



For immediate release
October 26, 2009

Jaguars in the streets of Merida, Mexico

**Children paint life-sized jaguars and join festivities leading up to WILD9
9th World Wilderness Congress
Merida, Mexico November 6 – 13, 2009**

Boulder, CO -- Ten life-size fiberglass jaguars grace Merida's "sculpture space," a public passageway near the city's main plaza owned and managed by Museo Macay. Last week children painted the jaguars in conjunction with the arrival of the 9th World Wilderness Congress (WILD9) to this Yucatan state capital known for its colonial charm, architecture and vibrant culture.

WILD9 is teaming with Mexican donors and social charities working with disadvantaged and other children's causes to host painting events. Assisted by well-known, volunteer painter-coaches, children adorn the beige animals, sculpted specifically for WILD9 by artist Sergio de la Rosa, with vibrant patterns and hues. The theme of each animal is drawn from local Yucatecan culture. Ten more jaguars will be painted in the coming week.

The jaguar painting initiative continues WWC's tradition of engaging with host communities. "Interaction with the community is a rich and essential aspect of each WWC," said Vance Martin, president of the WILD Foundation and chairman of WILD9's executive committee. "Merida has welcomed us with open arms and it's important for WILD9 to give back...and a lot more fun."

"Everyone got together and painted this week, including kids in wheelchairs and with Downs syndrome. The kids were ecstatic and the adults were happy with few dry eyes in the house," said Martin.

Mercedes Ruiz Galindo and Elba Garcia Villarreal, co-curators of the jaguar-painting initiative, harnessed a network of Mexican corporations, museums and individual patrons to sponsor the unpainted jaguars for US\$ 1000 each. El Papalote, Mexico City's popular national children's museum (Museo del Niño) sponsored five jaguars. In total, 15 jaguars are completed, and five more will be painted during the week of WILD9.

"This is one of many WILD9 projects that reach out to the public in order to communicate the importance of wild nature, and enlist public support for conservation,"

said Ana Dominquez, WILD9 special projects coordinator and jaguar-painting project manager.

The jaguar, an endangered species, plays an important and iconic role in Mexico's rich cultural and ecological history. They appear in stories, art, history, and, in ever decreasing numbers, in the wild. "The overriding theme and objective of WILD9 is protecting wilderness to conserve biodiversity and critical ecosystems and mitigate climate change," said Jaime Rojo, WILD9 executive director.

In a separate initiative, "Los Jaguares" -- a group of four wilderness lovers and professionals from England, Canada and the U.S. -- depart October 27, 2009 from Albuquerque, New Mexico on a motorcycle road trip to WILD9. Their journey will take them across the U.S.-Mexico border at Del Rio, Texas, then, once in Mexico, on to Monclova, Tampico, Veracruz, Campeche, down into Chiapas to the Blue Mountains (Monte Azules Biosphere Reserve) before sprinting up to Merida. See www.wild9.org for more details.

Learn more about prior WWCs and local collaborations and initiatives, such as the statewide, juried art competition funded and implemented by the [8th WWC in Alaska](#). The winning three-piece sculpture is a permanent installation "walking" around a central plaza in Anchorage.

Please send requests for **photographs of children painting jaguars** to media contacts below.

[Register Here for WILD9!](#)

WILD9 is a partnership between The WILD Foundation and Unidos para la Conservación and relies on the support and participation of many partner organizations.

The WILD Foundation (www.wild.org) Founded in 1974, WILD is the only international organization dedicated entirely and explicitly to wilderness protection around the world. WILD works to protect the planet's last wild places and the wildlife and people who depend upon them, because wilderness areas provide essential social, spiritual, biological and economic benefits. We believe that intact wilderness areas are an essential core element of a healthy modern society.

Unidos para la Conservación (www.undiosparalaconservacion.org) Founded in 1992, Unidos is a nonprofit Mexican conservation organization that has actively promoted the concept of wilderness conservation in Mexico. Its working strategy combines the establishment of alliances with government, non-profit and corporate partners with the promotion of a conservation culture through publications and films in a search of conservation solutions through specific action.

Media Contacts:

Susan Bruce (Boulder, CO)

susan@wild9.org 1 404 593 6391

Elena Torres (Mexico City, Mexico)

elena@wild9.org (52) 55 56159650

Silvia Casellas (Barcelona, Spain)

silvia@wild9.org (34) 934 343 715

-XXX-