

Macho B Died for Your Sins: Western vs. Indigenous Perspectives on the Killing of the Last Borderlands Jaguar¹

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On March 2, 2009, Macho B, quite possibly the last wild free-roaming jaguar in the United States died at the hands of man. He was not killed by a trophy hunter desiring another wall mount, or a beautiful spotted pelt as a floor rug; nor was he killed by a rancher seeking to protect his livestock investment from this most powerful of American predators. Instead, Macho B's death was directly brought about by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (hereafter AZGFD) with the full blessing and support of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – the very two governmental agencies charged to protect this animal and to insure his safety and well-being under the Endangered Species Act.

The killing of Macho B offers a classic case study as to how western society and its stepchild, western science, view and exploit the natural world and other living entities. It is a story of arrogance and dominance, of reckless and self-centered behavior, of misrepresentation and denial, and now it is also a story of a federal criminal investigation. But most importantly, the Macho B tragedy tells us we must change our fundamental views about the natural world and our place in it. The time has come for us to reexamine our current values and belief system, and to rewrite our policies and procedures to incorporate another more respectful and appropriate view of our fellow non-human beings with who we share the Earth. The alternative world view I am proposing is one that goes back to time immemorial, that of traditional Native America.

This essay hopes to accomplish two purposes: First, to provide a critical philosophical and factual analysis of the events which led to the death of Macho B, and secondly to provide a contrasting Indigenous views of the natural world and these relate to the Macho B story.

Before proceeding with this essay, I feel that I should make a disclaimer of sorts. I admit to being no disinterested third party in the Macho B story. For me the death of Macho B has been personal. Prior to my recent move to the Northwest, I had lived most of my adult life in Arizona, and for many years I was very involved in the environmental community and with the “borderlands” jaguar program conservation efforts. I have for a long time held very strong beliefs and opinions regarding the various jaguar initiatives and on Macho B specifically. These views are clearly expressed throughout this paper.

In this essay I place blame for the death of Macho B squarely on the doorstep of AZGFD. In all fairness, AZGFD has a commendable record in working to restore endangered species such as the Mexican wolf, Black-footed ferret, and California condor. And they deserve credit for the reintroduction programs they have initiated with these species and others. I have done some volunteer work with AZGFD on both the Mexican wolf and Black-footed ferret programs, and I would never question the commitment of AZGFD to endangered species conservation. But the insistence of AZGFD on capturing and radio-

collaring Macho B proved to be disastrous, and they should be held accountable for it. Most importantly, AZGFD seems to have learned nothing from this tragic affair. They continue to deny any mistakes or wrong-doing and have reaffirmed their plans to capture and collar any future jaguar that might enter the state. It is for these reasons only that I have felt compelled to write this essay. In many ways this has been a difficult and painful essay to write; in part because I personally know and respect many of the people who were directly involved in the capture and death of Macho B. Terry Johnson and Brad Van Pelt, who have been the “face” of the jaguar conservation program, are honorable men who are well meaning, and in their own, way completely dedicated to jaguar conservation. So is Emil McCain, a contract biologist to AZGFD, who has unfortunately become a central figure in the Macho B story. Emil is a first rate field biologist and is clearly someone who is a passionate champion of jaguar conservation. These are not bad people or villains. But they also possess and promote a view of the natural world that tends to exploit, and ultimately destroy, the very animals they profess to love. It is toward what I believe to be this misguided set of attitudes and values – not any individual person - that my criticism in this essay is directed.

The Life and Death of Macho B

To most people the very word *jaguar* conjures up visions of a powerful spotted feline stalking through a tropical rainforest. But historically the American Southwest was also the home of jaguars as well. No less than 84 of the great cats have been recorded in Arizona alone, with others documented in Southern California, New Mexico, Texas, and even Colorado. Virtually every Native American tribe living in jaguar country had stories, traditions, and sometimes ceremonies about the animal. For many of these tribes, the jaguar was one of the “Animal People” – a fellow being who had been with them since “the time before time.” Everywhere Native Americans honored and respected the jaguar. The Pueblos referred to him as the *rohona*. The Tohono O’odham knew the jaguar as *ooshad*. The Yaquis called him *topol*. To the Navajos, the jaguar was Spotted Lion. To all of these tribes he was an animal of mystery and power, a sacred kinsman who played an integral role in their stories and traditions.

