

Group wants second opinion on jag's death

By JB Miller

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The Center for Biological Diversity, a nonprofit organization known for its work protecting endangered species through legal action and scientific petitions, has called for an independent medical inquiry into the death of a Mexican jaguar known as Macho B.

"The circumstances of Macho's death call for the highest level of inquiry by qualified, independent experts in order to fully understand any lessons to be learned from this tragedy," said Michael Robinson of the center in a letter addressed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Originally captured on the north side of the U.S.-Mexico Border on Feb. 18, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) officials said early data indicated that the animal, estimated to be 15-16 years old, was doing well in the days after being fitted with a tracking collar. However, AZGFD officials said careful monitoring conducted between Feb. 28 and March 1 revealed a decreased level of activity that called for "further investigation."

On March 2, the jaguar was recaptured at an undisclosed location in Southern Arizona and brought to Phoenix. Zoo veterinarians conducted lab work and physical exams to evaluate the deteriorating condition of the animal, which they said was due to kidney failure.

"The initial necropsy has already established that the capturing and sedating of Macho likely further stressed his kidney, contributing to his death," said Robinson. The letter also said that it is "unknown" whether AZGF could have used additional precautions given Macho B's old age. "What we need to know is if there is anything different that Game and Fish could have done and whether it is safe to capture jaguars given their very small numbers in the United States."

Calls to AZGF were not returned by press time.