

# First Arizona jaguar captured, collared, released

by **Heather Hoch** The Arizona Republic- Feb. 20, 2009 02:45 PM

Arizona Game and Fish Department officials captured, collared and released the first jaguar found in Arizona borders Wednesday. The 118-pound male cat was found in a lug hold snare set out by department officials and fitted with a satellite-tracking collar and released.

Terry Johnson, Endangered Species Specialist at the Arizona Game and Fish Department, said the jaguar was confirmed by his spotted pattern to be Macho B, a jaguar that has been photographed by trail cameras for about 13 years.

Macho B was first photographed at about two to three years old, which makes him currently near 16 years old, Johnson said. Macho B is the oldest documented wild jaguar in the world. Despite his age, Johnson said Macho B “looks in darn fine condition” and is nearly at the average weight of male jaguars with good muscular tone.



Since 1971, only six jaguars have been documented in the U.S. In the past 120 years, less than 70 of these animals have been documented. The department unsuccessfully attempted to collar a jaguar ten years ago, and since then have developed rules for collaring captured jaguars. The rules call for sedation of the animal while in captivity, observation for a minimum of six hours, and then release back into the wild.

Since jaguar presence became known in border states, the Endangered Species Act extended protection to U.S. jaguars in 1997. It is unknown

whether the jaguar is native to Arizona or Mexico, but Johnson said the collar has a special alert signal if Macho B crosses the border. The one pound and 12 ounce collar, which was donated by North Star Science and Technologies, will provide location points every three hours for the incredibly rare feline, according to Johnson.

“We have absolutely no firm information on how jaguars use land in the U.S.,” he said. “The collar will help verify or refute all speculations on the jaguar's habits.”

Bill Van Pelt, Program Manager at the Arizona Game and Fish Department, said, compared to a mountain lions, jaguars are more robust, “kind of like a wrestler.” According to Van Pelt, a loose translation of the name jaguar from Native American dialects is “the predator that kills in one jump.” Historically, jaguar territory extended as far north as the Grand Canyon, Van Pelt said. They currently live predominantly in Mexico and South and Central America. Jaguars are the third largest feline in the world, after lions and tigers, and the only feline on the Western Hemisphere that roars.

# Hopes for studying Arizona jaguar dashed by death

By ARTHUR H. ROTSTEIN Associated Press Writer

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TUCSON, Ariz.—Arizona biologists were excited that a tracking collar put on an elusive jaguar might help unlock many secrets. Less than two weeks later, their hopes crashed when the cat had to be euthanized. The abrupt ending to the jaguar, believed to be 15 or 16 years old and the oldest known jaguar in the wild, came Monday after an Arizona Game and Fish Department team recaptured the animal southwest of Tucson because it appeared ill.

"It was definitely a roller-coaster ride yesterday," said Bill Van Pelt, the department's nongame bird and mammal program manager.

Wildlife biologists and a veterinarian shot the jaguar, nicknamed Macho B, with an anesthetic dart from a helicopter about five miles from where it had been caught Feb. 18 in a snare trap set to study bears and mountain lions.

Team members determined from tests at the Phoenix Zoo that the jaguar was in severe, unrecoverable kidney failure, Van Pelt said Tuesday. In consultations with veterinarians, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and the head of Arizona Game and Fish, "we felt it was in the best interest of the animal to put it down," he said.

Little is known of the endangered jaguar's habitat or ecology in this country. It once ranged from the Appalachians to the San Francisco Bay, but New Mexico and Arizona are now thought to be the northernmost reaches of a range extending into South America.

Scientists had hoped to learn more about the jaguar's use of the borderland habitats to aid in conserving the species. "Was this male moving across the border? Did it rendezvous with other cats? How was it utilizing the habitat?" U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spokesman Jeff Humphrey said. "Would it seasonally use one group or one mountain or canyon versus another? Was it requiring a large territory? "And unfortunately, 10 days and about five miles worth of data is about all we will have at this point."

Michael Robinson, a spokesman for the Center for Biological Diversity, called Macho B's death "a major setback for the jaguar." Further tests were expected to determine whether blood taken in February preserved for genetic analysis showed signs of renal failure, and necropsy results were expected in a few days.

Officials called Macho B healthy when it was first captured. Transmissions from its GPS-equipped collar grew infrequent Friday, Humphrey said. "The movements were really limited," he said, "a hundred yards here, a hundred yards there"—far less than long movements when he had been foraging. A three-member team tried to get a visual sighting Saturday, and another tried to dart the jaguar on Sunday but missed.

It's not known whether stress from having the trap or the anesthetic used in the dartings may have contributed to kidney failure, which Humphrey said is common among older cats. "We did learn the area where he went," Van Pelt said. "But unfortunately, there is not a lot of information that is going to be available. "We were hoping to unlock some of the secrets about the jaguar from years past. Those secrets will now be kept forever with him."