Unfortunately to the Euro-Americans - the white farmers, ranchers and other settlers who arrived to claim and conquer the land, the jaguar was simply another animal that was in the way of “progress and civilization.” With the advent of the western cattle industry in 1880s, a war of extermination was launched against predators, a war waged largely by a federal program known as Predator and Rodent Control (PARC). Wolves, bears, mountain lions, and the occasional jaguar that might be encountered were viewed as being potential threats to livestock and were indiscriminately killed. It took another century for at least some enlightened Americans to begin to understand the workings of ecosystems and the need to protect *all* life – including predators. In 1973, Congress belatedly responded by passing the Endangered Species Act, but, by then, the jaguar was considered to have been already extirpated from the United States and was not listed for protection. The northern states of Mexico - Chihuahua and Sonora - still had a relatively healthy population of jaguars and a number of these cats continued to cross through the

rugged mountain ranges into Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Between 1970 and 1996, dozens of creditable sightings were reported, but only one jaguar during this time, a male killed in the Dos Cabeza Mountains of southeastern Arizona in 1983, was considered to be “official.” U.S. Fish and Wildlife regarded any jaguar recorded in the Southwest as being little more than a “tourist” and continued to deny them protection under federal law.

In 1996 a series of events occurred that promised to forever change the landscape of jaguar conservation in the American Southwest. In that year, two different jaguars were recorded by lion hunters in southern Arizona. The first cat was brought to bay by hounds belonging to Warner Glenn, who photographed the animal and then let it go. The second jaguar was treed by hounds belonging to Jack Childs who not only photographed, but also videotaped the cat before he also let it go. Both of these lion hunters could have legally killed these jaguars and probably would have faced no legal issues. Instead they chose not to, and both men would later play key roles in the ensuing struggle for jaguar conservation. For Jack Childs and his wife Anna especially, their encounter with the jaguar - who would later be named Macho B - proved to be a life-altering experience. The couple would ultimately devote themselves to preserving jaguars in the American Southwest, most notably by securing funding from various sources to operate a string of remote sensor trail cameras throughout the mountain ranges of southeastern Arizona. In time their efforts transformed into a more formalized Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project (BJDP). For a short time I was privileged to run a string of cameras for Jack in the Patagonia Mountains. Jack and Anna also published a book about their experiences entitled *Ambushed on the Jaguar Trail: Hidden Cameras on the Mexican Border* (2008). No one has fought harder for the cause of jaguar conservation than has this husband and wife team.

Soon after the two jaguars were discovered, a “Jaguar Conservation Team” (JCT) was created. This volunteer group was largely organized and run by AZGFD and was comprised of any organized entity or individual self-identified as being a “stakeholder.” From the beginning, representatives from AZGFD, New Mexico Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Services – the federal agency that handles lethal predator control – and various land owners, especially livestock ranchers, dominated the activities and the decisions made by this group. Environmental organizations also held membership, as did a number of private citizens – including me - who were simply interested in jaguars. Initially this group was organized on the part of the majority stakeholders largely to prevent the jaguar from being listed under the ESA. State agencies like AZGFD wanted to maintain control over the conservation of wildlife within their jurisdiction and did not wish to be restricted or dictated to by the federal government. Landowners feared the impact that listing might have on their property rights. Environmentalists favored listing because they felt that only the weight of federal law could truly provide adequate protection. A lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity eventually forced the federal government to add jaguars to the ESA in 1999. After that, the JCT focused its efforts on learning more about the needs of jaguars in the Southwest and how best to educate the public about this beautiful feline. Although tension always existed between the major interest groups within the JCT, the agency and

landowner contingency and the environmentalists, everyone generally cooperated with each other toward the common goal of doing what was right for jaguars. I was very active with the JCT for about the first four years of its existence. One of my contributions was to research and write a report on the role of jaguars in Native American culture. This report eventually became an article entitled “Rohonas and Spotted Lions: The Historical and Cultural Occurrence of the Jaguar, *Panthera onca*, among the Native Tribes of the American Southwest” which was published in *Wicazo Sa Review*. I also worked with AZGFD in the development of a jaguar teaching curriculum for secondary schools.

