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2 Comparison of Two Individual 3 Identification Algorithms for Snow 4 Leopards after Automated Detection

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6 Drew Blount¹, Eve Bohnett^{2,3,4,*}, Jason Holmberg¹, Jason Parham¹, Sorosh Poya Faryabi⁴,
7 Örjan Johansson^{5,6}, Li An^{3,7}, Bilal Ahmad⁸, Wajid Khan⁹, Stephane Ostrowski⁴

8 Running header: Deep learning for snow leopard individual ID

9 Abstract

10 1. Photo-identification of individual snow leopards (*Panthera uncia*) is the primary technique for
11 density estimation for the species. A high volume of images from multiple projects, combined
12 with pre-existing historical catalogs, has made identifying snow leopard individuals within the
13 images cost- and time-intensive. 2. To speed the classification among a high volume of
14 photographs, we trained and evaluated image classification methods for PIE v2 (a triplet loss
15 network), and we compared PIE's accuracy to the HotSpotter algorithm (a SIFT based
16 algorithm). Analyzed data were collected from a curated catalog of free-ranging snow leopards
17 photographed across years (2012-2019) in Afghanistan and from samples in captivity provided
18 by zoos from Finland, Sweden, Germany, and the United States. 3. Results show that PIE

¹ Wild Me, 1726 N Terry Street, Portland, OR, USA

² Department of Biology, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA, USA

³ Center for Complex Human-Environment Systems, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA, USA

⁴ Wildlife Conservation Society, 2300 Southern Boulevard Bronx, New York, NY, USA

⁵ Grimsö Wildlife Research Station, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden

⁶ Snow Leopard Trust, Seattle, WA, USA

⁷ Department of Geography, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA, USA.

⁸ Institute of Agriculture Sciences and Forestry, University of Swat, Mingora, Pakistan

⁹ Department of Environmental and Conservation Sciences, University of Swat, Mingora, Pakistan

*corresponding author: ebohnnett@sdsu.edu

19 outperforms HotSpotter. We also found weaknesses in the initial PIE model, like a minor
20 amount of background matching, which was addressed, although likely not fully resolved, by
21 applying background subtraction (BGS) and left-right mirroring (LR) methods. The PIE BGS LR
22 model combined with Hotspotter showed a Rank-1: 85%, Rank-5: 95%, Rank-20: 99%. 4.
23 Overall, our results recommend implementing PIE v2 simultaneously with HotSpotter on
24 Whiskerbook.org.

25 Keywords: background subtraction, deep learning, hotspotter, individual identification, PIE v2,
26 snow leopards

27 Introduction

28 The snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is categorized by the International Union for Conservation of
29 Nature (IUCN) as Vulnerable (McCarthy et al., 2017). Population estimates in sampled areas
30 primarily rely on the use of camera-trap technology of individuals identified by their unique
31 spotty phenotypes, in concert with capture-recapture modeling (Jackson et al., 2006; Royle &
32 Young, 2008; McCarthy & Mallon 2016). Abundance estimates for snow leopards have shown
33 to be fraught with errors from camera trap photo misclassification arising from a variety of
34 reasons (Ellis 2018, Johansson et al. 2020), including the manual processing of photo sets, that
35 have become increasingly large with the advent of affordable digital photography (Beery et al.,
36 2019; Falzon et al. 2019; Miguel et al. 2016). Current solutions for reducing the risk of
37 misidentifying images of snow leopards are often resource-intensive, for example, using
38 repetition and multiple observers to manually process large photo sets to limit the risk of false-
39 negative classification (Borchers & Fewster 2016; Choo et al. 2020; Foster & Harmsen 2012;
40 Johansson et al. 2020).

41 To reduce misclassification errors, as well as time and labor in processing camera trap data,
42 scientists are increasingly turning towards artificial intelligence and computer vision to identify
43 animals through automated image classification by species (Beery et al., 2019; Falzon et al.,
44 2019; Nguyen et al., 2017; Norouzzadeh et al., 2019; Parham et al., 2018), and to perform
45 identification based on individually distinct patterns (Wäldchen & Mäder, 2018; Weinstein,
46 2018). The work presented here investigates the use of deep learning methodologies to support
47 semi-autonomous methods for sorting and identifying snow leopard individuals within an
48 accessible format.

49 The Whiskerbook.org online platform (Whiskerbook 2021) provides a Web-based data
50 management framework and a computer vision pipeline (Parham et al. 2018) for detection and
51 individual identification of multiple species of large cats, including snow leopards. However,
52 existing computer vision techniques on Whiskerbook.org, such as HotSpotter (Crall et al. 2013),
53 have been recommended for use (Miguel et al. 2019) on snow leopards but not formally
54 evaluated for accuracy, leaving questions about their overall accuracy and reliability for this
55 species. Additionally, recent developments in machine learning have suggested that a new
56 class of deep learning-based algorithms may improve automated matching capability (Moskvyak
57 et al., 2019).

58 Researchers seek to address conservation and management for this species and conduct
59 analyses over biologically relevant scales, meaningful to goals across the snow leopard range.
60 The project needs to reconcile previously classified and curated snow leopard photo-ID catalogs
61 with individuals from newly collected datasets. To do so, we need to automate a pipeline that is
62 both more efficient in terms of expert time and reduces misidentification errors.

