

Project Update: December 2014

Most conservation efforts rely upon the existence of protected natural areas (PNA), but it is unknown how local people perceive these areas and how their perceptions affect the conservation of jaguars. The survival of the jaguar in the Yungas relies on its protection within and outside protected areas, considering its requirements for large territories. The jaguar is a flagship species of great cultural value for both natives and new residents of the region, which could become a powerful tool to consider at the moment of designing conservation strategies.

Goal

The goal of the study is to investigate social perceptions of local people towards the existence of protected areas. This is critical for two reasons:

1. To provide management tools to improve the interaction between local people and protected areas.
2. To ensure the survival of conflicting species like the jaguar.

Specific objectives

1. To determine the importance of the existence of protected areas within the distribution range of the jaguar.
2. To understand the attitudes and perceptions of the people towards protected areas and how these influence the conservation of jaguars.
3. To determine the role that protected areas play in the livelihoods of people living in and around protected areas.
4. To assess what demographic, cultural, economic, educational and gender factors can explain the attitudes and perceptions in relation to protected areas in general and to jaguars in particular.

This update reports the work done during the first six months of the project (June-November 2014, Table 1).

To assess perceptions of rural dwellers I performed (n=31) and their buffer zones (10 to 20 km) in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy, where jaguars currently inhabit, and in (n=123) PA where the species no longer lives. Interviews were conducted with men and women who: a) do not belong to the same family group, b) live in the region for more than 5 years. Places to conduct interviews were chosen based on two criteria: 1) the proximity of human settlements to natural protected areas and 2) the dominant type of economic activity

(type of crops, animal husbandry and the degree of implementation). Interviewees were randomly selected and I conducted the interviews personally, using a semi- structured interview with open and closed questions. Table 1 is a summary of the field work. Baritú National Park (picture 1 and 2). Provincial Reserve Pizarro (picture 3 and 4).

Preliminary results

Most of those interviewed who live in or on the surroundings of the PNA responded that the function of PAs is the conservation of flora and fauna. The benefits that people perceived are offered by the PNA was the provision of fresh air. However when asking for damages deriving from PA, responses varied depending on the proximity to the area. The closer the area is to the interviewee, the more negative perceptions people had. For example, they are forbidden to hunt, fish, forbidden to extract rocks from rivers, etc. The use of these resources by the settlers before the creation of the protected area was indiscriminate. Another problem identified by some people was that within the area there is reproduction of “negative” species or pests that often invade their homes, farms and crops, such as: spiders, snakes, pumas, condors, and jaguars. People living outside the buffer zone area did not find neither harm nor benefit derived from the PNA.

Perceptions and attitudes of people in the presence of the jaguar in the PNA seem to be conditioned by two main factors, a) dominant economic activity e.g. Livestock, agriculture or tourism, b) the probability of direct encounters with jaguars. This seems to be because both occupy the same space.

In some PNA where jaguars still live and villagers whose main economic activity is livestock, the jaguar is perceived by most as the main threat to livestock. Thus, despite being banned, hunting and persecution are especially intense in the summer months.

In general the farmers said that due to the huge economic losses annually produced by jaguars, without receiving any subsidy from the national government makes the husbandry practice a job that is becoming increasingly less profitable.

In the PNA and buffer zone where the species has gone extinct, for example Provincial Reserve Pizarro and Provincial Reserve Las Lancitas, social perceptions are different.

Near Provincial Reserve Pizarro people have admitted they had persecuted jaguars with their parents and grandparents tirelessly and about half of respondents regretted their extinction. The rest think that the jaguar is a harmful animal to livestock, a threat to their dogs and even for the same people. In the case of the Provincial Reserve the Lancitas, local people are focusing on eco- tourism as the main economic activity, even declaring their farms as private reserves. So they expressed their desire to have jaguars back in the area.

We are still in the process of obtaining information the type of management of each area

through review of their management plans, interviews with officials from the parks to provide management tools improve interaction between local people and protected areas and ensure the survival of conflicting species the jaguar. For this reason do not yet have preliminary results.

CATEGORY	PROVINCE	ENVIRONMENT	PRESENCE OF JAGUAR	PLACE	TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS (n)	MONTHS OF WORK
Baritú National Park	Salta	Yungas	YES	Baritu	25	June- August
Baritú National Park	Salta	Yungas	YES	Lipeo	8	June- August
Baritú National Park	Salta	Yungas	YES	Buffer zone	2	June- August
Provincial Reserve Nogalar	Salta	Yungas	YES	Toldos	88	August
Provincial Reserve Nogalar	Salta	Yungas	YES	Arazay	9	August
Provincial Reserve Pizarro	Salta	Yungas-Chaco	NO	Buffer zone	85	September
Provincial Reserve Lancitas	Jujuy	Yungas-Chaco	NO	Within the Protected Area	4	October- November
Provincial Reserve Lancitas	Jujuy	Yungas-Chaco	NO	Villamonte	11	October- November
Provincial Reserve Lancitas	Jujuy	Yungas-Chaco	NO	El Fuerte	28	November
total	-	-	-	-	260	-

Table 1: Summary of work done

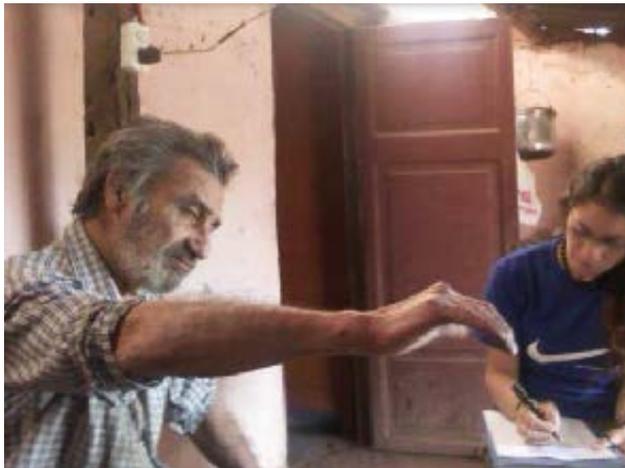
Photo gallery



Baritú National Park (picture 1)



Baritú National Park (picture 2)



Provincial Reserve Pizarro (picture 3)



Provincial Reserve Pizarro (picture 4)