2025
IMPACT REPORT



FELIDAE CONSERVATION FUND

FROM CALIFORNIA TO THE WORLD:
Science for Wild Cat Survival



Photo Credit (above): Trish Carney.

Cover: Puma in the San Francisco Bay Area.
Photo credit: Otto Olnes.



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Photo Credit: Wes Hardaker.



MISSION

Felidae Conservation Fund advances the conservation of wild cats and the protection of biodiversity through rigorous scientific research and targeted conservation efforts across the United States and globally. We focus on landscapes and ecosystems where people and wildlife intersect, applying a One Health framework to reduce human-wildlife conflict, strengthen ecological resilience, and inform public health strategies. Our work bridges science and action to ensure thriving ecosystems for both wildlife and human communities.

VISION

We envision a world where wild cats and people coexist within resilient, biodiverse ecosystems. Through a One Health lens, we strive to protect wildlife, preserve ecosystem balance, and reduce health risks shared by animals, humans, and the environment.

FELIDAE CONSERVATION FUND

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BAY AREA PUMA PROJECT

Since 2007, BAPP has monitored pumas across the San Francisco Bay Area and, since 2023, in Orange County, Southern California. Our work has shed light on puma activity, health, behavior, and movement.

Bay Area Puma Project

OUR WORK

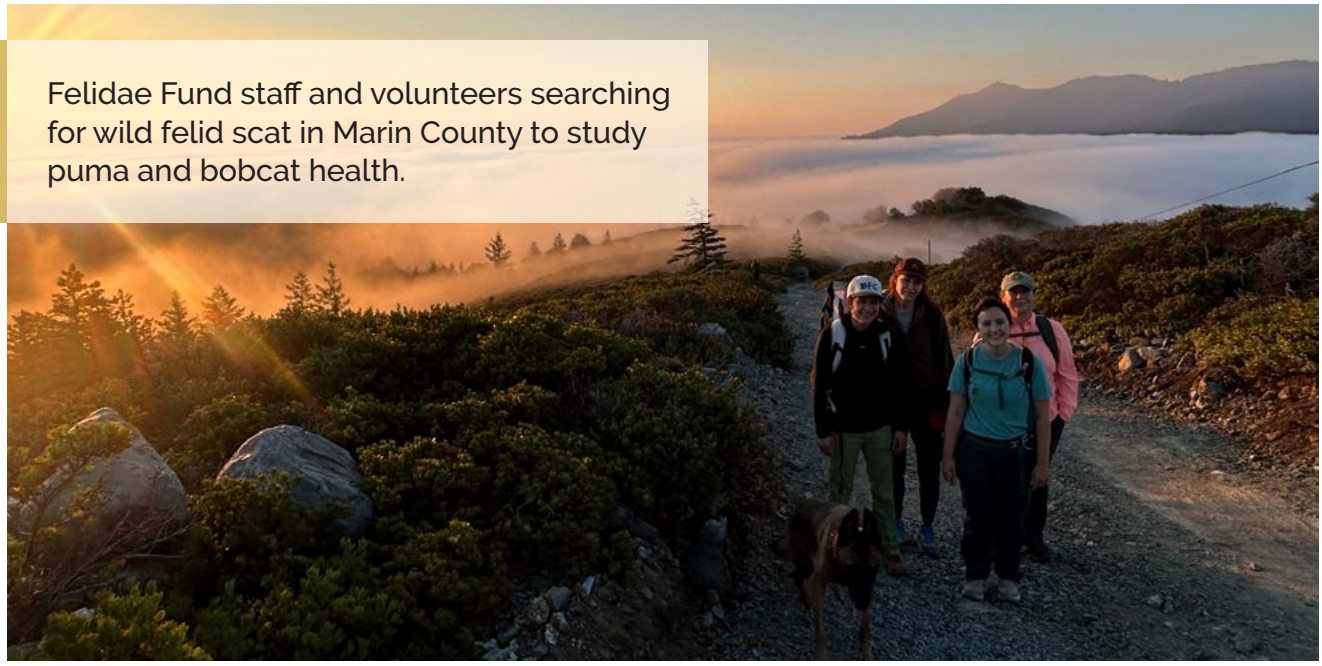
Felidae's large-scale camera trap network captures thousands of wildlife images, including pumas and bobcats, providing critical insights into how these species navigate human development at California's urban edge. BAPP focuses on two urbanized areas where puma populations are at risk of extinction—the San Francisco Bay Area and Orange County in Southern California.

Our long-term, non-invasive monitoring efforts span over a decade, allowing us to track changes in activity and health in response to human encroachment. Our data informs regional conservation strategies, providing insights into puma responses towards intensifying development, traffic, and fragmentation.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

In late 2023, we expanded our research network to include Orange County—one of the most densely populated regions in California—to study puma responses to growing urban encroachment at contrasting levels of landscape disturbance. We use camera traps to non-invasively collect data about wildlife presence and activity, and our long-term monitoring network of >150 camera stations allows us to assess trends in wild felid habitat use across multiple spatiotemporal scales.

In 2025, we processed >1 million camera trap images using our cloud-based software, WildePod, advancing our understanding of wild felid activity and health in human-dominated landscapes. We also monitor puma and bobcat health by collecting fecal samples, with 2025 marking Y2 of our data collection. Fecal samples allow us to measure exposure to zoonotic diseases and extract genetic information for DNA analysis.



Felidae Fund staff and volunteers searching for wild felid scat in Marin County to study puma and bobcat health.

BAY AREA BOBCAT PROJECT

The Bay Area Bobcat Project has monitored bobcats, an important mesocarnivore, in California since 2009.



Felidae staff and volunteers monitor wildlife using camera traps (left). A bobcat walking through an East Bay open space (above). *Photo credit: John McGinty.*

OUR WORK

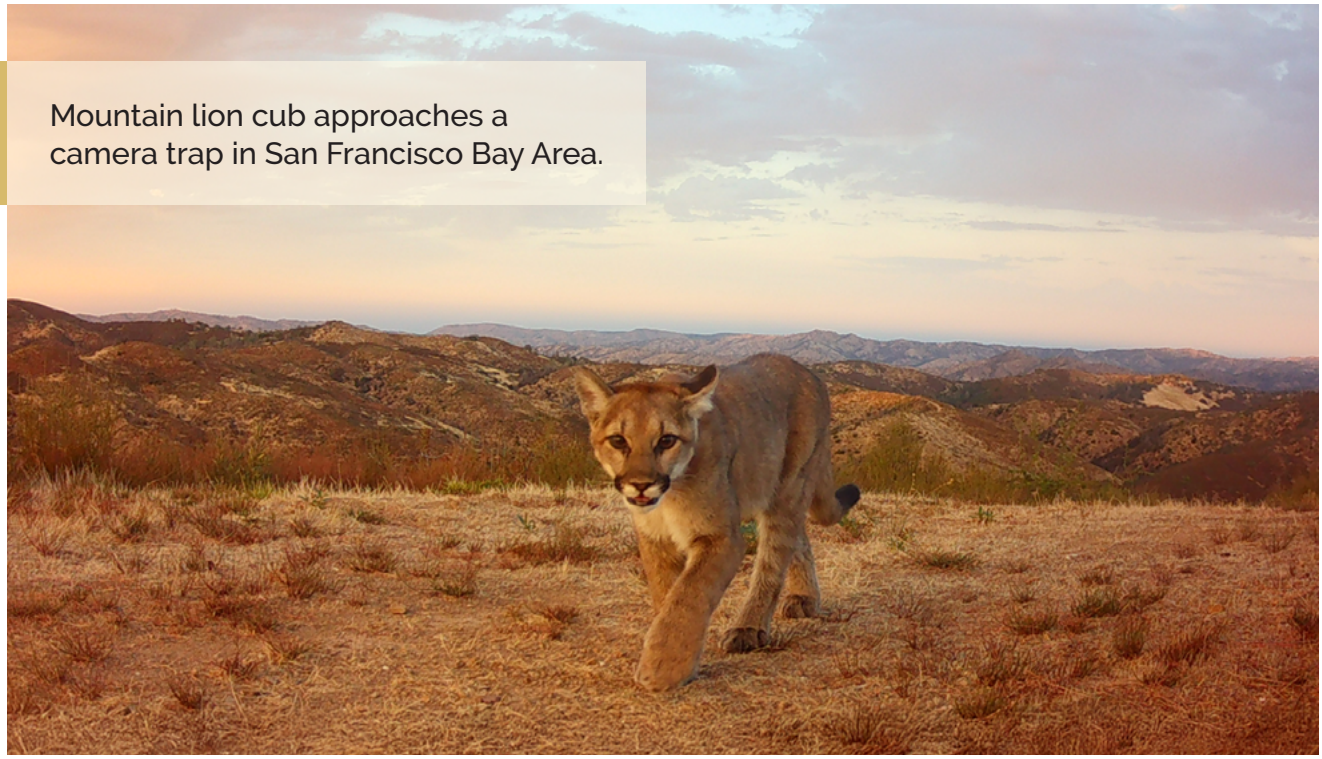
Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) play important ecological roles as mesocarnivores. They mostly prey on small mammals (e.g., rodents, rabbits) and keep those populations in check. They also prevent disease transmission, a key ecosystem service. For over a decade, we have collected data on bobcat activity and movement through our large-scale camera trap network across California's San Francisco Bay Area and Orange County, to better understand how bobcats respond to an intensifying human footprint at the urban-wildland interface.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

Along with data from our camera trap network, Felidae biologists and volunteers collect bobcat fecal samples across our Northern and Southern California study areas to monitor bobcat population health, as part of the Wild Cat Health Project (described above). Samples are sent to partner laboratories for genetic analysis and screening for parasites and pollutants, providing valuable insights into bobcat population health and potential disease risks. This non-invasive approach strengthens our understanding of how bobcat health may be compromised for populations near human-dominated areas.

