

Living With Mountain Lions

Mountain Lion Fact

Description: The mountain lion is called by more names than any other Colorado mammal – cougar, puma, panther, catamount, or just plain lion – and all connote respect for such a magnificent hunter. Colorado's largest cat, adult mountain lions are more than six feet long, with a graceful, black-tipped tail 32 inches long. They weigh 130 pounds or more. Color is reddish to buffy, paler below.



Range: Cougars have the largest geographic range of any American native mammal other than humans – from western Canada to Argentina. Once they ranged from coast to coast in the United States, but today eastern populations are extinct or endangered; the West is their stronghold.

Habitat: In Colorado, they are most abundant in foothills, canyons, or mesa country. They are more at home in brushy areas and woodlands than in forests or open prairies.

Diet: Active year round, the lion's staple diet is deer. Adults maintain their condition by eating a deer a week. Cougars hunt by stealth, often pouncing on prey from a tree or rock overhanging a game trail. The deer is often killed cleanly with a broken neck. The cat gorges on the carcass until it can eat no more, covers the remainder with leaves or conifer needles, then fasts for a few days, digesting and resting.

Reproduction: Mountain lions may breed at any time of year, but mating peaks in the fall. Births are most common in July, after a gestation period of about 14 weeks. Two or three spotted, fist-sized (about one pound) kittens are a typical litter. They are weaned

about six weeks of age, at about eight times their birth weight.

For more info: [**Be WildSmart About Mountain Lions**](#)

Lion Country



Much of Colorado, including La Plata County, is prime mountain lion country. This simple fact is a surprise to many residents and visitors. These large, powerful predators have always lived here, preying on plentiful deer and playing an important role in the ecosystem. Like any wildlife, mountain lions can be dangerous.

With a better understanding of mountain lions and their habitat, we can coexist with these magnificent animals.

The mountain lion's habitat ranges from desert, chaparral, and bad land breaks to subalpine mountains and tropical rain forests. A lion's natural life span is 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, lions, and wolves. They also fall victim to accidents, disease, road hazards, and people. playing an important role in the ecosystem. Like any wildlife, mountain lions can be dangerous. With a better understanding of mountain lions and their habitat, we can coexist with these magnificent animals.

- In Colorado, lions are found in areas of pinion pine, juniper, mountain mahogany, ponderosa pine, and oak brush. Lions generally will be most abundant in areas with plentiful deer.
- Individual lions range in areas varying in size from 10 to 370 square miles. Females with young kittens use the smallest areas; adult males occupy the largest areas.
- The size of the home range depends on the terrain and how much food is available. Boundaries of the male home range are marked with piles of dirt and vigs, called scrapes, which signal to other lions that this area is occupied.

More Information

The CPW booklet, [Living in Mountain Lion Country](#) is a valuable resource with important safety information.

Information from the Mountain Lion Foundation, P.O. Box 1896, Sacramento, CA 95812

[Website FAQ](#)