

ANIMAL MASKS IN MEXICAN FOLK ART

A mask is an artificial face. When it is worn by someone, it hides that person's identity and allows them to pretend they are someone or something else. Masks are worn by people in every part of the world. In Mexico, masks are an important part of Folk Art. They have been used for thousands of years. People wear different types of masks for different reasons. Some masks are meant to be worn on religious holidays, while others are used for play and celebration. Some masks are based on real figures; others are based on make-believe characters. Some masks are made to look like people; others like animals. According to a traditional belief in Mexico, every man and woman shares a common destiny with an animal counterpart called a Tono(a). The Tono of Tezcatlipoca, a very important god in Aztec mythology, was the jaguar; popularly known throughout Mexico as the *tigre*. The jaguar is the most feared and respected of all animals in Mexico. In traditional harvest dances, the jaguar brings the corn to the church to be blessed before the people can eat it.

Web Sites

- <http://www.savethejaguar.com> - all about jaguars
- <http://www.wcs.org/> - The Wildlife Conservation Society saves wildlife and wild lands.
- <http://teensforplanetearth.org/> - This site is here to help YOU protect this amazing planet we call home.
- <http://www.kidsgowild.com/> - gives you the chance to get involved in conservation by joining Conservation Kids
- <http://www.savingwildplaces.com/>

Books By Alan Rabinowitz

- Jaguar* - One man's struggle to set up the world's first jaguar preserve Island Press, U.S. Softcover. 2000
- Chasing the Dragon's Tail* - Struggle to save Thailand's wild cats. Island Press, New York. 2002.
- Beyond the Last Village* Island Press/Shearwater Books. 2003.

Other books

- Journey of the Nightly Jaguar* by Burton Albert and Robert Roth Inspired by Maya legend, the sun becomes a jaguar at night, stalking through the jungle until it appears again as the sun in the eastern sky. (Atheneum, 1996)
- The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynn Cherry This book proclaims a conservation message about the most widely studied endangered habitat, the South American rainforest (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990)
- Jaguar* by Helen Cowcher A hunter stops when he sees the vision of the jaguar and "sinks to his knees in wonder at such power and beauty." (Scholastic Books, 1997)
- The Nine-Ton Cat, Behind the Scenes at an Art Museum* by Peggy Thomson The cat is a stone Aztec jaguar. Readers go through the Staff Only doors at the National Gallery of Art to meet the people who work behind the scenes at the museum.
- Jaguar Smile* by Salman Rushdie A brilliantly focused and haunting portrait of the people, the politics, the land, and the poetry of Nicaragua. (Vintage Canada, 2003)
- Looking for Jaguar and Other Rain Forest Poems* by Susan Katz A book of poems (Greenwillow, 2005)



Alan's World



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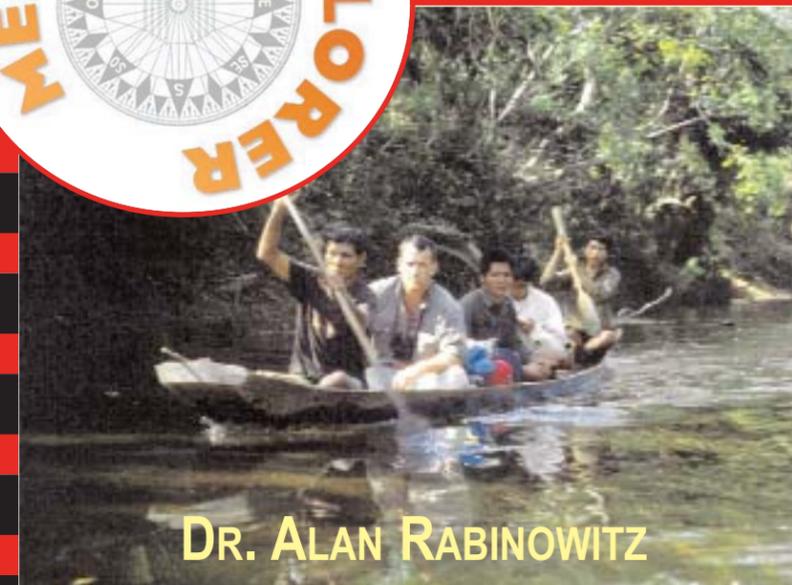


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DR. ALAN RABINOWITZ

INDIANA JONES

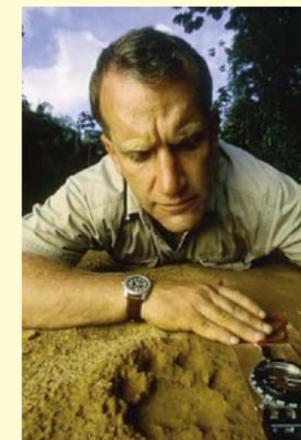
Dubbed the "Indiana Jones" of wildlife science by The New York Times, Dr. Rabinowitz's life has all the elements of a riveting adventure story. Dr. Alan Rabinowitz graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1981 with a M.S. in zoology and a Ph.D. in wildlife ecology. He is currently the Director of the Science and Exploration Division for the Wildlife Conservation Society based at the Bronx Zoo in New York.

