



**Exploitation of the jaguar, *Panthera onca*  
and other large forest cats in Suriname.**

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## TABEL OF CONTENT

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>RESULTS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>12</b>



**Kwamalasemutu 2009: Jaguar skin**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Pending...**

## INTRODUCTION

The Guiana's ecosystems provide habitats to over 4,500 species of flowering plants, 660 species of birds, 300 species of freshwater fishes, 180 species of mammals, 150 species of reptiles and 90 species of amphibians. Of great significance in the Guianas is the large number of wild fauna and flora that are unique to the region. Amongst these are species that are globally in decline but have found safe refuge in the Guianas' wilderness and are flourishing. Other species are simply endemic to the region, being found in very few other areas of the planet.

Amongst the very special species found in the Guianas is the jaguar, *Panthera onca*, the largest cat of South America. As with species like the giant river otter, *Pteronura brasiliensis*, the arapaima, *Arapaima gigas*, black caiman *Melanosuchus niger*, and giant anteater, *Myrmecophaga tridactyla*, the jaguar requires an extensive territory to survive and has found this in the Guianas. The extremely low population of humans, most of whom live along the coast, make the Guianas very attractive for forest cats whose migratory behaviour necessitates their having extensive wilderness areas as habitats. Another character that has helped make the Guianas attractive to forest cats has been the general respect and or fear that persons of the region have always had for the species. The jaguar, and many of its smaller relatives such as the jaguarundi, *Herpailurus yagouaroundi*, ocelot, *Leopardus pardalis* and the oncilla, *Leopardus tigrinus*, have rarely ever had to face the threat of targeted exploitation. Human – wildlife conflicts have, in the past, been limited to accidental encounters within the territory of the animals. However, from recent reports to WWF, this situation is feared to have changed.

Several species of wildlife are exported annually from Suriname and Guyana to the US, Europe and Japan. Some of these species, particularly birds and wild plants, are also the subject of domestic trade. Globally, illegal and/or excessive trade remains a very significant impediment to the survival of many species. Both Guyana and Suriname have a legal international trade, with export quotas being set per species, based on population estimates and relative abundances worldwide. The quotas also reflect the listing of the species under international conventions. However, the jaguar does not belong to this list of species approved for exploitation. The jaguar is classified by all countries of the Guianas as being endangered and thus in need of protection. This means that it is illegal to target and hunt the species, whether for export, recreation, the domestic pet trade, or for bushmeat. There are only a few exceptions where special provisions are made for capture and shipment for education, exhibition and research to zoological parks, museums and wildlife reserves.

Under its Species Conservation Programme, WWF endeavours to monitor and provide technical and other support towards the management of trade in wild animals and plants. WWF is fully aware of the significant impact that illegal, unreported, unregulated and unmonitored trade can have on biodiversity, and subsequently, ecological balances within forests and aquatic systems. To safeguard against species and population declines, WWF supports research which identifies unsustainable exploitation and its solution, and management gaps and or loopholes which, if left unchecked, may lead to species decline and a reduction in benefits to human populations. WWF also supports research to identify emerging threats to biological diversity and supports the development of mechanisms to halt such threats.

Consequently, WWF is currently very concerned about the numerous reports of jaguars being specifically hunted in order to meet demand for body parts. WWF, via its global network, is very much aware of the severe, negative impact that such a market demand can have on a species. Asian tigers and other large cats are near extinction half way across the world due to demands for their body parts. WWF believes that if such demands are currently occurring in the Guianas, information must immediately be obtained to guide management authorities so that corrective measures can be taken.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE OF STUDY**

Conduct an in depth assessment on current exploitation of the jaguar, *Panthera onca* and other large forest cats in Suriname.

## **METHODOLOGY**

THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT WAS COLLECTED IN THE FOLLOWING WAY:

