

The Jaguar's Shadow – Searching for a Mythic Cat by Richard Mahler.
Yale University Press 2009.

A passion for a particular creature can be life-transforming and life-enhancing, and it also carries the risk of being soul-destroying if the creature in question is so rare or elusive that sighting it in the wild is a near impossibility.

Richard Mahler, an award-winning writer on a range of subjects, including travel and culture, has chronicled in *The Jaguar's Shadow* his own quest for that imperilled, elusive, and staggeringly beautiful big cat. He describes not only his extensive searches for it through southern states in the USA, Central and South America but also his encounters with jaguar enthusiasts and experts – from former hunters turned trackers and naturalists, to indefatigable scientists and conservationists, to impassioned zoo keepers.

As *The Jaguar's Shadow* unfolds, Mahler describes his experiences and emotions with great honesty, drawing the reader in to the places he visits and the passion he feels for his quarry; at the same time he explains the place of the jaguar in the culture of north and south America, its history and biology, and the frequently blood-stained close relationship between it and human beings over the millennia.

The Jaguar's Shadow is a fine piece of natural history writing, with added value, and the reader is left with an appreciation of the intense joy to be felt from seeing one of the marvels of the natural world in the wild as well as deep concern about the fragility of the jaguar's future. Did Richard Mahler fulfil his quest? For the answer to that you will have to read the book!

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh