



Contact

Debbie Freeman (602) 789-3215
Public Information Officer, AFGD

Elizabeth Slown (505) 820-1777
Public Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release [Oct. 18, 2004](#)

Wild jaguars photographed in southern Arizona *Endangered species lives south of Tucson*

PHOENIX — When you think of Arizona wildlife, you probably think of javelina, coyotes, and snakes, but recently two jaguars were caught on film in the wild borderlands of southern Arizona.

“This is a great step in the continuing efforts of a multi-agency jaguar conservation team in Arizona,” says Bill Van Pelt, head of the Arizona Game and Fish Department nongame mammal program. “Until now, we had no full body photos of jaguars in the wilds of our state. **Now, the public will get to see these photos through the media.**”

Jaguars have never been common in Arizona and New Mexico, but they have been spotted here more than 50 times since the mid-1800s. By the 1900s, they nearly disappeared from the United States because of development, trophy hunting, and shooting to protect livestock. In 1997, the jaguar was named an endangered species in our country. That’s also when a Jaguar Conservation Team of landowners, ranchers, citizen groups, scientists, and state and federal agencies was formed to develop a conservation plan, which appears to be working.

“A bare-bones monitoring program shows the continued presence of these magnificent native cats in Arizona,” says Terry Johnson, the department’s nongame branch chief, who chairs the conservation team. “We thank other agencies and our private partners for their hard work. The new jaguar photos were taken with equipment maintained by a private citizen, Jack Childs, and a Humboldt State University graduate student, Emil McCain.”

State and federal agencies are currently coordinating a Jaguar Borderlands Recovery Strategy that recognizes the success of the jaguar in the United States is dependent on conservation efforts in Mexico.

“Conservation works best when it is founded on collaboration,” says Dale Hall, Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Southwest Region. “It’s great to see success come from efforts such as this that engage local participation.”

The four new jaguar photos were taken using remote motion-sensing cameras south of Tucson. At least two different jaguars are in the new pictures.

“We had a few photos from the years 2001 and 2003, where you could only see part of a jaguar, so the new pictures mark a milestone,” says Van Pelt.

Each jaguar has a unique pattern of markings. Using these markings, scientists have confirmed that one jaguar in the new photos was also in the 2001 photos from the same area.

Jaguars are far-ranging animals with recorded movements of up to 500 miles. They can live in the wild for more than 11 years and breed year-round. Litters range from one to four cubs. Jaguars’ prey includes more than 85 species, including javelina, armadillos, turtles, and fish.

With deer season beginning statewide on Oct. 29, the Arizona Game and Fish Department wants to remind hunters to be aware that jaguars range in parts of southern Arizona. Please be careful not to disturb these animals.

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Note to media: A new jaguar photo is available by calling Public Information Officer Debbie Freeman at (602) 789-3215. File video of jaguars is also available. Interviews with Arizona Game and Fish Department biologist Bill Van Pelt and the head of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Arizona field office, Steve Spangle, are also being offered. Humboldt State University Public Affairs representative Sean Kearns can be reached at (707) 826-5151.