

**Wild Cats of Brazil: “Long-term monitoring and threat mitigation of Northern
Tiger Cat at its worldwide key protected area of Mirador State Park, Brazil”**

Project 182517790

Part I





Wild Cats of Brazil: “Long-term monitoring and threat mitigation of Northern Tiger Cat at its worldwide key protected area of Mirador State Park, Brazil” – Project 182517790

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Final Report - I

Conservation Actions

From Global to Local:

The project’s findings can have an impact on several levels, from global (IUCN), where the findings shed interesting and important points related to the global species conservation assessment. This specifically relates to doing viability assessment in the light of detected threats and analysis conducted by the project. To estimating the population expected to occur in the northern savannas of Brazil, which, in turn, comprises the most extensive and less disturbed/impacted area of the entire species range in Brazil. Expected population size considering all system of protected areas and the mega-corridor of the Cerrado Biosphere Reserve connecting them all (considering the corridor area only for the MATOPIBA region) is a mere 2,000 – 3,000 mature northern tiger cats! If we take into account another likely species taxonomic split, making *Leopardus tigrinus tigrinus* a species on its own, the perspective scenario would look troublesome and global assessment would likely go to Endangered (EN).

At the national level, we were just invited to take part in the making of the new Small Felid Conservation Action Plan of Brazil, called the “second cycle”. Conducted by Brazil’s Biodiversity Institute - ICMBio, which is part of the Environmental Ministry. With the findings and approaches

we see important for species conservation actions based on the project's outcomes, there should be some changes in priorities and actions to be taken/proposed, this mid-November 2019.

At the local scale we have aligned with the new State Environmental Secretariat in working together at MSP and, after our results get published, make the tiger cat the Park's flagship species, given its worldwide importance for its conservation. At the Park level, we are continuing the environmental education/conservation action practices. For this, we are targeting smaller children, which we found out have a better understanding on the park's wildlife than the older teenagers. The Threatened Species Photo Exhibit "Target: Extinction" is becoming ever increasingly popular, a real hit. It is being invited to several places, from schools to events, and has gone to the park's neighboring towns of Loreto and São Raimundo das Mangabeiras, where most of the hunting pressure towards the park comes from. Even though we did not detect hunting as a problem for the cats, it is a major threat to the other wildlife. This work would not have been possible without the support of The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, which we deeply appreciate.

The Environmental Education Activities

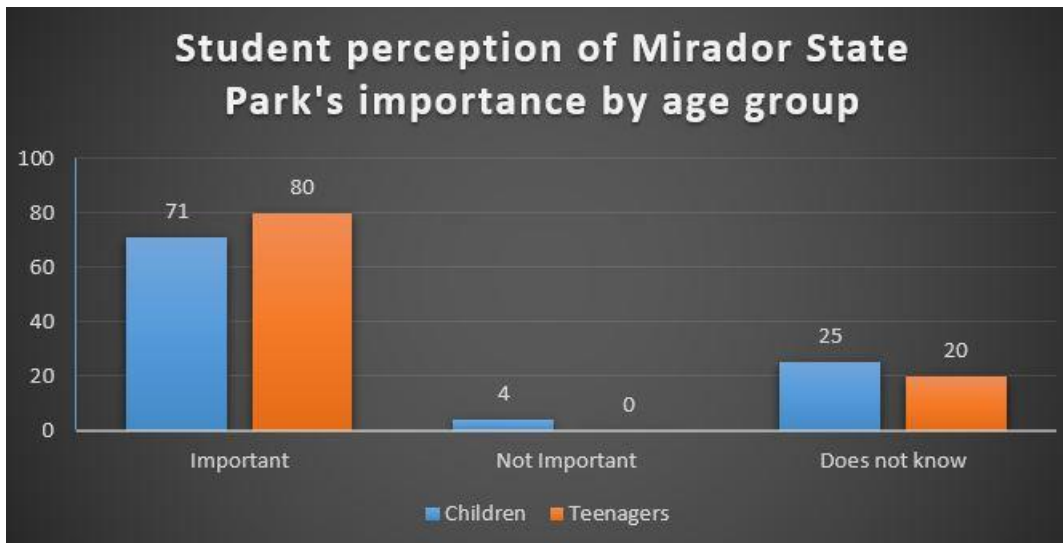
Students Perceptions on Mirador State Park Wildlife:

We have been assessing the perception of students from schools around MSP (located just outside park's boundaries) in order to give us guidance on the best ways to approach the issues. Age class divided the approach. Those 3 to 6 years old did drawings, from 7 to 13, and from 14-20 years answered questionnaires. This was optional and doing so or not was their choice. Students that chose to take part included almost all of the smaller ages and ca. 70% of the older ages (teenagers).