63 This work is novel as the first attempt at testing and thoroughly evaluating two computer vision
64 algorithms to understand their performance at matching individual snow leopard sightings. The

65 first is the Hotspotter algorithm (Crall et al. 2013), a SIFT-based comparison of significant visual
66 texture areas, previously deployed on Whiskerbook.org for species like jaguar (*Panthera onca*).
67 The second is called Pose Invariant Embeddings (PIE v2; Moskvayak et al. 2019), a
68 convolutional neural network (CNN), in this case, InceptionV3 optimized with a triplet loss
69 network, which was first tested on manta ray bellies (*Mobula* spp.) and humpback whale
70 (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) flukes (Blount, 2018).

71 Understanding algorithm performance can inform the usability of the Whiskerbook.org platform
72 and aid researchers in not only rapidly matching individuals across photo ID catalogs (a
73 significant potential time and cost-saving on the road to more extensive and more
74 comprehensive catalogs and modeling efforts) but also at improving the effectiveness of mark-
75 recapture models that ultimately inform snow leopard conservation.

76 Materials and methods

77 Camera Trap Imagery

78 We conducted our experiments and evaluations with curated photos of well-known individuals
79 photographed between 2012 and 2019 from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) program
80 in Afghanistan, as recorded in the Whiskerbook.org platform (Blount, 2021). Additional data for
81 captive snow leopard data were contributed from seven European zoos (Helsinki and Ätheri
82 Zoos in Finland, Kolmården Zoo, Nordens Ark and Orsa Bear Park in Sweden, and Köln and
83 Wuppertal Zoos in Germany) and two zoos in the United States (WCS managed Bronx and
84 Central Park zoos in New York City). Our project had access to 22,120 annotations (i.e.,
85 machine learning-detected bounding boxes around snow leopards in photos) (Fig 1) from 359
86 snow leopard encounters within hourly intervals. However, these numbers are inflated by their
87 data capture technique: camera traps, which generate a high volume of imagery in a brief

88 timeframe and at a single location. For example, limiting the data to only individuals sighted
89 three or more times (three annotations of a side is a minimum requirement for PIE model
90 training) reduces the number of annotations to 12,311 and the number of distinct encounters to
91 116. Further data filtering used in machine learning training and analysis (e.g., to prevent
92 overrepresentation of highly sighted individuals) reduced these numbers even further. While we
93 believe this to be the largest data set yet assembled for analysis of computer vision on snow
94 leopard individual ID, although the available data is still relatively small.



95

96 *Fig 1. An annotated snow leopard. Annotations were generated by a machine learning-based*
97 *computer vision model and associated with identifying known individuals by human*
98 *confirmation. Annotations served as the fundamental data learned from ML and compared by*
99 *each algorithm. Photo courtesy of WCS Afghanistan.*

100

101 Performance Metric

102 We evaluate the performance of each algorithm individually by computing the top-k accuracy on
103 a test set where $k = 1, 5, 10$ and represents the rank of the correct match (i.e., an annotation of
104 the same individual represented by a query annotation) in a list of proposed matches. A top-1
105 rank, therefore, is the correct result returned by the algorithm as the most likely match for a
106 candidate annotation. A top-5 rank is the correct result ranked fifth most likely as returned in the
107 candidate list and so forth.

108

109 Min-3/Max-10

110 For training machine learning algorithms like PIE, we often utilize a Min-3/Max-10 data subset.
111 This data subset represents the individuals with at least three photos of the same viewpoint
112 (either left or right), also limited to a maximum of ten photos per individual/viewpoint. The
113 training phase requires a minimum of three photos (two photos for ML to learn from) and the test
114 phase (at least one for ML to test it against). A maximum of ten photographs is allowed for data
115 set balance and prevent highly sighted individuals from causing the ML system to optimize on
116 highly sighted individuals yet perform poorly on infrequently sighted individuals. In our
117 experience, a max-10 limit will suppress the Top-k performance ranking but create an ML model
118 that performs better in real-world matching across various individuals. After applying these filters
119 to the curated data on Whiskerbook.org, this resulted in 829 images of 217 individual snow
120 leopards.

121 Feature detection

122 Before the classification algorithms can act, the snow leopard needs to be detected in the
123 images. A machine learning detector, a customized PyTorch implementation of YOLO v2
124 (Redmon et al. 2016), created the snow leopard annotations as the first step in the Wildbook
125 Image Analysis (WBIA) pipeline (Parham et al. 2018). The task of the detector localizes animals
126 in images, focused mainly on accurate bounding boxes over the ground-truth detections (made
127 *a priori* by humans for a test set) while minimizing false positives and false negatives. We
128 trained a model to predict the snow_leopard class (a species-labeled bounding box) using a
129 training dataset of 2,000 images and 2,078 annotated bounding boxes (2 empty images, 34
130 images with two boxes, and 23 images with two boxes).

131 Network architecture, data pre-processing, training, and
132 evaluation.

133 With a machine learning detector trained and configured to extract snow leopard annotations,
134 we then used those annotations and related metadata (in particular the known identifications
135 based on coat patterning) in the WBIA pipeline (Parham et al. 2018) to first custom train the
136 Pose Invariant Embeddings (PIE) algorithm (Moskvyak et al. 2019).

137 We used a Min-3/Max-10 data constraint for PIE ML training and divided the training and test
138 data (Table 1).

139 *Table 1. Initial data division for machine learning training with PIE.*

Set	Individuals	Annotations
train	91	745
test	35	84
total	126	829

140
141 Models were trained and tested by tuning the number of required epochs and further assessing
142 for any indication of overfitting based on model outputs and error results. Overfitting may occur
143 if the model becomes too detail-oriented, fitting the data precisely, thus modeling extraneous
144 noise in the training data instead of the general features of interest.

