

Jaguar Conservation Team (JAGCT)
Summary Notes for Meeting of February 19, 2009
Meeting Location: Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona
Final: February 28, 2009

JAGCT Chair Terry B. Johnson, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. local time.

1. Opening comments and ground rules

Opening Comments. Terry Johnson opened the meeting with a welcome and introductions by all present. He followed with an announcement that a male jaguar was captured and collared by the Arizona Game and Fish Department on February 18, 2009. Jack Childs provided additional information. The capture site was southwest of Tucson. The jaguar was fitted with a 1 lb 12 oz GPS satellite collar and released on-site six hours later. As the jaguar regained its faculties, it began to move away, travelling 2-3 miles before stopping in a resting site. GPS data downloads will be coming every three hours for the life of the collar battery (probably 15-18 months). The delayed release was required under protocol for the drug used to calm the jaguar while it was being weighed, measured, and GPS-collared.

Note: for JAGCT convenience, the following information is included even though the details were not known until immediately after the JAGCT meeting:

The captured jaguar was presumed to be Macho B, due to location and post-capture examination that revealed its teeth indicated the cat was about 14-15 years old. Previous photographs affirmed that Macho B has been present in the Arizona borderlands from August 31, 1996 through January 21, 2009. Macho B was estimated to be 2-3 years old on August 31, 1996, so he is about 14-16 years old now. However, capture photographs must be examined by Jack Childs and Emil McCain before we can say for sure whether this is or is not Macho B.

[Note: on the evening of February 19, 2009 Jack Childs and Emil McCain confirmed the capture jaguar is Macho B. The “Betty Boop” spot is evident on the jaguar’s left side, and the “Pinocchio” spot is evident on the right side. The photos and the post-capture/pre-release evaluation also confirmed the jaguar weighed 118 pounds, appeared to be in excellent physical condition (visual assessment), and its belly appeared to be full. Hair, swabs, feces, and blood samples were taken for lab analysis and to enable comparison with samples collected in the future.]

The jaguar was caught in a leg-hold snare set for mountain lions. The capture site was at approximately 4000 ft elevation, in a transition between desert grassland and oak woodland. The AGFD researchers were trapping that area because a lion previously collared in that area during their study of wildlife movement corridors along the International Border had been lawfully killed by a hunter and needed to be replaced (8 bears and 3 lions have been collared in the study). Incidental capture and collaring of the jaguar has been authorized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

(USFWS) since 1998. The protocol under which the jaguar was handled post-captured was developed by JAGCT, vetted with JAGSAG, and revised in 2007. The GPS collar was donated to the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project (BJDP) by North Star Science and Technologies for use on a jaguar, if the opportunity ever presented itself. On behalf of JAGCT, AGFD, and USFWS, the BJDP had instructed the AGFD research team on the jaguar handling protocol and use of the GPS collar because they were trapping lions and bears in areas along the Borderlands where jaguars had been documented since 1996. Simply put, preparedness met opportunity and as a result we will now have accurate information on how at least one jaguar uses the AZ-Mexico borderlands landscape.

More details will be forthcoming on the capture and post-collaring movements by this animal. However, specific locations will not be given out except as necessary for AGFD, USFWS, and USDA Wildlife Services to handle their responsibilities.

Anyone who is not familiar with photographs of Macho B, the story of this marvelous cat, and the Betty Boop and Pinnochio spots should buy (or at least borrow) a copy of:

Jack L. Childs and Anna Mary Childs. 2008. *Ambushed on the jaguar trail: hidden cameras on the Mexican border*. Tucson (AZ): Rio Nuevo Press.

Ground Rules. Ground rules were the same as previous meetings. Participants were asked to raise their hand to ask a question or state an opinion. Only one person is allowed to speak at a time, and side conversations must be kept to a minimum. This allows each person to be heard and keeps the meeting moving through the agenda. Also, attendees should turn cellular telephones and beepers off or set them to vibrate. In the event of a call, please leave the room before conversing with the caller. Anyone attending today's meeting may comment on any agenda item and all are encouraged to do so.

2. Agenda Review/Additional Discussion Points

No additional items were added to the Agenda at this time.

As noted on today's agenda and/or previous public notices for this meeting: information regarding jaguar conservation in the Southwest may be obtained on the JAGCT Web page at <http://azgfd.gov/jaguar>. To receive JAGCT's electronically distributed updates, including public notices of JAGCT meetings, visit <http://azgfd.gov/signup> and subscribe to the electronic newsletter, *Endangered Species Updates*. Email correspondence to JAGCT should be addressed to the JAGCT Chair (jaguar@azgfd.gov). This is a passive email account; messages received will be read and used as appropriate, but individual responses will not be sent.

