



Conservancy Advisory Living with Mountain Lions on the Santa Lucia Preserve



Mountain Lions are an essential part of the ecology of the Preserve -- a ‘keystone’ species that keeps our deer population healthy and contributes to the natural beauty we all treasure. Their shy and solitary nature makes it possible for people to spend many years in mountain lion country before catching a glimpse of one. Living in harmony with this amazing creature requires some understanding of its behavior and respect for its wild nature.

A Few Facts about Mountain Lions

Mountain lions, also known as cougar, panther or puma, are tawny-colored with black-tipped ears and tail. One of North America’s largest cats, adults may be more than 8 feet long from nose to end of tail and weigh from 90 to 150 pounds (the size of a large dog). A long, expressive tail makes up at least 1/3 of this length. Cubs have spots and dark rings around their long tails. Bobcats, our other native wildcat, are much smaller (more like the size of a very large tomcat), are grey or spotted with a ‘bob’ tail, and pose no threat to people.

Mountain lions are typically calm, quiet and elusive. Solitary unless with cubs, they inhabit areas with plentiful prey and natural cover. Such conditions exist in communities in natural landscapes like the Preserve. However, the potential for being injured by a mountain lion is very low compared to many other natural hazards. There is a far greater overall risk, for example, of being struck by lightning than of being attacked by a mountain lion.

Deer are mountain lions’ primary food source. Smaller animals such as turkeys, pigs, coyotes, and raccoons are also prey. Lions usually hunt at night, and may cover their ‘kill’ with dirt or leaves and return to feed later.

Staying Safe in Lion Country:

Mountain lions do not normally consider people prey. To avoid being mistaken for something more interesting, it’s best to avoid walking or jogging alone at night, in low light or fog. Other precautions to consider include:

IN YOUR HOMELAND

Avoid Attracting Lions

- Don’t feed wildlife and always feed pets indoors.
- Keep pets secure: roaming pets are very attractive.
- Landscape for safety:
 - ✦ Avoid using plants that attract deer.
 - ✦ Thin or remove dense, low-lying vegetation near the home, especially around play areas.

Keep Children Safe

- **Supervise small children outdoors.**
- Talk with children about lions and teach them to make noise (yell for help) and stand tall (don’t run) if they see a lion or other large animal. In particular, make sure children are with adults before dusk to after dawn.

ON THE TRAIL

Avoid Being Mistaken For Prey

- Keep small children close when in areas of natural cover.
- Always keep dogs on a 6 foot leash or at heel.
- Use the ‘buddy system’ esp. at dusk or early morning.
- Carry a whistle and/or walking stick on long hikes.

If You See A Lion – Stay Calm

- **Never Run.** Running may stimulate its instinct to chase.
- Pick up small children so they don’t panic and run.
- Stand tall. Do not bend down or try to hide. Face the animal, wave your arms slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice. Back away slowly if needed to allow it to escape.
- Report sightings to the Concierge to keep us informed.
- Promptly report aggressive behavior to Security (620-6750)