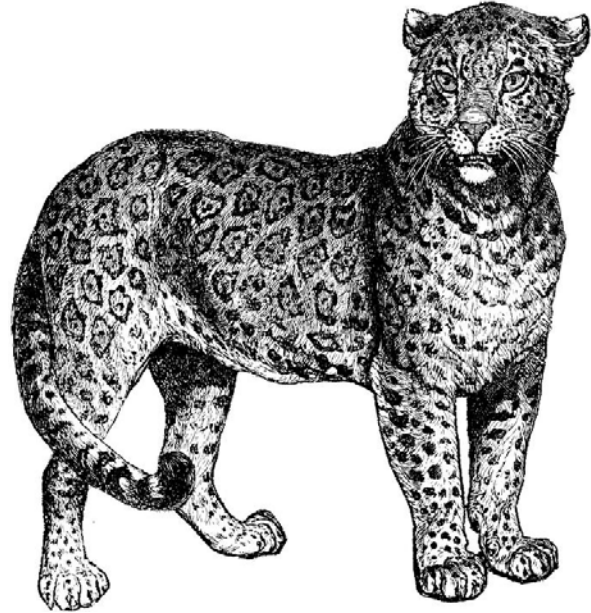


## *All About the JAGUAR*

### Scientists Call It

- *Panthera onca* (species name)
- Jaguars belong to the *Panthera* group of animals. Other *Pantherinae* include the tiger, lion, leopard, and snow leopard. These five are also called the “big cats” or “roaring cats.” Jaguars are the only big cat in the New World.



### Other Names

- El Tigre Americano (Spanish)
- Yaguara (a South American Indian word that means “it kills with a single leap”)

### Physical Characteristics

- Jaguars differ a lot in size, depending on their habitat. Where preferred prey is more abundant, jaguars are larger.
  - Weight ranges from 79 to 350 pounds. In rainforests males average 125 pounds, females 92 pounds. In Brazilian grasslands males average 220 pounds, females 168 pounds.
  - Length of head and body ranges from 4 feet to 8.75 feet.
  - Length of tail ranges from 1.5 feet to 2.5 feet.
  - Shoulder height varies from 2.3 to just over 2.6 feet.
- Jaguars are stocky with muscular build. They have shorter legs than other big cats.
- They have large square heads and powerful jaws.
- Their coats are pale yellow to dark gold with small black spots. On trunk and flank, spots are ringed by large rosettes. There is a broken or solid black stripe along the midline of the back.
  - Forest jaguars often have a darker coat than jaguars living in open land.
  - Black or dark brown coats caused by high amounts of melanin are not uncommon. Rosettes and spots are faintly visible on dark coats.
  - Black or dark brown jaguars are called “panthers.”
- Jaguars live 15 to 20 years.

### Habitat

- Jaguars live in different kinds of habitat: dense forests, swamps, open grasslands, and deciduous forests.
- They are the most water-loving of all big cats. In all habitats they like to be near water.

## Range

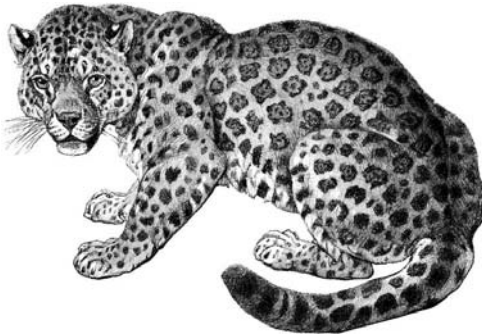
- Jaguars once ranged from the Argentinian Patagonia to the southern United States.
- Since the early 1900s, the jaguar's range has become smaller. It has shrunk 620 miles from the north and 1,240 miles from the south. Jaguars are no longer in the United States and most of Mexico, Central America, Uruguay, Argentina, and eastern Brazil. Today jaguars will sometimes cross from Mexico into southern New Mexico and Arizona, but this is quite rare.

## Behavior

- Like most big cats, jaguars live alone.
- Typically, jaguars are active for 12 to 14 hours of each 24-hour period.
- Jaguars are swift and agile. They are good climbers. They spend much of their time in trees.
- Jaguar sounds include roars, grunts, snarls, growls, and mews. Jaguars also purr.
- Jaguars are aggressive when cornered, but they avoid humans and have rarely harmed them.
- Jaguars are territorial, but their hunting ranges typically overlap with other jaguars' ranges. Males share ranges only with females. Both sexes mark home ranges with urine and by scraping trees with their claws.

## Hunting (Territory and Prey)

- Jaguars are nocturnal and do most of their hunting just before dawn and after sunset, when their prey are most active.
- Their hunting ranges vary from 9.5 square miles to 58 square miles, depending on availability of prey.
- Jaguars stalk and ambush prey. They often drag their kill to a sheltered place.
- Jaguars are powerful swimmers. Their strong jaws allow them to kill fish and reptiles.
- Their preferred prey include deer, peccaries, capybaras, rodents, tapirs, monkeys, birds, fish, turtles, tortoises, small crocodiles, and frogs.
- Jaguars are the only big cat known to kill by piercing the skulls of their prey with their canine teeth.



- In places where jaguar habitat is used for ranching, jaguars have been known to kill and eat cattle.

## Reproduction

- Female jaguars make dens in caves, canyons, or other safe places for bearing and nursing cubs.
- Gestation is 93 to 105 days. Litters

contain 1 to 4—often 2—tiny, spotted cubs. Newborn cubs are tiny and may weigh from 3.5 ounces to just under 2 pounds.

- Cubs open their eyes when they are about 13 days old. They suckle for 5 to 6 months, and stay with the mother for about 2 years.
- Young jaguars become sexually mature when they are 2 to 4 years old.

### **Population Status**

- Jaguars are extinct in much of their original range, including Florida, Texas, and the southwestern United States.
- Intact rainforests of the Amazon Basin are the key stronghold for the jaguar. In this 6 million-square-mile area, researchers estimate that there may be one jaguar per 5.75 square miles.
- However, little is known about jaguar numbers in the Amazon because rough terrain has kept most people out of the rainforests.
- In all other habitats, jaguars have been greatly reduced or eliminated due largely to human activities.

### **Threats**

- Commercial fur hunting: Until 1975, the jaguar was frequently hunted for its coat. In 1975, CITES\* banned trade in jaguar pelts. Some jaguar populations are beginning to recover.
- Ranching: Jaguars are often shot on sight by ranchers protecting their livestock. This caused the disappearance of jaguars from the United States and northern Mexico in the mid-1900s.
- Deforestation: Latin American forests are rapidly being cut down and burned to clear land for development. This is especially true in the wet savannah woodlands of Brazil and Venezuela. These areas are easy to reach and valuable to humans.
- Habitat fragmentation: When forests and other habitat are reduced to small, isolated areas, jaguars suffer. They do not have large enough ranges, and it is easier for hunters to find them.
- Loss of jaguar diversity: A healthy jaguar population includes a wide variety of breeding adults. New jaguars coming from different areas help maintain the genetic viability of a local population. Genetic diversity is now at risk because there are fewer jaguars and more distance between jaguar populations.

\* CITES is the acronym for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. CITES is an agreement among the governments of 156 nations, including the United States. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.