WILD CAT HEALTH PROJECT

The Wild Cat Health Project is a long-term One Health aligned study to assess zoonotic spillover risks by tracking health biomarkers in puma and bobcat populations across California urban areas.



Mountain lion cub approaches a camera trap in San Francisco Bay Area.

OUR WORK

As urbanized areas continue to expand in the US, so does the risk of disease transmission between wild felids, domestic animals, and people. This poses a major risk to ecosystem health and biodiversity. This is particularly concerning in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Southern California, where pumas are under threat from intensifying habitat isolation and fragmentation. While research to date has allowed us to better understand how human activity affects wild felid behavior at the urban edge, there are still critical gaps about how this affects their population health and how at risk populations like those in the Bay Area and Southern California are affected.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

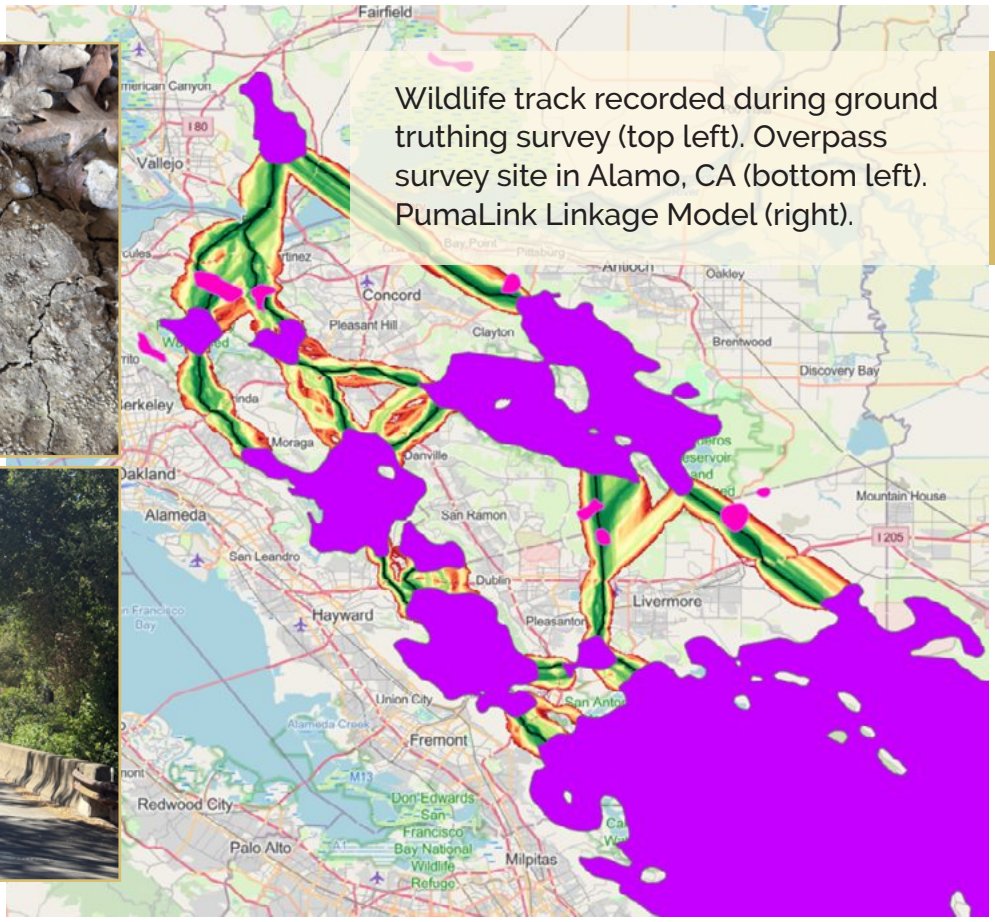
Through the WCHP, we are building a long-term dataset to track puma and bobcat health in the SF Bay Area and Orange County, gleaning early insights into their overall health. Data collection is non-invasive and uses a conservation detection dog to locate fecal samples in various land jurisdictions (e.g., federal, state, county, private land). Results from our feasibility study (2022-23) revealed widespread exposure to parasites, such as Toxoplasmosis, throughout the Bay Area, as well as high cortisol levels in our puma fecal samples. In 2025, we collected >100 wild felid scat samples in the Bay Area and Orange County. By identifying areas of compromised wild felid health and increased zoonotic risk, the WCHP will reveal further insights about the interconnectedness between ecosystem, wildlife, and public health.

DIABLO PUMALINK PROJECT

Habitat fragmentation poses a critical threat to pumas in the East San Francisco Bay Area. Highways and urban development isolate Mt. Diablo State Park, posing a barrier to movement for pumas to use this critical habitat. After over a decade of monitoring, we have yet to detect a puma in the park.







Wildlife track recorded during ground truthing survey (top left). Overpass survey site in Alamo, CA (bottom left). PumaLink Linkage Model (right).

OUR WORK

Identifying and restoring habitat linkages is urgent for preventing extirpation. Despite having high-quality habitat, abundant prey, and over a decade of monitoring, there have been no confirmed puma sightings in Mount Diablo State Park. To better understand puma habitat use in this region, we initiated PumaLink, an initiative to conserve and improve connectivity by mapping potential linkages and prioritizing conservation actions to facilitate movement between habitats.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

Our habitat suitability modeling underscored the importance of Mt. Diablo State Park and the surrounding landscape as priority habitat for pumas. The model also identified critical linkages between these core habitats, including stepping stones, which facilitate movement between these core areas.

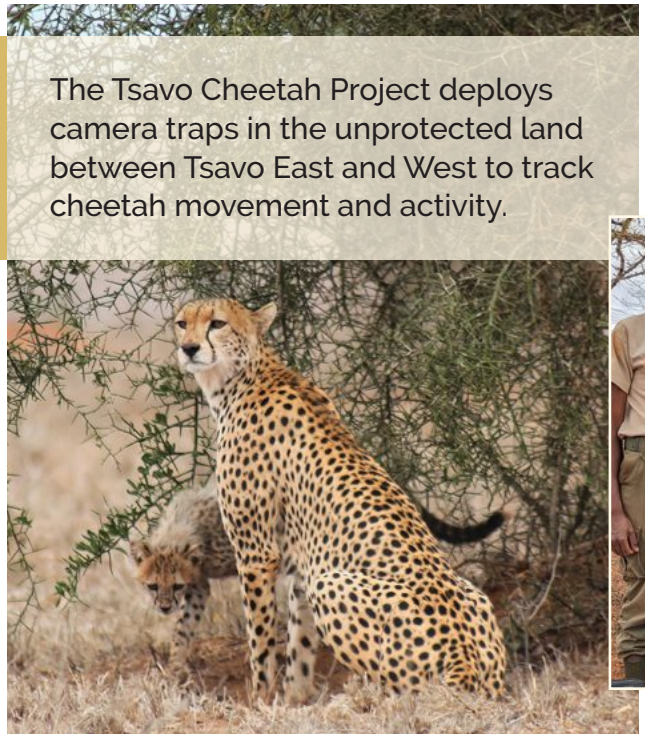
These assessments were further validated through field surveys, where we evaluated select culverts for permeability and ranked them based on key metrics. Upon final field validation, the model is expected to enter final review in April 2026.

TSAVO CHEETAH PROJECT

Launched in 2011, the Tsavo Cheetah Project works to ensure the long-term survival of the world's fastest land animal in one of its last remaining strongholds. With cheetah populations continuing to decline, we use research, monitoring, and local collaboration to protect this iconic species.

OUR WORK

Tsavo National Park is an important habitat for Kenya's wildlife, but the area between Tsavo East and West National Parks is an unprotected and critical corridor for cheetahs. However, increasing road, railway, and urban development, along with expanding commercial activity, fragments this critical landscape. The Tsavo region also supports diverse tribes, cultures, and land uses. Increased proximity of cheetahs to human-settlements can lead to conflicts with people and livestock. The Tsavo Cheetah Project's (TCP) principal investigator, Cherie Schroff, is working to address these challenges through research and collaboration with local communities, informing conservation strategies to promote coexistence and habitat connectivity.



The Tsavo Cheetah Project deploys camera traps in the unprotected land between Tsavo East and West to track cheetah movement and activity.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

With support from National Geographic's Big Cat Initiative, the TCP expanded its camera trap monitoring efforts in 2025. The team is deploying over 100 cameras on conservancies and ranch land in the unprotected area around Tsavo East and West National Park. Cameras allow Cherie and her team to better understand how cheetahs are using this multi-use landscape while also identifying conflict hotspots to prioritize them for outreach work.

The TCP team maintains a consistent presence in the area, visiting individual ranches and conservancies every month. During these visits, they collect valuable data about cheetahs, helping to identify movement barriers for this threatened species. The TCP is working to organize an education workshop for Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) officers to encourage reporting and data sharing about cheetah behavior and ecology, allowing KWS to effectively assume their roles as custodians of wild cheetahs.



BHUTAN WILD CAT HEALTH PROJECT

Launched in 2025, the Bhutan Wild Cat Health Project aims to improve our scientific understanding of nine wild felid species and the impact of free-ranging dogs on wild felid health.



Tigers *(Panthera tigris)* are classified as Endangered and are one of the species we study using camera traps and fecal surveys in Bhutan.

