



Ratings Don't Last, Good Journalism Does

by David F. Briggs

During the week of July 15, 2013, Tony Davis, environmental reporter for the Arizona Daily Star, published three articles on the draft biological opinion for the proposed Rosemont Copper project, which was prepared by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This 418 page document deals with potential impacts that the Rosemont Copper project may have on nine endangered or threatened species, which are known to occur in the northern portion of the Santa Rita mountains.



**David F. Briggs at Rosemont, the Future Site of Arizona's
Next 21st Century Copper Mine**

Anyone reading of these articles would find it very difficult to learn this fact, because eight of the nine endangered or threatened species in the draft biological opinion are only very briefly mentioned. Instead of reporting on all the rare resident species discussed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mr. Davis focused exclusively on the jaguar, which is currently represented by a single transitory male, observed on several occasions in the Whetstone and Santa Rita Mountains since November 2011.

Providing layered context for statements made in a lengthy report is more difficult than printing the sensational secondary headline that appeared in the Arizona Daily Star's July 17th article: "But Rosemont may kill country's only big cat, Fish & Wildlife says". Mr. Davis reluctantly retracted this quote in his article of July 18 only after succeeding in his goal of inflaming the passions of many readers.

The sole purpose of Mr. Davis' articles seems to have been to argue that the Rosemont Copper project will negatively impact this lone jaguar and ultimately threaten the critical habitat of the entire species. His articles fail to convey an objective and balanced presentation of the draft biological opinion, which covers both impacts and mitigations and is the product of nearly four years of painstaking scientific research and evaluation. These articles are examples of journalism at its worst and unworthy of the citizens of southeastern Arizona.

The Arizona Daily Star's articles are completely silent on the positive benefits that have resulted from the preparation of the draft biological opinion. This document summarizes the results of numerous professional publications on the jaguar and eight other endangered or threatened species that may be affected by this proposed mining project. Scientific data gathered during the permitting process has added considerable information to our existing knowledge base on these species and the habitats where they are found. There would be less incentive and private funds available to study this area in detail without the need for evaluations required by law for Rosemont Copper's responsible efforts to develop a 21st century copper mine at this site.

The mitigation efforts designed to protect the jaguar include conservation measures in the Davidson Canyon watershed, at Sonoita Creek Ranch, Helvetia Ranch North and in other areas; restoring lost springs, establishing woody vegetation preferred by these animals and conducting camera studies and biological monitoring programs. It also requires Rosemont Copper to fund these and similar projects, which will greatly benefit efforts to protect the jaguar and other species and preserve wildlife habitats for many years into the future.

Acknowledgment: The title of this guest opinion is a quote from [Dan Rather](#), former news anchor of the CBS Evening News.

Disclaimer: David F. Briggs is a resident of Pima county and a geologist, who has intermittently worked on the Rosemont Copper project since 2006. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Rosemont Copper.

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