



MOUNTAIN LIONS in the United States

PHOTO: @finandfurfilms



**Ecology, behavior, signs, and
safety tips for living with lions**

www.mountainlion.org



PHOTO: @finandfurfilms

Safety When Recreating

Hiking & Camping

- Hike in pairs or groups and keep small children close.
- Keep bear spray accessible and review directions on its use. Bear spray is a good, non-lethal deterrent for lions.
- Make enough noise to avoid surprising wildlife, especially at bends in the trail. Whistles work well.
- Do not approach dead animals, especially deer or elk; they could be mountain lion prey left for a later meal.
- Keep your camp clean and store food and garbage in wildlife-proof containers away from sleeping areas.

Mountain Biking & Trail Running

- Ride with a partner or in a small group and wear a helmet.
- Talk and make noise as you go along the trail.
- Avoid running alone in mountain lion country, especially at dawn and dusk.
- Avoid running with headphones that can block out sounds around you.
- Carry bear spray.

If You Encounter a Mountain Lion

- Do not run. Running or rapid movements may be perceived as fleeing prey and can trigger an attack.
- Pick up small children and place them on your shoulders.
- Face the mountain lion and try to appear larger. Talk to it firmly and hold your ground while slowly backing away. Be careful not to trip and fall.
- Always leave the animal an escape route, even if it means stepping aside so the mountain lion can move past you. Do not expect the animal to turn and walk away.
- If the mountain lion does not leave, become more assertive and ready your bear spray. Signs of aggression (crouching, ears back, teeth bared, hissing, tail twitching, or hind legs pumping) mean it is time to shout, wave your arms, and throw anything available at the lion.
- Seeing a mountain lion does not mean you are in danger. Attacks on humans are extremely rare, and lions usually avoid people, often watching quietly until you pass by.

Does removing mountain lions decrease conflicts with pets and livestock?

Yes and No. Sometimes removing problem lions is necessary and will solve conflict. But removing adult lions can disrupt the local population, creating openings for younger lions that are more likely to get into trouble preying on pets and livestock. The best answer is prevention and coexistence. We need to work to limit attractants and prevent conflict.

Mountain Lion Safety Tips



PHOTO: National Park Service

Keep property safe in lion country

Don't feed deer, community cats, or other potential prey around your home. Prune shrubs and trees around the base to keep mountain lions from using them as hiding spots. Install wildlife-friendly lighting to illuminate walkways at night. Lighting alone will not deter a lion, but it will allow you to see your surroundings. Seal off open spaces under buildings and porches to keep lions and other wildlife from sheltering there. Keep outdoor garbage cans tightly sealed and compost secured.

Keep pets safe in lion country

Keep dogs and cats indoors especially after dusk and before dawn. Keep pet food indoors. If you feed animals outside, gather up food and water bowls and clean up spilled food. Install a fully secure, roofed kennel if you must keep pets outside.

Keep livestock safe in lion country

Confine livestock such as sheep, goats, llamas, pigs, chickens, and other fowl in secured and covered enclosures, especially at night. Consider specially trained livestock guardian dogs if you have a large herd in a remote area. Install an electric fence around areas where livestock or domestic animals are kept. Communicate with your neighbors and work together to follow these precautions.

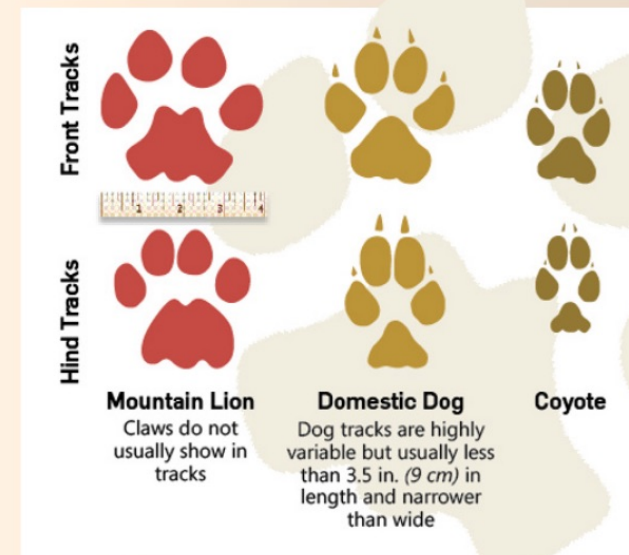
Mountain Lion Signs

You may never see a mountain lion in the wild, but you can find and interpret the signs that it leaves behind.

Scat

Mountain lions generally cover their scat (feces) with loose soil. Scat tends to be dense and segmented, blunt at both ends, and roughly the size of those left behind by a large dog. Scat may include hair, bones, and teeth from prey, and sometimes grass, but usually contain no fruit or other vegetation.