From the very beginning a major area of contention within the JCT was whether or not future jaguars should be captured and fitted with a Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite tracking collar for study. The majority of the stakeholder membership favored this idea. Several environmental groups, most notably the Center for Biological Diversity and Sky Island Alliance, opposed such action. I was one of the people who strongly and openly expressed opposition to any capture plans. My position was based on two beliefs, the first being that there was simply something wrong – something very unethical – in placing a collar on any wild, free jaguar. While I could support the short-term radio-collaring of any reintroduced jaguar, to me Macho B and his kin represented something far greater than an object to be poked, prodded, and studied. If the concept of “wilderness” – admittedly a purely western construct – meant anything of value, then the last remnants of it should be left alone. My second belief – one certainly validated by what would happen later – was that the risk of harming any jaguar far outweighed any potential research benefits that might be gained. The fact is that while capturing, tranquilizing, and radio-collaring large predators such as mountain lions and bears is a standard operating practice among wildlife researchers, there is always a certain mortality rate that must be factored in due to the stress of the capture and unforeseen effects of the drugs used – not to mention whatever unknown long term effects that the drugs used might have on the life and health of the animal. Since we were dealing with a total jaguar population of perhaps one or two animals at best, it seemed reckless to tempt fate. As time went by Macho B became the focus of the JCT. And as he grew older – and the risks to his health and safety increased - opposition to capturing him grew even stronger. In the end, this was a battle that I and others lost. The JCT decided – for reasons I will discuss later in this essay – to capture and radio-collar any future jaguar that might appear, including Macho B. AZGFD took the lead in this plan and was issued a permit by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A scientific committee that included some of the world’s leading jaguar experts eventually put together a protocol to capture and process jaguars. In retrospect, this protocol was clearly inadequate.

In the years that followed, AZGFD looked for an opportunity to capture Macho B, although they never specifically initiated a campaign or a program to do so. In the meantime, however, Jack Child’s non-intrusive trail camera program began to pay huge dividends. In 2002 a jaguar was finally photographed, a male that would be called Macho A. Twenty months later in 2003 a second male was photographed and named Macho B. An examination of the distinctive rosette patterns of Macho B revealed he was the same jaguar treed by Child’s lion hounds in 1996. Macho A was photographed again

in 2004 before he disappeared and was never seen again. Macho B would remain in Arizona – although certainly crossing from time to time into Sonora, Mexico - until his death in 2009, 13 years of sharing his life and secrets. During these years, he was photographed over 50 times by the BJD, proving once and for all that he was indeed a resident jaguar who called the rugged mountains of southeastern Arizona home.

I should add that AZGFD and the BJD were – to their credit - very careful about keeping the exact location of Macho B's haunts a secret. The reality is that throughout his life Macho B traveled a very dangerous human landscape. Although protected by federal law, there were undoubtedly more than a few hunters and ranchers who if given the opportunity would have followed the old western adage of “shoot, shovel, and shut up” in terms of dealing with this endangered animal.

On February 18th Macho B was caught in what I suspect was an Aldrich leg snare – a metal cable that tightens and locks onto an animal's leg – set by AZGFD in an unnamed mountain range in southeastern Arizona near the Mexican border. Twelve days later he was dead, euthanized by a veterinarian at the Phoenix Zoo. The exact details of what transpired during that time period are not yet fully known. What we do know is that AZGFD officers found him caught in a leg hold snare, tranquilized him (probably with telazol or ketamine) and placed a radio collar on him. He was then left to recover from his ordeal. But he never did. The radio collar was reportedly designed to broadcast the cat's location every three hours. But several days later it was clear that Macho B was in trouble. On the first day of what must have been a painful and terrifying ordeal for Macho B, he moved - through courage and sheer will power - several miles from his initial capture site. But then the radio collar indicated that he was no longer moving - and for the most part he would never move again. On March 2nd AZGFD wildlife personnel returned to the location to investigate. There is some evidence they might have used hounds to locate Macho B. When they did find him, he was too weak to escape and the decision was made to tranquilize again – his second dose of drugs in less than two weeks – and bring him out of his beloved mountains for evaluation and possible treatment. Macho B was flown by helicopter to the Phoenix Zoo where a team of veterinarians proclaimed that he was suffering from acute kidney failure. It was their recommendation that the jaguar should be euthanized. Shortly afterwards, within hours of the same day he had been recaptured, Macho B, the jaguar who meant so much to so many, was put to death.

The above paragraph is a brief summary of the events that resulted in the killing of Macho B as we know them. AZGFD has still not issued a complete report. Almost immediately after AZGFD issued its first press release announcing that Macho B had been euthanized, serious questions were being raised by the environmental community and other angry members of the public. Additional press releases resulted only in more outrage and some began to charge AZGFD with engaging in a cover-up. A hastily called press conference by AZGFD and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – held with almost no advance notice and consequently with almost no one being present – only served to further fuel the flames.

The controversies that have arisen over the death of Macho B center on a number of misconceptions perpetuated by AZGFD that I will charitably refer to as being “half-truths.” In the days and weeks that passed since Macho B was euthanized, new facts and allegations have emerged calling into question the validity and truthfulness of some of the earlier statements made by AZGFD. The following is a brief summary and analysis of the main points in the Macho B controversy.