145 After performing the first round of PIE algorithm modeling, we observed PIE converging
146 extremely quickly while training on this data. We believe this is partly due to territoriality (Only
147 one location may have snow leopards photographs) and that much of the training data was from
148 camera traps (compared to captive zoo data). We theorized that these two factors resulted in
149 "background matching" as an effective strategy for the PIE model during training, essentially
150 recognizing each snow leopard by recognizing the scenery where it most often appeared.

151 Researchers investigated background matching as a potential cause of overfitting by modeling
152 two datasets, one using a subset of individuals (n=14) that occurred at multiple locations and a
153 subset of individuals, including those that also had multiple sightings at the same location
154 (n=29).

155 Background Matching

156 We used two methods to minimize potential overfitting due to background matching in the PIE
157 model developed during training. The first method is appropriately named "background
158 subtraction" and removes the background algorithmically. Wild Me had already trained a
159 background subtraction model for snow leopards as part of detector training in the WBIA
160 pipeline (Parham et al. 2018), so we modified the PIE training pipeline so that each training
161 image was pre-processed with background subtraction (Fig 2).

162



163

164 *Fig 2. A background-subtracted snow leopard photo used to train the final PIE model. Credit:*
165 *Wild Me*

166

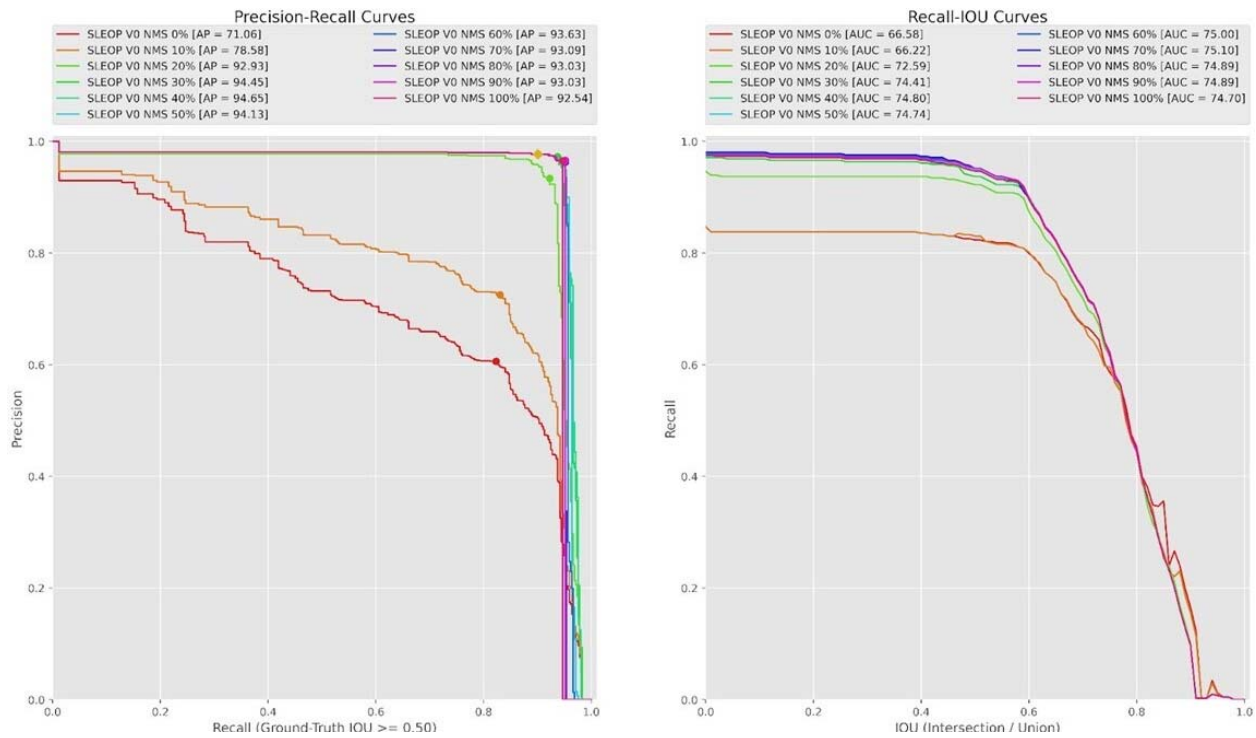
167 The second method involved mirroring left-side photos so that each image appears to have a
168 right-side viewpoint of the animal. This mirroring is a configuration parameter while training PIE

169 that can be turned on or off. It has previously been used on complicated matching problems to
170 get as much image-level consistency as possible: PIE is generally able to match diverse
171 viewpoints, but standardizing them may also increase accuracy.

172 **Results**

173 **Detection Algorithm**

174 The Precision-Recall performance curves of the trained snow leopard detection model were
175 computed on a held-out 20% test set (413 annotations) to assess the accuracy and report
176 comprehensive detection success (Fig. 3). The various colors of the curves show different
177 thresholds of non-maximum suppression (NMS) applied to the network's final bounding box
178 predictions. A common way to summarize the localization accuracy is with Average Precision
179 (AP) as determined by the area-under-the-curve. For example, the best performing configuration
180 with an NMS of 30% achieves an AP of 94.45%. The corresponding colored points on each
181 curve signify the closest point along the line to the top-right corner of the precision-recall
182 coordinate system, signifying a perfect detector. Furthermore, the yellow diamond specifies the
183 highest precision for all configurations, given a desired fixed recall of 80%.



