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## Peter Crawshaw Jr. 1952-2021



Peter with a sedated jaguar in xy year (Photo personal archive).

The passion for nature, for wild animals and wild places, and the drive to attempt to save what remains of the world's biodiversity, are unifying themes in the conservation community and in our Cat Specialist Group. Few people would embody these features more vividly than Peter Gransden Crawshaw Jr., pioneer in jaguar ecology and in the conservation of Brazilian wildlife. For those who knew Peter, he was notorious for his joyful and friendly nature, his endless energy, and his drive to work for wild cat research and conservation. Sadly, his intense life was cut short on 25 April 2021, by the Covid-19 pandemic. At a day and age when an ever-increasing number of people are trying to find

meaning to their lives, we find ourselves very lucky to have had an association with a person who was pure inspiration. We would thus like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his memory and legacy.

Peter was born on 9 January 1952 in São Vicente, São Paulo State, Brazil. In 1966, he moved with his family to Rio Grande do Sul state, in southern Brazil, where he lived up to his college years. He graduated as a Biology major in 1977, and soon after that he seized a lifetime opportunity: to help George Schaller establish the first field study focusing on jaguar ecology. Their contact began with Peter (back then still an undergraduate) hearing about Schaller's plans to come to Brazil to study jaguars in the Pantanal, and contacting him offering to help with the project. Correspondence ensued, they met in person in Brasília still in 1977, and in early 1978 Peter was hired by IBDF (the federal agency in charge of environmental issues at the time, that later gave rise to the current agencies Ibama and ICMBio), as a Brazilian counterpart to the project (Crawshaw, 2006; G. Schaller, pers. comm.).

Back in the 1970s, the Pantanal was a wild frontier, a land of caiman and jaguar poachers; however, this situation did not intimidate Peter, as he persisted even after receiving several death threats. After the initial work with Schaller, he conducted another project on Pantanal jaguars, in partnership with Howard Quigley, leading to important early in-

sights into the species' biology and ecology (see Crawshaw [2006] for references of the resulting articles). At that time, Peter did not know that he was starting to build his great legacy, creating the basis for carnivore research and conservation in Brazil.

His work in the Pantanal paved the way for the creation of, among several protected areas, the Pantanal Mato Grossoense National Park, that makes up a region considered by UNESCO to be a world natural heritage site. From a land of jaguar poachers, the Pantanal has become a major wildlife tourism destination for jaguar viewing, benefiting local communities by providing employment, economic sustainability and security for the local wildlife.

After completing those initial field studies in 1985, Peter went to the University of Florida, USA, to pursue a M.Sc. degree, with a thesis focusing on the ecology of caiman in the Pantanal. He then moved on to pursue a Ph.D. degree at the same university, starting in 1988, with a project focused on the comparative ecology of jaguars and ocelots, under the supervision of Mel Sunquist.



Peter with an ocelot in Iguaçu, XXXX (Photo R. Boulhosa).

For his Ph.D. project, he selected Iguaçu National Park, in southern Brazil, as the ideal field site, as it still harbored a complete set of large mammals (including tapir, peccaries and jaguars), and was surrounded by human-dominated agricultural landscapes on the Brazilian side, while retaining connection to a larger remnant of inner Atlantic Forest on its Argentinean side. He moved to Iguaçu park with his family in 1990, and spent se-



Peter with George Schaller in Porto Joffre, Pantanal, 2011 (Photo L. Marker).

veral years there, studying jaguars, ocelots, pumas and other carnivores. During his study in Iguazu, Peter opened opportunities to countless students seeking knowledge on carnivoran ecology and conservation. Several of these students have later become scientists, leading their own projects, following Peter's steps.

His work at Iguazu National Park has also changed the history of human-jaguar relations in that region. Deforestation and persecution threatened the local population of jaguars with extinction, and Peter's doctoral study highlighted the urgency of saving that jaguar population. After planning the conservation of the jaguar at Iguazu National Park, the population has recovered, persecution has decreased and local communities are now engaged in jaguar protection. Crossing the river, on the Argentinean side of this Atlantic Forest remnant, Peter was also a mentor for scientists and students, inspiring them to study and plan jaguar conservation in Argentina. Years later, his knowledge was also critical for planning the jaguar reintroduction project in the Esteros de Iberá region, in Argentina.

In 1994, Peter led the creation of the Brazilian National Predator Research Center (CENAP), a federal agency responsible for managing wild carnivores and planning for their long-term conservation. To our knowledge, this was the first government agency totally dedicated to large predator conservation. At CENAP, Peter built a national program to manage conflicts between large predators and farmers. From 1997 to 2005, CENAP trained



Peter with his family, 2017. From left to right: Danielle, Peter, Beatriz, David and Mara Pellin (Photo D. Crawshaw).

several environmental agents to solve human-wildlife conflicts in Brazil. This program served as the basis for the cultural change seen in ranchers and farmers at several locations in Brazil, which led to a reduction in jaguar persecution. Peter was also responsible for making the jaguar known to Brazilians, and the species is now considered a symbol of biodiversity in our country.

This short summary illustrates Peter's role as a pioneer in conservation biology in Brazil, fostering the development of many initiatives on behalf of wild cats and other carnivores. He was a true mentor, handing out enthusiasm and advice, with great generosity, to anyone interested. Peter has been described as a reference in his field and as an inspirational leader. He was all of these, but perhaps the most searing side to his early departure is that he was just a really lovely person.

Overall, everyone agrees that Peter had an intense life. Like a cat, we used to say that he had nine lives, having survived many remarkable adventures. To mention only a few, he was accidentally attacked by a jaguar during a project, suffered an ultralight crash while radio-tracking cats, was kidnapped in Bolivia, and suffered a boat accident in the Pantanal. He definitely loved living, and was always ready for a new field trip or a meeting with his friends. With his life partner, the guitar, we have lovely memories of Peter playing and singing Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, and various other songs from the 1960s and 1970s, sitting around a fireplace or at a barbecue site in the field. For sure, Peter had not

used up all his nine lives, and should still be here with us. His early departure is a very sad loss for the Brazilian and global conservation communities, but his legacy will live on in the myriad projects and efforts that he started or helped advance, and in the people that were inspired by his example.

Peter has left on a new trip, his ultimate adventure. He took with him memories of a well-lived life, frames of incredible experiences from all over the world with friends from different nationalities, who had him close to their hearts. He carried with him the passion for jaguars and other animals, for nature, for life. Peter has left us the biggest gift: the opportunity of meeting and being inspired by this incredible man, a wonderful friend, a great conservationist and an intense life lover. Farewell, dear Peter.

**Reference**

Crawshaw P. H. Jr. 2006. The history of carnivore research in Brazil. *In* Manejo e conservação de carnívoros neotropicais. Morato R. G., Rodrigues F. H. G., Eizirik E., Mangini P. R., Azevedo F. C. C. & Marinho-Filho J. (Eds) Ibama, São Paulo, Brazil, pp. 15–37.



Peter playing the guitar in Porto Joffre, Pantanal, 2011 (Photo C. Breitenmoser).