Tracks



Scrapes

Mountain lions make scrapes to communicate their presence, attract a mate, or define their territory. They make scrapes by using their hind feet to push up a mound of leaves, dirt, or other debris in conspicuous places, at junctions in canyons, and along trails and ridge lines.

Cached Kill Sites

Mountain lions typically drag large kills to a secluded site so they can return and continue to feed over several days. This is known as "caching" the kill. Lions often cover the prey with leaves, grasses, pine needles, snow, or branches to hide it from scavengers and to prevent it from spoiling. Mountain lions may stay close to the cached kill site, so it is important not to approach or linger near a dead animal.

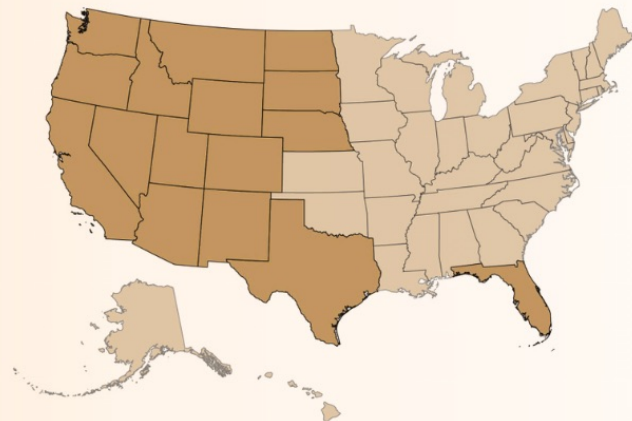
All about America's Lion

Mountain lions are also known as pumas, cougars, catamounts, or panthers. Seeing a mountain lion in the wild can be a thrilling and memorable experience, but sightings are rare due to their elusive nature.

How many mountain lions are there in the United States and where do they live?

The solitary and elusive nature of mountain lions makes them extremely difficult to count. Lion populations numbers are often calculated at the state level where the local agencies utilize a variety of methods with differing levels of precision and success. Due to this ambiguity, the Mountain Lion Foundation is unable to confidently estimate the current number of mountain lions nationwide.

There are breeding populations of lions in 16 states, mostly in the American West and Southwest. The Florida Panther represents the only known breeding population of lions east of the Mississippi River. That doesn't mean you won't see a mountain lion in other Eastern states though. Young male lions disperse hundreds to thousands of miles in search of new territory. Female lions stay closer to their birthplace. Some young cats travel vast distances through the Eastern U.S., but won't settle down unless they find a female, making these individuals transient east of the Mississippi River.



What do mountain lions eat?

Mountain lions are obligate carnivores, meaning they only eat meat. Most of the time, they eat ungulates, mostly deer. Lions will occasionally eat elk, wild pigs, rabbits, raccoons, beavers, porcupines, rodents, bighorn sheep, coyotes, and other wildlife species.

Do mountain lions prey on pets and livestock?

Rarely. Domestic sheep, goats, and chickens are more vulnerable to mountain lion predation than are cattle and horses, but these smaller livestock are also more easily protected. Securing backyard sheep, goats, llamas, pigs, chickens, and other fowl in predator proof enclosures from dusk to dawn will reduce livestock loss. Other lion deterrents include livestock guardian dogs, electric fences, and motion sensor lights and alarms.



When is mountain lion breeding season?

Mountain lions are unusual among carnivores because they breed and give birth at any time of year. However, studies in North America indicate spring and fall birth pulses. On average, females have their first litter at 2½ years of age, and they generally breed every 2 years thereafter spending 80% of their lives with kittens. Females move their nursing kittens frequently to new den sites for protection and to improve access to prey.

Do mountain lions overpopulate?

No. Mountain lion populations can self-regulate due to lions' territorial behavior, limitations from prey, and their prey's limitations to forage access. Lion densities vary based on habitat, but are typically between 1-4 adults per 100 square kilometers. Healthy lion populations can handle hunting impacts, if managed well. The greatest threats to stable lion populations are unsustainable management, habitat loss and fragmentation, vehicle strikes, wildfires, drought, rodenticides, and disease.



PHOTO: @finandfurfilms

Be a good steward at home and in the wild

By taking steps to safely coexist with mountain lions, you can help to ensure these remarkable animals remain an important part of our natural landscape.

- If a mountain lion has attacked a person, call 911.
- Report a sick or injured mountain lion to your state's wildlife agency.
- If you find a mountain lion cub in good condition, please do not touch or disturb it. Promptly, but slowly, leave the area as there may be a mother nearby.
- If you find a kitten alone in poor condition or obvious distress, do not touch it and instead report it to your local state wildlife office.

This content is for informational purposes only and does not list all possible risks. The tips provided are not exclusive, may not be appropriate in all situations, do not eliminate risk associated with interaction with mountain lions, and cannot guarantee safety. Consult with a wildlife professional for advice specific to your situation.



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