

## RECREATING IN LION COUNTRY

To reduce the likelihood of an encounter, or of an encounter turning into an attack, general alertness of surroundings is highly recommended. Look around — scan the sides of hills, behind rock outcroppings, under bushes and vegetation.

- Make noise so you don't surprise a lion.
- Bike, hike and ski in groups. Plan your trip so that you get back before dusk.
- Run with a buddy. Do not run alone in lion habitat. Run during daylight; avoid dawn, dusk and night.
- Before you set out, remind children how they should behave in lion country.
- Always keep children within arm's reach, preferably holding their hand. If there are two adults, make a "kid sandwich," an adult in front of and in back of the child or children in the middle.
- Hike with a sturdy walking stick or bear spray.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU MEET A MOUNTAIN LION

People rarely get more than a brief glimpse of a mountain lion in the wild. Lion attacks on people are rare, with fewer than three dozen fatalities in North America in more than 120 years. Based on the observations by people who have come upon lions, some patterns of behavior and response are beginning to emerge. Encounters with a lion are an interaction — you need to follow these guidelines and assess how the lion responds to your action so you can choose what to do next. Each situation is unique.

- When you walk or hike in mountain lion country, go in groups and make plenty of noise to reduce your chances of surprising a lion. A sturdy walking stick is a good idea; it can be used to ward off a lion.
- Do not approach a lion, especially one that is feeding or with kittens. Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.
- Maintain visual contact with the lion so you can always see what it is doing — keep your eye on it! If you look away, the lion could move and then you will not know where it is or what it's doing.

- **STAY CALM** when you come upon a lion. Talk calmly yet firmly to it and make enough eye contact so that it knows you have seen it. Slowly back away. Most lions will run away, but sometimes they stay and you need to completely leave the area.

- **STOP OR BACK AWAY SLOWLY**, if you can do it safely. Running may stimulate a lion's instinct to chase and attack. Face the lion and stand upright while backing away slowly.

- **DO ALL YOU CAN TO APPEAR LARGER**. Raise your arms. Position yourself to appear bigger by getting up on a stump or a rock. Open your jacket if you're wearing one. Stay upright and face the lion. Place obstacles you may have, like a bike, between you and the lion.

- If you see a lion and you are with a small child, pick up the child immediately so they won't panic and run. Tell the child not to speak — the high voice may sound like prey to a lion. This also helps you look bigger, and if the lion attacks, you can fold your body over the child to protect them. With a larger child, still keep them within arm's reach or in the middle. Have the child stand directly behind you and hold onto your belt or pants pocket.

- If the lion behaves aggressively, throw stones, branches or whatever you can get your hands on without crouching down or turning your back. Wave your arms slowly and speak firmly. Convince the lion you are not prey and that you may in fact be a danger to the lion.

- If the lion behaves more aggressively (eyes locked on you, ears forward, feet underneath them), **YELL LOUDLY** and wave your walking stick in front of you. Keep yelling in an aggressive manner. Loud, sustained noise is most effective at deterring a lion. An air horn may also be effective, as is bear spray directed at the lion.

- If the lion gets even more aggressive (crouched, tail twitching, hind feet pumping in preparation to jump), be ready to fight back.

- **FIGHT BACK** if a lion attacks you. People have successfully fought back with rocks, sticks, caps or jackets, garden tools and their bare hands. Remain standing or if you are knocked down try to get back up! A lion's face, including its eyes, can be sensitive areas to target with fingers or car keys if you have to strike back.



CPW / Wayne D. Lewis

## WHO DO YOU CALL?

Colorado Parks & Wildlife is responsible for managing, conserving and protecting wildlife. Your concerns are our concerns about wildlife as well.

If you have an encounter with a lion or an attack occurs, please immediately contact your local CPW office, Monday through Friday, 8AM - 5PM, as listed below. After hours, contact the Colorado State Patrol or your local Sheriff's Department. To report a sighting, please contact CPW during normal business hours. Your information is very valuable to us.

