

JAGUARUNDI
(*Felis yagouarundi tolteca*)

STATUS: Should a jaguarundi occur in Arizona, it would be protected as an endangered species. Endangered (41 FR 26019; June 24, 1976) in Mexico.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Small (88-128 cm (35-50 in) long), slender-bodied, long-tailed, unspotted cat, with short legs, and small rounded ears. It is about twice the size of a large domestic cat, and can grow as large as 9.1 kg (20 lb). There are three color phases--gray, red, and black. Diet consists mostly of small mammals and birds. Hunting occurs at night.

HABITAT: Jaguarundis are inhabitants of the dense, thorny thickets where cacti, mesquite, cat claw, granjeno, and other spine-studded vegetation abounds. There, these cats live a life of relative safety because such thickets are almost impenetrable to both dogs and man which are their chief enemies. Thickets need not be continuous, as interspersed, cleared areas are tolerated. Locations near streams are preferred wherever dense vegetation occurs in their range. They spend most of their time on the ground, but they are expert climbers and garner part of their food in trees and bushes. They are largely active at night but move about a good deal in the daytime, often going to water to drink at midday.

Their food consists of rats, mice, birds, and rabbits. An analysis of stomach contents from 13 Venezuelan jaguarundis revealed the remains of lizards, rodents, small birds, cottontail rabbits, and grass.

RANGE: Historic: South Texas, the east and west coasts of Mexico, southern Mexico, and Central and South America. There is no historical evidence that jaguarundis occurred in Arizona.

Current: Extremely limited distribution. Recent confirmed sightings in the U.S. come from Willacy and Cameron counties in southern Texas. Several unconfirmed sightings have been reported in Cochise, Pima and Santa Cruz counties, Arizona, but have been determined to be errors.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Endangered due to habitat loss and alteration, primarily brush clearing and predator control activities.

NOTES: A recent evaluation of all the jaguarundi records in the Arizona State's Heritage Data Management System and other historic records concluded that there is no historical or current evidence that jaguarundis exist in either Arizona or Sonora nor is there jaguarundi habitat in Arizona (Brown and González 1999). Therefore, the historic range as listed in the Federal Register (41 FR 26019; June 24, 1976) has been changed, removing Arizona from the historical range. Any jaguarundi which may appear in Arizona in the future would still be afforded the full protection of the Endangered Species Act.