



Mountain Lions

Sequoia National Forest

Mountain lions are one of the many wildlife species that occur within our forest. Like any animal, they should be treated with respect rather than feared. Here you will find some frequently asked questions regarding mountain lions and how to stay safe in mountain lion country.

How many mountain lions are in California?

Any statewide estimate of the mountain lion population is just a “guesstimate.” Mountain lion studies over the last 30 years have estimated population densities for different habitat types around the state. These density estimates varied from zero to 10 lions per 100 square miles, and were simply expanded to the total amount of each habitat type available. This method provides a crude estimate of between 4,000 and 6,000 mountain lions statewide.

Are mountain lion numbers increasing or decreasing in California?

Without an ongoing statewide mountain lion study, it is impossible to know what is happening on a statewide basis with populations. However, there are indications that mountain lion activity, such as depredation, attacks on people, and predation on prey populations, peaked in 1996, then decreased somewhat, and have remained stable for the past several years.

What causes a mountain lion to display unusually bold behavior toward humans?

Sometimes disease will cause an animal to behave strangely. Some mountain lions killed for public safety reasons have tested positive for feline leukemia. A mountain lion that attacked a man in Mendocino County in 1994 tested positive for rabies. Usually, there is no apparent explanation for why a mountain lion seems to abandon its instinctive wariness of humans. Mountain lions are typically solitary and elusive. Studies of collared mountain lions show that they often co-exist around people, unseen and unheard.

If I live in mountain lion habitat, how concerned should I be for my safety?

Statistically speaking, a person is one thousand times more likely to be struck by lightning than attacked by a mountain lion.

That said, mountain lions are wild animals and, like any wildlife, can be dangerous. People who live in mountain lion habitat can take precautions to reduce their risk of encountering a mountain lion. By deer-proofing the landscape, homeowners can avoid attracting a lion's main food source.

Are mountain lion attacks on humans common?

Mountain lion attacks on humans are rare. There have been only 16 verified mountain lion attacks on humans in California since 1890, six of them fatal. The last documented attack occurred in January, 2007, in Humboldt County.

Are mountain lion attacks on pets/livestock common?

It has become increasingly common for mountain lions to prey on pets and livestock as more people move into mountain lion habitat. The CDFW received hundreds of reports annually of mountain lions killing pets and livestock.



Staying Safe in Mountain Lion Country:

Mountain lions are quiet, solitary and elusive, and typically avoid people.

Mountain lion attacks on humans are extremely rare. However, conflicts are increasing as California's human population expands into mountain lion habitat.

- Do not hike, bike, or jog alone.
- Avoid hiking or jogging when mountain lions are most active – dawn, dusk, and at night.
- Keep a close watch on small children.
- Do not approach a mountain lion.
- If you encounter a mountain lion, do not run; instead, face the animal, make noise and try to look bigger by waving your arms; throw rocks or other objects. Pick up small children.
- If attacked, fight back.

If a mountain lion attacks a person, immediately call 911.

- **Keep Children Close To You:** Observations of captured wild mountain lions reveal that the animals seem especially drawn to children. Keep children within your sight at all times.



- **Do Not Approach a Lion:** Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.
- **Do Not Run From a Lion:** Running may stimulate a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If you have small children with you, pick them up if possible so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the mountain lion.
- **Do Not Crouch Down or Bend Over:** If you're in mountain lion country, avoid squatting, crouching or bending over, even when picking up children. Bending down or crouching could make you appear to be a prey animal for a mountain lion.
- **Do All You Can To Appear Larger:** Raise your arms. Open your jacket if you are wearing one. Again, pick up small children. Throw stones, branches, or whatever you can reach without crouching or turning your back. Wave your arms slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice.
- **Fight Back If Attacked:** A hiker in Southern California used a rock to fend off a mountain lion that was attacking his son. Others have fought back successfully with sticks, caps, jackets, garden tools and their bare hands. Since a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal.



Thank you for your help in making forest visits enjoyable and safe! Plan ahead by obtaining a National Forest map at one of the following offices:

Hume Lake Ranger District
35860 East Kings Canyon Road
Dunlap, CA 93621
[559-338-2251](tel:559-338-2251)

Kern River Ranger District
11380 Kernville Rd.
Kernville, CA 93238
[760-376-3781](tel:760-376-3781)

Western Divide Ranger District
32588 Hwy 190
Springville, CA 93265
[559-539-2607](tel:559-539-2607)

Forest Supervisor's Office
220 E Morton Ave
Porterville, CA 93257
[559-784-1500](tel:559-784-1500)