

PALM BEACH ZOO NEWS

FOR: IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FROM: PALM BEACH ZOO
RE: PALM BEACH ZOO ANNOUNCES FIRST "PRIORITY SPECIES"
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West Palm Beach, FL, January 4, 2009 - At its December board meeting, the Zoological Society of the Palm Beaches, the nonprofit organization that operates the Palm Beach Zoo, named the jaguar (*Panthera onca*) as its first "Priority Species for Conservation." Board chairman Luis Fernandez said, "The Priority Species Program was initiated to focus attention on a series of endangered species that are housed at the Palm Beach Zoo and raise awareness of their plight. The jaguar is the first of a series of iconic animals that will serve as ambassadors for their wild brethren, and help to motivate people to take action to save these magnificent animals and their habitats."

The jaguar was chosen as the first Priority Species because of its endangered status due to habitat loss and hunting. It is estimated that fewer than 15,000 jaguars still exist in the wild. At the peak of its decline in the 60s and 70s, around 18,000 jaguars were killed every year for their much sought-after coats. The Palm Beach Zoo has had exceptional success in managing and breeding jaguars in captivity - female "Nabalam" and male "Muchacho" have produced five cubs. Three of these offspring are now in other accredited zoos for breeding purposes. All jaguars housed in North American zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) are managed under the auspices of the Jaguar Species Survival Plan (SSP) which consists of 47 institutions dedicated to long-term management and conservation of the jaguar. Keith Lovett, the Palm Beach Zoo's Director of Living Collections, serves as the national vice-chair of the jaguar Species Survival Plan (SSP). There are now 50 individual jaguars in the jaguar SSP, seven of which belong to the Palm Beach Zoo.

The jaguar will also play an important role in the zoo's extensive education programs. Each year, more than 246,000 people are reached by these programs, both on zoo grounds and in regional schools, camps, and other community programs. Dr Terry L. Maple, President and CEO of the Palm Beach Zoo said, "We believe that the Palm Beach Zoo can be a powerful force for teaching conservation. Because the jaguar is a beautiful and captivating animal, it will help us activate the community in support of our efforts to protect jaguars in the wild and propagate the species in captivity. The Priority Species Program is designed

to provide a point of focus that will engage children and adults in this global conservation initiative.”

In 1972, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the jaguar as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. Today, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List has classified the jaguar as “*near threatened*” with a decreasing population trend. There are numerous threats to the jaguar throughout its range, including significant loss of habitat and hunting. The primary reason for its endangered status is habitat loss - a startling 46% of the jaguar’s original range is gone. Efforts to set aside protected wild areas for jaguars are critical to the survival of the species.

Gary Krieger, chairman of the Palm Beach Zoo’s Conservation Committee said, “The zoo has created the Jaguar Fund to support critically needed field conservation efforts in hopes that our work here in Palm Beach will have a global impact.” These efforts include an extensive population assessment of jaguars in Yucatan, Mexico utilizing non-invasive camera trapping techniques. Additionally, the zoo supports a non-invasive study of jaguar and other carnivore populations in Iguazu National Park in Argentina using trained scat-detector dogs for fecal identification. In 2009, Keith Lovett will assist in collecting data and in developing a jaguar conservation program in Iguazu National Park.

Although found in the wilds throughout most of Central and South America, the jaguar remains very poorly studied. While some information comes from the wild, most of what is known about jaguars has been learned from captive animals. The Palm Beach Zoo has supported

To support the Palm Beach Zoo’s jaguar conservation programs at the zoo and in the wild, the board has initiated a special fund-raising campaign. The Jaguar Conservation Fund will attempt to raise \$500,000 in the next calendar year to meet the requirements of a one-to-one challenge gift provided by an anonymous donor. To make a contribution, call (5612) 533-0887, Ext. 238, or e-mail gekey@palmbeachzoo.org. For additional information on the Palm Beach Zoo’s extensive conservation programs and get up to date information on Maya, the jaguar cub, go to www.palmbeachzoo.org

About the Palm Beach Zoo

The Palm Beach Zoo is a tropical habitat promoting awareness, appreciation and respect for wildlife and the natural world. The zoo sponsors many conservation projects throughout the world through its Priority Species conservation programs.

Palm Beach Zoo is located at 1301 Summit Boulevard, just east of I-95 between Southern and Forest Hill Boulevard. Regular zoo admission: Adults \$12.95, Seniors 60+ \$9.95, Children 3-12 \$8.95, under 3 years and Zoo Members are free. For more information regarding the Palm Beach Zoo, please visit www.palmbeachzoo.org.

JAGUAR FACT SHEET

Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)

Conservation Status:

- The United States Fish and Wildlife Service listed the jaguar as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act on March 28, 1972.
- The IUCN Red list has classified the jaguar as “Near Threatened” in 2008 with a decreasing population trend.

Range:

- Range extends from the southwestern United States through the Amazon basin to the Rio Negro in Argentina. Only 46% of its original range is now occupied by the jaguar

Species Survival Plan (SSP) Population (AZA Zoos):

- Currently there are 37 male and 48 female jaguars in the SSP population in 47 AZA institutions.

Palm Beach Zoo Jaguar History:

- First jaguar, Nabalum, arrives (1996)
- Zoo leads a rescue operation to save a malnourished, illegally housed male jaguar from Iquitos, Peru. This imported jaguar represented a significant increase in the genetic diversity of the SSP population. (January 1997)
- Breeding pair of jaguars arrives for the opening of Tropics of the Americas Exhibit. (2004)
- Nabalum gives birth to two cubs, Nacon and Masaya. (2004)
- Palm Beach Zoo’s jaguar exhibit recognized as the world’s best by Animal Planet’s Ultimate Zoo program. (2005)

- Two female jaguar cubs, Caipora and Izel, born to Nabalam and Muchaco (2005)
- Palm Beach Zoo recognized for significant achievement in its jaguar behavioral training program.
- Zoo's Director of Living Collections and Curator of Carnivores deliver a presentation at international Felid Taxon Advisory Group meeting. (2006)
- Nabalam gives birth to her fifth cub, a female, Maya, born on October 28, 2008.

Palm Beach Zoo Conservation, Research, and Education History:

- Palm Beach Zoo funds the first educational newsletter for Jaguar SSP (1998)
- The Palm Beach participates in a national fecal hormonal assay study to determine estrogen levels during jaguar pregnancies (1999)
- Palm Beach Zoo funds the development of the Jaguar SSP website and its translation into Spanish (2001)
- Palm Beach Zoo's Director of Living Collection elected Vice-chair of the SSP (2006)
- The Palm Beach Zoo funds an extensive population assessment of jaguars in Yucatan, Mexico utilizing non-invasive camera trapping techniques (2003-2006)
- The Palm Beach Zoo funds a non-invasive study of jaguar and other carnivore populations in Iguazu National Park in Argentina using trained scat-detector dogs for fecal identification. (2007)

Future Projects and Goals:

- The Palm Beach Zoo is providing funding for the continuation of the population assessment in Iguazu National Park. The Zoo's Director of Living Collections and Curator of Carnivores will be assisting in data collection and development of a jaguar conservation education program for townspeople surrounding the National Park. (August 2009)
- Modification of Tropics of the Americas' jaguar habitat to facilitate the display of multiple jaguars simultaneously. (December, 2008)
- Collaboration with Wildlife Conservation Society for the habitat protection and study of jaguars in Central America. (2010)
- Development of domestic dog and cat vaccination program in township surrounding Iguazu National Park in order to protect the health of wild jaguar populations. (2010)