The first half-truth focuses on the specific events which led to the capture of Macho B in the first place. From the beginning AZGFD claimed – and continues to maintain – that capturing Macho B was an inadvertent accident - that he had been trapped in a snare set as part of an on-going project to capture and radio collar mountain lions and black bears. Almost immediately people began to question the legitimacy of this claim. Macho B was captured in the heart of his home range. The wildlife officials who set out the snares most certainly knew – and later admitted as much - that there was a high probability that the 15-17 year old cat would be caught. Even after he had been trapped and initially released, AZGFD continued to make the ludicrous claim they were not sure at the time of capture that the obviously aged jaguar they had snared was actually Macho B. One wonders how many jaguars they thought were prowling that mountain range? The fact is that AZGFD acted recklessly by setting out snares in Macho B’s home range – unless of course they *wanted* to capture this particular jaguar. In time, evidence surfaced to indicate this might have been exactly their intent.

Perhaps because of the anger expressed by an outraged public, AZGFD will probably never officially release the names of the field personnel involved in the Macho B capture. However, a week or so after the death of Macho B, one of the individuals directly involved in his capture, a field technician from the BJDPA named Janay Brun, came forward with a startling accusation. She told the Arizona Daily Star newspaper that she had been instructed by her supervisor, Emil McCain, to bait the snare that caught Macho B with female jaguar scat which he provided for her, in a deliberate effort to lure the jaguar to the trap. This jaguar scat had been allegedly obtained from the Phoenix Zoo and had been used numerous times before to lure Macho B to remote cameras to be photographed. “The jaguar meant a lot to me,” she stated, “and the fact that I mindlessly participated in this is a regret I’ll have for the rest of my life.” Shortly after this revelation, a federal criminal investigation into the entire Macho B affair was initiated at the request of Arizona U.S. Representative Raul Grijalva. AZGFD and McCain have denied the accusations made by Brun.

It should also be noted that AZGFD has also come under criticism for using snares in the first place, and in the manner they were used. A risk assessment conducted four years ago determined that using snares was by far the riskiest of four possible jaguar capture methods. Moreover, many wildlife organization that use snares to capture large carnivores also employ the use of electronic monitoring to tell them when an animal is caught. This enables them to get to the trap in a timely manner thus minimizing the amount of time the animal is struggling in the snare. AZGFD does not utilize electronic monitoring, claiming that it is too expensive. It is estimated that Macho B was in the snare from three to 14 hours, although it could have been longer. Walter Boyce, a

professor, wildlife veterinarian, and biologist at the University of California-Davis criticized AZGFD for not using electronic monitoring, stating that the department “should have been doing all of those things for mountain lions, much less jaguars.” Another University of California-Davis wildlife biologist added that it was “absolutely inexcusable” for AZGFD to not be using electronic monitoring. Still yet another expert, David Jessup, a wildlife veterinarian for the California Game and Fish Department expressed his opinion that it is “standard” practice to use electronic monitoring in the capture of large carnivores and to allow an animal to struggle for 12 hours, “isn’t, in my opinion, professionally acceptable.”

Still yet another criticism leveled at AZGFD was that it did not have a veterinarian on hand for the capture. In addition to being able to properly diagnose the health and perhaps injury to the animal, a veterinarian would have taken blood samples for further analysis – something that AZGFD did not do. Boyce has stated that “The failure to collect blood at large mammal captures anywhere in the U.S. is pretty inexcusable from an animal health ... perspective.”

The second half-truth focuses on the exact cause of Macho B’s death, and if the cat needed to be euthanized at all. When first caught Macho B was described by AZGFD as being “healthy and robust” and “thick and solid.” When recaptured less than two weeks later he was emaciated and weak after most likely having very little food and water in almost two weeks. But the official cause of death according to AZGFD and the veterinarians working for them was that Macho B had died of “severe and unrecoverable” kidney failure due to advanced age. The implication of the official report was clear: Macho B had died of natural causes.

