



"Bird's eye" view of southwestern Arizona

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BORDERLANDS JAGUAR DETECTION

Southeastern Arizona is home to many neotropical species of plants and mammals. This area is the northernmost geographical range of the majority of the species. Some that call this area home are the thick-billed parrot, elegant trogon, Mexican brown nosed opossum, coatimundi, javelina, ocelot, and jaguar. This habitat, primarily madrean oak woodlands, is also home to a large array of other indigenous carnivores such as cougars, black bears, bobcats, coyotes, gray foxes, ringtails, and four species of skunks. Many prey species are also represented, making this an area rich in biodiversity.

The Human Aspect

The majority of southeastern Arizona is within the Coronado National Forest and is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture under the multiple-use concept. The primary human activities are recreation, hunting, livestock, grazing, and mining. The human population density is very low within the national forest boundaries. Several small cities and towns are located within this fragmented landscape. Undocumented immigrants move across the border daily.

Threats

The most pressing threat to the large carnivores that inhabit these "sky island mountains" is urban development. The river valleys that separate these mountains and provide travel corridors for dispersing and breeding animals are rapidly filling up with houses. This not only destroys habitat but also limits genetic flow and further isolates wildlife

Highlights

Total Area

- 850 mi²
- 1,368 km²

Habitat Types

- Mesquite grasslands
- Madrean evergreen woodlands

Wildlife Present

Birds

- Yellow-billed cuckoo
- Trogon

Mammals

- Coati
- Rock squirrel
- Arizona gray squirrel
- Cottontail
- Ringtail

Plants

- Mexican goldpoppy
- Evening primrose
- Fairy duster
- Pinon pine
- Juniper

WCS involvement

- Since 1997

Argentina

Belize

Bolivia

Brazil

Costa Rica

Guatemala

Guyana

Honduras

Mexico/U.S.

Nicaragua

Panama

Peru

Venezuela





First camera trap photograph of a jaguar crossing into Arizona

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populations. This rapid population increase is followed by an increase in public services such as power lines and roads. An increase in water consumption furnished by deep wells has the potential to lower ground water tables and dry up the few remaining free flowing streams in the southwestern United States.

In order to combat the increase in illegal immigration and drug smuggling into the United States from Mexico, the Border Patrol would like to construct a lighted road along the entire Mexican border. If this were to happen, it could prove to be a barrier to dispersing jaguars.

WCS Activities

The Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project is designed to detect the presence of neo-tropical felids and, at the same time, attempt to monitor population fluctuations of cougars and black bears. If we are to allow jaguars the chance to establish a breeding population in Southern Arizona, it is important to monitor habitat use of immigrating jaguars and other large carnivores indigenous to the area. Non-invasive methods such as camera traps, track transects, and hair snares are being used.

Important Next Steps

- Conduct field studies to monitor carnivore movement, concentrating on the basins between the sky island mountain ranges in order to identify, and help protect important wildlife travel corridors.
- Seek funding to purchase critical jaguar breeding habitat, already identified in Sonora Mexico, in order to preserve the gene pool of jaguars that migrate into Southern Arizona and New Mexico.
- Encourage studies that would seek out possible solutions to the illegal immigration problem along the southern border of the United States.

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Mission

The Wildlife Conservation Society's International Conservation program saves wildlife and wild lands by understanding and resolving critical problems that threaten key species and large, wild ecosystems around the world.

WCS Strategies

- Site-based conservation
- Research
- Training and capacity-building
- New model development
- Informing policy
- Linking zoo-based and field-based conservation

Support this Project!

Donations can be sent to:
The Jaguar Conservation Program at the Wildlife Conservation Society

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