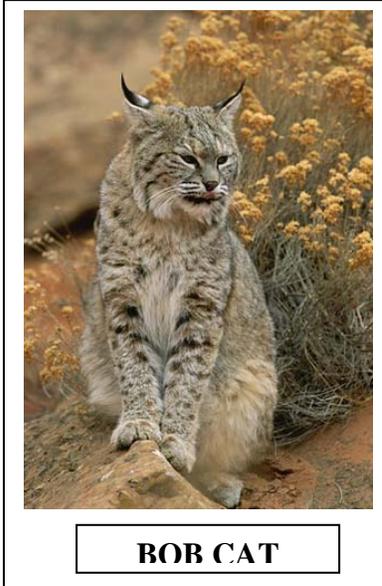
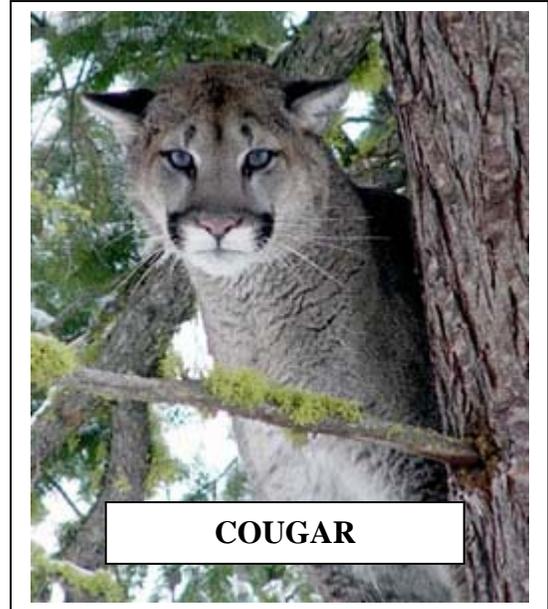


# SOME COUGAR ADVICE

(Source: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife)



**BOB CAT**



**COUGAR**

## **Preventing Conflicts**

The cougar's ability to travel long distances occasionally brings these cats into seemingly inappropriate areas, even places densely settled by humans. Such appearances are almost always brief, with the animal moving along quickly in its search of a suitable permanent home. However, where humans are encroaching on wildlife habitat, the number of cougar sightings and attacks on livestock and pets is on the rise.

Cougar attacks on humans are extremely rare. In North America, roughly 25 fatalities and 95 nonfatal attacks have been reported during the past 100 years. However, more cougar attacks have been reported in the western United States and Canada over the past 20 years than in the previous 80. In Washington, of the one fatal and fifteen nonfatal attacks reported here in the past 100 years, seven attacks occurred during the 1990s.

A high percentage of cougars attacking domestic animals or people are one- to two-year-old cougars that have become independent of their mothers. When these young animals, particularly males, leave home to search for territory of their own, and encounter territory already occupied by an older male cougar, the older one will drive off the younger one, killing it if it resists. Some young cougars are driven across miles of countryside in search of an unoccupied territory.

If you are living in cougar country, prevent a conflict with them by using the following management strategies around your property, and, if possible, encourage your neighbors to do the same.

Don't leave small children unattended. When children are playing outdoors, closely supervise them and be sure they are indoors by dusk.

Modify the habitat around your home. Light all walkways after dark and avoid landscaping with plants that deer prefer to eat. Where a deer goes, a cougar may follow. Shrubs and trees around kids' play areas should be pruned up several feet to prevent cougars from hiding behind them.

Although costly and not 100 percent effective, a chain-link or heavy woven wire fence that is 10 feet high with 3-foot extensions installed at a 65-degree angle on each post may keep cougars out of an enclosed area. To increase effectiveness, string barbed wire or four electric wires between the extensions, alternating positive and negative wires.

Don't feed wildlife and feral cats (domestic cats gone wild). This includes deer, raccoons, and other small mammals. Remember predators follow prey.

Close off open spaces under structures. Areas beneath porches and decks can provide shelter for prey animals.

Feed dogs and cats indoors. If you must feed outside, do so in the morning or midday, and pick up food and water bowls, as well as leftovers and spilled food, well before dark. Pet food and water attract small mammals that, in turn, attract cougars.