184

185 *Fig 3. The detector Precision-Recall curves for snow leopards.*

186 Delving deeper on the Precision-Recall curves, the maximum recall values (x-axis intercept)

187 represent the absolute maximum percentage of annotations that the detector configuration can

188 "recover" or "recall" from the ground-truth detections. Therefore, a recall of 90% indicates that a

189 given detection configuration found 90% of the ground-truth annotations. The recall is a

190 fundamental measurement for false negatives and implies a miss rate of 10% per sighting. The

191 precision value indicates the percentage of correct detections (thereby measuring the number of

192 false positives) and how many additional incorrect detections. A true-positive in our detection

193 scenario is defined by the amount of intersection-over-union (IoU) percentage between a

194 prediction and a matched ground-truth bounding box. For all plots in this section, we fix the

195 acceptable IoU threshold to be 50% or greater. Non-maximum suppression (NMS) is a common

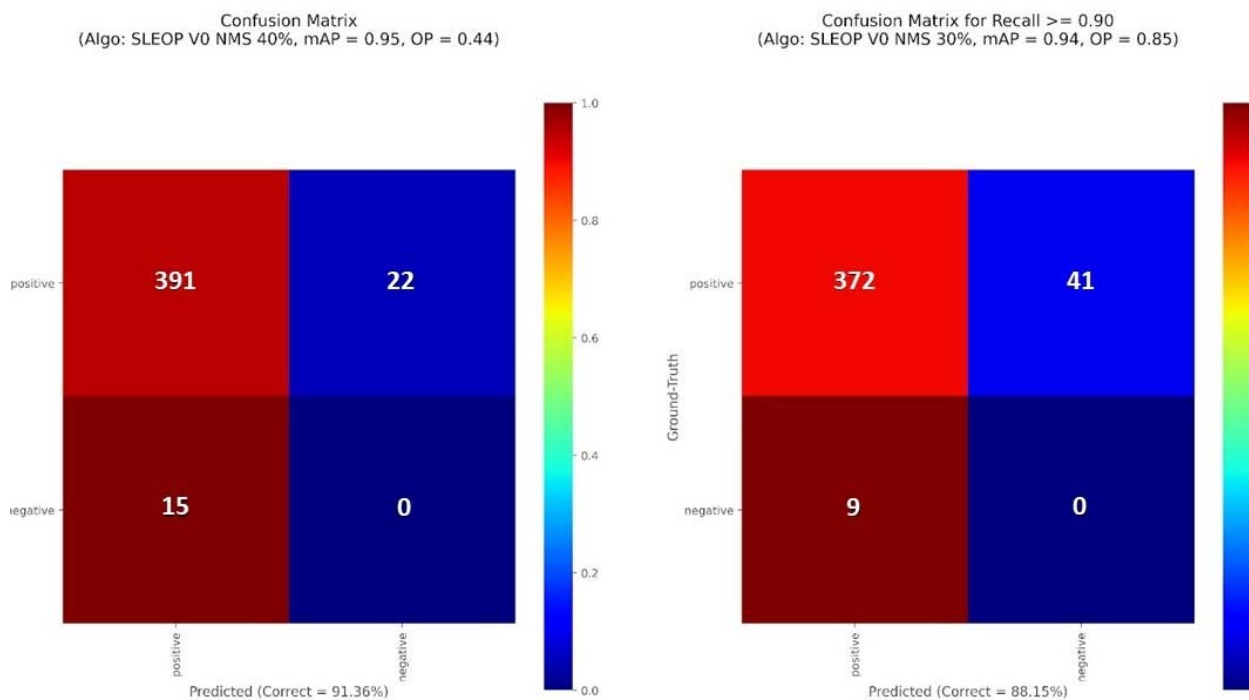
196 technique for filtering duplicate detections by eliminating highly overlapping and lower-scoring

197 predictions. A high NMS value will remove many bounding boxes from the output based on their

198 percentage of overlap area (leading to an increase in precision but a decrease in recall). True

199 negatives are undefined, which is why a receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve is not
200 provided in this report.

201 The confusion matrices give the accuracy for the best-colored point (left) and the yellow
202 diamond (right) (Fig 4). It is worth mentioning that the 80% recall is arbitrary and can be
203 adjusted based on the performance targets of the final project.



204
205 *Fig 4. Confusion matrices for the best-colored point (left) and the yellow diamond (right) from the*
206 *Precision-Recall performance curves (Fig. 2). False negatives occur when not detecting a snow*
207 *leopard when one is present in the image, and false positives are spurious detections when no*
208 *snow leopard is present in the image, such that a bounding box is generated where there is no*
209 *snow leopard within it.*

210 We can see that the best performing and our chosen configuration (highest AP at nearly 95%)
211 has an NMS threshold of 40% and a score threshold of 44% (Fig 3 and 4). With this
212 configuration, the overall detector makes 32 errors out of 413 overall annotations, with 22 of
213 those incorrect detections being false negatives (not detecting a leopard when one is present).
214 For 22 false negatives, there are 15 false positives (spurious detections of snow leopards that

