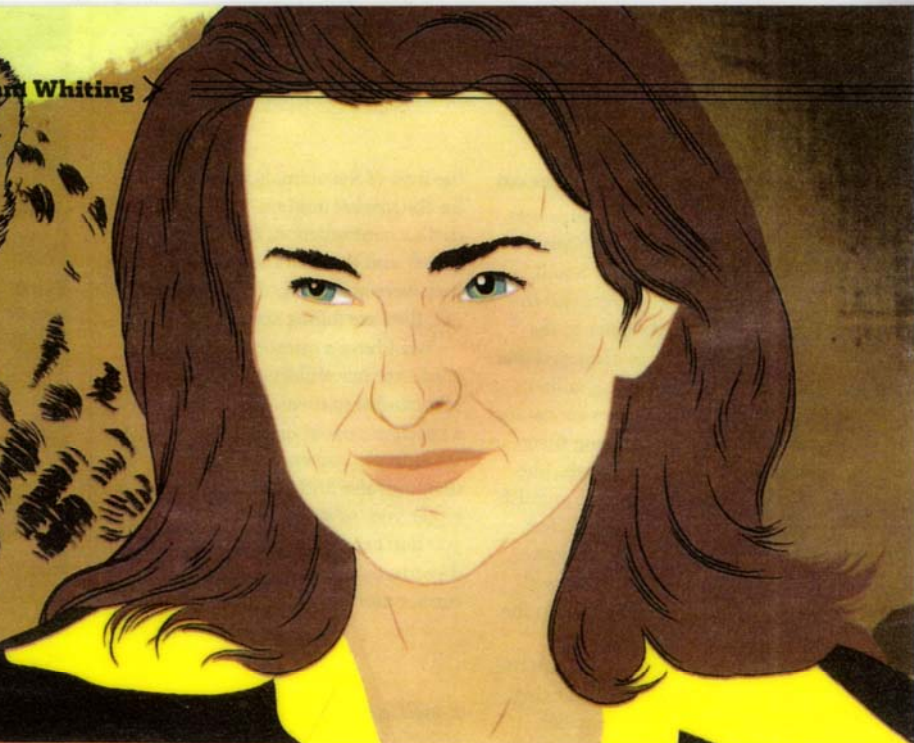
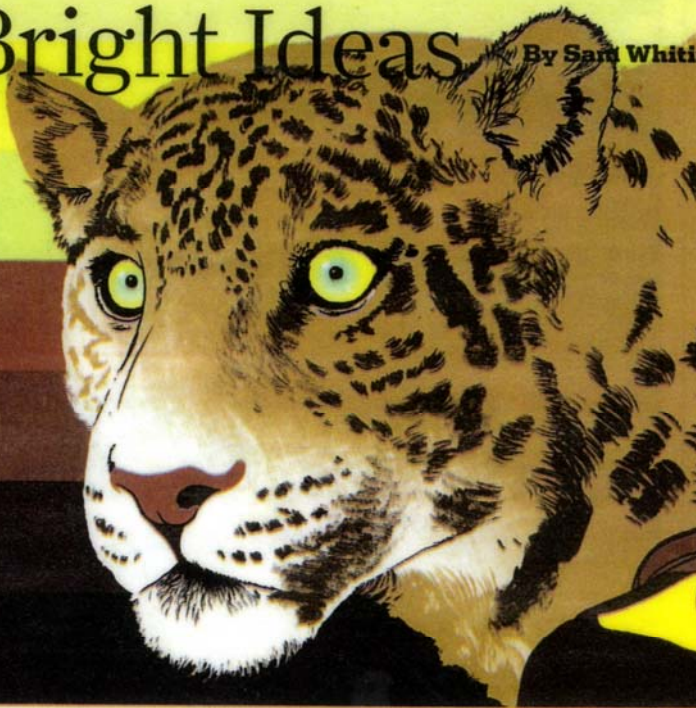


# Bright Ideas By Sam Whiting



## BIOLOGIST HEALY HAMILTON ON ALL THE OTHER LIFE-FORMS THE BORDER FENCE WOULD KEEP OUT

**J**aguars have no use for walls at national borders, and neither does Healy Hamilton, Ph.D. Hamilton, 45, a biologist at the California Academy of Sciences, would like to see animals roaming North America top to bottom.

**"I GREW UP** in San Rafael, in a household where we competed to see how many dishes we could fit in a dishwasher, to not be wasteful of water and energy. My mother, Lee Ross, was a relatively celebrated local environmentalist in Marin County in the 1970s, before it was hip. She was on the board of Save the Whales. She's still pulling invasive Scotch broom off the hillsides at age 73.

**MY COLLEAGUES AT** the Academy of Sciences are incredible experts at identifying and describing new species. My job is to map the knowledge they have provided about life on earth into patterns.

**I AM A SCHIZOPHRENIC** scientist. My Ph.D. from UC Berkeley is in integrative biology and I've taken that very literally. I weave it all to-

gether to understand current patterns of life on earth and how those patterns are shifting.

**I MODEL HOW** species are responding to climate change, and I'm modeling species moving right out of the areas that we've designated to protect them. If we don't have a place for species to go, they may go locally extinct. The border wall will go from San Diego almost uninterrupted to the Gulf of Mexico. It's not like wildlife can just go around it. The border wall is right now about to sever the room that animals need to roam in.

**IT IS AN ECOLOGICAL** fact that healthy populations have to move across the landscape and that fragmentation is the major nail in the coffin of a population. It makes two less stable populations where one stable population once was. Endangered jaguars, wolves and Sonoran pronghorn antelopes depend on borderland habitat that doesn't recognize political boundaries.

**WE HAVE THREE** wildlife refuges, a national conservation area and a national monument, all of which will be adversely affected by the border wall. There is an irony in spending millions of dollars to protect habitat and then spending millions of dollars to destroy the habitat we just spent millions of dollars to protect.

**FOR THOSE OF** us who care about jaguars, there is a healthy population just across the border in northern

**THE LIGHTBULB: I was at a workshop in Tucson and climbed a mountain near the Mexico border. You could look south over an open, parched landscape. I imagined what it would be like as an animal trying to find food and a mate and a place to rear its young. I could see where the border wall will reverse decades of conservation effort in the Southwest. Instead we should be thinking about conservation on the scale of an entire continent.**

Mexico. The jaguar is a beautiful cat that used to live all over western North America. It's a top predator. It's like the lion of North America. It's been hunted to near extinction

and has been on the federal endangered species list since 1972.

**IF THERE WAS** a recovery plan, this border wall would be illegal, but it's part of this administration's attempt to gut the Endangered Species Act. I can't say what the McCain administration would do any differently than the Bush administration. We would hope that a Democratic administration would recognize that the border wall is not the solution for human migration, and it is an incredibly detrimental policy for wildlife migration.

**A REMOTE CAMERA** has recorded a male jaguar that is currently living in remote mountains of Arizona. They want to come back. The border will eliminate any chance the jaguar has of returning to the United States. If we want healthy wild ecosystems, then jaguars need to be present as well. Look at Marin. It is overrun with deer because we eliminated the mountain lion."

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