

IRVINE POLICE DEPARTMENT

IRVINE POLICE DEPARTMENT • ONE CIVIC CENTER PLAZA
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SOME FACTS ABOUT MOUNTAIN LIONS

Physical appearance:

The mountain lion, commonly known as cougar, panther or puma, is tawny-colored with black-tipped ears and tail. Although smaller than the jaguar, it is one of North America's largest cats. Adult males may be more than 8 feet long, from nose to end of tail, and generally weigh between 130 and 150 pounds. Adult females can be 7 feet long and weigh between 65 and 90 pounds. Mountain lion kittens or cubs are covered with blackish-brown spots and have dark rings around their tails. The markings fade as they mature.

Habitat:

Mountain lions live in many different types of habitat in California, from deserts to humid coast range forests, and from sea level to 10,000-foot elevations. They generally will be most abundant in areas with plentiful deer. Home Range: An adult male's home range often spans over 100 square miles. Females generally use smaller areas--about twenty to sixty square miles. Along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, where competition for habitat is intense, as many as ten adult lions occupy the same 100 square mile area.

Diet:

Their food is almost entirely animal matter but, as with domestic cats, grasses may be eaten occasionally. The chief item of diet is deer such as the mule deer and white-tailed deer. In addition the diet could include porcupines, cottontails, jackrabbits, domestic cows, and miscellaneous mammals (including sheep, goats, skunks, foxes, coyotes, beavers and prairie dogs) In certain areas they are known to kill and feed upon horses.

Behavior:

Mountain lions are very powerful and normally prey upon large animals, such as deer, bighorn sheep and elk. However, they can survive preying on small animals as well. They usually hunt alone, at night. They prefer to ambush their prey, often from behind. They usually kill with a powerful bite below the base of the skull, breaking the neck. They often cover the carcass with dirt, leaves or snow and may come back to feed on it over the course of a few days. Their generally secretive and solitary nature is what makes it possible for humans to live in mountain lion country without ever seeing a mountain lion. Generally, mountain lions are

calm, quiet and elusive. They are most commonly found in areas with plentiful prey and adequate cover. Such conditions exist in mountain subdivisions, urban fringes and open spaces. Consequently, the number of mountain lion/human interactions has increased. This increase likely is due to a variety of reasons: more people moving into mountain lion habitat, an increase in prey populations, an increase in mountain lion numbers and expanded range, more people using hiking and running trails in mountain lion habitat, and a greater awareness of the presence of mountain lions.

Deterrents:

- Don't feed the wild life. By feeding deer, raccoons or other wildlife in your yard, you may inadvertently attract mountain lions, which prey upon them.
- Avoid using plants that deer prefer to eat; if landscaping attracts deer, mountain lions may be close by. The California Department of Fish and Game has a brochure entitled "Gardening To Discourage Deer Damage" available at most DFG offices.
- Remove dense and/or low-lying vegetation that would provide good hiding places for mountain lions, especially around children's play areas; make it difficult for mountain lions to approach a yard unseen.
- Install outdoor lighting. Keep the house perimeter well lit at night – especially along walkways – to keep any approaching mountain lions visible.
- Roaming pets are easy prey for hungry mountain lions. Either bring pets inside or keep them in a kennel with a secure top. Don't feed pets outside; this can attract raccoons and other mountain lion prey.
- Keep a close watch on children whenever they play outdoors. Make sure children are inside before dusk and not outside before dawn. Talk with children about mountain lions and teach them what to do if they encounter one.

DOG

MOUNTAIN LION

