

The Wild Felid Research and Management Association

The Wild Felid Research and Management Association (WFA) is a professional association open to researchers, wildlife managers, educators and others dedicated to the conservation of all wild felid species, with an emphasis on those species in the Western Hemisphere. The WFA acts in an advisory capacity to facilitate wild felid conservation, management, research, and public education, and functions among various governments, agencies, councils, universities and organizations responsible or interested in wild felids and their habitats.

In This Issue

COVER STORY

- 1 Priorities for conservation of and research on the world's southernmost pumas

COUNCIL NEWS

- 3 From the President
- 6-7 WFA Council Election
- 8 WFA Regional Representatives
- 9 Costa Rica and Columbia Reports
- 12-13 Workshop summary: Opportunities for collaborative mountain lion research on and near the Colorado Plateau, USA
- 25-26 WFA member application and survey
- 27 Future Events
- 28 Getting involved with the WFA

STUDENT CORNER

- 10 Announcing 2010 Wild Felid Legacy Scholarship
- 11 2nd recipient of WFA Legacy Scholarship awarded

MANAGEMENT NEWS

- 14 Lynx conservation and national forest management in the Rocky Mountains, USA
- 15 Puma population structure and vital rates on the Uncompahgre Plateau, Colorado, USA

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

- 16 Huiña conservation actions in northwestern Patagonia, Argentina
- 17 Evaluating bobcat populations using motion-activated cameras in Colorado, USA
- 18 Genetic analysis of scats reveals minimum number, sex, and diet of mountain lions on the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona, USA
- 19 Bobcat home range, activity, diet, survival, and other observations in the Chihuahuan Desert of New Mexico, USA

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

- 21 Linking resource selection and mortality modeling for population estimation of mountain lions in Montana, USA
- 22 Pluck a hair from a cat? My quest to test hair snares as a survey method for jaguars

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- 22-23 Research abstracts
- 24 Recent publications

Cover page and p. 4 photo credit: Andrés Novaro, anovaro@wcs.org
Last page photo credit: Susan Morse, info@keepingtrack.org
WFA logo designed by Ben Wright, ben@bwrightimages.com

The Wild Felid Monitor is the biannual newsletter of the Wild Felid Research and Management Association
PO Box 3335, Montrose CO 81402 USA E-mail: wildfelidmonitor@gmail.com; Websites: www.wildfelid.org & www.wildfelid.com

Managing Editor: Chris Papouchis, papouchis@gmail.com

Newsletter Committee: Chris Belden, Melanie Culver, Sharon Negri, Chris Papouchis, Linda Sweanor, Mike Tewes

Editorial Policy

The Wild Felid Monitor encourages submission of articles, information and letters on ecology, research, management and conservation of wild felid species, and particularly of those species native to the Western Hemisphere. Preferred length of submissions is about 750 words. Submissions of photos, drawings and charts are encouraged. Electronic submissions to wildfelidmonitor@gmail.com are preferred; otherwise mail to the address above. The WFA reserves the right to accept, reject and edit submissions. The artwork is copyrighted – Please do not reproduce without permission.

Deadline for the Summer 2010 issue is April 15, 2010

HUIÑA CONSERVATION ACTIONS IN NORTHWESTERN PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

Martín Moneteverde, Asociación Civil Conservación Patagónica and Departamento Fauna Terrestre, Centro de Ecología Aplicada del Neuquén, martinjmonteverde@gmail.com

Guillermo D'Oliveira, Lanín National Park, National Parks Administration.

The huiña (or kodkod; *Leopardus guigna*) is the smallest and one of the most poorly understood wild cats in South America, and the only carnivore endemic to the Patagonian Andean forests of Argentina and Chile. This mysterious and rare animal is classified as *Vulnerable* on the IUCN Red List. In Argentina, where huiña are found only in Patagonian National Parks, it is considered a “*Threatened Species*” by the Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Use and a species of “*special value*” by the National Parks Administration. Efforts to developing effective conservation strategies for huiña in the Patagonian National Parks of Argentina are being hindered by the lack of robust information about its ecology, habitat requirements and the main threats to its persistence.