To me, the claim made by AZGFD and their veterinarians that Macho B died from what might be considered the ravages of old age is perhaps the most troubling – and insulting – of the misrepresentations perpetuated by AZGFD. Macho B’s advanced age had long been at the heart of the capture debate. When captured, Macho B was estimated to be between 15-17 years old. The previous oldest wild jaguar on record was 13 years of age. Years earlier – when Macho B was a younger but still a very old cat – many people were already questioning the wisdom of tranquilizing an animal his age. I was one of these people. In the days following the death of Macho B, I telephoned or emailed several wildlife biologists, including one veterinarian who is a leading authority on the effects that capture and anesthetization has on wild large carnivores. I wanted to get several independent expert opinions, although common sense already told me what they would say. In fact, *all* of the experts I talked to were critical, or at the very least expressed serious doubts, as to the advisability of tranquilizing what might have been a 17 year old cat. All agreed that Macho B’s kidney failure – if it was that – was not the single factor that led to his death. Almost without question Macho B died from what biologists refer to as “capture myopathy” – the cumulative impact of stress, fear, exertion, and the effects of the drugs used – all of which combined to damage muscle tissues and organs. In other words, had Macho B not gone through the ordeal of capture, he would in all probability lived for many years.

Think of it this way: Veterinarians have calculated that a 17 year old domestic feline, one living a sheltered and pampered life with a regular and healthy diet and all standard vaccinations, is the equivalent of an 85 year old human. How many responsible doctors would anesthetize an 85 year old man in order to perform surgery? Factor in that Macho B was a wild jaguar who had lived his life as a loner in an extremely rugged mountain range with all of its challenges and perils. It is very clear – at least to me - that AZGFD acted recklessly and that it was their actions – not kidney failure – that led directly to the death of Macho B. The fact is that unless these people were very stupid or very incompetent, every human involved in the trapping and the anesthetizing of Macho B most certainly knew that they were condemning this animal to death.

Within days of Brun's admission that she had baited the snare that had caught Macho B, a second bombshell accusation was dropped on AZGFD, namely that the Phoenix Zoo veterinarians who euthanized Macho B might have done so prematurely, and perhaps even without justification. In their desire to preserve the pelt of Macho B for taxidermy purposes, a rushed and sloppy necropsy – what has been deemed as a “cosmetic” necropsy – was performed that jeopardized any hope of finding the true cause of Macho B's degraded condition.

When first brought into the Phoenix Zoo, Macho B showed no obvious signs of physical illness other than being in poor physical shape, probably from the stress of his capture, being pumped with drugs on two occasions, from not having eaten in perhaps two weeks, and probably from a lack of fluids as well. The zoo veterinarians ran standard blood tests to analyze the blood urea nitrogen (BUN) and creatinine levels, the two most important indicators of kidney function. It was discovered that these levels were excessively high, or in the words of one of the veterinarians, “off the charts.” Consequently, Macho B was diagnosed quickly - and apparently without considering other possible causes - as suffering from “severe and unrecoverable kidney failure,” and the decision was made to euthanize him. Since then, however, a third veterinarian has suggested that Macho B might not have suffered from kidney dysfunction after all.

After Macho B's death, tissue samples were sent to the University of Arizona's veterinary diagnostic laboratory. One of the pathologists there, Dr. Sharon Dial, stated that her own study of the tissue indicated that Macho B's kidneys were not in a state of chronic failure, but instead actually seemed healthy. In sum, Macho B might have been suffering from nothing more than dehydration. Dr. Dial stated that “Nothing is absolute. There is nothing to say that he absolutely would have recovered, but I can say by looking at the kidneys that there is no structural reason he could not have.” She went on to conclude that “I've looked at a lot of cat kidneys, not jaguar kidneys. But for a supposed 15 year old cat, he had damned good looking kidneys.” Dr. Dial also contended that Macho B might have been euthanized too quickly and that time should have been given to see if he would recover.

AZGFD responded angrily to Dr. Dial's comments, labeling them as being “outrageous, unprofessional, and speculative,” and that her comments “are not valid or appropriate.”

But if Dr. Dial's assessment is accurate, the Phoenix Zoo veterinarians might very well be guilty of a common criticism leveled against scientists in general, namely that they tend to be myopic in the course of their research. In other words, the veterinarians *already knew* what Macho B was suffering from and consequently what to look for. Once they found what they expected to find, and based on their preconceived diagnosis, they closed to their minds to any alternative possibilities.

In a related issue, it was also discovered that at AZGFD request, these same veterinarians also performed what amounted to a sloppy necropsy following the euthanizing of Macho B. In a desire to preserve his skin for mounting with as little damage done to the pelt as possible, the veterinarians performed what has been deemed a "cosmetic" rather than a full necropsy. Again, this goes back to the previous comments made regarding the possible myopia of the veterinarians. They already *knew* what caused the death of Macho B; so why go through the trouble of conducting a thorough necropsy? In the end, this could prove to be a very critical issue because, without a thorough and complete necropsy, the truth of Mach B's death might never be known.

