

## Shared Habitat: Living in Mountain Lion Country

**DON'T FEED WILDLIFE:** By feeding deer, raccoons and other wildlife in your yard, you will inadvertently attract mountain lions, which prey upon them.

**DEER-PROOF YOUR LANDSCAPE:** Avoid using plants that deer prefer to eat; if your landscaping attracts deer, mountain lions may be close by. The California Department of Fish and Game has a brochure called "Gardening to Discourage Deer Damage" available at most department offices.

**LANDSCAPE FOR SAFETY:** Remove dense or low-lying vegetation that would provide good hiding places for mountain lions, especially around children's play areas. Make it difficult for mountain lions to approach your yard unseen.

**INSTALL OUTDOOR LIGHTING:** Keep the perimeter of your house well lit at night - especially along walkways - to keep mountain lions visible.

**KEEP PETS SECURE:** Roaming pets are easy prey for hungry mountain lions. Bring pets inside or keep them in a kennel with a secure top. Don't feed pets outside, which can attract other mountain lion prey.

**KEEP LIVESTOCK SECURE:** Where practical, place livestock in enclosed sheds and barns at night. Be sure to secure all outbuildings.

**KEEP CHILDREN SAFE:** Keep a close watch on children whenever they play outdoors. Make sure children are inside between dusk and dawn. Teach your children what to do if they encounter a mountain lion.

## What To Do If You Encounter a Mountain Lion

What should a person do if approached by a mountain lion? The following suggestions are based on studies of mountain lions, tigers and leopards:

### Do Not Hike Alone

Go in groups with adults supervising children.



### Keep Children Close To You

Observations of captured wild mountain lions reveal that the animals seem especially drawn to children. Keep children within your sight at all times.

### Do Not Approach a Mountain Lion

Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.

### Do Not Run From a Mountain Lion

Running may stimulate a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If you have small children with you, pick them up if possible, so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the animal.

### Do Not Crouch or Bend Over

In Nepal, a researcher studying tigers and leopards watched the big cats kill cattle and domestic water buffalo while ignoring humans standing nearby. He surmised that a human standing up is just not the right shape for a cat's prey. On the other hand, a person squatting or bending over looks a lot like a four-legged prey animal. If you're in mountain lion country, avoid squatting, crouching or bending over, even when picking up children.

## Do All You Can To Appear Larger

Raise your arms. Open your jacket if you are wearing one. Pick up small children. Throw stones, branches or whatever you can reach without crouching or turning your back. Wave your arms slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice. The idea is to convince the mountain lion that you are not prey and that you may be a danger to it.

## Fight Back If Attacked

A hiker in Southern California used a rock to fend off a mountain lion that was attacking his son. Others have fought back successfully with sticks, caps, jackets, and their bare hands. Since a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal.

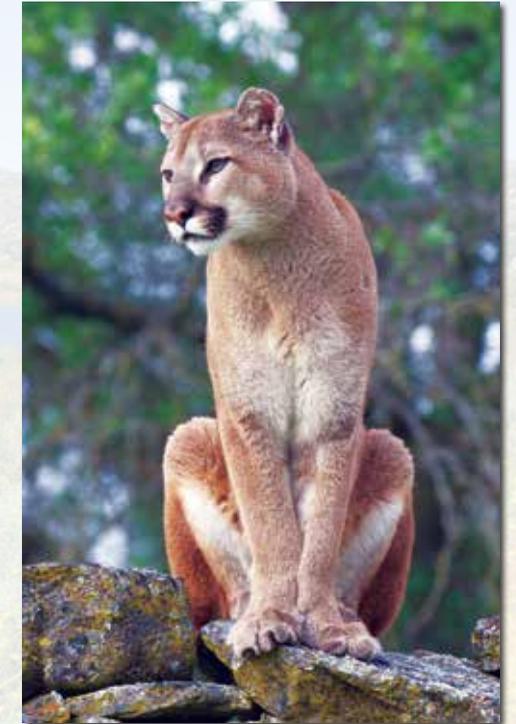
## Report An Attack Immediately

If you are involved in a face-to-face encounter with or are attacked by a mountain lion, call 9-1-1 immediately and inform a Park Ranger.

