
January 23, 2010

Arizona Intentionally Snared Last Jaguar, Inquiry Finds

By [LESLIE KAUFMAN](#)

Contrary to their denials, employees of the Arizona Game and Fish Department intentionally snared the last known jaguar in the Southwest last year, a report by the federal government says.

Wildlife advocates and politicians had demanded a federal investigation of the capture of the male cat, nicknamed Macho B, which was freed soon after he was snared but later recaptured and euthanized because he was ailing. Many described the department's account of his capture and death as suspicious.

The report, issued by the inspector general of the [Interior Department](#), said the Arizona game and fish employees had acted inappropriately in many ways, starting with the snaring.

But Arizona's Game and Fish Department called the document incomplete and denied that it was to blame.

"The department stands by its previous statements that the department did not direct any department employee or any other person associated with the initial capture to intentionally capture a jaguar," said Tom Cadden, the department's spokesman.

In February, the 118-pound jaguar, which then appeared to be in fine health, was captured in a leg-hold snare in the mountains near Nogales, Ariz. His canine tooth was broken as a result. He was tranquilized, equipped with a radio collar and released.

Days later it was found that Macho B was not moving, and he was recaptured and brought to the Phoenix zoo. Veterinarians there said he was suffering from irreversible kidney failure and euthanized him.

Arizona's Game and Fish Department repeatedly denied that the snare was intended for the jaguar and said it had been set for mountain lions or bears. But the outcry from wildlife advocates and local politicians led to several investigations, including a joint criminal inquiry by the law enforcement arm of the federal [Fish and Wildlife Service](#), which is part of the Interior Department, and the Justice Department.

In its report, the inspector general listed several violations by the Arizona employees. It said the trap was set in an area that the employees knew Macho B patrolled. By law they needed to notify the federal authorities before setting the trap and get a permit but did not do so.

The employees also had a necropsy performed on the jaguar but not a full one, as would have been appropriate, the report said.

Without the full necropsy it is impossible to know whether Macho B's death was related to his being snared.

In describing the jaguar's capture as intentional, the report did not offer specific evidence. But it said that

the United States attorney's office in Tucson was in possession of the specifics related to the investigation.

Tom Buckley, a spokesman for the federal [Fish and Wildlife Service](#), said it was too early to know if any charges would be filed.

Some critics of the jaguar's capture said they were vindicated by the preliminary findings.

"This is a moral indictment if not a criminal one," said Michael Robinson of the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), a wildlife advocacy group based in Tucson.

The jaguar has been listed since 1997 as endangered, the highest level of peril for a wild species. Last week the Fish and Wildlife Service said it would take steps to designate and protect its habitat and draft a recovery plan.

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