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NEWS RELEASE

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Collared Arizona jaguar recaptured for medical intervention

PHOENIX — A collared jaguar from southern Arizona was recaptured today and transported to the Phoenix Zoo for medical attention after wildlife officials concluded the health of the animal may be in jeopardy.

A field team consisting of Arizona Game and Fish Department biologists and a wildlife veterinarian was deployed on Sunday to locate the jaguar to assess its overall condition.

Early data transmitted in the days following the capture and collaring of Macho B indicated that the animal was doing well, travelling more than three miles after being released. However, careful monitoring of recent data revealed a reduced pattern of movement and foraging over the past three days.

A capture was attempted unsuccessfully on Sunday, but a second attempt today was successful. The jaguar is being moved to the Phoenix Zoo for further assessment.

Recapturing the jaguar was required to better evaluate his condition and health. When the team observed the cat in the field, it was noted that the animal had experienced weight loss and was exhibiting an abnormal gait, so intervention was deemed necessary. Initial assessment showed the cat had normal vital signs.

"We have been monitoring Macho B's movements continuously since the initial capture. While he was still moving around, we noticed a decreased level of activity over the weekend that warranted further investigation," said Bill Van Pelt, the Arizona Game and Fish Department birds and mammals program manager and a member of the Jaguar Conservation Team. "We had a rare opportunity to collect priceless data on a species we know little about when we incidentally captured Macho B during the course of a research study on black bears and mountain lions. Now it is incumbent upon us to do all we can to aid this animal."

Biologists have been concerned with Macho B's age. He is believed to be the oldest known jaguar in the wild. His age was estimated at two to three years old in photographs taken in 1996, making him 15-16 years old now. Previously the oldest known jaguar in the wild was 13 years old.

"We staunchly support the initial capture of the jaguar and the responsible efforts to closely monitor the condition of the animal and intervene as needed," said Steve Spangle, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Arizona field supervisor.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Phoenix Zoo have been integral partners in providing technical assistance and support during and after the recapture.

The field team used the GPS location points provided every three hours to track the animal. At less than two pounds, Macho B's collar is less than two percent of his body weight, and it should not impede his normal movements and ability to catch prey.

The jaguar's initial capture was guided by protocols developed in case a jaguar was inadvertently captured in the course of other wildlife management activities. The plan, which was created in consultation with leading jaguar experts, includes a protocol for capture, sedation and handling.

Black bear and mountain lion trapping had been occurring in the area where the jaguar was initially trapped since the summer of 2007 without a jaguar being trapped.

The species has been listed outside of the United States under the Endangered Species Act since 1973. That protection was extended to jaguars within the U.S. in 1997, the year after their presence in the Arizona and New Mexico borderlands was confirmed.

In 1997, the Jaguar Conservation Team was established in Arizona and New Mexico to protect and conserve the species.

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Note to media: More information on Macho B and jaguar conservation is available by calling Public Information Officer Lynda Lambert at (623) 236-7203.

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