- a. Visits to 4 forest sites in Suriname namely Kwamalasemutu in Sipaliwini, Santigrón in Wanica, Plantage Lasai in Commewijne, Witsanti in Para where jaguar exploitation is known or confirmed to be taking place.
- b. 50 interviews of hunters and persons who within the last 2 years are known to have shot jaguars or other large forest cats or have recollections of large cats being killed.
- c. In Paramaribo visits were made to 2 Chinese restaurants in Maretraite, markets these were Central market at the Saramacca street, Post 1, near Latour weg and Sr. W. Churchillweg, visits also made to 4 Chinese Supermarkets and 12 Jewelry shops in Paramaribo centre to assess and investigate possible trade in meat, skins, bones and other body parts.
- d. Visit to one Pet shop facility to determine the presence of orphaned cubs, and where relevant, record numbers, place(s) of origin, frequency of arrival, description of sales contact.
- e. Collection of data from NCD (Nature Conservation Division of the Ministry of Physical Planning, Lands and Forest Management) to determine how many jaguars and large cats have been reported to have been killed in 2007, 2008, and 2009.
- f. Determination of how many shootings are considered to have been justified.
- g. Development of a data base on the number of jaguars destroyed and the methods of disposal of the carcasses. Indicate the lead party involved in disposal of the carcasses for each recorded circumstance.

## RESULTS

Location	# Persons interviewed	Ethnicity of persons	Background /profession	Feedback and Personal Observations
Paramaribo	6	Chinese	shop owner	In possession of teeth
Commewijne	2	Chinese	shop owner	Jaguar meat in freezer
Santigron	3	Maroon	villager	No jaguars shot
Kwamala-semutu	42	Indigenous	villager, Incl. 1 ACT officer	7 jaguars, 1 ocelot, 3 jaguarundi killed in 2009 in village
Weg naar zee	1	Haitian	farmer	1 jaguar shot to stop killing of livestock
Latour	2	Maroon	fish vendor	Orders for cat parts could be placed with them
Zanderij	1	Indigenous	youngster	1 jaguar shot to stop killing of livestock
Lelydorp	2	Javanese	hunter	Afraid to disclose details
Lelydorp	1	Indian	hunter	Encounter with ocelot in Lelydorp, ocelot not killed

**Table 1: Summary of Locations, Interviewees and Feedback on Jaguar Exploitation**

Year	Species	#	Body parts used	Sale price(SRD)	Observations
2007	Jaguar-undi	1	Teeth, skin sold	200/ tooth	Meat consumed by villager
2009	Jaguar	9	Skin and teeth sold	unknown	Not sold
			Teeth sold	50/tooth	Sold
			Head sold	750	Sold to Chinese shopowner
			Teeth sold	80-150/tooth	Sold
			Meat sold	400 (all the meat)	Sold
			Not used		Buried
			Skin teeth & meat	Unknown	Bought by Chinese
2009	Jaguar-undi	2	Meat and Teeth	Unknown	Not sold yet
			Meat and Teeth	200 / tooth	Sold
			Meat		Consumed
2009	Ocelot	2	Teeth	Paid srd150 for entire animal just to get the teeth.	To be used for personal reasons.

**Table 2: Description of wild cat exploitation based on personal experience of persons interviews.**

Year	Species	No	Total from 2007-2009	Body parts used at home or sold
2007	Jaguarundi	1	3	Teeth and Meat
2009	Jaguarundi	2	-	Teeth and Meat
2009	Jaguar	9	9	Skin Teeth and Meat
	Ocelot	2	1	Teeth

**Table 3: Summary of information obtained from interviews during the study.**

## TRADE

### Trade in Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)

Based on the data obtained during the study it was clear that most jaguars are bought by the Chinese people. They have the most interest in the meat, teeth, bones and skin. They believe that the meat has medicinal power especially for ailments at old age. The bones are used to prepare medicines for rheumatism, mostly bones of the head are requested.

The teeth are used as pendant in gold jewelry and vary in values depending on the size. Prices vary from SRD 80,- to SRD 1200,-, K9 teeth are more valuable than other teeth. For teeth only the price varies from SRD 45,- to SRD 400,- a piece.

During one interview it was mentioned that the teeth are illegally transported to China, because of a higher market value there. If they need jaguar products they place the order with known hunters.

During special parties in Kwamalasemutu some villagers adorn themselves with skin of the jaguar, jackets and masks.

Tourists visiting Kwamalasemutu are very eager to buy cats skins and teeth because they can sell these for a better price in Paramaribo.

Because of its size the big cats are normally beheaded, and only the head is taken to Paramaribo because of the price (SRD 750), that the Chinese are willing to pay.

## TRADE IN JAGUAR PARTS IN SURINAME



Image 1:

*Paramaribo. Gold pendant from Jaguar K9 teeth; 1200 SRD a piece*



Image 2:

*Commewijne, Jaguar front leg in freezer in supermarket*





Image 3:

*Kwamalasemutu; jaguar skin being dried*

### **Trade in Jaguarundi (*Herpailurus yagouarondi*)**

The jaguarundi is the most popular cat, because the skin is more valuable for the Chinese than the jaguar, for this reason the jaguarundi is also more expensive on the market. According to them the meat also tastes better because it is similar to that of deer. Inhabitants of Kwamalasemutu agree on the taste of the jaguarundi meat.

