



Mountain lion in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala

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Highlights

Total Area

- 2,000,000,000 ha
- 4,942,107,656 acres

Habitat Types

- Lowland tropical rainforest

Wildlife Present

Birds

- King vulture
- Mealy parrot
- Ocellated turkey

Mammals

- Brocket deer
- Tapir
- Jaguar
- Mountain lion
- White-lipped peccary

Plants

- Xate palm
- Chicozapote
- Ramon

WCS involvement

- Since 1987

SUBSISTENCE HUNTING IN THE MAYA BIOSPHERE RESERVE

WCS in Guatemala

The Gallon Jug Estate in northwestern Belize lies in the heart of the Maya Forest shared by Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico. Buffered on all sides by extensive tropical forest, Gallon Jug Estate is uniquely well protected from hunting and human settlement pressures. Its conspicuous wildlife, including the jaguar, makes it an ideal field research test site. Remote camera-trap studies have been ongoing for more than a decade here.

The Human Aspect

Human communities located in or near the Maya Biosphere Reserve are very dependant upon exploiting natural resources. Inhabitants make a minimal subsistence by collecting xate palm for export to the U.S. flower industry, harvesting resin from chicle trees, slash and burn agriculture, and small-scale timber extraction. Hunting wildlife occurs yearlong and is concurrent with all other activities.

Threats

The jaguar in Guatemala, and throughout Central America, is threatened by habitat destruction, direct persecution, and the disappearance of their prey. Within many areas of the Maya Biosphere, unregulated hunting for subsistence and commercial reasons has significantly reduced the number of game animal. Some of the larger mammals, such as white-lipped peccary, have been nearly extirpated from areas near human habitation.

Argentina

Belize

Bolivia

Brazil

Costa Rica

Guatemala

Guyana

Honduras

Mexico/U.S.

Nicaragua

Panama

Peru

Venezuela





Local hunter

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This overexploitation of wildlife threatens the continued existence of jaguar and mountain lion since the same mammals pursued by hunters are a major source of prey for big cats.

WCS Activities

The objective of this research project is to understand the effect hunting has upon the ecology of the jaguar and mountain lion. The abundance of large cats is being monitored with remote-triggered camera traps. Diet of large cats living in fully protected areas is being compared to those living in areas near human settlement where over hunting occurs. We will identify how the large cats respond to a depletion of their prey. The local community and protected areas personnel have taken an active role in collecting data and participating in the research. This research is part of a larger effort by WCS to enhance the capacity of Guatemalan government agencies and local communities to sustainably manage resources found with the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

Important Next Steps

As part of their overall effort to ensure the sustainable management of wildlife and the conservation of jaguar, the WCS project will undertake the following:

- Facilitate the creation of community-based, participatory wildlife management plans that will regulate the hunting of wildlife and reduce the threat posed by hunting to jaguar and mountain lion.
- Promote the enforcement of regulations that prohibit the sale of wild game at restaurants serving tourists who visit the Maya Biosphere Reserve.
- Publicize the results from this research in Spanish and distribute these to the agencies and organizations throughout Central America that are involved in natural resource management and jaguar conservation.

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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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