

Project Update: December 2008

These first eight months I have completed the first systematic camera-trap survey in the area, within the Chaco Province Aboriginal Reserve, lasting nearly three months based at a field camp. I set up 30 camera trap stations, each with two camera traps, and operated them for 60 continuous days. In this period, we have obtained 200 photographic film in which we get photos of more than 14 species of medium and large mammals, including *Puma concolor* and *Leopardus pardalis*.

During a period of 75 days, my team and I covered over 3000 km of trails and roads, on foot and by vehicle, to record tracks, signs, and observations of *Panthera onca*, *Puma concolor* and prey species. We conducted semi-structured interviews at local settlements and schools, focused on species' presence, jaguar-human conflicts, hunting data on cats and their prey, among other subjects. We also conducted informal interviews with local government and park guards from two Provincial Reserves and one National Park in the region. Finally, we distributed educational materials to five rural schools in the area and to the park guard of one of the Provincial Natural Parks. I am currently compiling and analysing the field data and the photographs.

The fact of being present in the area for 3 whole months conversing with people, teachers and park guards was an important contribution to jaguar conservation in the area, at least in a preliminary fashion. Slowly we are creating awareness that this is a protected species, that people from outside are interested in protecting and studying it, and these changing attitudes help reduce the conflicts people have with the species. In the same way, we believe that the distribution of educational materials also contributed significantly to this goal.

In terms of institutions responsible for decision-making, we believe that our having initiated field surveys and sent the first informal technical reports has generated an important reaction and a reactivation of interest in working to manage and protect this species. We also believe that this will generate new initiatives in education and dissemination in the area, and possibly contributing to proposals for the creation of new protected areas.