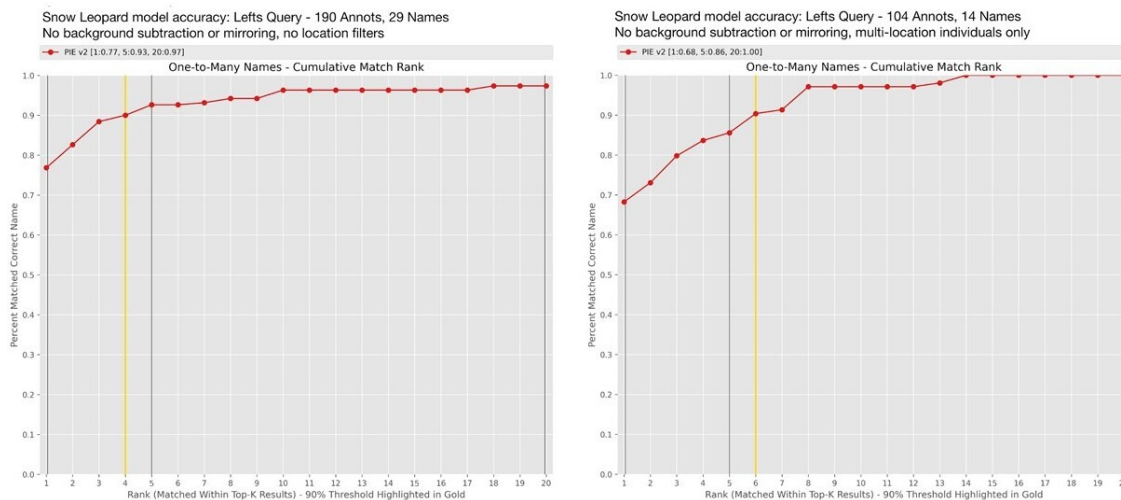
215 were not in the image, a bounding box is generated where there is no animal) (Fig 3). If we relax
216 the miss-rate requirement to 10%, we make fewer false detections (a total of 9 down from 15),
217 but we end up missing 41 animals (false negatives), and the overall accuracy drops by over 3%
218 (Fig. 4, right plot).

219 Manual observers can remediate false positives and negative errors by cleaning the detection
220 algorithm results. The cleaning can simultaneously deal with errors due to two detections being
221 formed on the same individual, separate annotations creating new encounters for a second or
222 third snow leopard or missing annotations. From user experience accounts, field camera trap
223 data often contain many images of the same individual within an hourly interval, where the
224 impacts of false negatives are likely not as significant on a larger dataset. For example, the
225 detection algorithm may not classify several photos within an encounter of 30 photos, and the
226 annotated sample for that individual is still substantial. Experienced observers report that false
227 negatives seem to arise from low-quality captures, such as those inordinately far away from the
228 camera trap or bad quality captures that are blurry or less recognizable.

229 Investigation of Overfitting

230 After running an initial set of PIE models, the neural network reached its most accurate state
231 rapidly, after seeing each image only 10-30 times (in machine learning terms, after 10-30
232 "training epochs"), whereas 70-250 epochs would be a more usual period for this convergence.
233 Subsequent training only decreased the algorithm's performance on held-out test data, meaning
234 its long-term behavior was more akin to memorizing its training set than learning a generalized
235 matching strategy (this is the machine learning definition of "overfitting").
236 We investigated overfitting by measuring the algorithms' accuracy matching 14 individuals which
237 were seen at multiple locations (PIE results: Rank 1- 68%, Rank-5 86%), and comparing with
238 the initial model where there were also 29 individuals seen at the exact location with the same

239 background (PIE results: Rank 1- 77%, Rank-5 93%, and Rank-20 96%) (Fig 5). The algorithms'
240 top-1 and top-5 accuracies for snow leopard individuals detected at different locations are lower
241 than the first modeling attempt, which we can determine were due to the background assisting
242 in the classification of the image. These results clearly show the significance of background
243 matching in increasing classification accuracy, despite the filtering criteria having used only half
244 as many individuals across multiple locations. Since there were fewer individuals, we expected
245 the individuals to classify with higher accuracy if the algorithm successfully identified the
246 individual snow leopard in the image.
247



249 *Fig 5. Accuracy on a PIE model without background subtraction or L/R mirroring. Left is without*
250 *location filtering; right is only multi-location individuals that moved between trapping stations.*

251 Background Subtraction

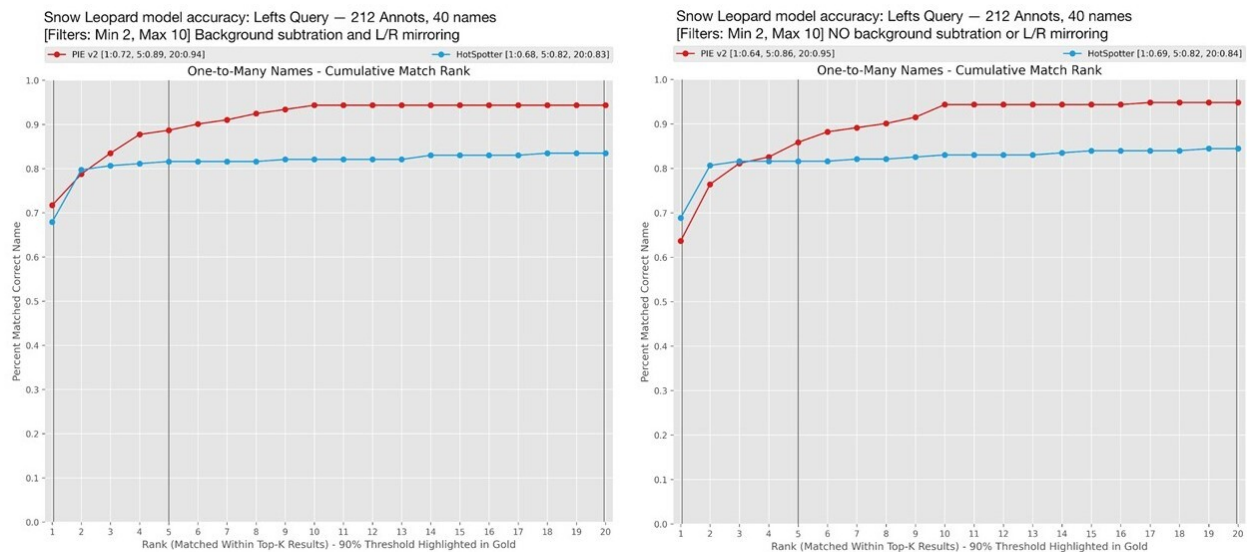
252 The deployed model was then trained using imagery subjected to background subtraction and
253 L/R mirroring. We found that turning on the LR parameter significantly changed the training
254 behavior, causing slower convergence with fewer signs of over-fitting. We have speculated that
255 this mirroring could double the number of background textures available for background

