

Making a Difference for Wildlife

Hundreds of local conservation projects are undertaken annually by SCI Chapters. They are reinforced by many notable conservation initiatives funded by the SCI Foundation.



Yucatan Jaguar Habitat Preservation North Florida Chapter Total Funding: \$840,000

MEXICO'S YUCATAN PENINSULA rainforest is one of the most biologically diverse areas on the planet with thousands of unique wildlife species. Some 1.7 million protected acres of the region, the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, is home to the largest jaguar population outside of Brazil. Possibly 400-500 of the spectacular spotted beasts occur here.

To the east lies the additionally protected Sian Ka'an Reserve, but between the two lies hundreds of thousands of acres of communal lands subject to logging. Big carnivores like jaguars require large habitat ranges to sustain viable populations, so conservation groups want to purchase conservation easements in the communal lands to protect jaguar habitat.

SCI's North Florida Chapter has pledged \$4000 per year for four years to help place another 500,000 acres into perpetual conservation. For not developing their lands, local landowners receive compensation from a Friends of the Calakmul-established trust.

SCI North Florida's donation will also benefit jaguar research being conducted by the Institute of Ecology of Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico under Professor Gerardo Ceballos. (Ceballos is also a co-founder, with David Levanthal, of Friends of the Calakmul).

This research will attempt to understand the basic ecology of the Yucatan jaguars, including home range requirements, population numbers, and other information essential to ensure proper management. Originated by SCI's David Hanlin, this now-famous research employs hounds and volunteer hunters that dart jaguars for radio-collaring.

SCI North Florida has also contributed an additional \$5000 to Jacksonville Zoo's four-acre rainforest habitat. Soon to be the world's largest jaguar exhibit, it is meant to instill in zoo visitors a conservation ethic for the jaguar.

This three-pronged approach provides a comprehensive program management and conservation for *el tigre*, as well as thousands of other plants and animal species in Mexico's Campeche and Quintana Roo forests.

