Where do jaguars live and what do they eat?

Sarah Lee - 2026-11-20 - Comments (0) - Cats

Where do jaguars live?

Jaguars often live in tropical lowlands, preferably close to water such as rivers and inland wetlands. In the past, jaguars could be found from the south-western USA to the scrub grasslands of Argentina. Sadly, they have lost half of their historic range mainly due to habitat loss. Today, the Amazon is the largest stronghold for this predator. Around 50% of jaguars are found in Brazil alone, and the rest of the jaguar populations live in the remaining 17 countries, eight of which share the Amazon rainforest: Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela, and the oversea territory of French Guiana.

What do jaguars eat?

Carnivore

- **Consume a variety of prey**
    - Target *c.* 85 species
    - Only cat known to have a taste for reptiles
        - Compete with humans for edible turtles
- **Terrestrial mammals**
    - Most common prey items
    - Preference for capybara, marsh deer, giant anteater, and red broket deer
    - Also consume tapir, marsh deer, peccary, and armadillo
- **Other prey items**
    - Eat caiman (alligator), fish, turtles, iguana, anaconda, and birds
        - Consume whole turtles and tortoises
            - Larger turtle and tortoise shells broken with teeth or a paw is inserted between top (carapace) and bottom (plastron) and turtle's insides scooped out (without breaking the shell)

        - Caimen are killed by a crushing bite to neck

    - Occasionally take cattle

        - Studies suggest jaguars which target domestic animals often have gunshot wounds

        - Jaguars preyed on large grazers in the Pleistocene Epoch; feeding on cattle today may be their response to introduced equivalents of large prey that went extinct in North America 11,00O years ago (Polisar et al 2003)