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Mexican Send-off Festivities Honor 5,000 Mile Trekker *Surprises abound during 6-day exploration of remote Jaguar Reserve*

Wilderness explorer and outdoor adventurer, John Davis, began a 5,000-mile TrekWest on January 25, 2013, his second long-distance journey to promote the importance of wildlife corridors in maintaining human and wildlife communities. Beginning in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, Davis will bike, hike, canoe and ski along the Rocky Mountains, and is expected to complete his trek in Fernie, British Columbia in November 2013. He will continue his journey to Alaska the following year.

The adventure began with a resounding TrekWest launch ceremony in Hermosillo, Sonora and a day-long send-off fiesta hosted by the tiny village of Sahuaripa at the southern edge of the vast [Northern Jaguar Reserve](#). Following these festivities, he spent the first six days of his historic conservation journey alternating between hiking and riding horseback through some of the toughest terrain he may face on his 5,000-mile international trek to promote wildlife corridor protection.

“I’m honored to have been received almost like a dignitary,” said Davis of the outpouring of public support he’s received. “Even though I have to rely on an interpreter to deliver my message of [Say Yes to Wildlife Corridors](#), the wonderful people of Sonora have had no trouble grasping the importance of healthy and connected wildlife habitat. And once they’re engaged they realize that there are connectivity projects they can support right here in Sonora.”

Davis’ TrekWest partners in Sonora, including Mexico’s best-known conservation organization, [Naturalia](#), and Northern Jaguar Project, which manages the 70-square-mile jaguar reserve, played a huge role in generating local excitement and interest in the adventure. “Naturalia’s regional director, Juan Carlos Bravo, was treated like a conservation rock star,” says Davis, who was joined by scores of bicycle riders as he left Hermosillo heading for Sahuaripa, where a community fiesta organized by Northern Jaguar Project flooded the streets with young students holding drawings of that region’s fabled icon of the wild.

The send-offs were quickly followed by Davis’ first miles on the trail of TrekWest, a week of hiking and riding horseback through some of the most difficult terrain he has ever encountered. Riding horseback

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with a group of local residents in a traditional “cabalgata” procession, he immediately experienced what he says was “one of the scariest 10 minutes I’ve known,” passing through dense, head-high thorn scrub along the steep side of a canyon on a fortunately surefooted packhorse. “Any misstep could have been disastrous,” said the adventurer, who admitted he hadn’t ridden in more than 15 years.

But Davis’ challenges, which were punctuated by sightings of coveted jaguar and ocelot tracks, were not over, as the trekker had to wade the cold, swift, chest-deep water at the confluence of the Aros and Bavispe rivers— carrying his backpack above his head — before exiting the jaguar reserve. Once out of the reserve and into more hikeable terrain, Davis realized for the first time the value of the beautiful handcrafted Zuni jaguar fetish he carried in his pocket for good luck.

Davis next joins partners from [Tutuaca Mountain School](#) and [Cuenca los Ojos](#) for the trek east across the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental into Chihuahua, and north to the U.S.-Mexico border at Cajon Bonito to view the corridor fragmentation posed by miles of border security infrastructure.

Part of his journey will recreate the first boots-on-the-ground conservation trek completed in 1999 by [Karsten Heuer](#) when he hiked from Yellowstone National Park to the Yukon. Karsten is now President of the [Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative](#) (Y2Y), which seeks to protect this intact mountain ecosystem. This new journey will help answer the question, ‘What shape is the Yellowstone to Yukon region actually in today?’ Y2Y is one of many [proud partners in the TrekWest](#) project and will be co-hosting the leg of John’s trip from Jackson, WY to Fernie, BC in the late summer and early fall of 2013.

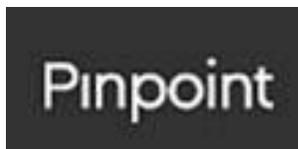
For more information about TrekWest visit [trekwest.org](#) where Wildlands Network’s petition promoting protection of wildlife habitat corridors can be signed, and where Davis’ regular blogs, posts and tweets can be seen along with TrekWest trail maps, photos, and more.

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