### CPW Headquarters - Administrative Offices

6060 Broadway, Denver, CO 80216.....	303-297-7227
Brush .....	970-842-6300
Colorado Springs.....	719-227-5200
Denver.....	303-291-7227
Durango.....	970-247-0855
Ft. Collins.....	970-472-4300
Glenwood Springs.....	970-947-2920
Grand Junction.....	970-255-6100
Gunnison.....	970-641-7060
Hot Sulphur Springs.....	970-725-6200
Lamar.....	719-336-6600
Meeker.....	970-878-6090
Monte Vista.....	719-587-6900
Montrose.....	970-252-6000
Pueblo.....	719-561-5300
Salida.....	719-530-5520
Steamboat Springs.....	970-870-2197

Colorado Parks & Wildlife is the state agency responsible for managing wildlife and its habitat, as well as providing wildlife-related recreation. CPW is funded through hunting and fishing license fees, federal grants and Colorado Lottery proceeds through Great Outdoors Colorado.

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

# Living With Lions



Much of Colorado, including any exurban areas in the foothills and mountains, are prime mountain lion country. These large, powerful predators have always lived here, preying on deer and elk, playing an important role in the ecosystem.

If you live or recreate in the foothills, mountains or canyons of Colorado, you are in mountain lion country. Like all wildlife, mountain lions can be dangerous. With a better understanding of mountain lions and their habitat, we can coexist with these magnificent animals.

### Colorado Parks & Wildlife

6060 Broadway, Denver, CO 80216

303-291-7227 | [cpw.state.co.us](http://cpw.state.co.us)

## WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MOUNTAIN LIONS

The mountain lion, commonly known as cougar, panther or puma, exists only in the Western Hemisphere and is one of North America's biggest cats. Lions are elusive, solitary animals that live on the landscape at relatively low densities. Based on density studies of lion populations in Colorado and other states, it is extrapolated that there may be 4,000 to 5,500 independent mountain lions living in Colorado — although this population projection is just a general range and not a census. As habitat models and recent and ongoing research on Colorado mountain lion densities improve with new data, this population projection can change. A lion's natural life span is probably about 12 years in the wild and up to 25 years in captivity. Lions are very powerful and usually kill large animals, such as deer and elk. Natural enemies include other large predators such as bears, wolves and other mountain lions. They also fall victim to accidents, disease, road hazards and people.

The status of the mountain lion in Colorado evolved from that of a varmint, on which a \$50 bounty was offered from 1929, to designation as a big game species in 1965. The change in legal status reflected growing public appreciation and concern for sound lion management. Lions are a legally-hunted species in Colorado with specific season dates and regulations governing harvest.

### Physical Appearance

The lion's scientific name, *Puma concolor*, means “cat of one color.” Mountain lions in Colorado are usually tawny to light cinnamon in color with black-tipped ears and tail. They vary in size and weight, with males being larger than females. Adult males may be more than 8 feet in length and weigh an average of 150 pounds. Adult females may be up to seven feet long and weigh an average of 90 pounds.

Mountain lions are easily distinguished from other wild cat species in Colorado. Lions are much larger than lynx or bobcats and have a long tail, which may measure one-third of their total length.

### Tracks

In an unhurried walk, lions usually place the hind paw in the imprint made by the front paw. They have four toes with three distinct lobes present at the base of the pad. Generally, claw marks are not visible since their claws are retractable. Lion tracks range from about 3 inches across for females up to 5 inches for males. Lion stride length is much longer than that of a bobcat or lynx, measuring around 12 inches between consecutive tracks, 30-40 inches for female lions and 40-50 for males.

Mountain lions are solitary animals. Adult males almost generally travel alone. If tracks indicate two or more lions traveling together, it's probably a female with young.



FRONT



HIND



CPW / Wayne D. Lewis

Larger, older kittens can often be as large as their mothers, so sighting of multiple lions together are often families or occasionally family groups sharing kills of deer or elk.

### Habitat

Mountain lions can be found anywhere in Colorado, but are predominately found in the foothills and mountainous regions where deer and elk are abundant. These habitats include areas of pinyon pine, juniper, mountain mahogany, ponderosa pine and oak brush.