GOALS

Dr. Rabinowitz's goal in life, and the mission of his Science and Exploration Division, is to find and survey the world's last wild places, with the intention of saving as much land in protected areas as he can and securing homes for some of the world's most endangered large mammals. At the present time, Dr. Rabinowitz is firmly committed to the success of two incredibly important, long term objectives: establishing and securing a contiguous wild jaguar corridor on public and private lands ranging from Mexico to Argentina; and setting up the world's largest tiger reserve (an area nearly the size of Vermont) in the Hukaung Valley of northern Myanmar that will benefit both people and wildlife.

WORKING AROUND THE WORLD

He has traveled extensively, concentrating his research efforts in places such as Belize, Borneo, Taiwan, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar (Burma). He has studied jaguars, clouded leopards, Asiatic leopards, tigers, Sumatran rhinos and other large mammal species.

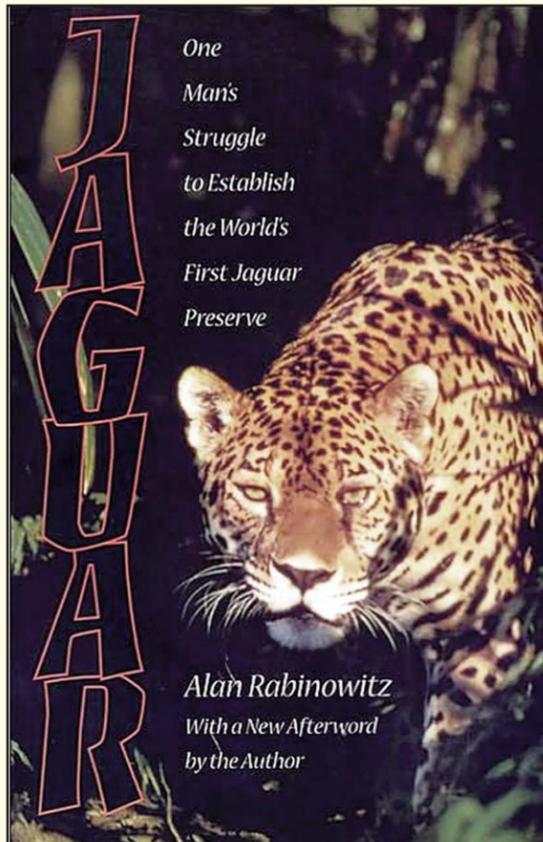


MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

He has published over 75 scientific and popular articles and 6 books. His first two books *Jaguar* and *Chasing the Dragon's Tail* are popular accounts of his adventures in Belize and Thailand. His recent popular book, *Beyond the Last Village*, takes the reader on an intensely personal journey through his adventures, explorations, and discoveries in Myanmar.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SPECIAL

Dr. Rabinowitz's ground-breaking work with jaguars, as well as his personal hurdles, are documented in an award-winning National Geographic television special "In Search of the Jaguar" which airs on November 26 on PBS (Channel 13 locally). You can also learn more about jaguars on the November 27 "Kids News" story on Channel 13.



Yaguara, the South American Indian word for jaguar, literally means the animal that kills in a single bound. The elusive, spotted-coat cats secretly stalk their prey until just the right moment. Then they pounce with a graceful thud; In one leap the cats must snap their prey's spine or else go hungry.

BIOLOGY (bi-ol-o-gy)
THE STUDY OF LIVING ORGANISMS, DIVIDED INTO MANY SPECIFIED FIELDS

Jaguars, unlike all other large cats, aren't very fast; they can't chase down prey over long distances. Jaguars are the largest cat in the western hemisphere. In comparison with the leopard, the jaguar is generally larger and much stockier, with a broad heavy head, and much shorter legs and tail. Jaguars are included in the group of the four roaring cats. The roar has been likened to a series of hoarse coughs which function as a means of proclaiming territorial boundaries and announcing their presence. The Tucano Indians of the Amazon believe the roar of the jaguar is the sound of thunder.

IN THE WORDS OF ALAN RABINOWITZ:

AS A YOUNG BOY GROWING UP IN A BIG CITY

Most people in my field talk about growing up with animals. I grew up in New York City. I never saw a living cow until I went to college in Maryland. I suffered from a severe stutter, so it was painful for me to be around people. My problem was so extreme that I was put in a special class in school that included "problem" children. It was horrible. But I discovered that I did not stutter when I sang or when I talked to animals. Animals had no expectations. I had lots of pets, the kind you buy at pet stores, like gerbils and snakes. They were my instruments of expression. Even then I saw that many of the animals I owned should not be sold in pet stores. They were exotic and not expected to live long away from their wild environment. But animals helped me to survive my childhood and so I wanted to become a voice for them to help them survive.

AN AVID READER

I consumed books on adventure. Richard Burton in particular. I dreamed of being in a place where I could not speak the language and therefore not have to talk. I craved immersing myself in wild places. The people there were not judgmental and the animals were making a last stand.