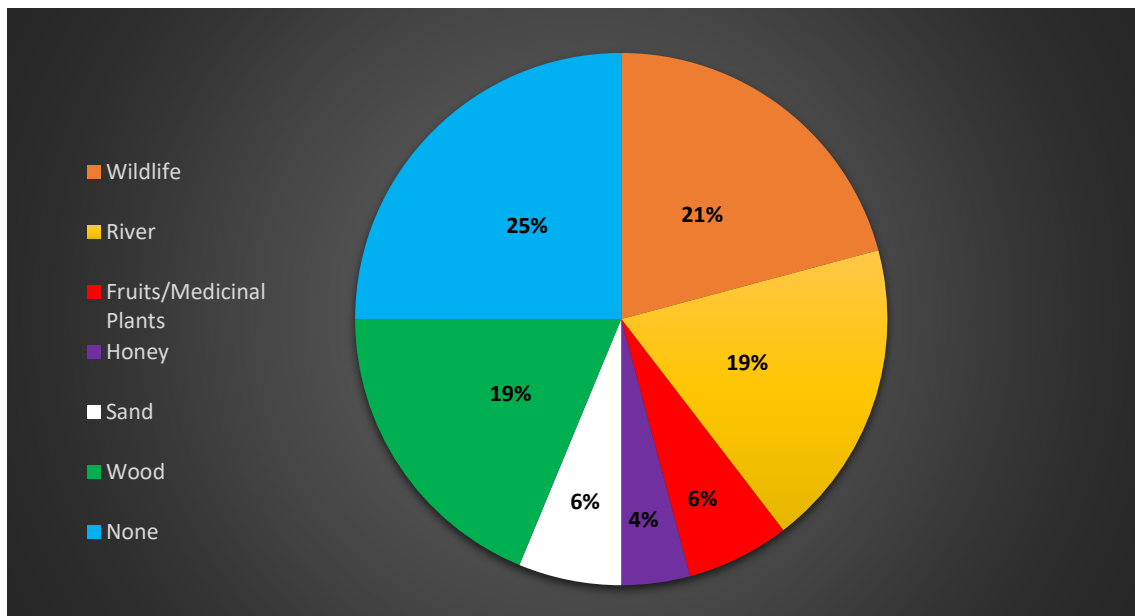


Children showing drawings of their favorite animals and 9th grade students answering the questionnaire.

Most students, children and teenagers, perceive the park as being important. Interestingly, when asked about using Park’s natural resources, only the children (<14 yo) answered, all teenagers either said no use or refused to answer. This gives a clue that the families of most students that live in or around the park are using in one way or another its natural resources.



Student perception of Mirador State Park’s importance by age group (values in percentage).



Percentage of students’ families using natural resources from MSP.

All students say that they live outside the park. However, the younger children mention the use of resources by their family. This is concentrated on wildlife (for meat), such as birds (large cracids), armadillos, deer, caiman, and on wood and river resources (fish, recreation). Findings, with a 75% resources use, will help direct our approach in the environmental education approach, in order to minimize threats/use.



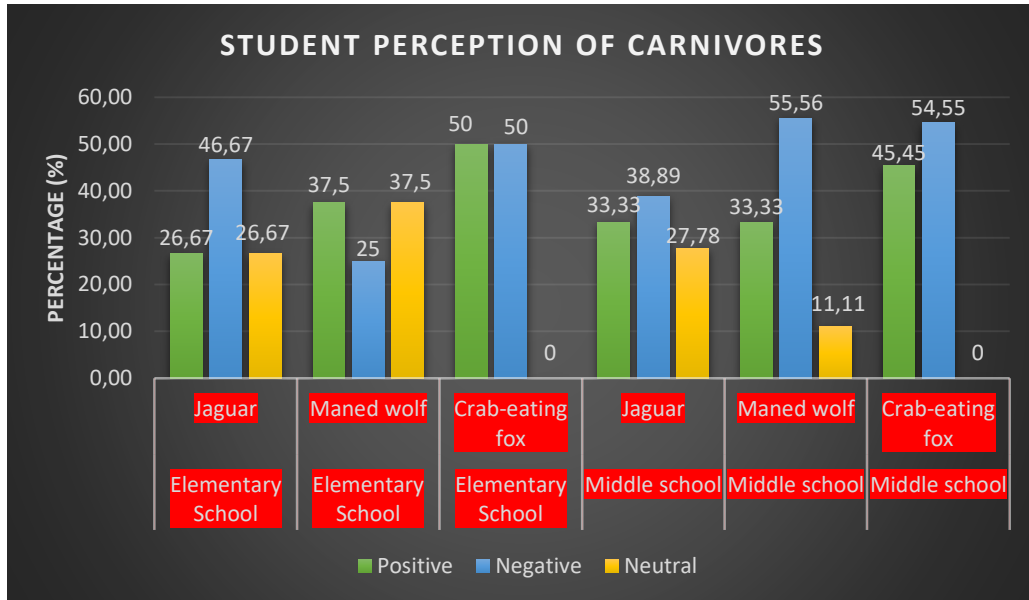
Talking about MSP wildlife.



Becoming a tiger cat kitty:



At the park’s surrounding schools, carnivore perception is concentrated on jaguar (*Panthera onca*), maned wolf (*Chrysocyon brachyurus*) and fox (*Cerdocyon thous*). They tend to be mostly negative and the reasons mentioned are as man-eaters for jaguars, and fierce and feisty for the canids, but overall they are considered “dangerous”.



Student perception of three carnivore species.

