



News Release

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Contacts: Jeff Humphrey (FWS) (602) 242-0210 ext 222
Kirk Emerson (Univ Arizona) (520) 621-3315
Karen Klima (AGFD) (520) 975-6490
Lynda Lambert (AGFD) (623) 236-7203

Jaguar and Ocelot Recently Photographed by Monitoring Cameras in Southern Arizona

An adult male jaguar and an adult male ocelot have been photographed in two separate southern Arizona mountain ranges by automated wildlife monitoring cameras. The images were collected as part of the Jaguar Survey and Monitoring Project led by the University of Arizona. Both animals appear to be in good health.

In late November 2012, the UA project team downloaded photos from wildlife cameras set up as part of the research project and found new pictures of a jaguar in the Santa Rita Mountains. A total of ten jaguar photos were taken by three UA cameras and one Arizona Game and Fish Department camera. The cat's unique spot pattern matched that of a male jaguar in the Whetstone Mountains photographed by a hunter in the fall of 2011, providing clear evidence that the big cats travel between southern Arizona's "sky island" mountain ranges.

A September 2012 jaguar "tail" photo was previously reported by the Arizona Game and Fish Department from a hunter's automated wildlife monitoring camera in the Santa Rita Mountains. None of the UA photos can be matched to this "tail" photo because, in the new photos, the tail is obscured or the opposite side of the jaguar was photographed. However, the jaguar is most likely the same individual.

In addition, a new ocelot photo was taken in the Huachuca Mountains west of Sierra Vista by one of the UA project cameras. Again, comparisons of the spot patterns revealed this to be the same male ocelot that has been reported by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and photographed in the Huachucas several times in 2011 and 2012. However, the UA photo was taken about 4 miles away from the previous photos, demonstrating that even the smaller cats move across the rugged Arizona landscape.

The purpose of the UA research project is to establish a non-invasive, hands-off system for detecting and monitoring jaguars and ocelots. The project is using motion-sensor-activated "trail" cameras placed in areas most likely to detect the spotted cats. Once fully operational, up to 240 paired cameras will be in place throughout the project area to capture images of both sides of detected animals.

The University of Arizona is conducting this large-scale project to detect and monitor jaguars and ocelots along the northern boundary of the U.S.-Mexico international border, from the Baboquivari Mountains in Arizona to the southwestern "boot heel" of New Mexico.

The researchers are also employing a specially-trained scat detection dog to assist the team in collecting potential jaguar and ocelot scat in the areas where a jaguar or ocelot has been detected by camera. The UA Conservation Genetics lab under the leadership of Melanie Culver, U.S. Geological Survey geneticist in the UA School of Natural Resources and the Environment, will conduct genetic testing of the scat to verify species and possibly identify the individual cats.

The three-year study will be accomplished under a contract with funds provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The purpose of these funds is to address and mitigate environmental impacts of border-related enforcement activities.

The ocelot has been protected in the U.S. as endangered under the Endangered Species Act since 1982. The jaguar was listed in the U.S. in 1997.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Five of the automated camera ocelot and jaguar photos are posted on Flickr at <http://bit.ly/TapYhK> (and Facebook album at: <http://on.fb.me/TazSP9>)

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