

# Cougar Facts

## Cougar Awareness

**Average Weight:** Males, 140 pounds; Females, 90 pounds

**Life Span:** 8 to 12 years in the wild

**Average Length:** 7 feet from nose to tip of tail  
(tail is nearly as long as the body)

- Cougars are also known as: Mountain Lion, Panther, Puma, Catamount, Painter, Ghost Cat.  
Latin Name: *Puma concolor* (“Cat of One Color”).
- Cougars were once found in all 48 contiguous United States. Resident breeding populations are now found in just 16 states: AZ, CA, CO, FL, ID, MT, ND, NE, NM, NV, OR, SD, TX, UT, WA and WY.
- Cougars are extremely adaptable and have one of the greatest distributions (from northern Canada to the southern tip of South America) of any terrestrial mammal in the Western Hemisphere. They make their home in deserts, swamps, grasslands, sub-alpine mountains and tropical rainforests.
- A single cougar requires a minimum of 50 – 100 square miles to breed, raise young, hunt and survive. Home ranges vary in size according to season, habitat quality and prey availability, with male territories larger than those of females.
- By nature, mountain lions are elusive and reclusive, preferring to avoid contact with humans at all costs. They seldom tolerate other cougars, except during mating season.
- Unlike African lions, cougars do not form prides, hunt in a group or share their prey.
- Cougars keep their numbers in check through an intricate social system, a hierarchy that involves intense competition in the wild.
- Female cougars are pregnant or raising dependent kittens for more than 73% of their adult lives.
- Cougars can reproduce at any time of year. There may be birth “pulses” in January and August, but cougars are capable of breeding year-round.

- Following a 95-day gestation period, female cougars produce an average litter of 2-4 kittens weighing between one and two pounds. Kittens are born with blue eyes and have blackish-brown spots and a dark-ringed tail. The spots begin to fade at three months old and disappear entirely after one year.
- Cougar kittens rely completely on their mothers until they are 18-24 months old. Cougar mothers teach vital hunting skills and how to select appropriate prey during that time. Young cougars reach adult size between 3-5 years old.
- Cougars are obligate carnivores (they only eat meat). Depending on habitat, the primary diet for cougars consists of deer, elk, turkey, rabbits, porcupines, coyote and numerous other small mammals.
- Cougars have highly developed eyesight and are capable of hunting and traveling at low-lit times of day (such as dusk and dawn) thanks to their excellent nocturnal and diurnal vision.
- To prevent other animals from scavenging their kills, cougars often bury the carcass of a recent kill (often referred to as a “cache” or “caching”) with sticks and leaves, which enables them to feed on the remains for several days.
- Cougars are able to jump up to 30 feet in distance, 18 feet in height and reach speeds of 50 mph at a sprint.
- The fur of an adult cougar is most commonly a tawny golden color, but may also appear to be gray, dark brown or even cinnamon-colored.
- Cougars cannot roar, but are capable of numerous vocalizations including low-pitched hisses, growls, purrs, chirps and peeps.
- Studies have shown that sport hunting does not increase human safety.
- The greatest cause of mortality amongst cougars is human-related. This includes illegal poaching, auto-related deaths, sport hunting, lethal removal of cougars who have preyed on livestock, and the orphaning and often subsequent death by starvation, exposure and predation of cubs when their mother is killed by any of the above causes. 🐾