3. Discussion of JAGCT Summary Notes

Terry Johnson announced that all Summary Notes to date are now in final form. Copies of the notes for the past four meetings are available today in this meeting (see the hand-outs table at the front of the room). PDF copies of these notes and various other documents discussed today will be posted to the JAGCT Web page (<http://azgfd.gov/jaguar>) within a few days.

4. Updates on jaguar monitoring and reported sightings

New Mexico – No sighting reports have been received in New Mexico.

Arizona – No Class I or Class II (verifiable accounts). We did receive one Class II report from Mexico in January. This account is likely to be a different jaguar than Macho B, as the location was farther south than could be traveled in the time since Macho B was last photographed in the United States. Additionally, there was one Class III (unverifiable account) report for Arizona: a single black animal seen in the Dos Cabezas.

The usual Classification discussion ensued. Handouts of the Classification were again available at the meeting. Tim Snow went over the Classes that are used.

A discussion ensued regarding black individuals. To date, there have been no verifiable records of black jaguars north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Mexico). Black individuals tend to occur in tropical areas. There are unverifiable reports of black jaguars north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec including a disputed photograph near the Sinaloa/Chihuahua border by Dr. Vladimir Dinets in 2004, a Class II sighting report in 1998 from the Burro Mountains near Silver City, a 1973 belated report from west central New Mexico, and a 1910 account in the Big Hatchets of New Mexico that was first described as a black mountain lion. Again, no skins or photograph accounts of black jaguars exist for the northern part of their range.

5. Update on jaguar sighting report forms and notification process

Tim Snow led a discussion regarding sighting report forms (available at the meeting) and the current notification process. It is important to recognize that each agency maintains its own policy regarding how to route information on such reported sightings, but the end results should be the same: involvement of all affected parties and timely resolution of any situation. It is also important to realize that the individual jaguar's physical condition, damage of personal property, and public safety play a role in how these calls might be routed.

With this in mind, Tim presented information regarding AGFD procedures. Reported sightings come to the Department in a variety of ways, including e-mail, phone calls to Regional offices, phone calls to the Phoenix offices, and phone calls to our Operation Game Thief (1-800) number. While we try to standardize and triage these calls so that potential

jaguar calls are routed to the appropriate person (Department JAGCT representative), due to availability of personnel sometimes there are delayed responses to calls that do not pose a potential public safety concern. Despite these difficulties, AGFD remains committed to conducting interviews and possible field investigations when deemed appropriate.

Questions were raised regarding the definition of “affected parties” in regard to notification. Currently, our practice has been to maintain the confidentiality of the site. Therefore, “affected parties” have typically been the landowner, livestock permit holder at the immediate site (if different), and persons conducting legal trapping or livestock depredation activities in the immediate area (done via normal law enforcement contacts in the field). **Action Item: Include USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services in the list of contacts for potential trapping and depredation for all verified reports.**

Concerns were discussed regarding how neighboring parties are being informed of the presence of jaguars in the area. AGFD has routinely used media announcements, JAGCT outreach efforts, and individual group presentations for announcing the general area in which jaguars and jaguar conservation efforts have occurred or are occurring. Today’s meeting is another avenue of this outreach effort. We certainly recognize the potential need for neighboring parties to be informed of JAGCT efforts and potential reports of jaguars in the area, and we will remain committed to informing those folks in the immediate area of verifiable reports. One suggestion was provided that includes using local area group newsletters (such as an announcement in the Malpai Borderlands Group or the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance membership newsletters). While this is an excellent suggestion, we will need to establish a point of contact for those groups. In addition, it is important to note that not all local parties are affiliated with those groups (i.e. they do not all receive these newsletters).

Important reminder: in view of the GPS-collared jaguar and the potential for many, many more locations to be identified, the JAGCT and the agencies will need to further develop these reporting tools/information sharing protocols without disclosing the immediate location of the collared animal. **Action Item: Draft protocol for discussion at the next JAGCT meeting.**

6. Update on jaguar capture and handling protocols

JAGCT protocols regarding capture and handling have not been updated since 2007. Mainly, personnel changes and contact information is required to bring the protocols up-to-date. **Action Item: Draft protocols for capture and handling will be provided at the next JAGCT meeting.**

7. The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance

The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance (AVCA) hosted and provided lunch at today’s meeting. The group began in 1995 and works on habitat restoration and conservation in the

Altar Valley, including preservation of family ranching against development pressures, erosion control along Altar Wash, the return of natural fires and prescribed burns, and protection of native species. AVCA expressed interest in the JAGCT and would like to see continued information sharing between the groups.