The third half truth perpetuated by AZGFD regards the benefits – and thus the justification – that would have been gained through monitoring the movements of Macho B. AZGD claimed that learning the extent of his range, preferred habitat, and the frequency which he crossed the border into Mexico, would all serve to help future jaguar conservation efforts. The reality, however, was that Macho B was one single and very old cat whose lifestyle was probably atypical of his kind. Biologists might have learned something about him, but certainly not the species as a whole. To extrapolate anything more would be the equivalent of putting a radio collar around *my* neck, following my movements for, say a year, then claiming that "Based on the valuable data we collected from Steve's radio transmissions, we have determined that the human species spends its Sunday afternoons watching the Pittsburgh Steelers play football, frequently feeds at Chinese restaurants, and favors driving blue Ford Ranger pick-up trucks." Clearly the study of a "population" of one animal tells you nothing regarding the species in general.

In recent years we have heard much rhetoric as to the need to make environmental decisions based on the "best science" available. But sometimes the so-called best science is inappropriate, unethical, and often unnecessary.

The fact is that many biologists conduct research on wildlife ... simply to conduct research on wildlife. What passes for wildlife "research" is often repetitive in nature and tells us only what we already know. There is no end game in mind. This was certainly true in regard to Macho B. The many photographs of Macho B taken by BJDP were sufficient to tell us what we needed to know in order to protect the critical habitat of borderland jaguars, and also to begin the process of actually developing a recovery plan for this endangered species. But AZGFD and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have continuously dragged their feet on these issues. In the case of Macho B, the efforts made to capture him had more to do with human egos and building professional careers than it did about jaguar conservation. In the end, the rush to lay claim of being the first researchers to capture and "handle" a wild borderlands jaguar resulted only in the shame

and taint of being those responsible for killing what might have been the last jaguar in the American Southwest.

How Does One Relate to a Jaguar? A Contrast in Values

Prior to the arrival of the first Europeans, over 500 different Indian nations lived within the boundaries of present day America. All of these entities possessed their own unique metaphysical view of the natural world, and consequently each possessed its own cultural attitudes and traditions which determined how they related to and interacted with the other living entities with whom they shared the Earth. Consequently, there is no one single Indian view of the natural world, and it is admittedly dangerous to make generalizations regarding the “world view” of Indigenous people. But based on the words or writings of numerous early Native intellectuals like Sealth, Black Elk, Charles Eastman, and Luther Standing Bear, and the later work of contemporary Native scholars including Vine Deloria, Jr., Oren Lyons, John Mohawk, and Daniel R. Wildcat, it is still possible to comprise a list of generally shared attitudes and beliefs that served to define and characterize the relationship between tribal people and the animals. Such a list might include the tribal knowledge that:

1. Animals, like humans, are products of a divine creation.
2. Animals are different from humans only in outward appearance.
3. Animals are related to humans and in some cases were considered to be kin.
4. Animals are bound to humans in a network of reciprocal relationships.
5. Animals possess purposes independent of the needs and desires of humans.
6. Animals are equal to humans in terms of their right to life and pursuit of purpose.
7. Animals possess individual personalities.
8. Animals possess a wide range of emotions and feelings.
9. Animals possess knowledge and the ability to reason.
10. Animals possess spirits and/or souls and the promise of an afterlife.

It is not within the scope of this essay to adequately discuss each of the above items on this list, or to contrast each to the corresponding views and attitudes of western society. Generally speaking I think it is safe to say that in most cases western society, or at least

western science, would provide a polar opposite comparison. I would, however, like to offer something of a broader discussion that will also include some of the above points.

First of all, any discussion as to the contrasts that exist between western society's view of the natural world and that of Native American tribal world must begin with the idea of creation, and subsequently mankind's role in the universe. Both western and Indigenous societies are based on the concept of creation, but that is pretty much where the similarity ends. In the Judeo-Christian tradition man was created first and was specifically made in "God's image." Consequently from the onset humans were separated from other life – species – that would be created later. The Book of Genesis 1:26 then went on to claim that mankind was also given "dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the air, and the beasts of the earth." In sum, all life on earth was placed there for our own use and pleasure. The preeminent and elevated – indeed the Godly – status of man set the table for all future relationships between humans and animals. The advent of Darwinism solidified this notion of superiority. Humans could now claim scientific proof of what the Bible had told them from the very beginning, namely that they were the chosen end result of the progression of life. While most scientists and certainly most biologists might fervently deny it – especially in light of the battle over evolution – western science is very much the product of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In contrast, Native American creation stories generally do not tell of a single all-powerful God that provided for a separate or special creation of humans. Most often, the other "Animal People" were there at the beginning. Often these beings were actually the creative power themselves, or perhaps served as the creative agents working on behalf of a greater spiritual power. Many of the Native creation stories tell of a "time before time" in which humans, the other animal beings, and sometimes deities, lived together as one large family of relations. They differed only in appearance. They shared a common language and could communicate freely with each other. Each had their own special powers and gifts. They shared knowledge and learned from each other and, most importantly, all were equal. When Native people appeared in the present world or historic time, often as a result of some sort of an "emergence," these values of equality persisted.

