

Runaway leopard returns to Indian park after escape

January 5 2019



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A runaway leopard which escaped from an safari park in eastern India on New Year's Day has been recaptured after a massive search operation, an official said Saturday.

Wildlife authorities had deployed drones, trained elephants and set up traps with live bait to find the big cat after it escaped the park located in the foothills of the Himalayas, 557 kilometres (346 miles) north of Kolkata, capital of West Bengal.

The four-year-old beast nicknamed Sachin finally returned to its enclosure in the park late Friday, after a days' long hunt.

Nearly 100 foresters were pursuing the cat after its escape sparked panic in local villages.

"Sachin had been raised in captivity and could not hunt to feed itself," Vinod Kumar Yarad of the West Bengal Zoo Authority told AFP.

"We kept a large chunk of meat inside the leopard's enclosure with its gate left open. On Friday night, it returned to its enclosure, injured and hungry," he said

Yarad said the cat was raised in captivity and lacked the ability to hunt in a wild, and had probably suffered injuries in an attempt to kill a [wild boar](#) or some other animal.

The animal is being treated for its injuries.

Leopards in captivity may live to up to 23 years as compared to just 17 years in the wild.

The [park](#) in Siliguri—the gateway of the hill resort of Darjeeling—is spread over 297 acres and was opened to the public last year.

Official estimates suggest there are between 12,000 and 14,000 [leopards](#) in India.

An estimated 431 leopards were killed in 2017, according to government figures, most by poachers for their hides and other body parts.

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