

## Study Could Boost Clouded Leopard Population

**Improved breeding efforts include diversifying the cats' gene pool and reducing stress.**

Posted: Feb. 24, 2009, 3 a.m. EST

A study funded by the Morris Animal Foundation is geared toward helping the clouded leopard population bounce back. The clouded leopard population may soon welcome the arrival of a cub if all goes well in an effort to boost their falling numbers, according to the Morris Animal Foundation.

Various factors, such as a high rate of males killing females and reproductive issues, contribute to the population decline. To date, 78 of the wildcats remain in the North American Clouded Leopard Species Survival conservation program, MAF said.

Funding by the organization to help the species bounce back shows promise. After studying hormone protocols in 38 animals, several clouded leopards were inseminated.

If successful, resulting cubs would be the first clouded leopards born in the United States since 2003, according to MAF. Led by Dr. Katey Pelican and Dr. JoGayle Howard at the Smithsonian Institution, the study included ways to reduce stress and diversify gene pools naturally.

Ultimately, the goal is to bring the population total to 120 clouded leopards in North America.