OUR WORK

Bhutan is a global biodiversity hotspot, home to nine species of wild cats. This project uses large-scale remote-sensing camera arrays and fecal surveys to study these threatened species, while creating the country's first conservation K9 unit. Bhutan is home to a vast protected area network, but human encroachment around protected areas is intensifying. This increases the presence of free-roaming domestic dogs around forest edges, which often follow trekking groups into Bhutan's parks. Domestic dogs can transmit diseases like Canine Distemper Virus, Rabies, and Parvovirus, and using a One Health approach, we will track disease hotspots and trends over three years.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

Our nation-wide camera trap network is the first large-scale camera trap project to focus on all nine wild felid species in Bhutan, and involves deploying 400 camera traps by the end of 2026. In the spring of 2025, the Felidae team visited Bhutan to lead workshops on field techniques and data processing, and in the fall of 2025, project partner Rogue Detection Teams traveled to Bhutan to source and train four dogs for the K9 conservation unit

These dogs and their Bhutanese handlers have already started surveying protected areas for wild felid scat, and will continue throughout the duration of the project. Our findings will provide some of the first-ever insights about wild felid activity and health in Bhutan, informing wildlife management efforts while also informing dog vaccination and sterilization programs.

PATAGONIA WILD CATS PROJECT

Patagonia Puma Project

The Patagonia Wild Cats Project addresses some of the most urgent threats facing pumas and lesser-known small cats (Pampas cat, Geoffroy's cat) in Argentina's Patagonian Steppe, an area heavily shaped by historical overgrazing.



Pumas are one of the species of interest for the Patagonia Wild Cats Project.

OUR WORK

In the late 18th century, the Patagonian Steppe of Argentina was heavily modified by overgrazing from domestic sheep, resulting in habitat degradation and desertification. Wildlife populations were decimated, including wild cats. In recent decades, wild felids have returned to the area, reigniting concerns about livestock-carnivore conflicts.

PWCP's Project Leader, Mauro Lucherini, is investigating how livestock, free-ranging domestic dogs, and ranching are altering wild felid activity across nine study sites spanning multiple provinces, while exploring the consequences for human-wildlife coexistence. Along with research, the team is regularly engaging with local communities to prevent and mitigate human-carnivore conflict.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

The PWCP team works directly with ranchers, conducting informal interviews to better understand the factors contributing to human-wildlife conflict and local attitudes towards wild felids. Importantly, these conversations have revealed that small cats, especially Geoffroy's cat, remain commonly persecuted by ranchers because they are seen as a threat to newborn lambs and chickens.

Following several incidents of wild cat-vehicle collisions, the PWCP launched a national campaign to prevent future collisions. The team also regularly leads workshops about the use of deterrents (e.g., livestock guardian dogs, fox lights, etc) to prevent attacks on livestock.

GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE COUGAR PROJECT

The Grand Staircase-Escalante (GSE) Cougar Project is the first long-term study of cougars (aka pumas) in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM), Southern Utah.



The GSE Cougar Project non-invasively tracks cougars in Southern Utah to assess population structure.

OUR WORK

We are non-invasively tracking cougars to assess population density and health, genetic diversity, and social behavior. We are also promoting awareness and coexistence through public outreach and production of a documentary film. Cougars are tracked through ground surveys, drones, thermal imagery, and camera traps. We also collect hair and scat samples from trails, bedding areas, kill sites, and latrines.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

Field surveys are currently underway. Our findings will directly inform wildlife management, hunting and trapping regulations, and conservation planning in Utah and across the Western US. Research will be accompanied by the development of a documentary film to further ensure conservation success and highlight the ecological importance of cougars, as well as community meetings and outreach with rural Utah schools.

WILDEPOD
AI CLOUD DATABASE

Our camera network collects tens of thousands of images each month. We use AI and machine learning to optimize our workflow efficiency.

OUR WORK

Camera traps are triggered by motion, taking photos whenever someone walks in front of the camera's field of view. In open spaces that are especially popular for outdoor recreation, a single camera might be triggered over 10,000 times, underscoring the need for tools to help researchers process this wealth of data.

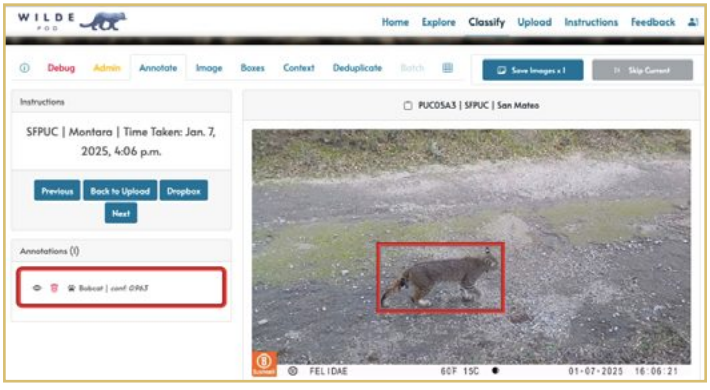
In 2021, Felidae's software team developed WildePod, an AI cloud-based database for processing camera images. WildePod allows us to catalogue images at the species level and export species detection histories that can be used in subsequent analyses. For example, puma detections can be modeled as a function of human disturbance variables, including road or housing density, providing insights into how pumas are affected in time and space by human impacts.

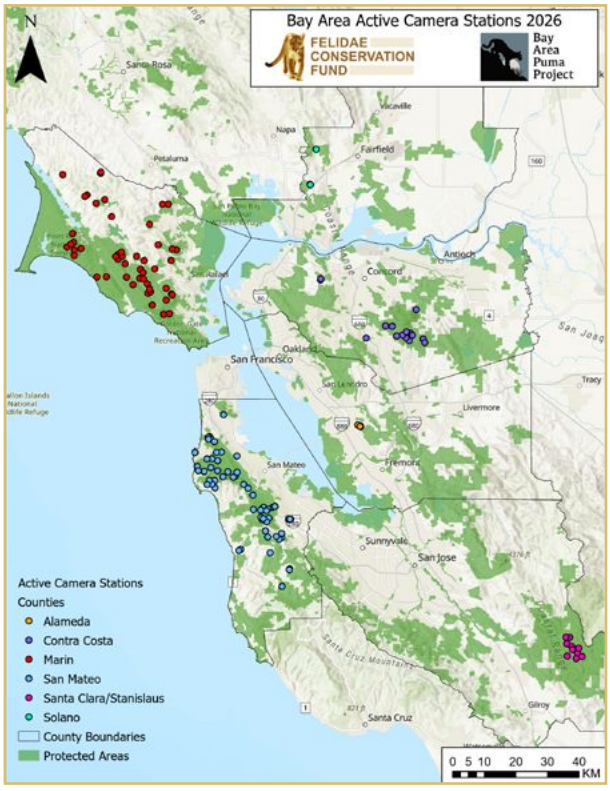
PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

WildePod uses AI to improve the efficiency of our workflow. MegaDetector performs first-level processing, filtering images that contain people, vehicles, or animals, while discarding false triggers that do not contain meaningful data. MegaDetector also provides suggestions for classifying objects (animals and people) in each image.

Felidae uses WildePod in multiple projects, including the Bay Area Puma Project, Bay Area Bobcat Project, and the Bhutan Wild Cat Health Project. The Tsavo Cheetah Project will begin using WildePod in 2026. Also in 2026, we will incorporate SpeciesNet, an automated species identification component, into WildePod, further improving the efficiency of our data processing workflow.

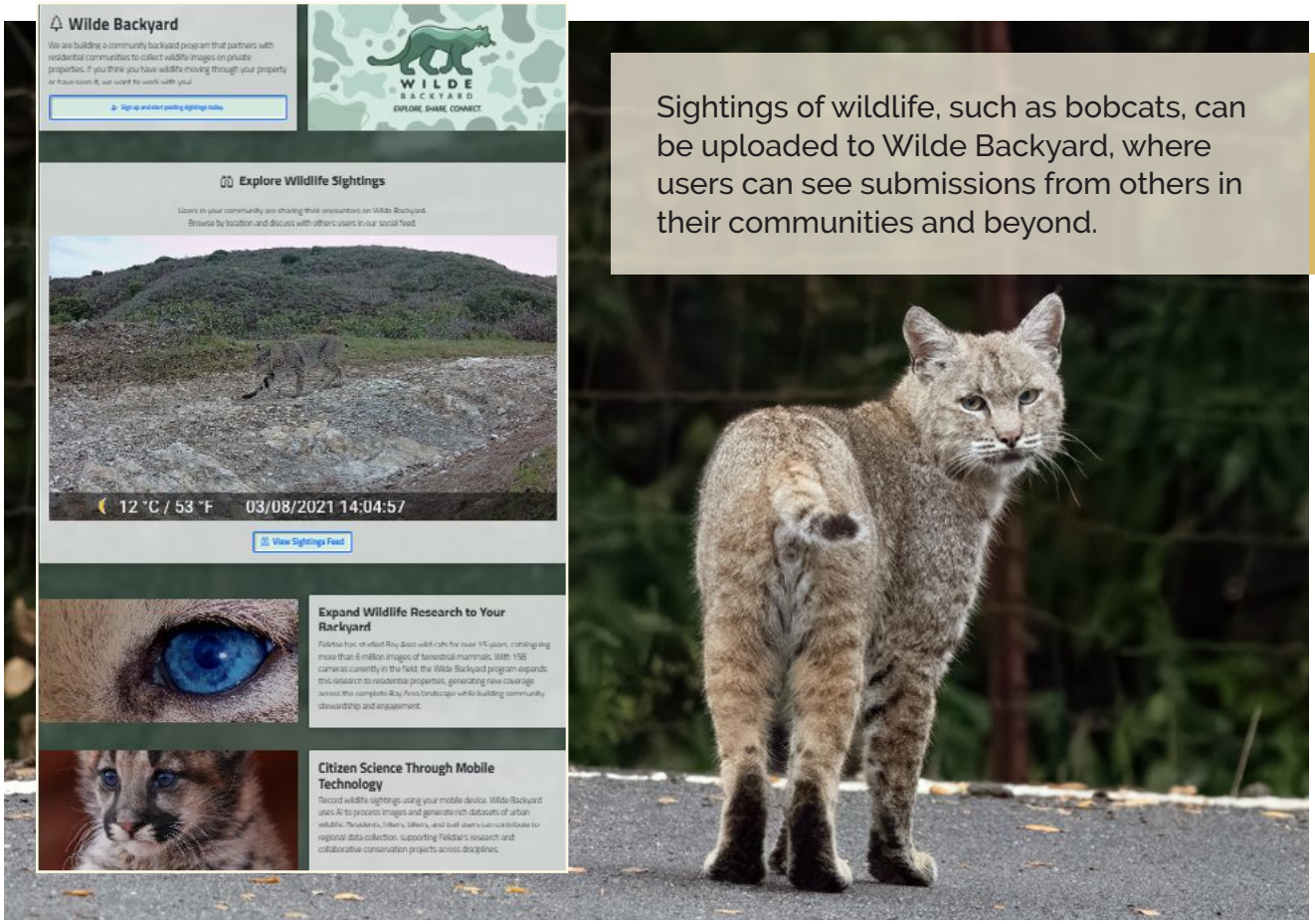
Images from our large-scale camera trap network (right) are uploaded to WildePod (below), where volunteers catalogue each image. The red box highlights objects identified by MegaDetector, with volunteers confirming species identification.





