



September 17, 2020.

Global Wildlife Conservation

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are very excited to write a letter to indicate the importance of the Maya Forest Corridor, previously called the Central Belize Corridor. This area represents the only missing piece that would make the protected area system of Belize a single connected wilderness landscape from North to South. This critical link is an unprotected, privately owned bottleneck area, connecting the largest forest conglomerate in Belize, the Maya Mountains, with the largest forest block North of the Amazon, the Selva Maya (Rio Bravo in Belize, Peten in Guatemala, and Calakmul complex in Mexico). This is of utmost importance to the long-term survival of a wide-ranging species such as the jaguar.

Panthera Belize has carried out extensive camera trap studies in the area since 2008, showing that it has a considerable jaguar population, with resident females and cubs growing up. Our research also indicates that there is a high density of jaguars, which compare favourably with protected areas in other parts of Central America. We equally found some worrying aspects in the form of reduced survival of adults, with high levels of conflict with livestock owners in the surrounding areas, resulting in retaliatory killing of jaguars. The area needs better management and requires incorporation into the protected area system. Having worked in the area for more than a decade, we can indicate that expansion of the agricultural frontier has been substantial, with associated fires and lack of management highly threatening the area. Where there were several alternative corridor pathways available in 2008, we are currently left with only a single area and the corridor has been reduced to its minimum. Any further agricultural expansion will sever this connection, especially when this accelerates human population growth and traffic on the highway. The core parts of this corridor are still functioning and we need to act now.

Recently, our final scientific publication on the ecology and conservation of jaguars in this area, detailing all these matters, has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Mammalogy. Although still going through some editorial minor changes, we will be happy to share these detailed findings if this can further convince you of its importance within an

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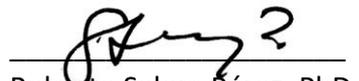


official scientific context. Many thanks for considering the corridor important and helping us with preserving a connected Belizean jaguar landscape.

Sincerely,



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