



Jaguar animal



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The **jaguar animal** (*Panthera onca*) is a big cat found in South America and the southern parts of the North American continent. The jaguar animal is the most powerful cat in the Americas and one of the larger members of the cat family Felidae. Since it has a round head and sturdy body shape, it is sometimes referred to as the “bulldog” of the feline world.

The jaguar animal is considered a so called “big cat”, together with other famous –and even bigger – large cats such as lions and tigers. The jaguar animal will typically reach a length of 1.62 to 1.83 meters (5.3 to 6 feet); not counting the tail which usually is around 75 centimetres (30 inches) long. The shoulder height of the jaguar animal is usually between 67 and 76 cm (27 and 30 inches). The biggest known jaguar specimens weighed over 150 kg (333lb), but most jaguars stay around 56-96 kg (124-211 lb).

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The female jaguar is usually around 20 percent smaller than the male jaguar. The jaguars living in Central America and Mexico are usually smaller compared to jaguars from other regions. A male jaguar animal from this region will rarely grow bigger than 56 kg (123 lb), while females tend to stay around 40 kg (90 lb).

The jaguar similar looks similar to the leopard, but the jaguar animal is heavier and has a more sturdy body shape. You can also tell the two cats apart by looking at the so called rosettes. The rosettes are black rings that sometimes encircle the characteristic spots found on several wild cats. The leopard has similar markings, but will rarely display rosettes with spots inside them. The rosettes will also be smaller on the leopard, while the jaguar animal has bigger and fewer rosettes of a darker colour. Thicker lines that encircle small spots are very common on the jaguar animal.

The background coating of the jaguar animal will usually have an orange or yellow shade. The profusion of dark rosettes and spots will therefore contrast sharply against the paler background. You can however encounter jaguars where the markings are virtually invisible, since the background coating is black instead of yellow/orange. This condition is called melanism, and a jaguar animal that has the condition is called a black panther. The black panther is therefore not a cat species; it is a leopard variant. If you look closely, you can actually see the rosettes and spots even on the black panther.

The male jaguar animal will become sexually mature when it is 3-4 years old, while the female jaguar animal usually reaches sexual maturity at the age of 2-3. The normal gestation period for the jaguar animal is 90-110 days and a jaguar litter can consist of up to four young ones. Newborn jaguars have closed eyes and will not be able to see until they are roughly two weeks old. They will stay with their mother until they are two years old. After this, they must start searching for their own territory. Depending on habitat, a jaguar animal will claim a territory that comprises from 25 to 150 square kilometres. In the wild, the jaguar animal rarely grows older than 11 years. Jaguars that are well cared for in captivity can reach an age of 20 years.



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The **Jaguar cat** is found in most parts of the South American continent, throughout Central America and in Mexico and southern United States. The jaguar cat prefers habitats where it will have access to plenty of water year round, but it can be found in much drier environments too. The Jaguar cat lives in temperate, subtropical and tropical forests as well as on the dry savannah, subtropical grasslands, thorn scrub woodland, and dry tropical lowland regions. In Mexico, it is even found in desert terrain. It likes seasonally flooded environments and marshlands. The Jaguar cat usually stay away from great heights and is not found above 2,700 metres in the Andes or in the high plateau of central Mexico. Occasional specimens have however been sighted 3,800 metres above sea level.

Earlier, the jaguar cat could be found a far north as California and Texas in the United States but the wild population disappeared from south western United States and northern Mexico during the middle of the 20th century due to vigorous hunting.

A similar prosecution of the jaguar cat has occurred in the pampas scrub grasslands of Argentina and Uruguay. Today, the Amazon region is the main stronghold for the jaguar cat, while the species is rapidly declining in most other habitats. In 2004, wildlife officials managed to photograph jaguars in southern Arizona, but these specimens might have been temporary visitors from Sonora, Mexico. If we travel very far back in history, we see that jaguars actually inhabited a region that stretched as far north as Missouri. These prehistoric jaguars are only known from fossils and were much bigger than our contemporary jaguar cat.