WILDE BACKYARD

In late 2024, Felidae launched Wilde Backyard, a conservation social network focused on improving awareness of wildlife activity in local communities and neighborhoods. Wilde Backyard will foster discussion, connection, and interaction between conservation enthusiasts while generating a rich dataset of wildlife presence in urban-edge systems across the country.



Sightings of wildlife, such as bobcats, can be uploaded to Wilde Backyard, where users can see submissions from others in their communities and beyond.

OUR WORK

Developed by WildePod team member Justin Yee, Wilde Backyard is currently in the testing phase to identify and remove bugs before its launch. Wilde Backyard will be accessible as a website and will be an important interactive community science tool. It will increase interest in wild felids and local wildlife among local communities while contributing to Felidae's data collection, supplementing data from our camera trap network.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

Wilde Backyard is available for public Beta and will receive updates periodically. This program is currently being tested by the Felidae team, volunteers, and contributors to the BAPP public sightings map.

Look for updates on Wilde Backyard and access information, which will be made available by Spring 2026.

AI SMART DEVELOPMENT

AI has been integrated into multiple facets of our work, including monitoring wild felids at the urban edge. In partnership with CambrianTech, we developed an edge-AI unit, which directly integrates the processing power of AI into camera trap units.

OUR WORK

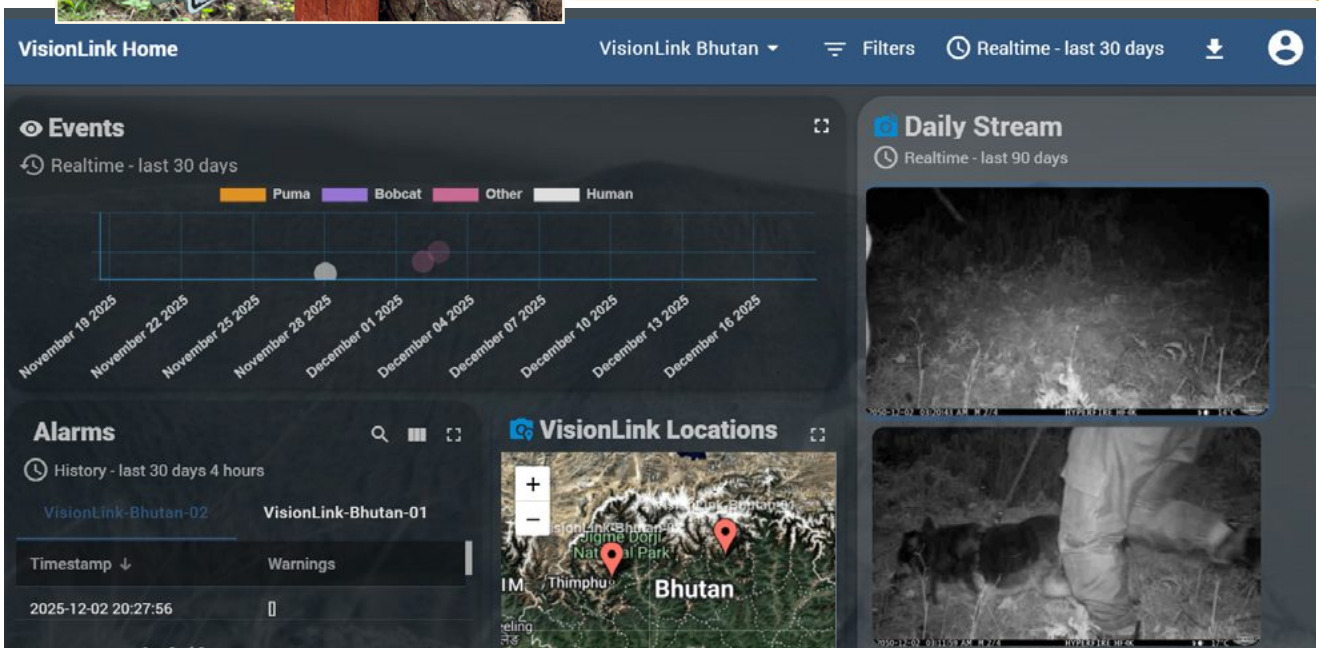
Our team has developed an AI Smart unit, a small, network-connected module that uses AI technology to analyze images from camera traps in real-time. When a species of interest is detected by the camera trap, the module flags that image and alerts users in real-time. Development of the AI Smart unit is led by Sunil Thulasidasan, founder of CambrianTech. The unit has an energy-efficient design, using low-cost hardware, and uses an AI species classifier trained through open-source tools.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

Three AI unit prototypes have been deployed for field testing. Two units are deployed in Bhutan as part of the Bhutan Wild Cat Health Project, serving as real-time monitoring units. The third unit is currently being tested on a private property in Marin County, California, where it is paired with a hair snare. This is an exciting application, as the hair snare is designed to non-invasively collect genetic material in the form of hair from pumas and bobcats. The real-time monitoring function of the AI Smart unit allows for quicker response to puma detections and collection of genetic material, thereby reducing the likelihood that hair samples will degrade in the field, increasing the probability of successful analysis.



A Smart unit attached to a tree to monitor wild felids (left). The VisionLink dashboard (below) allows users to see the locations and timing of events that triggered the camera unit.



COEXISTENCE TOOLKIT

The human-wildlife conflict mitigation toolkit is a digital guide meant to raise awareness about wild felids in California, fostering coexistence with wildlife by recreating responsibly in open spaces.

OUR WORK

Misinformation about pumas and bobcats is widespread, highlighting the need for improved public awareness about wildlife, especially at the urban-wildland interface. Although most of California is puma and bobcat habitat, many people are still unaware of what to do should they see a wild cat in their neighborhood, or while recreating in parks and other open spaces.

In 2023, we began work on a digital human-wildlife conflict mitigation toolkit to provide clear guidance on how to prevent and respond to human-wildlife conflict. The toolkit is downloadable and available as a wallet-sized version to share during in-person outreach events, increasing public awareness about wild cats, their behavior, how they are affected by urban encroachment, and how to foster coexistence with wildlife.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

The toolkit will be distributed to the general public in 2026, including outdoor recreation groups, naturalist groups, running and hiking clubs, zoological societies, as well as state, federal, county, and city agencies.

It will increase public support for wildlife conservation and habitat preservation efforts through accompanying in-person workshops. We will distribute the toolkit in multiple languages to share online and in person as part of our outreach efforts.

Infographic from the Coexistence Toolkit: Tips for Living in Puma Habitat



BAY AREA FIELD GUIDE

The Field Guide is a wildlife tracking guide that will be available for download in 2026, to enhance carnivore identification skills in California, improving public knowledge about wildlife tracking and identification.