### **Trade in Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*)**

Ocelot is bigger nuisance than other large cats. It frequently attacks poultry and is there for killed. Most often nothing is used; the animal is disposed of without removal of skin or body parts. No records of consumption of meat were found or obtained during interviews and field visits.

## **HUMAN AND WILDLIFE CONFLICT**

People of Kwamalasemutu are aware that the jaguar is protected and that it is illegal to kill them, but still every year more than 7 jaguars are killed in this village. The residents including hunters claim that the jaguars attack their poultry and dogs and that they feel unsafe and threatened when they know that a jaguar is close. In 2009 the ACT (Amazon Conservation Team) was able to register 5 jaguars killed in Kwamalasemutu; the other incidents were not recorded.

In Maroon villages the jaguar is respected for its power and feared because of local beliefs. They will only shoot a jaguar if they feel threatened, but normally they will just chase it away. No records were found maroons trading in meat skin and bones.

## **RESTAURANTS AND MARKETS**

### **Local trade**

During visits to different local markets, the meat of wild cats was not encountered, but it was possible to place orders for jaguar and other wild cats. In several Chinese restaurants the meat of wild cats does not occur as part of the menu; however the restaurant can prepare upon request, meat that is delivered by the persons who place the order.

### **International trade and trade along the country border**

The skin of Jaguars can be traded for a hunting rifle with Brazilians along the border, or it can be sold for 500 real ( ± 1500 SRD). Jaguar teeth and skin are smuggled to China.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The head of the game wardens declares that in the event of catching persons with jaguar meat, the material is destroyed. According to their experience game hunters, and hunters for sport do not set out to hunt jaguar, but for deer, pingo, pakira, etc. The killing of jaguars by hunters is mostly an opportunistic event, because of the known value of jaguar teeth.



Image 4:

*Kwamalasemutu; measuring the length of a jaguar skin; 1.32 m*



Image 5:  
*Kwamalasemutu; villager selling jaguar tooth, K9, local price 45 SRD*



Image 6:  
*Paramaribo, jewelry shop; Jaguar teeth on display ± 70 SRD*



Image 7:

*Paramaribo, Jewelry store, K9 teeth , 85 SRD*



Image 8:

*Paramaribo, Jewelry store, K9 tooth*

## **DISCUSSION**

The existence of a thriving trade in meat, skin, teeth and bones of the wild cats is very clear. The amount of teeth, cat skins and other body parts reported to be in trade through this study alone suggests that the actual amount of countrywide trade is quite high. During a hunting trip in 2005, I was told that the crew encountered three jaguars, which all were killed and the teeth were removed to sell in Paramaribo. Assuming that this is normal procedure for hunters, the problem is very big, and the numbers described in this report far below the reality.

The economic situation in the country promotes the killing of jaguars, which compared to other game require less effort for good value. Not many people are aware of the popularity of wild cats among the Chinese population. The writer of this report cautions against spreading this information since this can change and increase the interest of opportunists to deliberately hunt for jaguars and other wild cats.

During the assessment it was not clear what the role of Nature Conservation Division (NCD) is on the enforcement of legislation for protection of jaguars. It seems that the department in charge of law enforcement does not have enough manpower and tools (vehicles) to properly enforce regulations. In many cases they react to anonymous tips from the public.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

A control mechanism to address this illegal trade in jaguar and other wild cat products should include

1. Regular visits by law enforcement and nature conservation officers and penalties imposed on restaurants and jewelry shops in Paramaribo, where the products are bought and sold.
2. Development and airing or printing via newspapers information bulletins on the Game Law and Resolutions 2002 which specifically prohibit the hunting and trade of forest cats. These information bulletins must target hunters and residents of areas known to collect and trade in jaguar and other wild cat products.
3. Institutional support to agencies such as the NCD to enable immediate and effective confiscation of all items from jaguars and other wild cat.
4. To increase awareness posters, development of posters to alert and warn consumers not to purchase items such as jewelry, meat and cat skin made or derived from wild / forest cats.
5. Issuing of awards for more information on hunting and trade in meat, skin teeth and jewelry from cat's teeth.
6. A "protect the jaguar campaign launched amongst schools and the Chinese community in Suriname.

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