

**MOVEMENT PATTERNS OF MALE AND FEMALE COUGARS
(*PUMA CONCOLOR*): IMPLICATIONS FOR HARVEST
VULNERABILITY**

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Abstract: Prior to 1996 the use of hounds was permitted to hunt cougars in Washington State and since then and the approval of Voter Initiative I-655 the use of hounds was banned for hunting cougars. Harvest data shows a preponderance of male cougars in the harvest prior to 1996 and a preponderance (~60%) of young-aged females in the harvest after hound hunting was made illegal. Conventional understanding is that hound hunters select for males because hunters have the opportunity to assess the sex and trophy quality of cougars that are treed, which allows hound hunters to select for male cougars. Since hound hunting was banned hunters purchased permits along with other big game permits and harvest of cougars has been either incidental to hunting other species or by using predator calls or stalking cougars in snow. This harvest strategy is considered, by some, to provide hunters with little opportunity to select sex and age of cougars harvested. We analyzed movement data from 22 cougars that were marked with GPS collars and have obtained > 16,000 GPS locations in western Kittitas County Washington. Movement data from GPS locations show different travel patterns for male and female cougars. Males, which show greater distance traveled per day and larger home range areas, may be more vulnerable to hound-hunters who drive roads and search large area to search for cougar tracks for hunting. Females, on the other hand, occupy smaller home ranges and use space more intensively and may be more vulnerable to harvest by hunters who search smaller areas more intensively while hunting deer or elk. Differences in home range size and daily movements may account for differences in sex and age of cougars harvested by hunters who use hounds or those who kill cougars incidental to hunting other big game species.