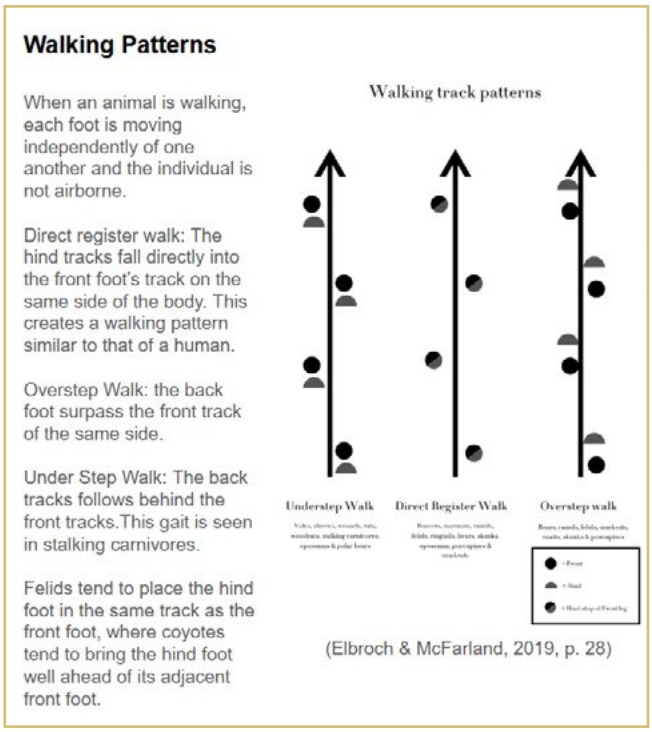
OUR WORK

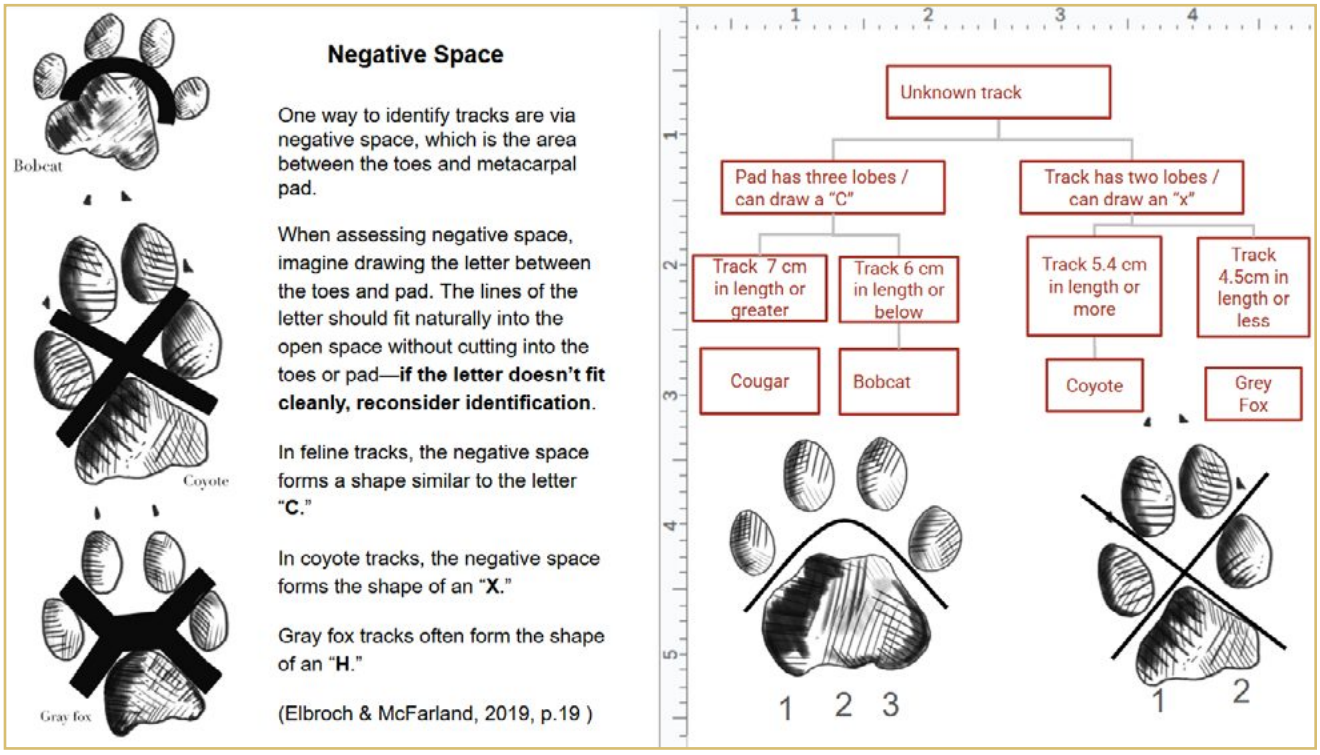
This guide will improve public knowledge about wildlife, with a focus on identifying wildlife tracks and signs, particularly those that are often misidentified, such as carnivores (e.g., coyotes, bobcats, pumas, etc).

The Field Guide will foster a connection to wild carnivores, most of which are elusive and rarely seen in person. By outlining how to correctly identify wildlife signs, the guide will lead to improved and accurate sighting submissions to our BAPP public sightings map and also to Wilde Backyard.

PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

The field guide will be shared via social media, outreach events, and Felidae's websites starting in early 2026.





PUBLICATIONS
Media Coverage & Research Articles

Over the past several years, Felidae's work has been featured in various popular media articles, and we have also published manuscripts in scientific journals. For example, popular articles include *Big Cats Magazine*, *Mongabay*, and *Bay Nature*. Felidae biologists Zara McDonald and Alys Granados have co-authored multiple scientific papers.



MEDIA COVERAGE

IN FOCUS



Photo: Sharon Osberg

PUMAS ON THE URBAN EDGE

A conservation project uses non-invasive methods to protect pumas in California

BY **ALYS GRANADOS & ZARA MCDONALD**

Pumas, also known as mountain lions or cougars, are incredibly adaptable creatures with the widest distribution of any terrestrial mammal in the Americas, second only to humans. They inhabit forests of Northern Canada down to the Patagonian steppe. These large carnivores play a crucial role in maintaining the health of ecosystems. Despite their significance, puma populations are declining across their range, with potentially serious implications for both the environment and human health.

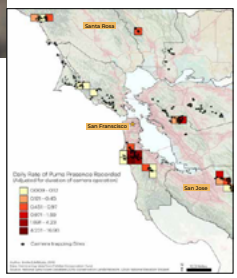
Pumas are keystone predators, meaning they have significant direct and indirect impacts on other species, and their environment. By preying primarily on hoofed-animals like deer, pumas help control these populations, preventing overgrazing and reducing the risk of deer-vehicle collisions, which can be dangerous for humans and wildlife. Additionally, deer are known carriers of tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease, so by keeping deer populations in check, pumas indirectly help manage the spread of these diseases. Further, when pumas kill prey, the carcasses they leave behind provide vital food sources for other scavengers, including birds of prey, mammals, and insects.

Despite their ecological importance, pumas face numerous threats, primarily due to human activities. In the United States, urban expansion and habitat fragmentation have forced pumas into closer proximity with human settlements. As a result, they must increasingly navigate urban edge habitats. Historically, pumas were found across the country, but now their range is mostly limited to the western states. Roads, cities, and agricultural developments have fragmented their habitats, making it necessary for pumas to move through urban and residential areas. Pumas are elusive and they avoid contact with humans. However, the growing overlap of shared spaces increases the likelihood of human-wildlife conflicts, as pumas may opportunistically prey on domestic animals like pets, hobby animals and livestock.

The overlap between pumas, domestic animals, and humans also raises concerns about zoonotic disease transmission. Zoonoses can compromise wild felid health, while also affecting public human health and that of domestic animals. Felids are definitive hosts of a parasite called Toxoplasmosis, which is widespread among domestic cats. Toxoplasmosis is a threat to public health and is of interest because of its potential to alter host behaviour (risky behaviour) and because of the risk of transmission between wildlife, pets, and people. This risk may also be greater at the urban edge, where domestic cats (especially unsupervised or feral ones) are more prevalent and where they overlap with wild cats like pumas or bobcats. Because pumas can carry potentially lethal parasites, viruses and bacteria, this poses health risks to humans. Zoonoses and spillover risk are particularly concerning in areas where pumas, domestic cats, and humans frequently interact.

California, the most populous state in USA, is home to a vital population of pumas. In most of California, pumas are the only apex predators left so their presence is crucial to a healthy ecosystem. In the San Francisco Bay Area, pumas often live at the edge of urban and wilderness areas. Despite the region's extensive network of protected areas, human development surrounds much of this land. Millions of people visit these open spaces each year, increasing the potential for human-puma encounters. Educating the public on how to safely coexist with pumas is crucial to preventing negative encounters.

Beginning in 2020, the Central Coast and southern California puma subpopulations entered an extinction vortex due to early signs of inbreeding and reduced genetic diversity, and are now listed as candidate species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Since 1990 the sport hunting of pumas has been prohibited in the state. However, depredation permits are issued when pets or livestock are taken by pumas, and are more rarely issued for threats to public safety. The CESA status provide stricter protections. This is in contrast to other states such as Montana, Wyoming, Texas, Idaho, Colorado, and others where hunting pumas for sport is legal.



Bay Area Puma Project

To address the challenges facing pumas along California's central coast, the Bay Area Puma Project (BAPP) was established in 2007 by the Felidae Conservation Fund. This is the first long-term puma project in the region, using research, technology, and community engagement to ensure the persistence of pumas in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Under this project, data is collected on puma presence, behaviour, movement, and health using non-invasive methods like camera traps, fecal surveys and hair snares. A current focus of BAPP research is tracking zoonoses and spillover risks.

Most of the San Francisco Bay Area is puma habitat. So, BAPP educates local communities on how to respond should they encounter a puma in the wild. Despite the extremely low chance of a puma encounter, many people have a disproportionate fear towards large carnivores. Thus, BAPP engages with local communities through in-person and virtual outreach, putting into perspective the level of risk of a puma attack, which is less than one in six million. This is far less common than being attacked by a dog or being in an accident due to a distracted driver.

Our understanding of puma ecology and behaviour has significantly improved, thanks to projects like the BAPP. This growing body of knowledge reveals insights about pumas at the urban edge. Despite widespread human presence, pumas are largely successful at avoiding people. There are under three public safety incidents in the state each year and pumas in California have largely managed to avoid conflicts. However, continued urban development poses ongoing challenges. By supporting research and community engagement, we can help ensure that pumas and humans can coexist peacefully in shared landscapes. ✿

Dr Alys Granados is a Wildlife Ecologist for Felidae Conservation Fund.
Ms Zara McDonald is President of Felidae Conservation Fund.