It was the western attitude of mankind's absolute right of dominance over other life forms that set the stage for the death of Macho B. To the AZGFD, Macho B was simply one more animal that existed only at, and for, the pleasure of mankind. AZGFD views all wildlife – game and non-game animals - simply as being "resources" to be "managed." This is not to say that individuals who work for AZGFD are callous or uncaring in their feelings towards wildlife – many wildlife officials profess to "love" the animals they are assigned to manage. Most certainly many who had knowledge or experience with Macho B formed, at some level, a degree of personal attachment to him. But he was still never more than an animal to them. Whatever personal feelings they might have had for Macho B, it was entirely prefaced on the view that he was nothing more than an *object* – and to some, nothing more than a piece of *property*. One of the saddest aspects of the life of Macho B and his encounters with mankind is that almost no human that impacted upon

his life – including those who have so often since his death publicly professed to love him – ever offered him any measure of respect or dignity as an individual.

What if Macho B had been a livestock killer? Perhaps he might have been hunted down and killed, or more likely captured and put in a zoo. The fact is that Macho B was only allowed to be a jaguar *on our terms*. Whenever the actions of any animal come in conflict with the interests of mankind, the animal *always* loses. They are no exceptions to this rule.

Earlier in this essay I referred to the historical war on wildlife that led to the destruction of so many predators. Most Americans are probably unaware of the fact that this war continues today through a special branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This agency, once known as Animal Damage Control and later to be ironically re-named “Wildlife Services” in an attempt to make their grisly work more palatable to a uniformed public – or perhaps because their first choice of names - “Friends of Animals” had already been taken by another organization - shoots, traps, and poisons over a million animals every year. This terrible harvest – which includes nearly 100,000 coyotes annually – is carried out largely to protect property interests. This program, in my estimation, is one of the single greatest wastes of taxpayer money imaginable and cannot be justified either morally or economically. In addition, it should also be added that AZGFD also kills – or sanctions the killing by livestock owners – of hundreds of bears and mountain lions every year for the same reason. Several years ago AZGFD also initiated a program to exterminate mountain lions in order to reintroduce desert bighorn sheep – for the purpose of creating future hunting opportunities - into a range where they had never historically existed.

Make no mistake about this important point: When AZGFD tranquilized and collared Macho B they were engaging in the ultimate act of dominion over him. Prior to that moment, Macho B had been a wild free animal who had, for over a decade, eluded their best efforts to capture and subdue him. The moment they slipped the collar over his neck he became their property. It was also the moment that Macho B began to die not only physically, but even more importantly, spiritually. One of the most disturbing images of the Macho B tragedy was a photograph that AZGFD proudly displays on their website – and which has now been seen world-wide – of this once proud animal standing but clearly still in a drug-induced state, wearing its radio collar like a common household pet.

The second broad area I would like to address is the denial of western society of recognizing the *rights* of individual animals. Wildlife agencies such as AZGFD are interested in only one thing: managing *populations* of wildlife species for the benefit of human consumption. The entire field of wildlife management is little more than a numbers game in which optimum populations of animals are maintained for hunting - or to use a more economic term, *harvest*. In such a system, animals can not be viewed as emotional, rational, and certainly not spiritual beings. To recognize a status of personhood and kinship with animals would lead to a great deal of soul searching in regard to how animals are viewed and utilized.

In contrast, Native Americans have always recognized the individual rights of animals - rights that were equal to that of humans. Most importantly these rights “stood alone” in that they were apart from and independent from the desires of humans. They were *inherent* rights. Every individual animal was believed to possess the inherent right to live and pursue its purpose – a purpose perhaps known only to the Creator. This did not preclude hunting, fishing, or gathering because Native Americans understood the cycle of life, namely that one must die so that another may live. But the act of taking or interfering with another life was a serious matter that was not taken lightly and was carried out in an appropriate manner.

There was nothing appropriate about the death of Macho B.