As for the remaining carnivores, such as the smaller cats, puma (*Puma concolor*) and tayra (*Eira barbara*) were recorded as less known. Most of the small cats are called wild cats. It was very suggestive that whatever knowledge they have is coming from external sources, not local knowledge of wildlife, as sometimes local names from the southeast region of Brazil are used. Children drawings, in most cases depicted cows, domestic cats, insects, fish and exotic wildlife such as lions and giraffes. This indicates that they are being influenced by school-books and/or TV, not learning from hands-on experience. Of the local wildlife that was drawn, most were jaguar and foxes, and only eventually other species such as bat, tiger cat, woodpecker. In fact, these children showed a higher knowledge of the local wildlife and of the resources of the park used by their families. The findings so far are helping us redirect and rearrange the approaches in the environmental education program. We are doing this through lectures, pamphlets and a future booklet focusing on local wildlife.

Drawings of a child's favorite animals:



jaguar (right) and bat (left).



tiger-cat, fox



fox



Cow, woodpecker



Presentations about the effects of felid extinction and children's reaction to the video of wildlife importance and extinction.

Raising Awareness:

The “Target: Extinction” Photographic Exhibit experience:

We see awareness as crucial for a change of attitude towards the environment. In order to raise awareness for people of all ages, we selected some flagship species of threatened wildlife present in the State of Maranhão, including all Mirador State Park’s felids. The goal is to talk about biodiversity extinction, its causes and consequences and especially to make people aware (which a lot are not), that we have several species of threatened wildlife “just outside our doorsteps”.

From the schools just outside Mirador State Park and its neighboring towns, to the major shopping malls of the state capital, to the State Government Palace ‘Enrique de la Roque’. We have made 12 exhibits, which totaled 44 days of exhibition, with an estimated attendance of 4,350 people. “Target: Extinction” became a major hit by its own, and invitations for more exhibits are constantly being made.





Education and outreach:



Doing research is very important, but conveying the results of such research directed towards conservation to the wider public is often overlooked. We recognize the importance of talking about conservation and outreach to non-scientists. This is why we have done numerous workshops, including the local schools and towns around the Park. These, particularly target at middle and high school students. In these workshops, we talk about conservation, with a focus on the small felids. We also demonstrate on the typical duties of a field conservation biologist's studying and protecting cats and wildlife in general.

Mentoring Students in Wildlife Conservation:

It is ever increasingly more important to train the new generation of wild cat biologists and conservationists. In the project, there is a lot of involvement of students, both graduates and undergraduates. Besides this, we also have students coming from abroad to do internships and get hands-on experience on small cat research and conservation.

Despite our limited funding, we consider training students a very important priority for long-term small cat conservation. During the terms of this MBZSCF project there were five undergraduates permanently involved in conservation action activities, with several more (>20) giving additional support in several occasions, especially during the “Target: extinction” photographic exhibitions. There are also seven more graduate level students involved in project’s activities, one of which comes from Georg August Universität, the celebrated University of Goettingen (Germany).

The project has also received two Germans undergraduate students from Hogeschool Van Hall Laresntein University of Applied Science in the Netherlands. They came to Brazil to learn field techniques such as camera trapping as well as how to analyze data from field studies targeting small cats.





Undergraduate students Jan Geisler and Richard Robold, from Hogeschool Van Hall Laresntein University of Applied Science, the Netherlands.

Cat Conservation Material:

We are using one pamphlet for environmental education around the Mirador State Park and another one used on “Target: Extinction” exhibits (see attached).



Social Media:

We have also been active on social media, committed to sharing our science and conservation actions with the public. We currently have accounts on two social media platforms: Instagram and Biofaces. On both of these, we make regular postings about cats and other wildlife. This is very important as we are able to reach a far larger audience in all corners of the world. Furthermore, the Research and Conservation Program “Gatos do Mato – Brasil / Wild Cats of Brazil,” which also includes the part funded by MbZSCF has an English website, which is constantly being updated:

<https://www.wildcatsbrazil.com/>

The image shows two social media profiles. The top profile is on Instagram, for 'Projeto Gatos do Mato - Brasil'. It features a profile picture of a jaguar, the name 'Projeto Gatos do Mato - Brasil', location 'todo Brasil - Brazil', 11 followers, and 97 posts. It also displays statistics for 46 species and a ranking of 281. Below the profile are several photos of wild cats in their natural habitats. The bottom profile is on Facebook, for 'wildcatsbrazil'. It shows 7 publications, 496 followers, and 1,174 people being followed. The bio describes the project as 'Gatos do Mato/Wild Cats Brazil' and provides the website 'www.wildcatsbrazil.com'. Below the bio are three photos: a jaguar eating, a person with a camera near a wire trap, and a jaguar walking.

HOME OVERVIEW NEWS MEET THE CATS WORK IN MOTION SOME PROJECT FINDINGS CONSERVATION IN ACTION CAT CURIOSITIES MEDIA TEAM PUBLICATIONS MORE

Gatos do Mato - Brasil

WILD CATS - BRAZIL

PAST AND PRESENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CONSERVATION OF SMALL CATS