BIG CATS

September/October 2024
Alys Granados &
Zara McDonald

SPOTLIGHT ON CHEETAH IN KENYA



A mature cheetah with a juvenile in a thicket.

Cheetah's Last Great Refuge

The Tsavo National Park has emerged as the largest stronghold of the species now considered Endangered in Kenya

BY **CHERIE SCHROFF, ZARA MCDONALD & ALYS GRANADOS**

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY **FELIDAE CONSERVATION FUND**

In the heart of Kenya, where vast savannas meet rugged terrain, the biodiversity-rich Tsavo ecosystem stands as one of East Africa's last great refuges for the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*). Known for their breathtaking speed and elusive nature, cheetahs here face mounting challenges in a landscape increasingly shaped by human activity.

Tsavo National Park, located in southeastern Kenya east of Mount Kilimanjaro, is the largest of Kenya's national parks and one of the world's largest conservation areas. Established in 1948, it was later divided into two administrative units: Tsavo East and Tsavo West. Drained by the Tsavo and Galana rivers, and the Tiva River to the north, the park features acacia scrub, scattered woodlands, savannah grassland and semi arid plains dotted with acacia and baobab trees. Dormant vegetation bursts into luxuriant bloom after light rains.

While Tsavo East is relatively flat, Tsavo West boasts of volcanic landscapes with numerous springs and seasonal manmade waterholes. The park is home to diverse wildlife, including elephants, lions, rhinoceroses, buffalo, hippopotamuses, hartebeests, various antelope species, and hundreds of bird species. However, poaching and habitat loss remain persistent challenges. The Nairobi-Mombasa highway and railway divide Tsavo East and Tsavo West, fragmenting this expansive ecosystem.

Tsavo East and Tsavo West anchor the unique ecosystem that spans over 42,000 km². These two sites are home to a range of tribes, cultures and land use types. Yet, between these parks lies an expanse of unprotected land dominated by livestock ranches. This vital area serves as a critical corridor for cheetah movement, enabling genetic exchange and dispersal necessary for the species' long-term survival. Unfortunately, rising human development, including roads, railways, and commercial ventures, threaten to fragment this essential habitat.

Once spread across vast stretches from Africa to southwestern Asia, cheetahs have vanished from 91% of their historic range. Only about 6,517 individuals remain worldwide. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifies the cheetah as 'Vulnerable' on its Red List of Threatened Species. In Kenya however, cheetahs are listed as 'Endangered' under the country's Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, making the Tsavo region — one of their largest remaining strongholds — crucial for the species' future. Tsavo's cheetahs also have the potential to connect with Tanzania's cheetah populations, forming a transboundary conservation corridor that could enhance genetic diversity and population resilience.



Camera traps are used by TCP to monitor wellbeing and movement of the cheetahs.

> "Once spread across vast stretches from Africa to southwestern Asia, cheetahs have vanished from 91% of their historic range"

Cheetahs are apex predators crucial to maintaining the balance of Africa's ecosystems. By regulating populations of small herbivores, they help prevent overgrazing and preserve the health of the landscape. Unlike other big cats, cheetahs require vast territories, establishing expansive home ranges and existing at low population densities. This makes them especially vulnerable to habitat fragmentation. Genetic exchange between populations is vital for their survival, but as

BIG CATS

March/April 2024
Cherie Schroff,
Alys Granados &
Zara McDonald

FROM THE FIELD

Petaca, a Chilean Beauty

TEXT & PHOTOS BY **SHARON OSBERG**

PATAGONIA, IN SOUTH CHILE, IS A magical place famous for its jagged peaks, vast grasslands, and howling winds. It is also home to one of our most adaptable land predators: the puma (also known as the mountain lion, cougar, panther, or catamount). Adult pumas are highly territorial and generally solitary, except during the breeding season or when a female cares for cubs.

During my recent visit to the Torres del Paine UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Patagonia, which is home to around 100 Pumas, an unusual circumstance occurred after my subject Petaca's seven-day dry spell of hunting. Petaca, watched over her cubs feeding at the carcass she'd just stolen. Afterwards, she allowed the young puma (who made the kill) to feed. During this episode, Petaca never stopped growling but stayed put. Eventually, Petaca left the carcass, signalled for her cubs to join, and moved off. We followed them far across a valley and into the hills. ✿



A female puma of the Torres del Paine Biosphere Reserve in southern Chile

BIG CATS

January/February 2025
Sharon Osberg
Zara McDonald

MEDIA COVERAGE



MONGABAY INTERVIEW (BOBCAT)

March 2025
Zara McDonald



BAY NATURE

Spring Issue 2025
Alys Granados



BHUTAN PRESS RELEASE

October 2025
Alys Granados



M/OPPENHEIM INTERVIEW

October 2025
Zara McDonald

RESEARCH ARTICLES


nature ecology & evolution

Article

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-024-02363-2

Mammal responses to global changes in human activity vary by trophic group and landscape

NATURE ECOLOGY AND EVOLUTION

Burton et al. 2024
Alys Granados
Zara McDonald

WILEY ECOLOGY AND EVOLUTION

Stoner et al. 2023
Courtney Coon
Zara McDonald


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ecology and Evolution Open Access WILEY

Stepping stones to extirpation: Puma patch occupancy thresholds in an urban-wildland matrix

David C. Stoner[1,2] | Zara McDonald[2] | Courtney A. C. Coon[2]


WILDLIFE BIOLOGY

Research article

Unraveling the impact of dog-friendly spaces on urban–wildland pumas and other wildlife

Alys Granados[1], Zara McDonald[1], Katie McPherson[1] and David Stoner[1,2]

WILDLIFE BIOLOGY

Granados et al. 2024
Alys Granados
Zara McDonald
Katie McPherson

URBAN ECOSYSTEMS

Granados et al. 2026
Alys Granados
Zara McDonald
Benjamin Cohen


Home > Urban Ecosystems > Article

Illuminated landscapes: urbanization's influence on predator and prey behavior

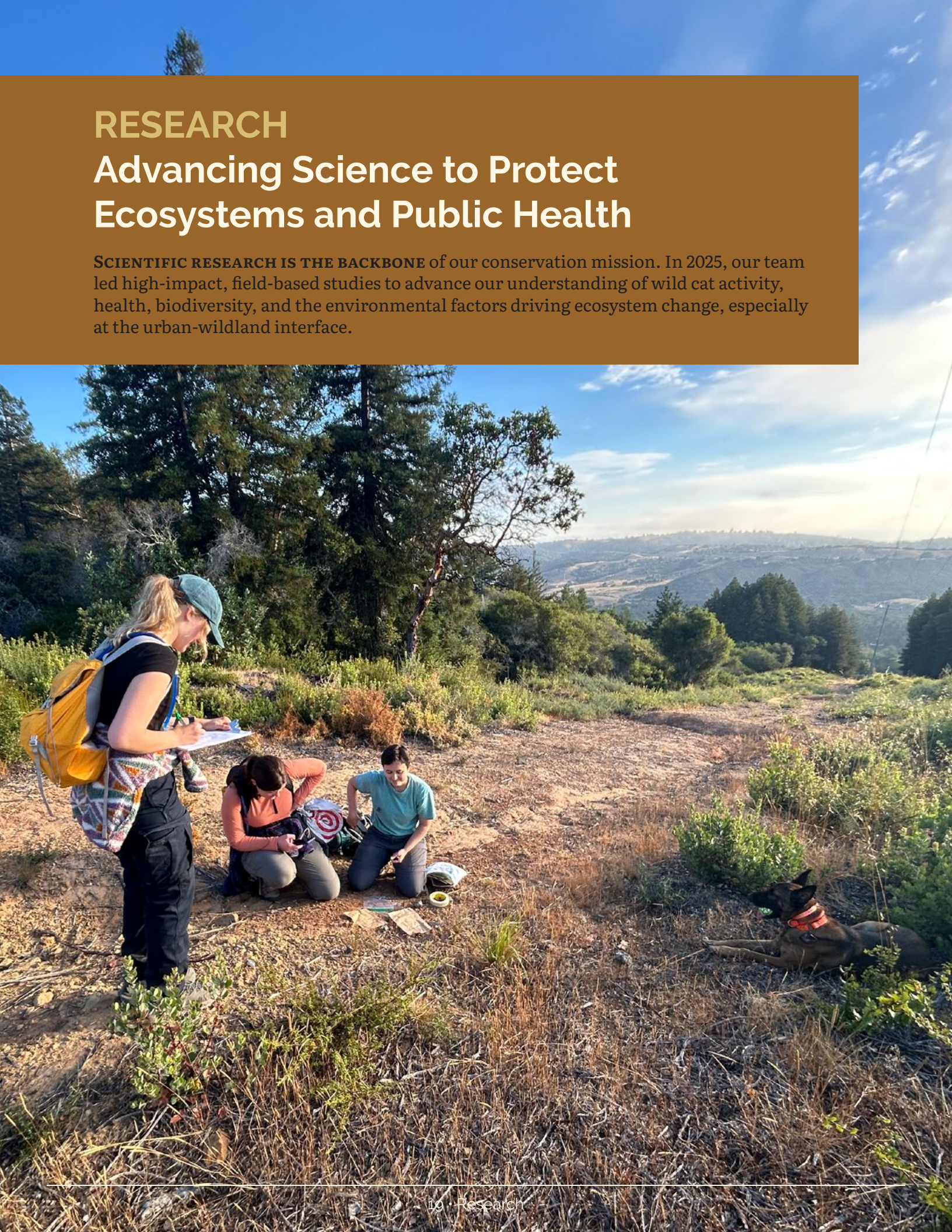
Research | Published: 14 March 2026

Volume 29, article number 82, (2026) Cite this article

RESEARCH

Advancing Science to Protect Ecosystems and Public Health

Scientific research is the backbone of our conservation mission. In 2025, our team led high-impact, field-based studies to advance our understanding of wild cat activity, health, biodiversity, and the environmental factors driving ecosystem change, especially at the urban-wildland interface.



