

## 'I was thrilled and shocked': images raise hopes of return of wild jaguars to the US

Level 3: Advanced

### 1 Warmer

a. Sort these animals. Are they extinct or endangered? Which ones surprised you? Discuss.

Arctic wolf	blue whale	crocodiles	dodo
golden toad	koalas	macaw	Tasmanian tiger

Extinct	Endangered

### 2 Key words

a. Choose the correct words to match the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

- having firm, strong muscles or relating to muscles  
a. rugged                      b. muscular                      c. flank
- a feeling of happiness and excitement that usually lasts a short time  
a. euphoria                      b. tentative                      c. insurmountable
- very excited and pleased  
a. standstill                      b. sighting                      c. thrilled
- difficult to find, define or achieve  
a. elusive                      b. muscular                      c. flank
- land that is not level or smooth and has rocks instead of plants and trees  
a. rugged                      b. biodiversity                      c. toll
- when you see something rare or unusual  
a. standstill                      b. prey                      c. sighting
- not definite or certain because it may change later  
a. rugged                      b. tentative                      c. stepping stones

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8. having many different kinds of animals and plants, creating a balanced environment
  - a. euphoria
  - b. expenditures
  - c. biodiversity
9. an event or experience that helps you make progress towards achieving something
  - a. stepping stone
  - b. toll
  - c. elusive
10. the side of something such as a building or mountain
  - a. toll
  - b. flank
  - c. rugged
11. a problem or difficulty that cannot be solved or dealt with successfully
  - a. insurmountable
  - b. standstill
  - c. tentative
12. an animal that is hunted, killed, and eaten by another animal
  - a. flank
  - b. biodiversity
  - c. prey
13. the act of spending or using a resource, like money or energy
  - a. expenditure
  - b. toll
  - c. insurmountable
14. the amount of damage caused in a particular event, such as a war, disaster, etc.
  - a. rugged
  - b. expenditures
  - c. toll
15. a situation in which all movement or activity has stopped
  - a. sighting
  - b. standstill
  - c. elusive

**b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.**

1. The conservation group discussed their concerns about the loss of \_\_\_\_\_ in the forest.
2. Often, it takes many \_\_\_\_\_ to reach a larger goal.
3. Our \_\_\_\_\_ moving date is the 1st, but it depends on when we close on the house.
4. Antelope, gazelles, and rabbits are the usual \_\_\_\_\_ for cheetahs.
5. The happy couple were \_\_\_\_\_ to announce that they were engaged.
6. Is the yeti \_\_\_\_\_ or simply a myth?

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7. Finding a new job is not an \_\_\_\_\_ challenge, but it can take some time.
8. There were two \_\_\_\_\_ of a rare bird here last week.
9. The snowstorm hit the construction site and caused a huge \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The western \_\_\_\_\_ of the mountains is more remote than the eastern side.
11. When it takes longer for animals to find food, it takes a \_\_\_\_\_ on their health.
12. Big cats, such as lions and jaguars, are very \_\_\_\_\_ animals.

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#### ***A series of sightings suggests the big cats are, against the odds, growing in numbers in New Mexico and Arizona***

**Samuel Gilbert**

**6 February, 2024**

- 1 The young, muscular male approached from the east at about 4 am. He paused briefly in front of the motion-sensor camera, as if posing for the photo. "It was overall a moment of euphoria," says Emily Burns, programme director at the Sky Island Alliance conservation group in Arizona.
- 2 "I was equal parts thrilled and shocked that there was a jaguar here."
- 3 Jaguars once roamed throughout the American southwest, but they were hunted to local extinction by the 1960s. In the 1990s, the elusive cat began to occasionally reappear in the rugged Sky Islands mountain ranges in New Mexico and Arizona. Now, a series of sightings in the region over the past year marks their tentative return.
- 4 Yet numerous obstacles remain to re-establishing a jaguar population in the US. The wide-ranging cat faces growing climate extremes, habitat loss – and the continued impact of the Trump administration's border wall.
- 5 In November 2023, Sky Island Alliance captured an image of a large jaguar walking along a wooded hillside in the remote Whetstone Mountains of southern Arizona. The photo represents the fifth recorded jaguar sighting in the US last year. In December, a wildlife camera captured a video of the same jaguar in the Huachuca Mountains to the south.
- 6 The Whetstone and Huachuca Mountains are part of the Sky Islands in northern Mexico and the US southwest. Their peaks and valleys boast some of the highest biodiversity in the US – and are a plentiful habitat for jaguars.
- 7 "You can just imagine a jaguar stopping somewhere like this for a drink," says Burns as we make our way up a rocky dry creek bed to where the underground river surfaces, creating a series of freshwater pools. Jaguars' primary prey, the pig-like javelina, lives here, and springs provide year-round water.
- 8 "I often think of these mountain ranges as stepping stones, providing different habitats, different food sources, often more abundant water," says Burns. Another jaguar was detected here by Sky Island Alliance in May 2023, but it is not known if it is the same cat photographed in December. "If these mountains can support the jaguar, it means it is a great habitat for so many other species as well."
- 9 Louise Misztal, Executive Director at Sky Island Alliance, says: "We know the western flank of the Huachuca Mountains and the San Rafael Valley provide one of the last open corridors for the northernmost population of jaguars to move between habitat in the US and Mexico. To recover these cats in the US, it's vital that we protect this pathway."
- 10 But that freedom—and the animal's return to this region—is threatened by the construction of the border wall, which began under Donald Trump's presidency and continued under Joe Biden's, despite the latter's opposition to the policy.
- 11 This region hosts numerous endangered species, such as the subtropical ocelot, Mexican grey wolves, and Sonoran pronghorns, as well as jaguars. These animals, and many others, have been adversely affected by the wall that extends nearly 364km along the Arizona border.
- 12 "The border wall is nearly insurmountable to anything much larger than a badger," says Russ McSpadden, southwest conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity in Arizona.
- 13 The barrier forces jaguars to expend more energy to reach critical habitat, prey and water – an increasingly unstable resource in the warming southwest.