Individual lions range in areas varying in size from 10 to 370 square miles. Females with young kittens use the smallest area; adult males occupy the largest areas. Size of the home range depends on the terrain and how much food is available. Boundaries and prominently used paths within a male's home range are marked with piles of dirt and twigs, called scrapes, which signal to other lions that this area is occupied. Scrapes can also be made by females to signal breeding status.

### Hunting And Feeding

Lions are most active from dusk to dawn, although they do travel and hunt in daylight. Lions prefer to eat deer and elk; however they also eat porcupines and other small mammals, livestock and a variety of domestic animals. Like most cats, they take their prey by ambush rather than by a long pursuit. After spotting prey, lions stalk using available cover, then attack with a rush, often from behind. Lions usually kill deer and elk by crushing the windpipe with their powerful jaws, but could also kill prey by biting below the base of the skull, breaking the neck. They then drag the carcass to a sheltered spot to feed on it. They cover the carcass with dirt, leaves or snow and may return to feed on it over the course of a few days. Generally, they move the carcass and re-cover it after each feeding.

Lions feeding on a kill can be dangerous to people. Lions that have been fed by people or seem “tame” may become aggressive unexpectedly.

### Mating And Breeding

Female lions generally reproduce for the first time when they are about 2½ years old. Courtship begins when a roaming female in heat makes frequent calls and leaves a scent that attracts males. After locating the female, the male accompanies her for just a few days when mating occurs.

Breeding can take place throughout the year, but most females give birth between June and August, following a three month gestation period.

### Birth To Maturity

The female finds a secluded spot where she gives birth to an average of two to three young, called kittens. Care of the kittens rests solely with the female. She defends them vigorously, even against male lions which may kill them. Newborn kittens are about one foot long and weigh about one pound. They are covered with light brown hair with black spots and have dark rings around their short tails. The young stir only to nurse until they are about two weeks old, when their eyes open and they become alert and playful. Weaning from their mothers milk occurs at about two to four months.

Kittens learn hunting skills though play and exploration, and by watching their mother. When the young are about six weeks old, she begins taking them to her kills to feed.

As the kittens mature, their spots fade. At six months, they weigh over thirty pounds and are becoming capable hunters. Kittens are naturally dependent on their mother for almost another year, improving their hunting skills.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU LIVE IN LION COUNTRY

Generally, lions are calm, quiet and elusive. Lions are most commonly found in areas with plentiful deer populations and adequate cover. Such conditions may exist in mountain subdivisions, urban fringes and open spaces. The number of mountain lion/human interactions has increased due to a variety of reasons: more people moving into lion habitat, increase in deer populations and density, presumed increase in lion numbers and expanded range, more people using hiking and running trails in lion habitat, an increase in easy food created by domestic animals (pets and hobby livestock) in lion habitat and a greater awareness of the presence of lions.

We can live with these incredibly efficient predators if we respect mountain lions and their habitat. To reduce the risk of problems with mountain lions on or near your property, we urge you to follow these simple precautions.

- When your children are playing outside, make sure there is at least one adult outside with them. Watching from inside the house is not good enough. Make sure children are inside before dusk and not outside before dawn.

- Teach your children that if they are outside alone and they see a lion, that they need to stand up and keep facing the lion. They need to yell as loudly as they can to their parents or other adults that they can see a lion. They must back up slowly until they reach the house or nearest shelter. Tell them to never turn away from the lion and never run.

- Make lots of noise if you come and go during the times when mountain lions are most active — dusk to dawn.

- Install outside lighting. Light areas where you walk, so you could see a lion if one were present.

- Landscape or remove vegetation to eliminate hiding places for lions especially around children's play areas. Make it difficult for lions to approach unseen.

- Planting non-native shrubs and plants that deer often prefer to eat encourages wildlife to come onto your property. Predators follow prey.

- DON'T FEED ANY WILDLIFE!

- Protect your pets. Roaming pets are easy prey and can attract lions. Bring pets in at night. If you leave your pet outside, keep it in a kennel with a secure top. Don't feed pets outside; this can attract raccoons and other animals that are eaten by lions. Store all garbage securely.

- Place livestock in enclosed sheds or barns at night. Close doors to all outbuildings since inquisitive lions may go inside for a look.

- Encourage your neighbors to follow these simple precautions. Prevention is far better than a possible lion confrontation.

