

Cougar Smart New Mexico



*Common Sense Tips
when in Cougar Country*



DON'T RUN

- If you see a cougar, face the cougar and slowly back away
- DO NOT run or play dead
- Pick up small children immediately and calm them
- Leave room for the cougar to escape, do not approach
- Make noise, make yourself look larger, lift arms up, and shout loudly
- If the cougar attacks, fight back hard with sticks, stones, backpack



BE ALERT

- Do not approach dead animals – cougars defend their prey
- Hike in groups and make enough noise to prevent surprising a cougar
- Carry a walking stick and bear pepper spray
- Keep pets leashed



PARENTS

- Keep children close at hand
- Don't let children run ahead or fall behind

*Cougars can be dangerous; being smart, cautious,
and aware may prevent incidents or attacks*

Anyone who sees a cougar that may be a threat to public safety is urged to call Game & Fish Dispatch at (505) 827-9376 at any time.

In case of emergency, call 911.

COUGAR



DOG



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Here are some ways to protect yourself and your family from unwanted encounters with cougars and other large predators:

Closely supervise children. Make sure they are inside before dusk and not outside before dawn. Make a lot of noise if you come or go during times when cougars are most active—dusk to dawn. Teach your children about cougars and what they should do if they encounter one.

Do not feed wildlife or attract deer or other prey species to your home. Cougars follow their prey, so avoid feeding wildlife or landscaping with shrubs and plants that deer prefer to eat.

Do not feed pets outside where the food can attract cougars or other smaller animals, which cougars prey upon. Do not leave pet food or food scraps outside.

Store and dispose of all garbage securely in containers with tight-fitting lids so as not to attract small mammals.

Eliminate hiding places and build barriers. Remove heavy vegetation near structures to eliminate hiding cover for cougars and making it difficult for a cougar to approach unseen, especially around areas where children play. Close off open spaces below porches or decks. Install outdoor lighting.

Keep pets indoors or in secure kennels at night and place all livestock in enclosed sheds or barns at night. Close the doors to all outbuildings so that an inquisitive cougar is prevented from going inside to look around.

Cougar Natural History

Cougars (*Puma concolor*), also called mountain lions or pumas, are an important part of New Mexico's heritage and ecosystem. They are second to jaguars as the largest cat in the Americas. Adults' body lengths are 6 to 8 feet, from nose to tail, which can be 3 feet long. Males weigh 120 to 180 pounds, and females weigh 80 to 110 pounds.

Cougars have a uniformly gray to reddish-tan body color. The muzzle and chest are white, and there are black markings on the face, ears, and tip of the tail. Cougar kittens are mottled with black spots and have ringed tails until they are about 6 months old.

Cougars are carnivores. They often stash their prey to eat later, so if you come upon a possible kill site, leave immediately. Although their usual prey is deer and other wildlife, it is possible, although rare, for them to perceive humans as prey. From 1890 to 2008, there have been 100 nonfatal attacks and 18 human mortalities from cougars. It is extremely rare to encounter a cougar.

Habitat: Cougars normally are reclusive and avoid humans. They make their dens in rocky outcroppings, dense thickets, and under uprooted trees. They are highly territorial—a male cougar may dominate a range of up to 100 square miles.



Ecosystem Vitality

Cougars are an important part of New Mexico's landscapes. Large carnivores contribute to the richness and complexity of animal and plant life in ecosystems. Having cougars on the landscape helps regulate all of these populations. In the absence of cougars and other predators, deer, rodents, and other prey populations' numbers greatly increase, causing problems for humans and the environment.