We expect that this ongoing study will have a positive impact on huiña conservation in Lanín National Park by providing new information about its ecology and status that will help us identify management goals and strategies.

To help the National Parks Administration redefine its management priorities and strategies for protecting huiña, we began a research study of this feline in Lanín National Park (LNP) in February 2008 and it remains the only ongoing huiña project in Argentina. Until now the only work on huiña in LNP has been the mapping of sightings reported over the last 20 years, the development of a high quality map of their potential habitat and descriptions of the potential human impacts on the species. We know huiña populations occur in low densities and are probably suffering local extinction processes in LNP but we do not know which specific factors and threats are involved. Thus, our specific objectives are to explore the spatial ecology, habitat use and the relationship of huiña with the rest of the native carnivore assemblage (as well as domestic cats), to evaluate the impacts of human activities on huiña, and to develop conservation actions and carry out educational activities to minimize the main threats detected so far.



Credit: M. Moneteverde

Our research focused on two specific areas of the Valdivian forest, the Hua Hum (S 40° 08' 14.8" and W 71° 42' 43.5") and Ñorquenco (S 39° 08' 51.3" and W 71° 16' 09.1") Basins. To acquire information on the presence/absence of huiña we used year-round camera-trapping following the protocol of the U.S. Forest Service for small forest carnivores, attempted live-captures during the summer of 2008-2009 using Tomahawk live traps, and set out scent-laden track stations (see pic). Our camera traps provided the first verified record of a living huiña but our attempts to live-capture or record the tracks of huiña were unsuccessful.

One of the most remarkable features of the camera trapping was that culpeo foxes (*Lycalopex culpaeus*) appeared in pictures from almost every camera. The relative abundance of this carnivore was very high compared to huiña and other small carnivores. Culpeo foxes are successful competitors and we hypothesize that they could be influencing populations of huiñas and other small carnivores through interspecific competition by spatial segregation and competition by exploitation or interference. Due to their small size (~ 2 kg) and low densities, huiñas are very susceptible to these kinds of competitive interactions.

The fact that we captured images of domestic cats and dogs within huiña habitat also has serious conservation implications. Domestic cats may compete with huiñas for prey and can spread parasites and diseases (e.g., panleukopenia, distemper). Necropsies performed on two huiñas - one killed near our study area in 2002 because it was found eating poultry and the other found in Los Alerces National Park - revealed intestinal parasites (*Ascaris*) that could only have been contracted from domestic animals such as cats. The potential for interbreeding between huiña and domestic cats also represents a threat to huiña due to genetic dilution. Predation by domestic dogs may also be a conservation problem.

In an effort to inform and facilitate participation of local peoples in the conservation of all carnivores in the Park and to reduce the impact of domestic animals on wild cats we initiated educational activities using the huiña as a “flagship” species. Our efforts included trainings for park rangers, an International Workshop with three colleagues studying huiña in Chile, and environmental education workshops for the human inhabitants. Since the beginning of the last century, much exotic wildlife has been introduced into this part of Patagonia and has become an important source of income for local peoples. Consequently, many native species such as the huiña are not valued by local inhabitants. Regrettably, due to predation of domestic poultry by huiñas, some rural people consider this species harmful and worthless. We believe that our educational activities have encouraged general interest in this cat, involved people in its conservation, and produced a long lasting change in the local community in terms of conservations awareness.

We expect that this ongoing study will have a positive impact on huiña conservation in LNP by providing new information about its ecology and status that will help us identify management goals and strategies. Designing a “Monitoring plan” and promoting the creation of new “Critical Conservation Areas” in the park where the presence of huiña is verified will allow us to begin to achieve these urgent conservation actions. In a few years we would like to expand our research to other National Parks in Argentinean Patagonia to help ensure the huiña’s survival across most of its current range. We also trust that huiña will serve as a flagship species for a more complete and integral conservation project in which local people play an important role in the conservation of the forest wildlife. §