

**Proposal for Master's thesis Lisa Söhn:
Qualitative study of the kodkod's human-environment context**

South America's smallest wild cat, the kodkod or güiña (*Leopardus guigna*), is considered "vulnerable with a decreasing population trend". Besides habitat loss, population decline is strongly associated with retribution killing after attacks on poultry.

The objective of my study is to assess the local perceptions and knowledge about kodkods in order to analyse the human-felid conflict, enabling to derive conservation strategies.

Qualitative interviews with indigenous Mapuche people and other socio-cultural groups of landowners will be conducted in the Cautín province, Chile. The rural population of the three districts of Curarrehue, Pucón and Villarica will form the target group of the study. Based on an initial evaluation, stakeholders will be classified into socio-cultural groups, which are anticipated to include Mapuche communities, large scale landowners and protected area managers. The interviews will explore the implications for future land use and cultural landscapes, based on knowledge, perceptions, conflicts and cultural relationships with the kodkod. The interviews will be conducted in form of qualitative semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which will be tape-recorded. Topics covered are people's knowledge of the ecology of kodkod cats and of its presence on their land, personal experiences and their socio-cultural and spiritual importance. After transcription, the interview data will be analysed using content analysis or grounded theory. With the help of indicators, the analysed data will be used to evaluate the kodkod as a cultural key stone species.