One of the people I have communicated with in regard to the Macho B story is Tom Holm, who is now a retired professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona. Tom is Creek-Cherokee – two Eastern tribes that have a strong jaguar tradition. In my discussions with him, he naturally, and with no effort made at being melodramatic, referred to the death of Macho B as being a “murder.” From a Native American perspective, the killing of any other being for no justifiable purpose is exactly that, a murder.

Immediately after his death, Macho B – as already noted – was skinned and his pelt sent off to be used in a full-sized body mount. His body was then dismembered and scattered to various laboratories for further scientific research. Considering the fact that AZGFD showed him no respect, nor granted him any measure of dignity in life, it is understandable that they would not do so in death. The desecration of Macho B had come full circle.

On their Macho B webpage, AZGFD describes their intent to utilize the remains of any jaguar – in this case Macho B - mostly for educational purposes. There is also a rather nebulous statement about providing jaguar remains for “Native American religious use.” I have talked to people in the cultural and/or natural resource programs of the two tribes in southern Arizona who are most likely to utilize the jaguar for ceremonial purposes, the Tohono O’odham and Yaqui. Neither tribe has been contacted by AZGFD. In all probability, AZGFD’s statement amounts to little more than “window dressing” and that they never had any real plan of offering the remains of any jaguar to tribes for ceremonial use. It is also possible that due to the nature of Macho B’s death, any of his body parts might be considered so tainted as to be useless or perhaps even dangerous for any ceremonially purpose. If AZGFD truly had respect for Native American spiritual beliefs – and for Macho B – they would have given his entire body to one of these tribes, if not for ceremonial use, then simply to be returned to the mountains where he could rest in peace. Most importantly, it is my hope that if AZGFD approaches any of the sovereign tribes of Arizona in the future regarding their desire to conduct research on tribal land, or perhaps to discuss any cooperative project that requires mutual trust, that an honest discussion takes place over the Macho B tragedy. And finally, if AZGFD approaches a tribe requesting permission to conduct jaguar research on their land, I would hope the

tribe responds with a great measure of skepticism and with a memorandum of understanding that no jaguar will be captured and collared.

Closing Thoughts

Native Americans knew that a hunter never simply went into the forest and killed a deer. If the hunter was successful, it was because he prayed, made offerings, and perhaps performed a ceremony which enabled him to hunt with a good heart. In turn he was rewarded by a deer presenting itself to be killed. In sum, the deer offered its life so that the natural cycle could go on. After the kill, the spirit of the deer returned to its own people and told them of the respectful and appropriate behavior of the hunter. If satisfied with the actions of the hunter, the Deer People would again offer themselves to him in the future.

In a like manner, Macho B offered himself to humans for over 13 years. During this time he *chose* on his own terms to teach us, to share his secrets, and to give all of us a glimpse into his private life. But for AZGFD and a handful of other people, the knowledge that Macho B shared was not enough. For them and the value system they represent, it is never enough.

I wonder what message Macho B took back to his kinspeople?

The late Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. noted that a great gulf exists between the way western science and traditional tribal people handled knowledge. Western science *forces* secrets from nature whereas Native Americans have always *accepted* secrets from the rest of creation. Western science also has the tendency to see the unknown and the unexplained as being an anomaly to be ignored, and perhaps even feared, until such time it can “scientifically proven” and placed within a body of rational accepted knowledge. Tribal people accepted the unknown and the unexplained with reverence. They also knew that some things could not, and perhaps should not, be explained. In the tribal world some things are better left a mystery. It is those mysteries that keep tribal people humble and respectful to powers greater than themselves. In contrast, Western science – which answers to no higher power – sees no limit in its quest for knowledge. It is obsessed with the desire to know everything, and arrogantly believes it to be their entitlement to know everything. It was this obsession to know mysteries that we are perhaps not meant to know, that resulted in the death of Macho B.

In the days following the death of Macho B, many of the people who were directly involved in killing this jaguar wrote eloquently of their deep personal feelings toward him and of their own sense of personal loss. Often these testimonials seem to cross the

scientific threshold into a realm I doubt they could truly understand. One wrote: “But at least his last sights and conscious thoughts were high on a mountain overlooking his favorite haunts. May his spirit roam there forever ...” I wonder if in the mind’s eye of this individual and others, the spiritual jaguar they envision is wearing a collar?

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¹ The title of this essay is obviously borrowed from Vine Deloria, Jr.'s class book *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969). I wish to thank Susan Harjo, Tom Holm, Will Tsosie, and Rick Wheelock for reading an earlier draft of this essay and offering their comments and suggestions. The author alone accepts full responsibility for the content and analysis made in this essay.

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