DATA-DRIVEN CONSERVATION

Across our main projects, we have collected over **1.2 million data points** using camera traps, fecal samples, and user-submitted data. Our research in 2025 included **15 species** and **9 distinct ecosystems** across California, East Africa, South America, and Asia.

We lead or manage:

9 active field research studies

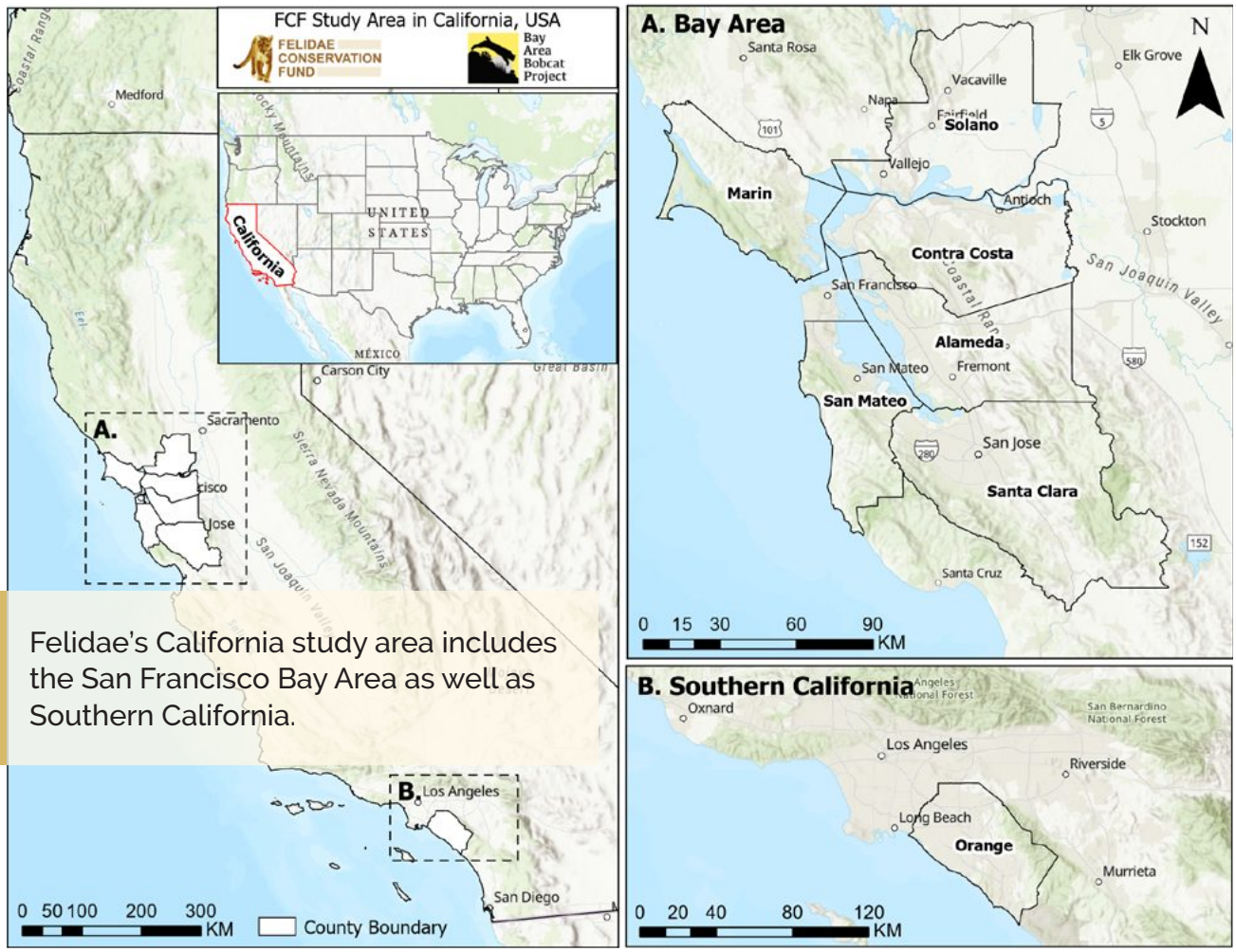
and partner with:

22 academic institutions and government agencies

generating real-time insights to inform conservation strategies and public health measures.



The Tsavo Cheetah Project works with people from local communities and with park rangers to track cheetahs through cameras, tracks, and scat as part of population monitoring efforts.



Felidae's California study area includes the San Francisco Bay Area as well as Southern California.

FROM FIELD TO POLICY

Our findings directly supported:

The design of:

3 wildlife corridor proposals

now under review by local planning authorities

Enhanced disease surveillance for zoonotic threats

in pumas and bobcats through our Wild Cat Health Project

The revision of regional land-use plans

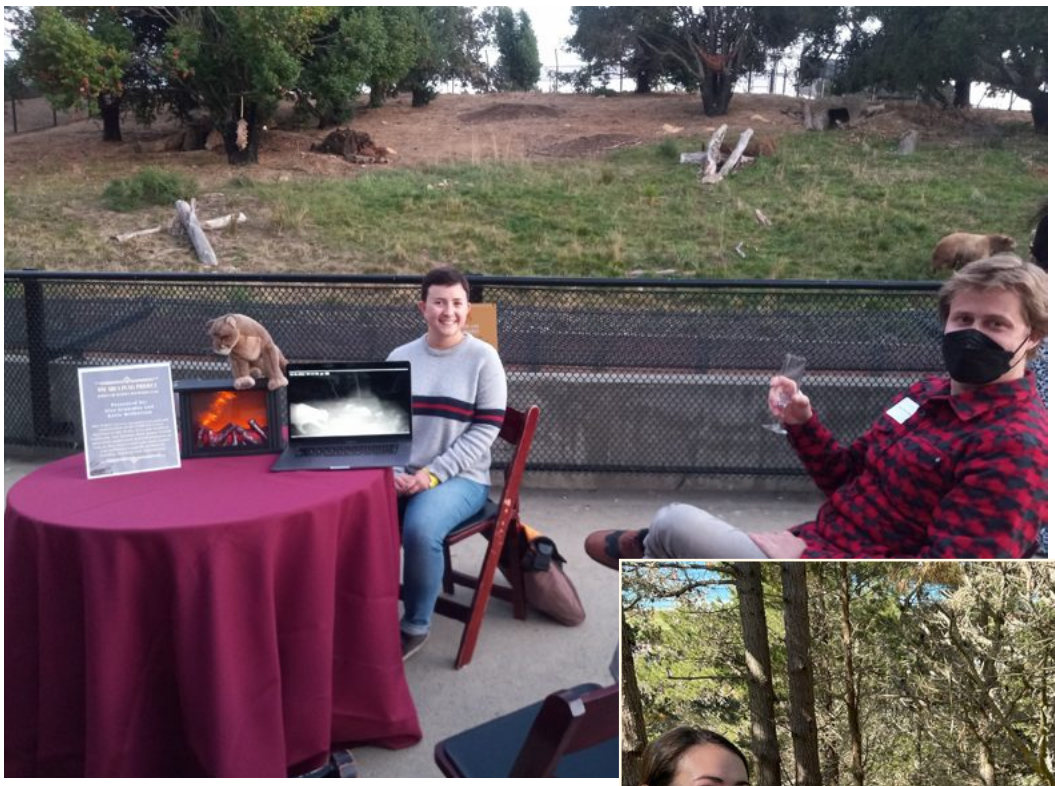
to include science-based mitigation measures

In addition, our data was cited in 2 published environmental impact assessments and contributed to the development of a new community-led wildlife coexistence toolkit.

BUILDING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

In 2024–25, we published **5 peer-reviewed papers** and presented findings at **4 national conferences**, including the Ecological Society of America and the Wildlife Disease Association. Our researchers also gave **14 public science talks**, bridging the gap between technical insights and community understanding.

Through our mentorship and training programs, we supported **18 early-career researchers and interns**—most of whom identify as women or BIPOC—cultivating the next generation of conservation scientists.





Felidae Staff host a fireside chat at the Oakland Zoo (above). A Felidae ecologist and volunteer working in the field (right).

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Inspiring Communities to Take Action

In 2025, our outreach and education programs empowered tens of thousands of individuals, including youth, educators, families, and community leaders, to become environmental stewards. The Felidae team gave seven presentations in California and a broad, and participated in 15 community tabling events throughout the year.

Through immersive, science-based experiences, we deepened public understanding of biodiversity, habitat health, and One Health connections between wildlife and people.





Felidae participates in outreach events each year, including community tabling events, giving residents the chance to learn more about the organization and local wildlife.

REACHING WIDER AUDIENCES

Since 2022, we have reached **over 68,000 individuals** across California and beyond through in-person events, virtual workshops, and classroom programs. Our Wilde Backyard Coexistence program engaged individuals from **more than 36 residential communities** in California, with a focus on under-resourced and urban-edge communities.