8. Jaguar-related habitat connectivity issues and activities in Arizona

Over the past year, AGFD and the JAGCT were criticized for lack of effort toward indentifying and protecting habitats important as wildlife movement corridors, particularly along the Mexican border. AGFD believes the criticism reflected a lack of understanding about JAGCT's role as opposed to AGFD's role in this area, and of AGFD's extensive efforts in this area. Consequently, AGFD informed the critic in writing that AGFD would be present at this meeting to present an overview of and respond to questions about its efforts to identify and conserve wildlife movement corridors. No response was received from the individual and he was not present at this meeting.

Josh Avey, AGFD Habitat Branch Chief, presented information regarding the Department's involvement with the **Arizona Wildlife Linkages Workgroup**. The Workgroup is an important collaborative effort between public and private sector organizations working to address habitat fragmentation in a cohesive, systematic approach in order to maintain and improve wildlife biodiversity in Arizona. Comprised of representatives from AGFD, the Arizona Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, USFWS, Northern Arizona University, the Wildlands Network, and the Sky Island Alliance, the Workgroup is developing a statewide map identifying wildlife movement corridors to provide a visual tool to guide future planning, engineering and mitigation efforts. Much of the wildlife information used in the models (GIS layers) is influenced by various sensitive species lists such as the Department's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and includes information specific to potential jaguar movements.

Josh's presentation demonstrated how AGFD and its collaborators use the GIS-based information to refine linkage or fracture zones into more site-specific areas that will guide future conservation and planning efforts. He also discussed plans for a pilot project in northern Arizona to begin using this tool. Further information on the Workgroup and its recent assessment of Arizona wildlife linkages is available at:

http://www.azdot.gov/Highways/OES/AZ_Wildlife_Linkages/index.asp

Action Item: Terry Johnson and Jim Stuart will collaborate to secure a presentation at the next JAGCT meeting to provide comparable wildlife linkages information for New Mexico.

9. Department of Homeland Security funding for border fence impact mitigation projects

The Department of Homeland Security is providing \$50 million through the Department of Interior (USFWS) for mitigating impacts of the border fence. These funds are for projects across the entire border area, from California to Texas. There is no guarantee how much of these funds will be used for jaguar specific projects, but the jaguar is well represented in the focal points for project proposals. AGFD is working with USFWS Region 2 to identify jaguar-related projects that qualify for these monies. Two Biological Opinions addressing border fence issues (and jaguar impacts) are available on USFWS Arizona Ecological Services Office web-site: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/biological.htm>.

10. Update on draft Jaguar Conservation Assessment

In lieu of the recent collaring event, a copy of the draft Conservation Assessment is not available. Terry has completed integration of comments previously received and will add information regarding the recent collaring effort. After one more round of AGFD-NMDGF review, the final draft document will be posted on the jaguar web-page as soon as possible. There will be one more public review period of at least 30-days from the time of posting. Terry thanks everyone that provided comment on previous drafts.

11. Discussion of tentative dates and locations for the next JAGCT meetings

- a. May 21, Lordsburg, New Mexico. Time: 11 am to 4 pm. Location: yet to be determined.
- b. September 24, Tucson, Arizona. Time: 11 am to 4 pm. Location: Pima County building complex; details to be forthcoming (Kerry Baldwin is making the arrangements now).

12. Other business

On March 22, 2007, AGFD and NMDGF executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as Lead Agencies for a state-led jaguar (*Panthera onca*) conservation program. The MOU provides for certain other government agencies to become signatory Cooperators on their written request and subsequent concurrence by both Lead Agencies and by concurrence (as indicated by voice vote) of a majority of the Cooperators present at a public meeting of the JAGCT. Today, by a vote of 6 votes for and 0 votes against, the JAGCT signatories accepted Graham County and the U.S. Forest Service (Southwest Region) as additional Cooperators. The updated list of Cooperators is as follows:

<u>Cooperators</u>	<u>Acceptance Date</u>
Arizona State Land Department	May 4, 2007
Cochise County (AZ)	May 4, 2007
Deming Soil and Water Conservation District (NM)	May 4, 2007

Graham County (AZ)	February 19, 2009
Greenlee County (AZ)	May 4, 2007
Hidalgo County (NM)	May 4, 2007
Hidalgo Soil and Water Conservation District (NM)	May 4, 2007
Luna County (NM)	May 4, 2007
Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District (AZ)	May 4, 2007
Sierra County (NM)	May 4, 2007
New Mexico Department of Agriculture	May 4, 2007
U.S.D.A.-APHIS Wildlife Services	May 4, 2007
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Southwest)	March 22, 2007
U.S. Forest Service (Southwestern)	February 19, 2009
Whitewater Draw Natural Resource Conservation District (AZ)	May 4, 2007

13. Adjournment

Chair Terry Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2:30 pm. Thanks and a big round of applause were given to the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance for graciously hosting today's meeting, including providing lunch, cookies, and non-alcoholic libations.