256 matching. It is also possible that the slower convergence was due to the randomness in the
257 initial configurations of the neural network during each training run.

258 We believe the PIE model with the mirrored and background-subtracted model has theoretical
259 advantages and has shown higher accuracy, so we have chosen it for deployment in the
260 Whiskerbook platform.

261 **Min-2 Accuracies**

262 The results shared so far are on datasets with at least three photos per individual + viewpoint
263 (e.g., individuals with at least three left side photos), here referred to as "min-3 accuracy". We
264 also computed accuracies on the more conservative filter of "min-2", which is the minimum
265 required for a human reviewer to perform ID. These results include the scenario where the
266 algorithm matches a new animal for the first time against only one existing catalog photo. The
267 results sought to classify 40 individuals with PIE BGS-LR (Rank-1 72%, Rank-5 89%, Rank-20
268 94%), PIE without background subtraction or L/R mirroring (Rank-1 64%, Rank-5 86%, Rank-20 95%), as
269 compared to Hotspotter (Rank-1 69%, Rank-5 82%, Rank-20 84%). The results showed that the
270 PIE model with background subtraction performed the best on the min-2 side-by-side matching
271 (Fig. 6). Overall, the BGS-LR model performs slightly better when compared to other models.

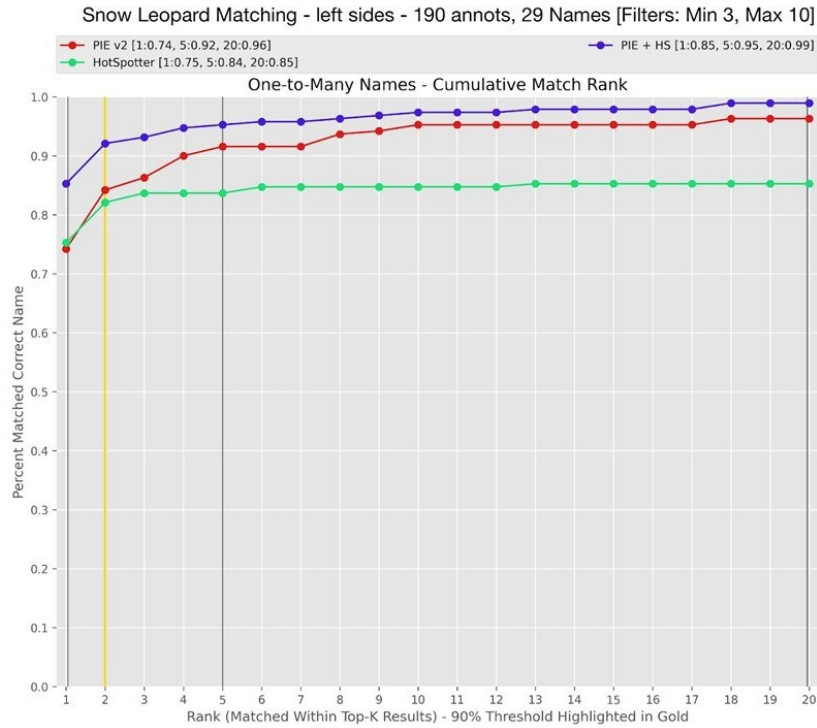


273 *Fig 6. Comparison of our two PIE models on data with a minimum of two left-side photos per*
274 *individual. The model on the left used background subtraction and L/R mirroring; the model on*
275 *the right used neither technique. HotSpotter (HS) is shown in both cases; differences in HS*
276 *accuracies are due to random noise as HotSpotter match scores are not strictly deterministic.*
277

278 PIE and Hotspotter Model Accuracy

279 Since Whiskerbook.org contains a multi-species, multi-feature, and multi-algorithm technical
280 foundation (Blount et al., 2021), more than one algorithm can be run in parallel when identifying
281 the individual animal in a photo. Therefore, we plotted the best PIE model alongside the older
282 HotSpotter algorithm's performance (Fig. 7), as well as the accuracy of both algorithms
283 combined (i.e., top-1 of PIE + HotSpotter means the percentage of cases where at least one of
284 the algorithms found the correct match at the top rank). Combining the two algorithms
285 significantly improves overall match accuracy:

- 286 • Top-1: 85%
- 287 • Top-5: 95%
- 288 • Top-20: 99%



289

290 *Fig 7. Accuracy plot of the deployed matching algorithm. Left-side annotations of individuals*
291 *contain at least three left-side photos. Right-side performance is roughly equivalent (this model*
292 *mirrors left-side photos, so every animal it sees is from a right-side perspective, but queries are*
293 *pre-filtered by viewpoint not to compare lefts and rights).*
294

295 The accuracy plots from all modeling attempts were summarized and compared across trained
296 PIE model variations (Table 2). Two things determine the accuracy of an ID algorithm: the
297 algorithm and the data. We have compared two PIE models, one trained with background
298 subtraction and L/R mirroring (the final, deployed model, dubbed "PIE-BGS-LR" here), and one
299 without either option ("PIE-vanilla"), as well as HotSpotter. We have considered three subsets of
300 the same data, all identified snow leopard photos on Whiskerbook.org. The subsets are either
301 min-3 or min-2, where the numeral indicates the minimum number of left-side sightings of the
302 same individual required for those photos to be included in the subset (right-side matching
303 behavior is comparable but not shown here). Additionally, datasets labeled "multiloc" indicate
304 that the researchers filtered the data to only include animals seen at multiple locations while
305 satisfying the min-X requirement.

306 *Table 2. Accuracy summary of algorithms on various data filters. BGS stands for "Background*
307 *Subtraction". "LR" stands for left-right mirroring. PIE-Vanilla indicates unmodified annotation*
308 *used in a PIE model. *: NA accuracies are shown where the result would be a trivial 100%*
309 *because fewer than 20 individuals meet the criteria.*

Algorithm	Dataset	Number of Annots.	Number of Individuals	top-1 ACC	top-5 ACC	top-20 ACC
PIE-BGS-LR	min-2	212	40	72%	89%	94%
PIE-vanilla	min-2	212	40	64%	86%	95%
HotSpotter	min-2	212	40	69%	82%	84%
PIE-BGS-LR	min-3	190	29	74%	92%	96%
PIE-vanilla	min-3	190	29	77%	93%	96%
HotSpotter	min-3	190	29	75%	84%	87%
PIE-BGS-LR + HotSpotter	min-3	190	29	85%	95%	99%
PIE-BGS-LR	min-3, multiloc.	104	14	67%	90%	NA*
PIE-vanilla	min-3, multiloc.	104	14	68%	86%	NA*
HotSpotter	min-3, multiloc.	104	14	72%	79%	85%

310 **Discussion**

311 Our results provide a first look at the matching accuracy of two independent, production-ready
312 pattern-matching algorithms for snow leopards. The results demonstrate that their use in
313 combination can further improve researchers' ability to identify matching snow leopards across
314 large catalogs rapidly. Combining PIE and Hotspotter for classification yielded an accuracy of
315 Rank 1- 85% correctly identified individuals on our dataset. As individual algorithms, PIE has
316 shown to have higher accuracy in matching these data than HotSpotter, and it is currently the
317 best-performing algorithm we are aware of for identifying snow leopard individuals in camera

318 trap photos. However, HotSpotter's results are only slightly less performant, and since they are
319 independently obtained, they add value in concert with PIE within the program.

320 Previous attempts at using deep learning for snow leopards advanced the methods to
321 automatically detect snow leopards in photos (A. Miguel et al., 2016) and optimize classification
322 using background erasing to assist Hotspotter algorithms to focalize on regions of interest
323 (Beery, 2016; A. C. Miguel et al., 2019). These prior advancements improved our understanding
324 of snow leopard individual identification capabilities and seeded the formal evaluation and
325 proliferation of tools based on these successes.

326 One shortcoming identified and addressed within the study showed a limited background
327 matching for the PIE model (Fig 8 helps visualize the impact). Rapid convergence indicated that
328 the "matching problem" was abnormally easy on this data, which is generally a result of
329 insufficient volume of training data, lack of diversity, or both. Background subtraction and left-
330 right mirroring were included in the PIE algorithm model testing to resolve these issues.

331 The issue of background is significant for the snow leopard, as a territorial species, where field
332 observations at one camera trapping site sometimes reveal many animals. Observers have
333 reported two territorial males, two territorial females, and several younger cats at a single
334 camera trapping site. Matching several individuals would be most effective when the algorithm is
335 making intelligent ID predictions based on the natural patterning of the animal. However, if the
336 model filters the imagery and makes intelligent decisions on the landscape features, it is not
337 always a bad thing, where there may be minor effects that filter and rank the list of candidate
338 individuals based on some background and location information.

339 These location-based limitations arise from compiling results based on a relatively small dataset
340 from collated zoo data and field camera trap observations from one location in Afghanistan.

341 Rapid convergence during PIE training suggests that more extensive and more diverse data

342 may produce a more robust model. The snow leopard-PIE training pipeline developed here can
343 be reused to train future models comparatively easily after more users begin to use the system
344 and additional data can be then utilized. The existing model may also help bootstrap that data-
345 curation process. There is a significant opportunity for regional and global-scale research
346 collaborations with snow leopard research institutions to curate and individually identify data that
347 would build on these existing models towards more sophisticated refinement and better
348 performance.

349 We expect the PIE model deployed to Whiskerbook.org to save time during snow leopard
350 matching, especially considering related Whiskerbook.org features. Features currently available
351 include settings that allow for a location-filtering option (where users can limit a match query to
352 animals sighted in a certain area), one-to-one image matching or one-to-many matching (for
353 previously classified individuals), side-by-side comparison with HotSpotter results, and the
354 overall high accuracy of PIE on our existing datasets documented here. The algorithm tools
355 within Whiskerbook are also complemented by a "visual matcher" interface for manual
356 classification by an observer, allowing for more easy side-by-side comparison of photos against
357 each camera trap station's photos at different dates.