## For More Information

California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
3883 Ruffin Rd., San Diego, CA 92123  
858-467-4201

# LIVING WITH CALIFORNIA MOUNTAIN LIONS



### Paw Print Differentiation Dog and Mountain Lion



Front paw

Dog



Mountain Lion



Hind paw



Note the toenail prints for dogs are absent on the mountain lion. The lion paw print has a distinctive "M" shaped pad.

## INFORMATION



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
**Department of Parks and Recreation**  
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San Diego, CA 92123

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## Living With Mountain Lions

Nearly half of California is prime mountain lion country, a fact that is a surprise to many residents and visitors. These large, powerful predators have always lived here, preying on deer and other wildlife. They play an important role in the ecosystem.



The status of the mountain lion in California has evolved over the years. Between 1907 and 1963, it was considered a **bountied predator** and monetary incentives were offered for every mountain lion killed. Its status was changed in 1969 to **game mammal** and again in 1990 to **special protected mammal**. This change in legal status over the years reflects a growing public appreciation and concern for mountain lions.

You may live or play in mountain lion country. As with all wildlife, mountain lions can be dangerous. We can coexist with these magnificent animals with a better understanding of their habitat.

## Sharing Mountain Lion Habitat

Generally, mountain lions are calm, quiet and elusive. They are most commonly found in areas with plentiful prey and adequate cover. Such conditions exist in mountain subdivisions, urban fringes and open spaces.

Consequently, the number of mountain lion/human interactions has increased. This increase is likely due to a variety of reasons:

1. People are moving into mountain lion habitat
2. An increase in prey populations
3. An increase in mountain lion numbers and expanded range
4. More people using hiking and running trails in mountain lion habitat
5. Greater awareness of the presence of mountain lions

The potential for being killed or injured by a mountain lion is quite low compared to other natural hazards.

## Mountain Lion Facts

### Physical Appearance

The mountain lion, also known as a cougar, panther or puma, is tawny-colored with black-tipped ears and tail. Although smaller than the jaguar, it is one of North America's largest cats.

Adult males may be more than eight-feet long, from nose to end of tail, generally weighing between 130-150 pounds. Adult females can be 7 feet long and weigh between 65-90 pounds.

Mountain lion kittens, or cubs, are covered with blackish-brown spots and have dark rings around their tails. The markings fade as they mature.

### Behavior

Mountain lions are very powerful and normally prey upon large animals, such as deer, big horn sheep and elk. However, they can survive preying on small animals as well.

They usually hunt alone, at night, ambushing their prey, often from behind. They usually kill with a powerful bite below the base of the skull, breaking the neck. They often cover their carcass with dirt, leaves or snow and may come back to feed on it over the course of a few days.

Their secretive and solitary nature makes it possible for humans to live in mountain lion country without ever seeing one.

## The Mountain Lion in San Diego County



### LEGEND

- MOUNTAIN LION HABITAT
- CAMPING PARK
- REGIONAL PARK
- LOCAL PARK
- PRESERVE

### Habitat

Mountain lions live in many types of habitat in California, ranging from deserts to humid coast range forests, from sea level to 10,000-foot elevations. They generally will be most abundant in areas with plentiful deer.

### Home Range

An adult male's home range often spans over 100 square miles. Females generally use smaller areas - about 20 to 60 square miles. Along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, where competition for habitat is intense, as many as 10 adult Mountain lions occupy the same 100 square miles.

### Population

In California, mountain lion populations have grown. Since 1920, a rough estimate put the mountain lion population at 600. By the 1970s, more accurate estimates, based on field studies, revealed a population of more than 2,000. Today's population estimate ranges between 4,000-6,000.

### Mortality

A mountain lion's natural life span is about 12 years in the wild and up to 25 years in captivity. Natural enemies include large animals such as bears and lions. They also fall victim to accidents, disease, road hazards and people.