

Cougars and Humans

Cougars are shy and avoid humans. Many people live entire lifetimes in cougar country out West and

Cougars are known occasionally to follow people, apparently out of curiosity. Fatal cougar attacks are extremely rare: a total of 13 people since 1890, compared to 18 people killed every year by dogs.

•Beier, Paul. "Cougar attacks on humans in the U.S. and Canada," Wildlife Soc. Bull. 19:403-412, 1991



There are some simple ways to avoid problems if you encounter a cougar in the woods:

- 1. DON'T RUN AWAY.** Running triggers a chase.
- 2. STAND TALL.** Open your arms to make yourself big. Speak loudly but calmly. Keep eye contact. Back away slowly, taking care not to trip. Keep children close to you.
- 3. FIGHT BACK** if attacked, with sticks, stones, or fists. Cougars can be driven away by resistance.

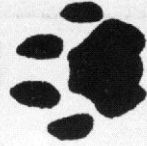
LIVESTOCK: Kills made by dogs or coyotes are frequently blamed on cougars. Dogs, a major problem, usually injure the hindquarters. Coyotes inflict many bites around the throat, flank and back. Cougar sign includes a bite to the back of the neck (occasionally the throat), large canine punctures, claw marks along the shoulders, and (often but not always) drag marks and an attempt to cover the carcass. Black bears may also bite and claw the head, but their claws are dull and don't pierce cleanly like a cougar's; they may drag prey but don't cover it; and they feed on meat. Cougars begin feeding just behind the rib cage to consume the liver, lungs and heart. Management practices such as bringing animals in during birthing or using guard dogs can greatly reduce losses.

•"Living with Mountain Lions" by MT Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, CA Dept. of Fish & Game, CO Div. Of Wildlife.
 •Acorn, Robert. *Methods of Investigating Predation of Livestock*, Agri. Branch, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

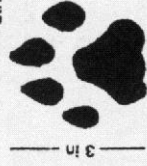
Cougar Evidence

COUGAR

—3½ in.—

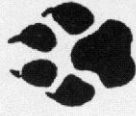


Front



Rind

Stride 20-28 in.



DOG

Many dogs make larger tracks than cougars. Cougars have retractable toenails that often don't show in tracks, but dogs with worn toenails also don't show them. The best cougar sign is 3 lobes at the rear of the heel pad.

Sounds: Cougars make many sounds, but rarely scream. Bobcats, owls, foxes and other animals make sounds that may be attributed to a cougar.

Scrapes: Males scrape up dirt and urinate on it to mark territory. Many other animals scratch the ground so cougar scrapes are hard to identify.

Sightings: Look for a size reference. Check for tracks, hair, droppings, kills, and other physical evidence. Make photos of tracks with a coin or ruler for size.

•Shaw, Harley. Mountain Lion Field Guide, Spec. Report no. 9, AZ Game Dept., 1987.

To Report Sign: There is a network of volunteer researchers interested in documenting cougars in the East. If you see or find cougar evidence, please contact: Todd Lester, P.O. Box 74, North Spring, WV 24869 (304-664-3812), or Dr. Donald Linzey, Biology Dept., Wytheville Comm. College, Wytheville, VA 24382 (540-223-4824).

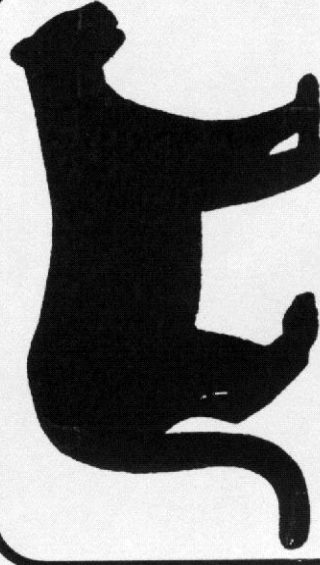
AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

Cougars are part of the natural heritage, a tradition in mountain culture, and a source of pride in the Appalachians. They are extremely rare and are protected by law.

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LIVING WITH COUGARS

IN THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS

A Fact Sheet

