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Jaguar Confirmed in Arizona's Whetstones

Spots Match Jaguar Recently Seen in Huachucas

TUCSON, Ariz. — Sky Island Alliance's wildlife camera network has confirmed two jaguar sightings in the Whetstone Mountains — in May 2023 and November 2023 — the first reported in that area since 2011. Staff analysis of the photos reveals that the jaguar seen in November is the same individual that was seen in December 2023 in the Huachucas. In the May photo, the coat pattern isn't clear enough to confirm whether it's the same cat. The recent jaguar sightings are in designated critical habitat.

"We're thrilled to see a young jaguar roaming the Sky Islands of southern Arizona," said Emily Burns, program director for Sky Island Alliance. "And we're gratified to see the cat visiting mountain ranges that are part of our work to recover habitat for wildlife and to know that the efforts of our volunteers and partners is paying off."

The fact that a jaguar was photographed in two different mountain ranges a month apart shows why jaguars need safe pathways to move across the landscape and protected areas with abundant habitat to thrive. Other jaguars have also walked this path, including the celebrated jaguar El Jefe first photographed in the Whetstone Mountains in 2011 and another male jaguar photographed in the Huachuca Mountains between 2016 and 2017.

"We know the western flank of the Huachuca Mountains and the San Rafael Valley provide one of the last open corridors for the northernmost population of jaguars to move between habitat in the U.S. and Mexico," said Louise Misztal, executive director for Sky Island Alliance. "To recover these cats in the U.S., it's vital that we protect this pathway."

While jaguars are rare in Arizona, historically these endangered cats have called the state home. This is the eighth confirmed jaguar in the U.S. Southwest since 1996. Their continued presence underscores the need to improve connectivity across the border into Mexico, where the core of the northern jaguar population is concentrated. It's also a chance to renew efforts to make roadways safer and protect lands threatened by drought, fire, and development.

Sky Island Alliance is dedicated to increasing knowledge of wildlife presence and movement and advocating for habitat, connectivity, and protection within the Sky Islands of southern Arizona, New Mexico, and Sonora. Among the group's programs within the region are its Border Wildlife Study, FotoFauna and Spring Seeker projects, and road closure work.



Jaguar photographed on Nov. 23, 2023, in the Whetstone Mountains courtesy Sky Island Alliance. [Image is available for media use.](#)

Sky Island Alliance is a regional conservation nonprofit dedicated to protecting and restoring the diversity of life and lands in the Sky Islands of the U.S. and Mexico. The Sky Island region is comprised of 55 mountain ranges rising out of arid grasslands and desert that provide critical habitat for plants and wildlife.

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