

Leopards spotted in Pakistan capital's park as virus clears way

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Rangers in Pakistan's Margalla Hills National Park have seen animal activity increase since a coronavirus lockdown was introduced

Leopards, jackals and other creatures living in Islamabad's tree-covered hills have been enjoying a rare respite from the throngs of hikers and

joggers that normally pack the trails.

Rangers in the Pakistani capital's Margalla Hills National Park saw animal activity increase soon after the city was locked down in March to counter the coronavirus.

Islamabad's normally reclusive leopards have been roaming onto deserted pathways, and social networks are rife with talk of purported sightings.

Motion-triggered wildlife cameras have been clicking away as animals explore areas they had long been nervous to visit.

"There is a big increase in the number of animals (seen) in the national park," ranger Imran Khan—not to be confused with the namesake prime minister—told AFP.

Images the park provided to AFP include pictures of leopards padding along paths, an inquisitive jackal and a muddy boar.

"Wildlife is comfortable as there are no visitors here. They are wandering here comfortably, which is a good sign for the jungle," Khan said.

The park was locked down for about a month and foot traffic remains light as families, picnickers and walkers stay away during the fasting period of Ramadan.

Sakhwat Ali, Islamabad's assistant wildlife director, said the space is home to 38 [mammal species](#), 350 bird species and 34 reptile species including 27 types of snake.



Ranger Imran Khan checks on a camera that monitors wildlife in Pakistan's Margalla Hills National Park

Ali added that rangers are conducting a survey and had already noticed new creatures.

"There are some species of butterfly which were not reported earlier, but these are visible now," Ali said.

Lockdowns in various cities around the world have seen urban wildlife grow bolder as people stay home. A gang of goats was spotted in a Welsh town and coyotes were seen exploring deserted streets in San Francisco.

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