CHOOSING A CAREER

In college I was introduced to camping. For a city boy this was at first terrifying, there were too many places for bad people to hide! But soon I just loved it. In the dark by the fire all my tension melted away. I wanted a career that merged my love of animals, that was physically demanding, and involved science. Ecology was then an emerging science. It seemed to offer what I wanted. But it was only offered in four graduate schools at that time and I chose the University of Tennessee.

BEGINNING EXPLORATIONS

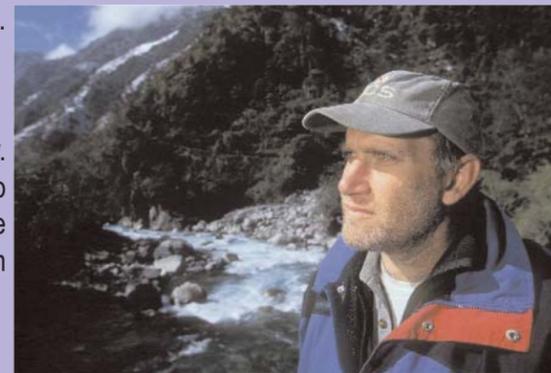


{Beginning my explorations} was due to my meeting George Schaller. He came down to Tennessee to meet me because I was then conducting a study of black bears in the Smokey Mountains. He was about to go study pandas and thought my study might help him understand pandas. During our hikes, he asked me what I wanted to do. I said I wanted to live an adventurous life, explore, and do something meaningful, but I didn't know how to make it into a career. Two weeks later he called and asked me to go to Belize to study jaguars. I had no idea where Belize was, but said yes immediately. He gave me \$600 and said I had six weeks to do a survey.

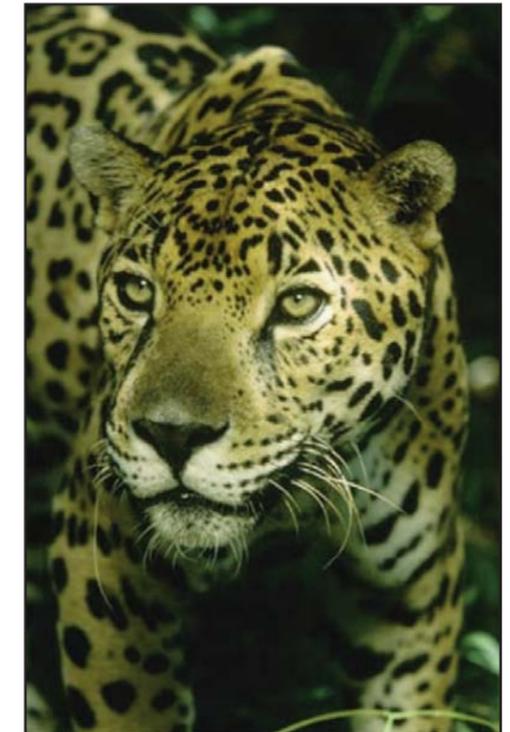
FOCUSING ON JAGUARS

Well I stretched it (six weeks) to eight weeks! At that time jaguars were numerous. In fact, while I was in Belize, a puma wandered into the capital city! I spent those 8 weeks traveling on buses and then hiking in traverses cross-country looking for signs of jaguars. After I sent George my report, he asked me to return to make the first study of jaguars in the rain forest. I went back from 1979 to 1981. I lived with Mayan Indians and learned to speak their language. They helped me survey and find and collar the jaguars. The result was the establishment of a preserve for jaguars. I discuss those experiences in my first book, Jaguar.

MOVING TO THE BRONX ZOO, HOME OF THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
George Schaller and the Bronx Zoo then hired me. It was an incredible opportunity. George told me I could work where I wanted to as long as I could justify it. I wanted to attempt the hardest study I could find in the most difficult terrain. I chose to study the clouded leopard, which used to range throughout South East Asia. I found them from Borneo to Thailand.



ZOOLOGY (zo-ol-o-gy)
THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF THE BEHAVIOR, STRUCTURE, PHYSIOLOGY, CLASSIFICATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF ANIMALS



Jaguar numbers have dropped steeply in the last hundred years. According to Scott Silver, a project coordinator for WCS's Jaguar Conservation Program, no one knows for sure how many jaguars remain in the wild. He believes the number is only in the thousands. The main cause for this drop is people, says Rabinowitz. Ranchers shoot jaguars to try to protect their animals. Jaguars are also endangered because of deforestation.

ECOLOGY (e-col-o-gy)
THE BRANCH OF BIOLOGY THAT DEALS WITH THE RELATIONS OF ORGANISMS TO ONE ANOTHER AND TO THEIR PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

Jaguars once lived from Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico all the way to southern Argentina. Since 1900, the amount of land fit for jaguars to live in has decreased by more than half. Today, wild jaguar families no longer live anywhere in the United States.

The primary habitats of the jaguar include the dense tropical rain forests and swampy grasslands of Central and South America, although they have been found at altitudes above 8000 feet. In the damp forest habitat, jaguars like to roam close to rivers, streams and lakes and are strong swimmers.