

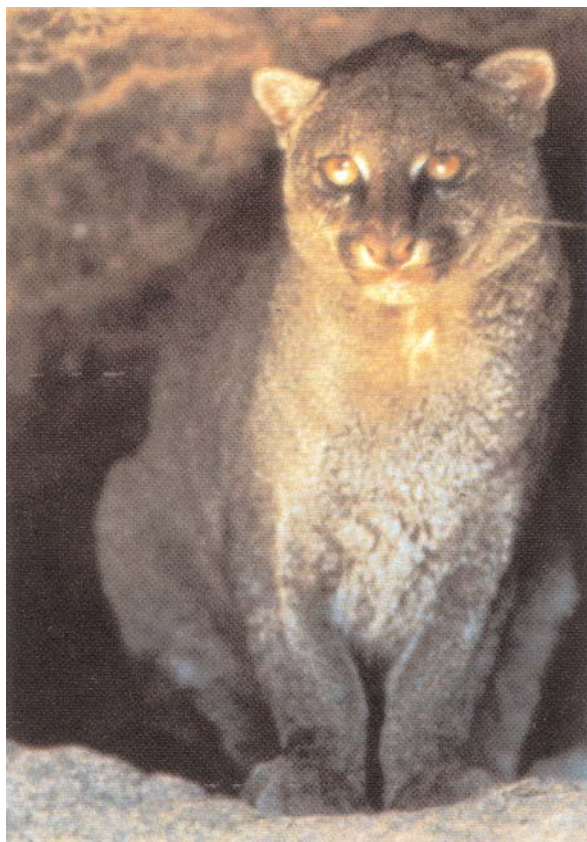
Jaguarundi

Scientific Name: *Felis yagouaroundi cacomitli*

Federal Status: Endangered, 6/14/76 • State Status: Endangered

Description

The Jaguarundi is a small, slender-bodied, unspotted cat, slightly larger than a domestic cat (7-22 pounds). Jaguarundis are characterized by slender, elongated bodies, small flattened heads, and long tails (11-24 inches) more reminiscent of an otter or weasel than a cat. Other characteristics include short legs standing at a height of 11 inches at the shoulder; and short, rounded, widely spaced ears. There are three color phases: black, reddish-brown and a brownish-gray. Because of similarity in size, the



Jaguarundi
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Jaguarundi can easily be confused with a large black feral cat, especially when seen in low light or dense cover.

Habitat

Little is known about the habitat of Jaguarundis in Texas. It is thought that they occur in the dense thorny shrublands of the Rio Grande Valley. Their habitat may be very similar to that of the Ocelot, although sightings

and information from Mexico indicate that the Jaguarundi may be more tolerant of open areas, such as grasslands and pastures, than the Ocelot.

Typical habitat consists of mixed thornshrub species such as spiny hackberry, brasil, desert yaupon, wolfberry, lotebush, amargosa, whitebrush, catclaw, blackbrush, lantana, guayacan, cenizo, elbowbush, and Texas persimmon. Interspersed trees such as mesquite, live oak, ebony, and hackberry may also occur. Riparian habitats along rivers or creeks are sometimes used by Jaguarundis.

Canopy cover and density of shrubs are important considerations in identifying suitable habitat. Little information exists concerning optimal habitat for the Jaguarundi in Texas. Scientists speculate that these elusive cats are similar to the Ocelot in their requirement for dense brush cover.

Tracts of at least 100 acres of isolated dense brush, or 75 acres of brush interconnected with other habitat tracts by brush corridors, are considered important habitat. Even brush tracts as small as 5 acres, when adjacent to larger areas of habitat, may be used by Jaguarundis. Roads, narrow water bodies, and rights-of-way are not considered barriers to movements. Brushy fence lines, water courses, and other brush strips connecting areas of habitat are very important in providing escape and protective cover. These strip corridors are considered important habitat.

Texas counties where Jaguarundis occurred during the past 30 years include Cameron and Willacy.

