

Video shows only known US jaguar roaming Arizona mountains (Update)

February 3 2016, by Astrid Galvan



This undated still frame taken from the first publicly released video of the giant cat, provided by the Center for Biological Diversity, shows the only known wild jaguar in the United States roaming in a mountain range just south of Tucson, Ariz. "El Jefe"—Spanish for "the boss"—has been living in the Santa Rita Mountains 25 miles south of downtown Tucson for over three years, according to the Center for Biological Diversity. (Center for Biological Diversity via AP)

The only known wild jaguar in the United States is seen roaming around

a creek and other parts of a mountain range in southern Arizona in the first publicly released video of the giant cat.

"El Jefe"—Spanish for "the boss"—has been living in the Santa Rita Mountains about 25 miles south of downtown Tucson for over three years, according to the Center for Biological Diversity.

El Jefe is about 7 years old and is one of only four or five jaguars that have been spotted in the U.S. in the last 20 years. He's the only documented wild jaguar in the country.

"A lot of people have no idea that we have jaguars in the United States or that they belong here," said Randy Serraglio of the Tucson-based environmental group. "In bringing this video, we hope to inspire people to care about these animals and support protection for their homes."

Conservationists say El Jefe's habitat is threatened by a proposed open-pit copper mine in the mountains. The proposed Rosemont Mine has been in the works for several years but is tied up in the permitting phase.

The mine will sit on "a very small fraction of the jaguar's 50 miles-plus range," said Patrick Merrin, vice president of the Hudbay Rosemont project. The mine will span nearly 8 square miles in the Santa Rita mountains' more than 215 square miles, he said.



An undated still frame taken from the first publicly released video of the giant cat, provided by the Center for Biological Diversity, the only known wild jaguar in the United States is seen roaming in a mountain range just south of Tucson "El Jefe"—Spanish for "the boss"—has been living in the Santa Rita Mountains 25 miles south of downtown Tucson for over three years, according to the Center for Biological Diversity. (Center for Biological Diversity via AP)

"We will continue to work with the federal agencies to establish appropriate conservation and mitigation measures for the jaguar and other plants and animals," Merrin said in a statement.

The videos of El Jefe were captured by Conservation CATalyst, an organization focused on conserving cats that the Center for Biological Diversity works with. Conservation CATalyst has about a dozen cameras in the areas where El Jefe lives and plans to add more, Serraglio said.

"We're getting a good sense of where he likes to go and what areas he likes to use, and travel corridors and that sort of thing," he said.

Jaguars roamed the Southwest, but they disappeared over the past 150 years because of habitat loss and predator control programs aimed at protecting livestock. A hunter shot and killed the last verified female jaguar in the U.S. in 1963 in northern Arizona.

Conservationists don't know where El Jefe's mother may be, but they say he first popped up in the Whetstone Mountains in 2011 when he was about 3 years old.

"She must be somewhere not too far away," Serraglio said.

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