



**SKY
ISLAND**
ALLIANCE
Protecting our Mountain Islands
and Desert Seas

NEWS RELEASE

February 15, 2010

*****For immediate release*****

For Further Information and Images Contact:

Sergio Ávila, Northern México Program Coordinator

520.624.7080 x16 or sergio@skyislandalliance.org

Melanie Emerson, Executive Director

520.624.7080 x12 or emerson@skyislandalliance.org

**Northern Jaguars Are a Reality:
*Sky Island Alliance and partnering Mexican rancher
document jaguar close to the US/Mexico border***

Tucson, AZ – Almost one year after Macho B’s tragic death in Arizona, Sky Island Alliance (SIA) released today its first photographs of a northern jaguar in the Mexican State of Sonora. Three years into a conservationist-rancher partnership, a jaguar was photographed by a remote camera placed along an isolated canyon of the Sonoran Sky Islands. These are SIA’s first photographs of this elusive cat, and were taken only thirty miles south of the US/Mexico border.

“Northern jaguars are a reality and they want to stay” said Sky Island Alliance biologist Sergio Avila. “Jaguars don’t recognize political boundaries; instead they choose robust prey populations, open space and safe corridors. This healthy feline represents our chance to recover this species in the region.”

In the last three years Sky Island Alliance has surveyed northern Sonora, documenting a wide array of native wildlife species thriving in riparian, desert and oak woodland habitats. Working in partnership with Mexican ranchers, the group seeks to protect wild felid habitat, allowing species to roam free in a network of conservation ranches.

“We are thrilled about the results of this collaborative project,” said Carlos R. Elias, co-owner of El Aribabi, the ranch where the photographs were taken. “Our family has worked hard to restore ecological processes in this land. We hope this gets the attention of government agencies and foundations, so we can establish a sustainable model that protects biodiversity and supports landowners and their families at the same time.”

To support the recovery of this endangered tropical cat in the Sky Island region, migration corridors must be protected, linking key habitat cores between Mexico and the United States. Additionally, the protection of jaguar habitat benefits a range of less prominent endangered species as well.

The Sky Island region of northwest Mexico and southwest United States is a unique blend of temperate and tropical biological zones and species, and was named a World Biodiversity Hotspot by Conservation International in 2005. El Aribabi hosts over 35 species of plants and animals protected by Mexican law, including jaguars, golden eagles, Chiricahua leopard frogs and ocelots. In the first month of the remote

camera project, February, 2007, ocelots were documented at this ranch. Ocelots are another elusive, protected tropical cat whose northernmost range reaches northern Sonora. These were the first photographs of ocelots ever documented in the region and the first documented sighting in 40 years.

“The jaguar’s presence in this area confirms the excellent ecological conditions on the property and highlights the landowner’s efforts to protect biodiversity,” Avila said. “Jaguars in northern Mexico are the hope for jaguar recovery in the United States; this is a reminder of our responsibility and an opportunity to do things right this time.”

Sky Island Alliance is a grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the rich natural heritage of native species and habitats in the Sky Island region of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. We work with volunteers, scientists, land owners, public officials, and government agencies to establish protected areas, restore healthy landscapes, and promote public appreciation of the region's unique biological diversity.

For additional information on this program, please call Sergio Avila, Northern Mexico Program Coordinator, at (520) 624-7080 x 16; Sergio@skyislandalliance.org or visit: www.skyislandalliance.org/jaguars.htm



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