Our digital content also expanded its impact with:

20,700 video views

on educational content

32,000 social media engagements

across platforms

A 78% increase in website traffic

to sightings map and educational content

6,100 newsletter subscribers

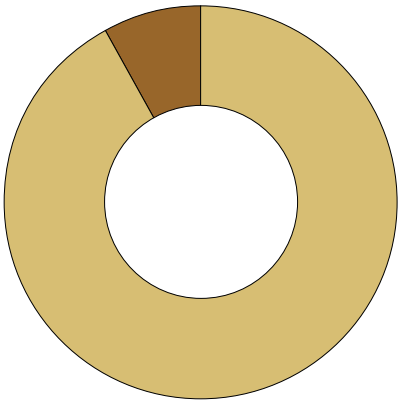
across platforms

DEEPENING ENGAGEMENT

More than 460 volunteers contributed almost 8,000 hours to events, image cataloging, field education, fecal surveys, camera monitoring, accounting, governance, design, writing, and citizen science. Participants in our "Wilde Backyard" workshops reported a **78% increase in awareness of native species** and took tangible actions—from native plant gardening to reducing nighttime light pollution.

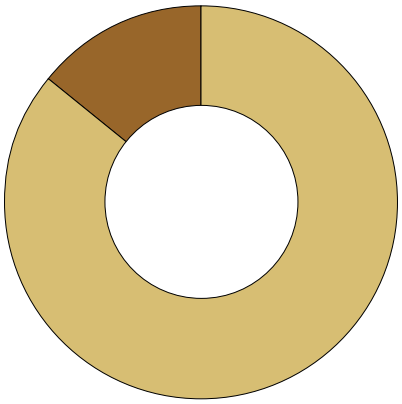
Measuring What Matters

Feedback from program participants showed:



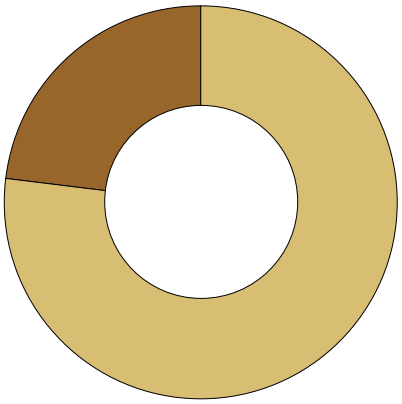
92%

felt "**more empowered** to protect local wildlife"



86%

reported **learning something entirely new**



77%

said they took at least **one conservation action within two months** of participation

These numbers are **more than data points**—they represent **a growing movement** of informed, motivated individuals who now **see themselves as part of the solution.**



Tabling events provide the opportunity to engage with communities and share information about pumas and bobcats.

METRICS

Intensifying urban development increases the likelihood that pumas and bobcats are forced to move through residential areas at the urban-wilderness interface. Also, the growing popularity of outdoor recreation (hiking, mountain biking, trail running, e-bikes) in protected areas and other open spaces throughout California increases the chance that people may see a puma or bobcat in nature. Encounters with people are rare but conflicts like attacks on pets or hobby animals may occur. Many people remain unaware about how to prevent such conflicts.

Focused efforts to educate people about how to prevent and respond to human-wildlife conflicts remains a focus of our work. We do this through outreach efforts, including tabling at community events, social media posts on Felidae's accounts, and in-person and virtual presentations to diverse audiences. Since 2022, we have given **83 presentations to communities around California** and have participated in **more than 67 community outreach events.**

Our outreach efforts included:

12 Conflict Prone communities

including Sonoma, Marin, and OC foothills

2 multilingual Materials created

in English and Spanish

27 Partnerships with local orgs

including schools, parks, and health agencies



Outreach tabling to increase public awareness of human-wildlife coexistence.



TESTIMONIALS

In 2024 and 2025, Felidae Fund participated in **31 in-person events**, **15 virtual events** and **webinars**, and **9 School and youth group sessions** across the SF Bay Area and Orange County on topics ranging from puma safety to One Health to wildlife corridors, **totaling over 6,550 participants**. Some of these participants have given testimonials about the organization's crucial work.



Barbara Beasley

Community Member, Volunteer

Last month, a juvenile puma from nearby open space was spotted in a tree in our neighborhood, sparking a flurry of posts on Nextdoor. Understandably, people were concerned but also very curious, with many questions. As a longtime volunteer with Felidae/Bay Area Puma Project (BAPP), I reassured neighbors by reporting sightings to BAPP and providing accurate information from our toolkit on how to stay safe and coexist with these magnificent creatures. It's moments like this that remind me how vital BAPP's role is to not just monitor wildlife but also support our community through science, education, and a balanced approach to potential conflict. And each time I catch a glimpse of a puma on the cameras I monitor for BAPP, it fills me with wonder and hope for the amazing wildlife on our urban edge.

Eliza Low

Intern

As an intern, I've had the chance to try out field research while helping protect local pumas. From monitoring camera traps to performing educational outreach, everything I do for the Bay Area Puma Project directly benefits both pumas and people. Through public outreach and citizen science, the Bay Area Puma Project replaces fears with facts to facilitate coexistence. Whenever I share about BAPP's work, people are always inspired to learn about efforts to protect the Bay's pumas. While helping collect data during a scat survey, I chatted with researchers and was amazed by the passion and creativity they brought to their work. BAPP's crucial work and dedicated team has inspired me to pursue a career in conservation biology

Wymans

Community Members

We are grateful for the expertise, advice, advocacy, and support of the ongoing work of the Felidae Conservation Fund team. My wife and I reached out to Zara following a move a few years ago to a remote family property in the Santa Cruz mountains on the Bay Area peninsula, with the intention of being good land stewards and providing sanctuary for a number of endangered species, including mountain lions, which have been seen occasionally, particularly in the deeply incised canyon of Woodhams Creek which crosses our property. Her team of biologists installed wildlife cameras and visited on a monthly basis, confirming regular migration of moun-

tain lions, foxes, coyotes, skunks and deer, all of whom rely on Woodhams Creek for fresh water and utilize it's canyon to migrate to and fro. In addition to documenting and sharing pertinent scientific information about felids, what has been really helpful is getting connecting with their network of environmental organizations and government agencies, all the better understand policy and protection efforts and what our responsibilities and rights as landowners are. We applaud and support Zara and her dedicated team of biologists and volunteers!

Hunter Breck
Botanist, Volunteer

All organisms in any Ecosystem, as well as abiotic factors, are all interdependent on each other either directly or indirectly. Puma, along with Black Bear, are the apex predators in the ecosystems where the Bay Area Puma Project is conducting research to quantify Puma populations, track movement, and identify individuals. Because interconnected and interdependent ecosystems are becoming increasingly fragile Worldwide, and here in the Bay Area, the research the BAPP conducts is invaluable to helping understand how these elusive and apex predators are faring in ecosystems and habitats that are within and adjacent to one of the major metropolitan areas in the World. The research benefits the animals because it informs scientists and conservationists about populations of Puma in decline, peril, as well as how to plan conservation efforts in areas where the cats are thriving. We also learn a lot about the local populations of all other wildlife through the trail camera network.

As a Botanist, I have been very lucky to volunteer for the BAPP for 5 years now. Through my own observations from maintaining over a dozen trail cameras, I have learned a lot about the populations and how common or uncommon other animals are as well (fox, deer, rabbit, skunk, raccoon, bobcat, coyote, black bear, possum, badger, river otter, and more (rodents and birds). I have become pretty intuitive about placing cameras in order to detect mountain lions. I have become able to fairly well predict when one large male will pass by a few of my cams. Working for BAPP has been a wonderful experience and has improved my life.



Felidae volunteers connect during a community outreach event.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Permits

National Park Service
California State Parks
San Mateo County Parks
OC Parks
Irvine Ranch Conservancy
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Marin Municipal Watershed District
Marin County Parks
San Mateo County Parks
East Bay Municipal Utility District
Cal Trans
Pacifica Land Trust
John Muir Land Trust

Private Land Access

Wymans
California State Parks
Filoli Estate
Walker Creek Ranch
Andy Forward
Potrero Nuevo Farm
Jean & Jeff Farmwald
Golden Gate Recreation Area
Sonoma County Parks
Wildlands Conservancy
California State University East Bay

And Special thanks to

Susan and Nick Pritzker
Dawn Shapiro
Sally Gale
Chileno Valley Ranch
Creekside Community Church
Emma Martinson
Hicks Mountain Ranch
Sumit Roy
Cynthia Pitt
Djerassi Arts Center

Grants 2020-Present

Bader Foundation
California State Parks
San Mateo County Parks
OC Parks
Irvine Ranch Conservancy
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
Marin Municipal Watershed District
Marin County Parks
San Mateo County Parks
East Bay Municipal Utility District
Cal Trans
Pacifica Land Trust
John Muir Land Trust
Conservation Society of California
Landsberg Foundation
TS and Katrina Glide Foundation
Marin Fish and Wildlife
Fresno Chaffee Zoo
Marine Ventures Fund
Flat Creek Fund
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
California Foundation for Stronger Communities
Conservation, Food, and Health Foundation
Mohammed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund
National Geographic Big Cat Initiative
Big Cat Rescue
Brabson Family Foundation
Horne Family Foundation
Disney Conservation Fund
CuriOdyssey

Collaborators

Conservation Biology Institute
Oregon State University
Utah State University
University of South Dakota
Rogue Detection Teams
DeMatteo LLC
Texas State University, Austin
Texas A&M
CDFW Genetics Lab
Bhutan Ecological Society
Bhutan Nature Conservation Division
One Health Committee
UC Berkeley
California State University East Bay
SF State University
Utah Mountain Lion Conservation
The Rocky Mountain Research Station
Grand Staircase Escalante Partners (GSEP)
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Inspired Classroom



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Photo Credit: Justin Barry.

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