Implementing Brazil's Largest Jaguar Corridor

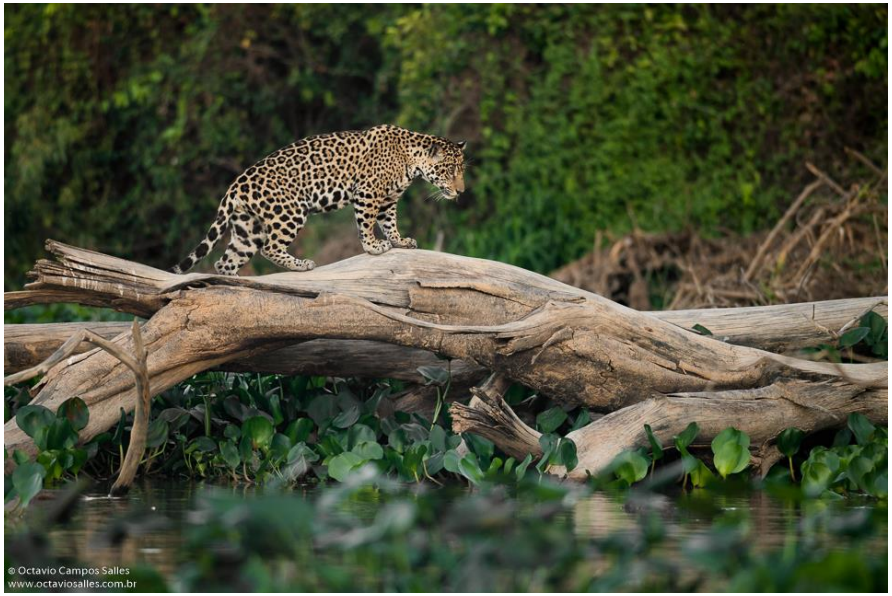
PROJECT GOALS:

- Develop and implement the first large-scale jaguar corridor in Brazil;
- Map and monitor jaguar occurrence along the Araguaia River corridor;
- Investigate the species' use of fragmented landscape;
- Assess its genetics and diet;
- Develop methods to mitigate jaguar-rancher conflict.

SUMMARY: Due to human disturbances, jaguar populations have become increasingly restricted to protected areas. The savannah-like Cerrado biome provides critical habitat for jaguars, yet since 1960, vast areas have been converted, with deforestation rates even higher than in the Amazon. Even so, only 1.6% of Cerrado lands are protected within legal reserves. Jaguars inhabiting the Cerrado must therefore depend on land outside of protected areas to maintain viable populations. The 2,200 km. long Araguaia River is one of the main watercourses of central Brazil, originating in the Cerrado and running northward into the Amazon Basin. Riverside habitat along the Araguaia therefore functions as an extensive biodiversity corridor that provides an important route for jaguar dispersal between the country's two major biomes.

STUDY AREA: Located in the close vicinity of Araguaia springs, Emas National Park is an important refuge for Cerrado jaguars. However, due to intensive agricultural pressure, Emas Park is literally an "island of natural habitats," which threatens to isolate its jaguar population. The Cantão State Park is located 1,000 km upstream from Araguaia springs in a transition zone between the Cerrado and Amazon biomes. Between the two protected areas lies a tract of 700,000 hectares of relatively well preserved riverside habitat. Both Emas and Cantão, and the riverine corridor between the two, are home to crucial jaguar populations, and their study, protection and conservation is part of the Jaguar Conservation Fund's (JCF) long-term mission.

METHODS: Using camera-traps and scat detector dogs, JCF field researchers will record jaguar presence along the Araguaia River Basin. DNA from scats will be used to investigate genetic connectivity. Using GPS collars, the team will monitor jaguar movements through the fragmented landscape and develop a habitat suitability model for the corridor. Additionally, researchers will investigate jaguar predation impact on local cattle ranches. Information obtained will be used to detect barriers for connectivity, major threats to the species, and key areas for conservation. Combined, these data will provide the basis for the development of a management plan for maintaining and re-establishing jaguar habitat connectivity. The JCF jaguar field research project is part of a larger and more complex effort to monitor, develop, and implement an Araguaia Biodiversity Corridor in the Brazilian Cerrado.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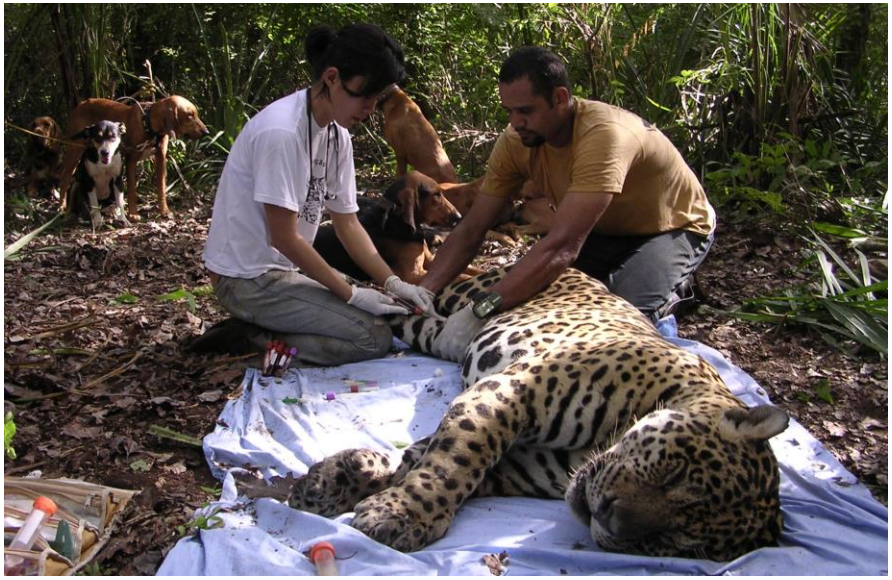


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