

Oryx

Joy and hope: recent records of jaguars in a transboundary area at the southern limit of their distribution

By Maria Flavia Caruso, 28th November 2022

In the Austral Yungas, a deep corridor of vertical stone walls with hanging vegetation embraces the international road that crosses it to connect north-western Argentina with southern Bolivia. In 2005, a binational initiative proposed the Baritú-Tariquía Biological Corridor to link the best-preserved sectors of the Argentine-Bolivian Yungas and to connect two important protected areas that are both known to contain the jaguar: Tariquía National Reserve in Bolivia and Baritú National Park in Argentina. However, the Baritú-Tariquía Biological Corridor still awaits effective legal protection, which is essential to ensure connectivity across the border for this jaguar population. Local residents have reported jaguar sightings along the Corridor, prompting us to carry out an intensive camera-trap survey. By placing cameras along trails, streams and mountain ridges, we surveyed different sites across the corridor to confirm the presence of jaguars.



The Bermejo River. Photo: María Flavia Caruso.

Our fieldwork depends on the support and friendly company of the local people who accompany me

on each trip. Starting at 5 a.m., we begin the day with backpacks laden with the equipment needed to install camera traps, as well as a machete and a small handmade backpack to carry food: potatoes in their skins, *mote* (grains or legumes cooked in water), a piece of bread and a small bottle with a little honey to sweeten the water we drink from natural springs. We also carry tents, GPS units, cheese and fruit. It's all very heavy to carry on long hikes through deep, winding terrain crisscrossed by deep ravines. We travel several kilometres along narrow, muddy paths, walled with large trees, until the path ends and we must continue along abandoned old logging roads and land crossed by deep and winding gorges with stone walls. In many places we have to use climbing equipment.



Preparing inner tubes to travel across the river. Photo: María Flavia Caruso.

In the summer the intense rains increase the magnitude of the Bermejo River, forcing us to take long detours or use local means of transport to navigate it. This transport consists of the inner tube of a tractor tyre with some reeds beneath, which we have to occasionally inflate, taking care to avoid colliding with tree or roots carried by the strong current. The fieldwork is difficult, intense and dangerous, but necessary for the conservation of the jaguar.



A jaguar captured on a camera trap during the study. Photo: María Flavia Caruso.

From our survey, we concluded that jaguars are present in the Baritú-Tariquía Biological Corridor; in Bolivia, jaguars were recorded at five sites, all between Baritú National Park and Tariquía National Reserve, while in Argentina, three jaguars were photographed, two by the same camera. Their occurrence at various sites suggest that it is a functional corridor for this key jaguar population. Confirmation that jaguars use this area between Argentina and Bolivia provides a strong argument for securing legal protection for the corridor and for involving the local community in updating the management plan and demarcating strategic areas for sustainable management. In this particular case, transboundary conservation is of paramount importance for jaguars and habitat connectivity, but presents important challenges as cross-border collaborations can be complex, costly, and time-consuming.

Using inflated inner tubes to travel across the Bermejo River. Video: María Flavia Caruso.

The article '[Recent jaguar records confirm the conservation value of the Baritú-Tariquía corridor between Argentina and Bolivia](#)' is available open access in *Oryx—The International Journal of Conservation*.





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