Keep dogs and cats indoors, especially from dusk to dawn. Left outside at night, small dogs and cats may become prey for cougars.

Use garbage cans with tight-fitting lids. Garbage attracts small mammals that, in turn, attract cougars.

Keep outdoor livestock and small animals confined in secure pens. For a large property with livestock, consider using a guard animal. There are specialty breeds of dogs that can defend livestock. Donkeys and llamas have also successfully been used as guard animals. As with any guard animal, pros and cons exist. Purchase a guard animal from a reputable breeder who knows the animal he or she sells. Some breeders offer various guarantees on their guard animals, including a replacement if an animal fails to perform as expected.

## **Cougars and Kids**

Children seem to be more at risk than adults to cougar attacks, possibly because their high-pitched voices, small size, and erratic movements make it difficult for cougars to identify them as human and not prey. To prevent a problem from occurring:

- Talk to children and teach them what to do if they encounter a cougar.
- Encourage children to play outdoors in groups, and supervise children playing outdoors.
- Consider getting a dog for your children as an early-warning system. A dog can see, smell, and hear a cougar sooner than we can. Although dogs offer little value as a deterrent to cougars, they may distract a cougar from attacking a human.
- Consider erecting a fence around play areas. Keeps a radio playing when children are outside, as noise usually deters cougars.
- Make sure children are home before dusk and stay inside until after dawn.
- If there have been cougar sightings, escort children to the bus stop in the early morning. Clear shrubs away around the bus stop, making an area with a 30-foot radius. Have a light installed as a general safety precaution.

## **Encountering a Cougar**

Relatively few people will ever catch a glimpse of a cougar much less confront one. If you come face to face with a cougar, your actions can either help or hinder a quick retreat by the animal.

### **Here are some things to remember:**

- Stop, pick up small children immediately, and don't run. Running and rapid movements may trigger an attack. Remember, at close range, a cougar's instinct is to chase.
- Face the cougar. Talk to it firmly while slowly backing away. Always leave the animal an escape route.
- Try to appear larger than the cougar. Get above it (e.g., step up onto a rock or stump). If wearing a jacket, hold it open to further increase your apparent size. If you are in a group, stand shoulder-to-shoulder to appear intimidating.
- Do not take your eyes off the cougar or turn your back. Do not crouch down or try to hide.
- Never approach the cougar, especially if it is near a kill or with kittens, and never offer it food.
- If the cougar does not flee, be more assertive. If it shows signs of aggression (crouches with ears back, teeth bared, hissing, tail twitching, and hind feet pumping in preparation to jump), shout, wave your arms and throw anything you have available (water bottle, book, backpack). The idea is to convince the cougar that you are not prey, but a potential danger.
- If the cougar attacks, fight back. Be aggressive and try to stay on your feet. Cougars have been driven away by people who have fought back using anything within reach, including sticks, rocks, shovels, backpacks, and clothing—even bare hands. If you are aggressive enough, a cougar will flee, realizing it has made a mistake. Pepper spray in the cougar's face is also effective in the extreme unlikelihood of a close encounter with a cougar.

### **END OF GUIDANCE**

**TO READ MORE GO TO: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/cougars.htm#kids>**

## What To Do If You Meet An Aggressive Cougar

Cougars are exciting animals to see in the wild and rarely cause problems for humans. In fact, you are more likely to be killed by a vending machine than to be attacked or killed by a cougar. But you should know how to react if you encounter an aggressive cougar:

- ❖ **Do not run from a cougar.**  
Running will provoke an instinctive prey response and the cougar may pursue you.
- ❖ **Make yourself look intimidating.**  
Make eye contact with the cougar, which cougars consider a threat. Make yourself look big by opening your jacket, raising your arms and waving them. Speak loud and firm to the cougar.
- ❖ **If you have children, pick them up.**  
Try to pick children up before they panic and run. When you are picking children up, keep eye contact with the cougar and try not to bend over too far or turn your back to the cougar.
- ❖ **If you are attacked, fight back!**  
Protect your head and neck, as the neck is the target for the cougar. If the cougar thinks it is not likely to win its fight with you quickly, it will probably give up and leave.



## Who To Call If You Meet A Cougar

If you encounter a cougar in a residential area or if you have an aggressive encounter with a cougar, please alert the Division of Wildlife Resources.

