

Living In Cougar Country

Observing and Avoiding Conflict with America's Lion

As with any wild animal, do not approach a wild cougar. Use binoculars to get a closer view.

Cougar attacks on humans are extremely rare. In North America, only 20 fatal attacks have been reported in the last 100 years. Today, sightings and reports of cougars are on the rise. As human development continues to expand and wild habitat dwindles, the more likely people are to encounter a cougar.

Here are some steps you can take to avoid human-cougar conflicts:

- Do not feed wild cougars.
- Do not feed deer or other wildlife. Remove vegetation on your property that encourages deer to feed. Remember, predators follow prey.
- Keep pets indoors or in a secure shelter at night. Do not let your pets run free. Accompany them outside. Do not leave pet food outside.
- Keep farm animals/poultry in sheds or barns at night, especially during calving or lambing season.
- Do not let children play unattended outside.
- Store garbage in cans with tight lids to discourage small mammals that may attract cougars.
- Light up walkways and remove vegetation that may be hiding places for cougars. Keep garage, barn or shed doors shut.

Ask your neighbors to follow these steps too.

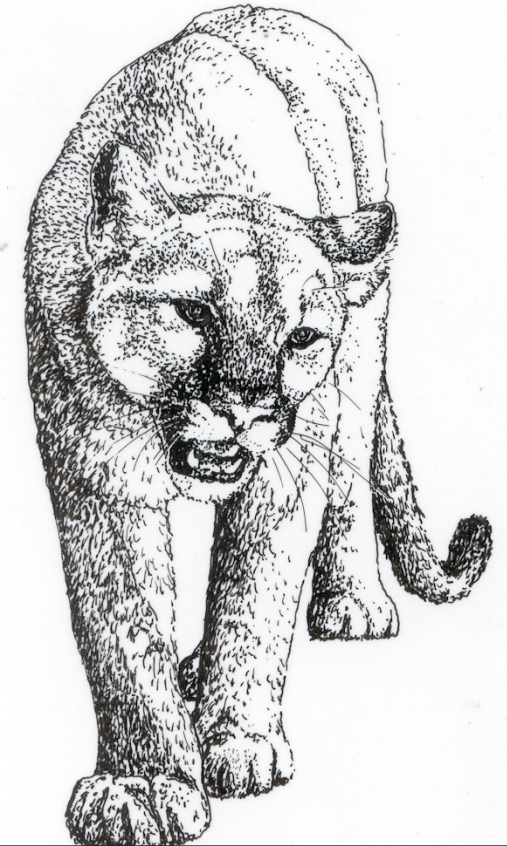
While hiking/camping in cougar country, you can avoid encounters by following these steps:

- Do not hike or jog alone. Go out in small groups and stay together. Make noise to avoid surprising a cougar.
- Keep small children close to the group. Do not let them go too far ahead or lag behind.
- Do not stay near a dead animal, particularly one that appears to have been cached (partially covered with dirt or leaves).
- Keep a clean camp area. Do not leave pets at the campsite alone.

If you encounter a cougar:

- Stop, stand up tall and **DO NOT RUN**. Pick up small children, control pets.
- Face the cougar and talk to it firmly, while backing away. Give the cat an escape route away from you too. **DO NOT TURN YOUR BACK.**
- Make yourself look bigger. Example: wave backpack, open up your jacket, stand on a stump.
- If the cat does not leave, yell and scream and wave arms. Be assertive. Convince the cat that you are not prey. **DO NOT BEND OVER TO PICK UP OBJECTS TO THROW.** Doing so will make you appear small and weak.
- If the cougar attacks, fight back! Generally, if you are aggressive enough the cat will realize it has made a mistake and flee.

Living With Predators



Cougar

Puma concolor

Can You Identify A Cougar?

- Cougars are members of the Felid (cat) family they are known by many different names; such as: mountain lions, pumas, ghost cats, tygers, catamounts, screamers, painters and panthers.
- The cougar's scientific name, *Felis concolor*, means "cat of one color." Their plain coat is reddish brown or tawny. They have a black muzzle with white lips, black ears and black tipped tails. Kittens are born spotted with ringed tails. They lose their spots by the time they reach adulthood.
- Males can measure seven feet from nose to the tip of the tail. Cougars tails are three feet long, a third of the cat's total body length. They stand about 2 feet tall at the shoulder. Females can weigh 90-120 lbs. and males can weigh 130-200 lbs. they are the largest cat in North America
- Cougars vocalize with bird like chirps and purrs. High pitched screams are territorial calls that can travel over long distances.
- They are most active at dawn and dusk; this is when sightings may occur.



The size of a cougar track is approximately 2 1/2 to 3 inches long. Like most cats, the cougar's claws are retractable. They release the claws from protective sheaths when attacking prey. *Note the lack of nail prints in the track.*

Cougar Facts

Range: Cougars once had the widest range of any wild mammal in the Americas. Today in the United States, they are found in only 12 western states, Texas and the Florida Everglades. They can also be found in Canada and parts of South America. Once eliminated from their eastern U.S. range, reports of cougar sighting are starting to increase. Although there are no verified cougar populations in the east, it suggests that the cat is trying to return to its historic range. Because of their elusive nature, it is difficult to know exactly how many cougars there are in the wild.

Habitat: Cougars are found in high mountain elevations, deserts, swamps, grasslands, pine forests and tropical forests.

Diet: The diet of a cougar consists primarily of deer and elk. A cougar can bring down prey twice its own body size. They also prey on mountain goats and sheep, moose, antelope, coyote, bobcat, porcupines, raccoons, beaver, rabbits, rodents, birds, reptiles and wild pigs. They have also been known to occasionally prey on livestock and small pets. Cougars will cache, or store large prey by covering it with grass, leaves or dirt, and eat from it for several days.

Young: Male and female cougars will pair up briefly for breeding. The cats normally breed every other year and have no particular breeding season. Typically, the kittens are born in the spring, early summer or early fall. A female's gestation is 93-98 days (three months). Two to four kittens are born in a den made in a thicket, shallow cave or rock overhang. The kittens stay with the mother until they are about a year and a half old. Females raise the kittens alone, and teach them all they need to be successful hunters. Once the young are mature, they disperse to find their own territories.

Agility/Habits: The cougar is a very powerful cat. Using its strong legs and long tail it can make horizontal leaps of 16 to 20 feet. Cougars are solitary animals. Each cat has its own established territory or home range that can cover 75-100 square miles. Male territories overlap several females' in that area. If a cougar is killed or vacates an established territory, a transient, or roaming cougar of the same sex will usually quickly take over that area.

Status: In most western states cougars are managed as a game animals, through regulated hunting. Cougars are protected in California and Florida. The Florida subspecies of cougar, commonly called Florida panthers, (*Felis concolor coryi*), are listed as an endangered species. There are only 30-40 left in the wild.

RANGE



Contact Numbers:

If you need to report a problem with cougars call:

1-866-4USDAWS toll free

Poaching Hotline:

1-800-662DEER toll free

**For more information
about cougars, please call:**

Utah's Hogle Zoo at 801-582-1631

or visit our web site at:

www.hoglezoo.org

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