To mark Endangered Species Day, a celebration of some of the remarkable mammals of Saudi Arabia. Some are common, some are rare, and others, like the Arabian leopard, are threatened, but Saudi Arabia is working hard to protect them all, and the diverse habitats they depend upon.

There are 14 protected areas throughout Saudi Arabia together, they cover a total of 62,035 km²—about 3% of the Kingdom’s total territory—and they just got bigger. The Kingdom plans to add 11 new protected areas, which will increase the total area to 98,035 km², 15% of the Kingdom’s territory. This is equivalent to adding an area the size of the state of Virginia.

With the births of the cubs in Taif, we are seeing the first paw prints of the success of the Arabian leopard initiative. Thomas Kaplan, founder of big-cat conservation organization Panthera, says the births are a pivotal moment for the species. He says it’s a sign of hope for the future of the Arabian leopard in the wild.

There are many places where the Arabian leopard is still found, but the population is small and fragmented. Conservation efforts are focused on protecting their habitats and creating corridors for them to move between areas.

The Arabian leopard is listed as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The species is facing many threats, including habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict.

Conservationists are working to protect the Arabian leopard by protecting its habitats, reducing human-wildlife conflict, and increasing awareness of the species.

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