358 Future research may seek to assess further the manual observer's ability to classify images
359 utilizing the features (Visual Matcher, Hotspotter, and PIE) within Whiskerbook using captive
360 snow leopard individuals from zoo collected data. A study of this design could advance the
361 results that demonstrated high misclassification rates from manual human labor on a set of
362 captive snow leopards with known identities (Johansson et al., 2020). Johansson et al. (2020)
363 showed that manual observers correctly classified 87.5% of all capture occasions, where
364 misclassification errors would compound to inflate population abundance estimates 33% above
365 actual population size. The algorithms demonstrated in this paper perform nearly at the level we
366 would expect of a human observer, and the algorithms can serve as artificially intelligent

367 observers and speed up the classification pipeline. Future research may seek to hypothesize
368 and demonstrate manual observers' increased capabilities using artificial intelligence and
369 features afforded in Whiskerbook to bridge the accuracy gap towards more precise estimates.

370 **Data Availability**

371 Research-related requests for annotations and data used for ML training in this paper can be
372 requested in COCO format (Lin et al. 2020) via the corresponding author and must be expressly
373 and independently permitted by author Eve Bohnett or through an established collaboration on
374 Whiskerbook.org. Data can also be reviewed and shared via a collaboration request to user Eve
375 Bohnett inside the Whiskerbook.org system.

376 **Code Availability**

377 All software used in this analysis is available in the Wild Me open source repository at:

378 <https://github.com/wildmeorg>

379 The base application for algorithm analysis as defined in Parham et al. 2018 is:

380 <https://github.com/WildMeOrg/wildbook-ia>

381 Specific algorithm plugins for the three algorithms evaluated here can be found at:

382 <https://github.com/WildMeOrg/wbia-plugin-pie-v2>

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400 **Author contributions**

401 DB co-wrote and performed the PIE algorithm training and multi-algorithm analyses. JH co-
402 wrote, fundraised, and coordinated data annotation for the project. JP trained the machine
403 learning detector used before PIE training. SP, OJ, and SO collected the data. EB curated the
404 data set used for machine learning training and performance analysis and performed writing,
405 copy editing, and revising tasks. BA and WK contributed to drafting and revisions. LA
406 contributed significant intellectual content. All authors provided comments and final approval of
407 the uploaded manuscript.

408 References

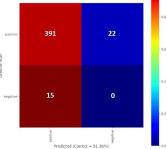
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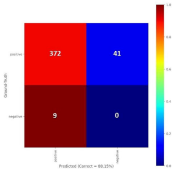
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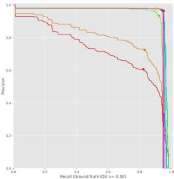
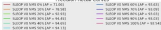
Confusion Matrix
(Rqrs: SLEOP VO RMS 40%, mAP = 0.95, DP = 0.44)



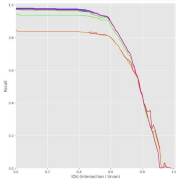
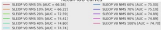
Confusion Matrix for Recall ≥ 0.90
(Rqrs: SLEOP VO RMS 30%, mAP = 0.94, DP = 0.85)



Precision-Recall Curves



Recall-IoU Curves

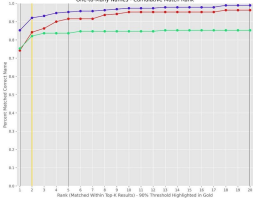


Snow Leopard Matching - left sides - 190 annots, 29 Names (Filters: Min 3, Max 10)

◆ PE v2 (1.0, 15, 5.0, 93, 20.0, 96)
 ◆ PE + HQ (1.0, 35, 5.0, 95, 20.0, 98)

◆ Halfpeter (5.0, 75, 5.0, 88, 20.0, 89)

One-to-Many Names - Cumulative Match Rank



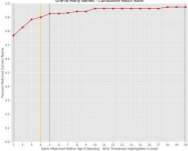


Snow Leopard model accuracy: Lefts Query - 193 Annots, 28 Names

No background subtraction or renaming, no location filter

AP: 0.71, 0.68, 0.67

One-to-Many Names - Cumulative Match Rank

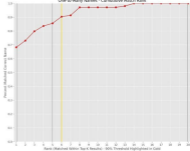


Snow Leopard model accuracy: Lefts Query - 104 Annots, 14 Names

No background subtraction or renaming, multi-location individuals only

AP: 0.44, 0.46, 0.50

One-to-Many Names - Cumulative Match Rank

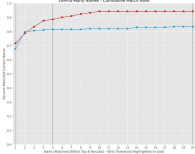


Snow Leopard model accuracy: Lefts Query — 212 Annots, 40 names

(Filters: Min 2, Max 10) Background subtraction and L/R mirroring

■ Percent Matched (0.00, 0.00, 200.00) ■ Percent Matched (0.00, 0.00, 200.00)

One-to-Many Names - Cumulative Match Rank



Snow Leopard model accuracy: Lefts Query — 212 Annots, 40 names

(Filters: Min 2, Max 10) NO background subtraction or L/R mirroring

■ Percent Matched (0.00, 0.00, 200.00) ■ Percent Matched (0.00, 0.00, 200.00)

One-to-Many Names - Cumulative Match Rank

