

Project Update: April 2010

In the first 6 months of 2009 we started sampling at the second study site of the project, Copo National Park, located in the Impenetrable of the semi-arid Argentine Chaco. Copo is the Impenetrable protected area with the greatest degree of formal protection and supposedly has less hunting and human influence. We made two trips to the study area, a preliminary study of 10 days in July 2009 and the large study of almost 3 months from September to November 2009.

In July 2009, we identified and walked the trails we would use during sampling, visited some of the local people to resume the contacts initiated in previous years, and recorded some preliminary data of signs and sightings of the wildlife of the national park. During the September to November study we installed 24 camera-trap stations in Copo National Park and neighboring ranch properties. The stations were 3 to 4 km apart, covering a minimum convex polygon area of 361 km². Throughout the campaign there were 1096 potential trap-nights but the 24 stations overall were active for only 34 days, totaling 816 trap-nights. We covered over 2,200 km on foot and by car within the study area, recording tracks and sightings of jaguar, puma and other mammals and potential prey of both cats. We conducted informal interviews on jaguar, puma and their prey with seven national and provincial rangers, one teacher and 10 rural residents who are neighbours of the National Park.

We did not record data of jaguars with either camera traps or line transect surveys but we recorded a good number of photos, tracks and sightings of puma *Puma concolor*, as well as other species of high conservation value for the area such as giant armadillo (*Priodontes maximus*), white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu pecari*), Chacoan peccary (*Catagonus wagneri*) and giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*). We are currently organizing the 2009 field data and beginning the data analysis to determine densities and intensities of use of the environment by the different species studied. In the next few months, we will be comparing these new data with those obtained in 2008 from the Aboriginal Reserve.