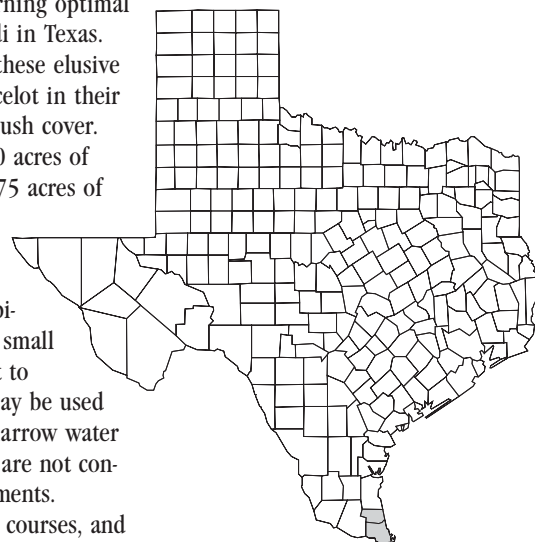
Life History

Little information is available concerning the biology of the Jaguarundi in Texas. Most of what is known comes from anecdotal or historical writings and information gained through the study of Ocelots in south Texas.

Jaguarundis hunt primarily during the day with peak activity occurring at midday. They are less nocturnal than the Ocelot and have been observed more often during the

day. Jaguarundis forage mainly on the ground. Prey includes birds, rabbits, reptiles, and small rodents. Historical accounts from Mexico suggest that Jaguarundis are good swimmers and enter the water freely.

Little is known regarding Jaguarundi reproduction in Texas. In Mexico, Jaguarundis are said to be solitary, except during the mating season of November and December. Kittens have been reported in March and also in August. It is not known whether females produce one or two litters each season. The gestation period is 60 to 75 days, and litters contain two to four young.



Threats and Reasons for Decline

Historically, dense mixed brush occurred along dry washes, arroyos, resacas, and the flood plains of the Rio Grande. The extensive shrublands of the Lower Rio Grande Valley have been converted to agriculture and urban development over the past 60 years. Much of this land, particularly the more fertile soils, has been cleared for production of vegetables, citrus, sugarcane, cotton, and other crops. Unfortunately for the Jaguarundi and Ocelot (another endangered South Texas cat), the best soil types also grow the thickest

brush and thus produce the best habitat. Less than 5% of the original vegetation remains in the Rio Grande Valley.

The Jaguarundi is one of the rarest cats in Texas, with only the Jaguar, which has not been reported in recent years, being rarer. Information about this species is urgently needed. Unless vigorous conservation measures are taken soon, this elusive cat may join the list of species extirpated from the United States.

Recovery Efforts

Very little is known concerning Jaguarundi biology in south Texas. Research regarding capture techniques, reproduction, rearing of young, dispersal, home range, and movements is urgently needed. Recently initiated Jaguarundi research in northeast Mexico, where they are more common, will enable biologists to better understand the requirements for a viable population. This information can then be used to assist conservation efforts for the Jaguarundi in Texas. Efforts to inform landowners and the public about the habitat needs, land management options, and biology of the Jaguarundi are also critical to recovery.

Conservation of remaining habitat, and maintenance or creation of brush corridors connecting these habitats, is necessary for survival of the Jaguarundi population in Texas. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, The Nature Conservancy, and many local landowners have been working to protect, acquire and restore Jaguarundi habitat in the Rio Grande Valley. Restoration generally involves revegetating previously cleared areas with native trees and shrubs.

Where To Learn More About Jaguarundis

The best places to visit to learn more about the Jaguarundi are the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge near Rio Hondo (956) 748-3607, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge near Alamo (956) 787-3079, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park near Mission (956) 585-1107, Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area near Edinburg (956) 447-2704, and Audubon's Sabal Palm

Grove Sanctuary near Brownsville (956) 541-8034.

How You Can Help

You can be involved with the conservation of Texas' nongame wildlife resources by supporting the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund. Special nongame stamps and decals are available at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) field offices, most state parks, and the License Branch of TPWD headquarters in Austin.

The Feline Research Program at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (Texas A&M University-Kingsville) also accepts contributions to its Cat Conservation Fund. These funds are dedicated to the research and recovery of free-ranging wild cats of Texas. For more information, contact the Feline Research Program at (361) 593-3922. The public is asked to report sightings of Jaguarundis to the Feline Research Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Be sure to note size, color, habitat, behavior, location, date, and time of day seen.

For More Information Contact

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Wildlife Diversity Branch
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744
(512) 912-7011 or (800) 792-1112

or

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife
Refuge
P.O. Box 450
Rio Hondo, Texas 78583
(956) 748-3607

or

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services - LRGV Office
Route 2, Box 202-A
Alamo, Texas 78516
(956) 784-7560

Management guidelines are available from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for landowners and managers wishing to conserve and improve habitat for the Jaguarundi.



Rio Grande resaca
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