



FACT SHEET: Mountain Lions

Background

Mountain lions, also known as “pumas” and “cougars” are large powerful predators that have an important role in the ecosystem. Their primary food source is deer, but they can also prey on smaller animals like raccoons, rabbits, domestic pets and livestock. More than half of California, including most of undeveloped San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, is prime mountain lion habitat. Mountain lions are a specially protected species in California.

Identification

The mountain lion has a small head and small rounded ears. It has a very long tail that is about 2/3rds the length of its body.

- **Color:** Generally tan, but can range from gray to brown, with a whitish underside. The ears and tail are tipped with black. Cubs have camouflage spots that fade as they mature.
- **Size:** Adult males can reach 8 feet in length from nose to tail; and weigh 130-150 lbs. Adult females can reach up to 7 feet in length and weigh 65-90 lbs.
- **Tracks:** Unlike a dog, mountain lions don't leave a nail mark and their pads are shaped like an “M”.
- **Behavior:** Adult pumas are solitary and territorial animals. Males can have territories up to 100 square miles and females' territories can range up to 60 square miles. They are most active between dusk and dawn, and generally avoid contact with humans.

Stay safe in mountain lion country

- 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 wear headphones.

If you encounter a mountain lion...

- Do not approach a mountain lion, it may feel cornered if you approach it.
- Don't turn your back or run, which might trigger a chase response.
- Stand tall, face the animal, make noise and try to look bigger by waving your arms or throwing objects.
- Without bending over, pick up small children.
- *If attacked, fight back.*

REPORT ALL ENCOUNTERS OR ATTACKS IMMEDIATELY

If a human is attacked by a mountain lion, call 911. If you have a face-to-face encounter with a mountain lion, contact a ranger or call the Midpen office at 650-691-1200 during regular business hours. On weekends or after 5:00 PM on weekdays, call 650-691-2165.



Keep mountain lions away from your home

- **Do Not Feed Wildlife.** This includes deer, raccoons, and other wildlife that are mountain lion prey.
- **“Deer-Proof” Your Landscape.** Landscape your yard with plants that deer do not like to eat.
- **Trim brush to reduce hiding places for mountain lions.**
- **Keep Your Pets Safe.** Keep your pets indoors, especially at night. Bring pet food inside.
- **Keep Livestock Secure.** Keep livestock in enclosed sheds and barns at night and be sure to secure all outbuildings.
- **Install Outdoor Lighting.** Motion or timer-activated outdoor lighting around your home and animal enclosures may keep mountain lions away.
- **Remove Garbage.**

Response Protocol

In case of an attack or incident, Midpen will immediately notify the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the local law enforcement agency. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has the ultimate authority for dealing with wildlife in the state, including the authority for the removal of aggressive wildlife. Midpen will then begin an investigation to assess the circumstances of the incident, the behavior of the animal, and what steps are necessary to protect the public. A preserve, or a portion thereof, may be closed immediately for public safety, investigation purposes and tracking of the aggressive animal. Preserve neighbors, nearby land management agencies and local jurisdictions may also be notified.

For more information, visit:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
wildlife.ca.gov/Keep-Me-Wild/Lion

Midpen mountain lion web page
openspace.org/mountain-lion

Bay Area Puma Project
bapp.org

About the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is a public agency, founded in 1972, that has successfully protected nearly 65,000 acres of open space throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Midpen was created by voters to acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space and agricultural land of regional significance, to protect and restore the natural environment, to preserve rural character and encourage viable agricultural use of land resources, and to provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

www.openspace.org

Some text has been adapted from information provided by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.