During regular office hours (8AM-5PM, Monday-Friday) please call the office closest to you. Offices and numbers are listed below. A Division employee will notify a conservation officer of your encounter or transfer you directly to law enforcement personnel. If the encounter or sighting occurs after hours or on the weekend, please call the police, who can contact a conservation officer to handle the situation.

### Utah Division Of Wildlife Resources Regional Offices

**Northern Region**  
515 East 5300 South  
Ogden, UT 84405  
(801) 476-2740

**Northeastern Region**  
152 East 100 North  
Vernal, UT 84078  
(435) 781-9453

**Southern Region**  
1470 North Airport Rd.  
Cedar City, UT 84720  
(435) 865-6100

**Central Region**  
1115 North Main  
Springville, UT 84663  
(801) 491-5678

**Southeastern Region**  
475 West Price River Dr  
Price, UT 84501  
(435) 636-0260

**Salt Lake Office**  
1594 West North Temple  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114  
(801) 538-4700

wildlife.utah.gov  
email: wcomment.nrdwr@utah.gov  
fax: 801-538-4745

Photos provided by Lynn Chamberlain.

## Safety In Cougar Country

Information about Living and  
Recreating in Cougar Country



STATE OF UTAH  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
Division of Wildlife Resources



## Facts About Cougars

- ❖ The cougar, *Felis concolor*, is also known as the mountain lion, puma or panther.
- ❖ The cougar is one of North America's largest cats and is recognized by its tawny color and long tail.
- ❖ Cougar kittens, or cubs, have blackish-brown spots on their body and dark rings on their tails that fade as they get older.
- ❖ Cougars are solitary animals, making them a rare sight for humans. They usually hunt alone and at night, ambushing their prey from behind. Typically, cougars kill their prey with a bite to the lower neck.
- ❖ After making a kill, a cougar often will take the carcass to the base of a tree and cover it with dirt, leaves or snow, saving it to eat later.
- ❖ Cougars live all across Utah, from the high Uintah Wilderness to the dry southern Utah deserts.
- ❖ Cougars' main prey is deer, so cougars are often found close to deer.
- ❖ Cougars live up to 12 years in the wild but have lived up to 25 years in captivity. In the wild they face death through accidents, disease and large predators (including humans).

## Living In Cougar Country

If you live in cougar country, here are a few guidelines to make your property safer:

- ❖ Do not feed wildlife. Feeding wildlife attracts animals to your yard that may be prey of cougars, thus attracting cougars to your yard.
- ❖ Do not feed pets outside. Cougars will eat pet food, and the food could attract cougars to your yard. Keep pets indoors at night as well, as pets make easy prey for cougars.
- ❖ Make your yard deer-proof. If your landscaping is attractive to deer, cougars will follow the deer and hang close to your property.
- ❖ Dense vegetation makes great hiding places for cougars. Remove vegetation that could be a hiding place, making your yard less friendly for cougars.
- ❖ Outdoor lighting and motion-sensitive lighting is a deterrent for the secretive cougar. Lights also make approaching cougars visible.
- ❖ Secure livestock in a barn or shed at night. If that is impossible, a small, well-lit pen close to a structure is the next-best option.
- ❖ Keep a close eye on your children when they are playing outside. Bring children in before dusk when cougars begin to hunt.

Note the typical "M" shape on this cougar track. Also note that no claws show on the print. Felines walk with their claws retracted.



## Playing In Cougar Country

If you recreate in cougar country, here are a few guidelines to make your experience safer:

- ❖ Hike with other people and make noise. Cougars usually will not bother groups of people.
- ❖ Keep a clean camp and store food and garbage in your vehicle or hang it between two trees where cougars (and bears) cannot reach it.
- ❖ When hiking with small children, keep the children in the group or in sight ahead of the group. Remember, cougars ambush from behind, so keeping a child in front of the main group will lessen the possibility of attack.
- ❖ Keep away from dead animals, especially deer or elk. This could be a kill that a cougar is guarding or will be returning to. A cougar will defend its food.
- ❖ If hiking with pets, keep them close to the group. Roaming pets will be open to cougar attacks or could irritate a cougar that is trying to avoid the group.

