

# Occasional Jaguar Hunting for Subsistence in Colombian Chocó

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**J**aguar *Panthera onca* hunting for subsistence consumption by humans has not been reported in the scientific literature. Nowak (1975) reported jaguar hunting for legal fur trade as one of the main factors for population reduction in wild jaguar populations, where historically it was directed for black-markets with large numbers shipped internationally (Doughty & Myers 1971).

In Colombia, jaguars are legally protected since 1981 (Rodriguez-Mahecha *et al.* 1986), however active protection is difficult in rural areas, and isolated communities are not subject to control or have access to education.

Here we present the first report of jaguar hunting for human subsistence by Afro-Colombian and racially mixed communities in Colombian Chocó. Between June and July 2007 during the high water season, an adult male jaguar was shot, captured and prepared for human consumption within the local community and for local wild-meat markets in the Colombian Chocó. The community, known as Isla de Palacios, is located in the Bojaya Municipality in the Chocó Department in the middle watershed of Atrato River (76.92023° W / 6.81965° N). The community is considered among the most conflictive, poor and more problematic areas in Colombia, experiencing problems regarding basic human rights, such as food security, social conflicts (security), health and education problems (United Nations Colombia 2007).

The exact location of the jaguar hunt was about 0.2 km from town on the Ciénaga La Isla 76.92020° W / 6.81965° N. The animal was killed from a “champa” (local canoe) with a .22 caliber rifle during a normal group fishing-hunting trip in the morning hours. The hunters reported the use of seven gun shots to knock down the animal from a tree branch. The jaguar’s pelt measured about 1.50 m (measured by the authors, Fig.1), According to community informants the animal’s weight was approximately 46 kg. The bones



**Fig. 1.** Jaguar pelt exhibited at the hunter’s house in Isla de los Palacios (right) and Bellavista, Colombian Chocó (left; Photo S. Balaguera).

were not used and were discarded into the river while the pelt was dried in the sun at the lead hunter’s house (Fig. 1). The skin and preparation of the animal was carried out in the village after the hunters retrieved the entire animal into the canoe. The meat was sold inside the community and some was sold commercially at the closest town of Turbo (Antioquia Department) for about 1.5 dollars/kg.

Captive jaguars were also reported from the same community, although local perceptions indicate that the jaguar is a feared animal (pers. obs.). Some villagers reported that jaguar consumption is a common practice in the community and surrounding areas, where numerous animals have been reported to be held in captivity for personal enjoyment in small communities.

This report suggests that many rural areas, with food, health and social problems, depend on wild meat for survival, including jaguar meat. Often these rural

communities have little option but to take advantage of any opportunity to alleviate their situation.

## References

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