

Project Update: March 2001

During the first 12 months of this project, one adult male puma, three jaguars (one black male, 1 black female and one spotted female), ten ocelots (8 males, 2 females) and one male margay were captured, equipped with radio-transmitters, and genetic material was collected from them. Two re-captures of the same male puma monitored the physical state of the animal. This trapping rate is as expected, but the capture effort will continue, so as to increase the number of animals with radio-transmitters.

Preliminary analysis indicates that the home range of the adult male puma is about 180km², roughly two thirds of the total Park size. The black jaguar home ranges vary from 52km² (female) to 106km² (male). The overall estimated numbers of pumas and jaguars are well below 50, the number recommended for short-term population viability and survival. Long term conservation will probably require a combination of regional planning, landscape connectivity and translocation efforts in order to rescue genetic variability and maintain ecosystem integrity.

Pumas and jaguars have been sighted in very small and isolated forest fragments - they appear to use such forest patches as shelter in which to hide by day, and then emerge at night to hunt. These large and to some extent generalist mammals are still surviving in very small fragments of forest, mainly because they are able to traverse long distances between them and exploit surrounding resources. These small patches of forest are therefore of vital importance, serving as "stepping stones" for large cats to traverse along in their movement from one segment of forest to another.