The jaguar cat is included in CITES Appendix I. According to figures from 1996, there are fewer than 50,000 mature breeding jaguar cats left in the world. If the decline persists, the jaguar cat will become much vulnerable and might face the risk of extinction. Today, the jaguar is fully protected by national legislation in most of its native environments, but illegal hunting still continues. Hunting jaguar cat is forbidden in the United States, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, French Guiana, Paraguay, Suriname, Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Uruguay and Argentina. Hunting restrictions apply in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Brazil and Peru. When the jaguar cat lives in protected areas, such as national parks, it is of course also formally protected from hunters.

Farmers tend to view the jaguar cat as a threat, since it can kill domesticated animals. Humans will also compete with the jaguar cat for prey, and commercial hunting and tapping is still carried out by poachers. Killing the jaguar cat for its pelt is however not as common today as it used to be, and the CITES listing have managed to reduce the presence of jaguar pelts on the international market. Deforestation is instead becoming a growing problem, since the remaining jaguar cat population can become trapped in small patches of land.

The Jaguar cat is an apex predator, which means that it is not considered prey by any other animal than man. The Jaguar is an opportunistic predator that will feed on a wide range of animals, but it prefers hoofed mammals. We know that jaguars can include at least 85 different animal species in their diet, including everything from peccaries and tapirs to small caimans. If unable to find large prey, the jaguar cat will happily gulp down birds, fish, frogs and mice. They can also kill domesticated animals such as cattle.

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Jaguar animal fact # 1

The scientific name for the jaguar is *Panthera onca*. It is found in the genus *Panthera* within the cat family *Felidae*, order *Carnivora*. The Jaguar is the only of the Panthera species that can be found wild in the Americas. The other members of this genus are *Panthera leo* (lion), *Panthera tigris* (tiger) and *Panthera pardus* (leopard), and these four species are the only cats capable of roaring. The roaring has been made possible by a modified hyoid bone.

Jaguar animal fact # 2

Panthera onca is currently divided into eight subspecies, but this might change in the future since most experts agree that subspecies of cats might have been described to freely in the past. More research and evidence is needed before we can accurately decide if and how *Panthera onca* should be divided into subspecies.

The current jaguar subspecies are:

Panthera onca onca
Panthera onca arizonensis
Panthera onca centralis
Panthera onca goldmani
Panthera onca hernandesii
Panthera onca palustris
Panthera onca peruvianus
Panthera onca veracucis

Jaguar animal fact # 3

Jaguars can mate with the other large cat species in the Panthera genus – lions, tigers and leopards. Such hybridizations will usually occur in captivity when the jaguar is unable to find a mate from its own species. A female jaguar can give birth to liguars, tiguars and lepjags by mating with a lion, tiger or leopard. A male jaguar can father jaglions and jaguleps by mating with a lion or leopard. We do not do of any instances where a male jaguar has produced offspring with a tiger. Dogla is the Indian name for a natural hybrid of a tiger and a leopard, but there is only anecdotal evidence to support the theory of successful leopard to tigress mating.

Jaguar animal fact # 4

Unlike the small housecat, the jaguar is very fond of water and is often found in marshlands, swamps and seasonally flooded regions. It is a keen swimmer and can catch fish as well as caimans. Forest living jaguars will often stay close to a river or stream.

Jaguar animal facts # 5

The jaguar cat has the most powerful jaw structure of any cat, and the second most powerful jaw structure of any land living carnivore species. If an adult jaguar kills an 800 pound bull, it is strong enough to drag it 25 feet using its powerful jaws and subsequently pulverize the bones of the bull. Research performed on captive jaguars show that they can cause 6 mm (1/4 inch) deep dents in bowling balls. The bite of a jaguar is also strong enough to penetrate the shell of a turtle.

Jaguar animal fact # 6

Most cats bite the neck of their prey in an effort to suffocate it or sever its spinal cord. The jaguar utilizes a completely different hunting technique by attacking the skull rather than the neck of its prey. The jaguar will pierce the brain with its strong teeth and

thereby kill its prey. Since skulls tend to be hard, it is common for jaguars to break their teeth – especially as they become older.

Jaguar animal fact # 7

The name Jaguar has been borrowed from one of the pre-Colombian American languages and translates "killer that takes its prey in a single bound".

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