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- 14 "A jaguar is accustomed to going to certain water sources known throughout its life," says Traphagen, who has co-authored a study on the border wall's impact on jaguar energy expenditures. "With the border wall, they must travel much greater distances to find that water."
- 15 Krista Schlyer, a photographer and author who has spent 15 years documenting the human and environmental toll of the border wall, has witnessed, time and again, animals dead or stranded along the barrier. In 2007, Schlyer was walking along a new section of wall near the San Pedro River when she noticed javelinas sniffing and anxiously pacing back and forth.
- 16 "They were smelling for their family on the other side," Schlyer says. The javelinas finally gave up, returning in the direction they had come.
- 17 That wall section now extends 70 contiguous miles from the border with New Mexico, ending near the San Rafael Valley.
- 18 McSpadden says, "It is critical that we actively protect jaguars' habitat and habitat connectivity in the southwest. Freedom to roam across vast territories is written into the DNA of jaguars."
- 19 Traphagen says resuming border wall construction could mean the end of the jaguar in the US. "The drum beat to finish the wall is here," he says of the growing support for the border wall. "If they walled off the San Rafael Valley, jaguar recovery would come to a standstill."

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What is the name of the conservation group in Arizona?
2. When were wild jaguars hunted to local extinction?
3. When did the jaguars start to reappear?
4. What are the three obstacles to re-establishing the jaguar population mentioned in the article?
5. When did a wildlife camera capture video of a jaguar in the Huachuca Mountains?
6. Where are the Whetstone and Huachuca Mountains located?
7. What is the jaguars' primary prey, and what other animal is that prey compared to?
8. What are other endangered animals, besides jaguars, in the region?
9. Why is the border wall problematic for jaguars and other animals?
10. What does Krista Schlyer document in her work?

### 4 Key language

a. Look at the nouns below and the adjectives and articles next to them. Put the elements in the correct order: *determiner, opinion, size, age, shape, colour, origin, material, and purpose*. Then, find the phrases in the article and underline them to check your answers.

1. male (muscular, young)
2. Mountains (Whetstone, the, remote)
3. sighting (the, jaguar, recorded, fifth)
4. corridors (last, the, open)
5. species (numerous, endangered)

b. Add another adjective to each item in task A. Write the adjectives in the correct order.

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c. Choose a noun to describe. Write one adjective from each category.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
determiner	opinion	size	age	shape
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
colour	origin	material	purpose	NOUN

### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Humans are the most dangerous threat to animals."
- "We should not allow laws and policies for people to affect animals."
- "Most people do care about protecting endangered species and the environment."

### 6 In your own words

a. Do some research about wild jaguars or another endangered species.

- Where is the animal's native habitat?
- Why is it an endangered species?
- What is being done to protect it?
- What human-made obstacles are there?

b. Report your findings to the class and share your opinions. Here are some phrases to help you when you discuss facts.

*According to my research, ...*

*One example is ...*

*Some ways to do this are ...*

*One law/initiative that is in place aims to ...*

*Another thing people/governments can do is ...*

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Here are some phrases to use when stating your opinion.

*I think (that) ...*

*From what I know/have read, ...*

*From my perspective, ...*

*In my understanding/opinion, ...*

*I (dis)agree with ...*