

Big cats love Calvin Klein cologne

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Cheetah. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Workers in Wildlife Conservation Societies around the world are using a new technique to lure big cats to their heat-and-motion-sensitive cameras and keep them there long enough to enable them to be identified. The new technique is to spray the area with cologne, but not just any fragrance - it has to be Calvin Klein's "Obsession for Men".

The idea began in the [Bronx Zoo](#) in 2003, when general curator Pat Thomas decided to test the effects of 24 fragrances on two cheetahs. The zoo had long sprayed perfumes on rocks in the cats' enclosure to keep them curious, but Thomas decided to be a little more scientific and test individual scents.

The results showed “Obsession for Men” was a clear winner, with the cats spending an average of 11.1 minutes in savoring the scent and obviously loving the musky perfume, rubbing their cheeks against trees that had been sprayed. Other scents did not perform so well for the cats, with Revlon’s “Charlie” occupying them for only 15.5 seconds, and Estée Lauder’s “Beautiful” keeping them interested for a mere two seconds.

After Thomas’s trials, word spread through the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and use of the cologne has spread from zoos to protected areas of jungle in wildlife conservation regions, where it is finding success in luring big cats of all kinds to cameras placed along remote animal trails.

In Guatemala, for example, Roan Balas McNab uses the perfume in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, one of the largest protected regions in South America, to attract jaguars to the area around the cameras and keep them there long enough for the individuals to be identified by their unique patterns of spots.

Since the cologne has been used the number of cats lingering in the vicinity of the cameras has increased threefold, and this will help the researchers to better estimate the size of the population of the reclusive cats. Researchers studying the cats have also been able to capture on video rarely seen events such as mating rituals near the cameras.

Program coordinator of the Jaguar Conservation Program run by the WCS said they plan to expand the use Obsession for Men to its jaguar population studies next year in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

Calvin Klein’s “Obsession for Men” was launched in 1986 and is still one of the top ten best-selling fragrances for men in the world. The “nose” who helped create the cologne, Ann Gottlieb, said there were a number

of ingredients that might attract animals, such as synthetic animal “notes” like the musky scent secreted by the civet.

Mr McNab initially hesitated to spread the word about the [fragrance](#) fearing poachers might use it, but he decided the benefits to science outweighed the risk since the fragrance is rare in stores near the rainforests and it is expensive, and poachers use dead animals as an effective bait to lure the cats. The WCS’s ethics do not permit researchers to use dead animals.

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