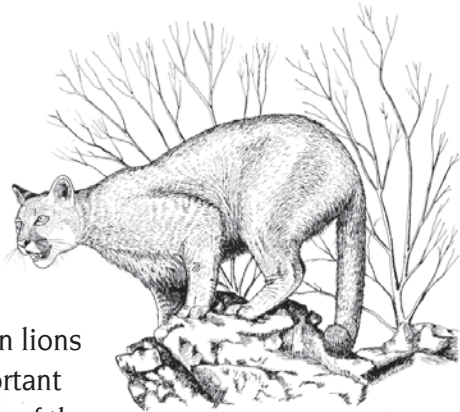




Mountain Lions in our Parks



Mountain lions are important members of the natural community. Normally, they are very elusive, and people rarely get more than a brief glimpse of them in the wild. However, they are unpredictable and have been known to attack people on rare occasion.

The mountain lion, also known as cougar, panther, or puma, is tawny-colored with black-tipped ears and tail. Adults may be 7 to more than 8 feet long from nose to end of tail and weigh between 65 and 150 pounds.

Mountain lions live in many different parts of California, from deserts to coast range forests, and from sea level to 10,000-foot elevations. They are generally most abundant in areas where deer are plentiful and there is adequate cover.

The predatory behavior of a mountain lion is very similar to the domestic cat. The lion will attempt to conceal itself for a surprise attack while stalking its prey. An agitated lion may snarl and lay its ears back.

To reduce the chances of an encounter with a mountain lion:

- Avoid hiking alone, especially between dusk and dawn when lions normally hunt. Make noise while you hike to reduce the chances of surprising a lion.
- Always keep children in sight and within arm's reach while hiking in areas that can conceal a lion. Mountain lions seem to be drawn to children because of their small size.

To reduce the chances of an attack when encountering a mountain lion:

- Do not attempt to approach a lion. Most lions will avoid confrontation. Give them a way to escape.
- Stay calm and face the lion. Do not run, because this may trigger the lion's instinct to attack. Try to appear larger by raising your arms and opening your jacket.
- Pick up small children so they don't panic and run. Avoid bending over or crouching.
- If the lion approaches or acts aggressively, shout and throw branches or whatever can be obtained without turning your back or bending over.
- Fight back if attacked. A good walking stick can be useful in warding off a lion. Because a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal.

Report any mountain lion sightings to park staff.