

CANADA'S LARGEST CAT SPECIES



In Alberta, cougar sightings have been confirmed across the entire province, although they are most common in the mountain and foothill regions. In recent years, sightings in the prairie, parkland and boreal regions have become more frequent.

Cougars are adaptable and can survive in any location that provides them with cover and a food source, such as deer. They normally do not prefer open terrain, but cougars may use river valleys, ravines and other travel corridors that pass through open terrain.

They are generally shy and wary of humans, avoiding human activity and populations whenever they can. For this reason, calculating population numbers and mapping cougar range are difficult.

As Alberta experiences expansion in both cougar and human territories, human-cougar conflicts remain rare. Most problems involve juvenile cougars that are struggling to establish their own territories and find suitable prey.

HABITS AND BEHAVIOURS

Cougars are efficient hunters that prey on deer, elk, moose, sheep and other mammals. They may also occasionally feed on domestic pets and livestock. They can be active any time of day but most often hunt at dusk, night and dawn.

Cougars don't hunt by leaping from trees onto their prey. They stalk and then rush their prey from the ground. Cougars normally climb trees only when they are being chased or harassed.

Their dens are usually located on ledges, in tree hollows, on steep slopes, under fallen logs and in between rocks. Cougars can breed at any time of the year and usually have litters of two to four kittens. When her kittens are still young, a cougar mother will often stash them alone when she goes off to hunt.



Adult cougars weigh 40 to 90 kg and can be up to 2.5 m long, including a metre-long tail.



Tracks are asymmetrical, round and lack claw imprints (8-10 cm long)



Cougar Management

A healthy cougar population is an indication of a thriving local ecosystem.

In years when deer, elk and moose numbers are high, cougar numbers are also high.

Cougar populations in Alberta are managed with public hunting seasons to help maintain healthy populations, reduce conflicts with people, manage predation on wild ungulates and provide hunting opportunities.

Hunting seasons run between November and February. Throughout most of cougar range, hunting is regulated with a strict quota system - seasons are closed as soon as a designated number of cougars has been harvested. Consult the Alberta Guide to Hunting Regulations or MyWildAlberta.com for more information.

Any person who is the owner or occupant of privately owned land may at any time of the year, without the use of dogs, hunt (but not trap) cougar on such lands without a licence. Under this authority, registration is required within one week of the kill.

Cougars may be removed in situations when livestock or pets are killed or public safety is threatened. Cougars are never relocated as a wildlife management tool to control deer populations.

If a cougar or other wildlife is a public safety concern, call 310-0000 or, if after regular business hours, call 1-800-642-3800.



For more information on cougars and other wildlife in Alberta, scan in the QR code or visit srd.alberta.ca

PREVENTING CONFLICT WITH WILDLIFE



Cougars

also known as pumas or mountain lions

Taking a few simple steps can help you to prevent conflict with cougars and other wildlife species.



Track imprint in mud



Cougar kill, covered with leaves, grass and forest debris



Scat, with scrape marks



Preventing conflict with cougars *at home*

Avoid attracting wildlife, especially deer, onto your property.

- Never feed wildlife or leave out salt licks for deer.
- Keep garbage in containers with tight-fitting lids and clean up spillage from bird feeders.
- Don't leave pet food outside.

Help keep your children safe.

- Children should play outside only during daylight hours, with adult supervision and away from heavily-wooded areas. Be sure they don't wander away from the group.
- Remind your children that if they see a cougar, they should not turn their backs, run away or show fear by screaming.
- Play areas should be set up in open spaces, away from trees and wooded areas.

in the wild

Stay alert for signs of wildlife.

- Watch for signs that cougars are in the area (tracks, scat, scrapes and covered kills).
- Don't wear headphones or anything else that interferes with your ability to detect wildlife.

Avoid recreating alone.

- Stay close together and keep children between the adults - don't let anyone run ahead or fall behind.

Protect your pets.

- Ensure outdoor animal enclosures are secure and closed across the top.
- Don't let your cats or dogs roam free. Supervise pets when they're outside.
- Walk your dogs during the day and avoid off-trail areas with thick vegetation.

Don't provide cougars with shelter.

- Trim shrubs and low tree branches along driveways and walkways.
- Close off spaces under decks and buildings.
- Have good lighting in your yard, including motion detector lights.

Be prepared.

- Carry bear spray, a noise maker and a walking stick - these can be used for protection in the event of an encounter.
- Cougars can be attracted to dogs, so it is best to leave your dog at home. If you do travel with a dog, keep it close and on a leash at all times.
- Carry a cell phone to call for help in the event of trouble.

Responding to an encounter

Merely seeing a cougar does not mean you are in imminent danger. Watch the cougar's behaviour and respond accordingly.

The cougar is at a distance and not focused on you.

- DON'T PROVOKE IT.
- Gather everyone in close, especially children and dogs.
- Back away slowly.
- Do not run.
- Keep your eye on the cougar.
- Prepare to use your bear spray.

The cougar is coming closer, and is hissing and snarling or staring intently and tracking your movements.

- SHOW THE COUGAR YOU ARE NOT A PREY ANIMAL AND WILL FIGHT BACK.
- Do not run and do not turn your back.
- If you can pick children up without crouching down, do so. Otherwise, keep them directly beside you.
- Shout at the cougar.
- Make yourself look larger by opening your jacket and waving your arms and walking stick.
- Use your noise maker and bear spray.
- Drop something (e.g. a back pack) that might distract the cougar long enough for you to get to safety.

The cougar makes contact.

- SHOW THE COUGAR YOU ARE NOT EASY PREY.
- Continue using your bear spray.
- Fight back, using anything you can find as a weapon. Aim at the cougar's eyes and face.
- If you're knocked down, get back up - don't give up.
- Never play dead with a cougar.
- After the cougar has left, continue to watch for it until you've reached a place of safety.