet, Yunnan and Xinjiang.

The animal has rarely been seen in the wild this century due to loss of habitat and poaching. According to official statistics, in 2015 there were an estimated 3,500 to 7,000 snow leopards living in the wild, in addition to around 650 in captivity worldwide.

Another snow leopard was rescued and released in Qinghe County of Xinjiang in April.