



Discover
Washington's

COUGARS

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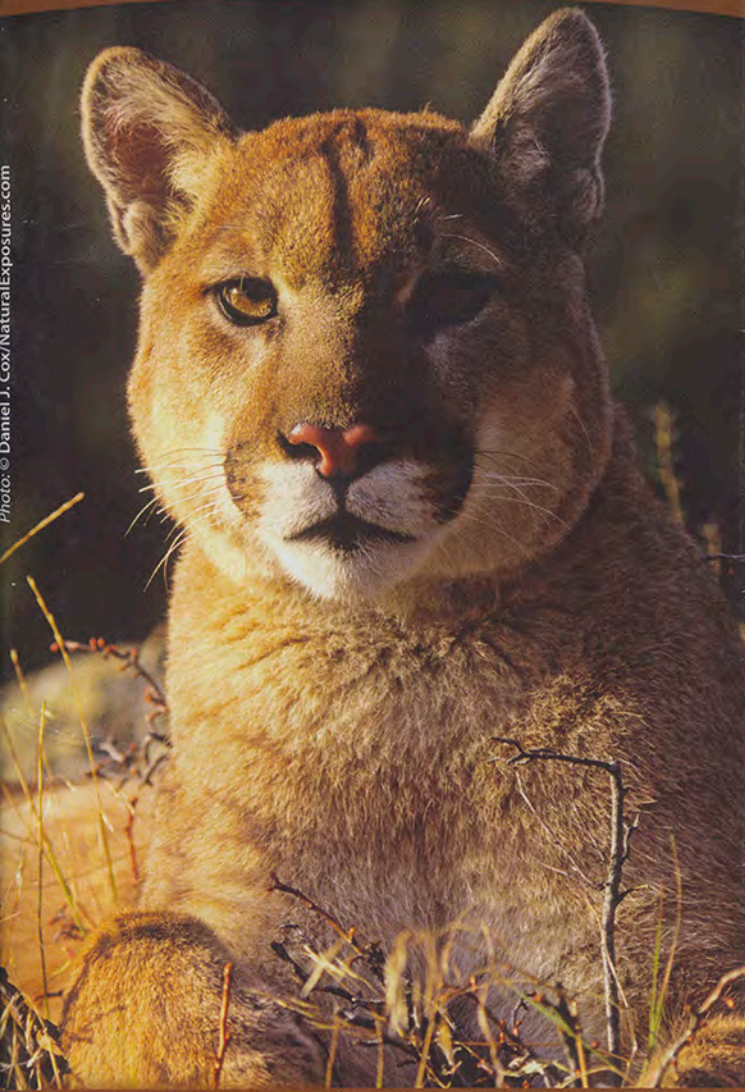


Photo: © Daniel J. Cox/NaturalExposures.com



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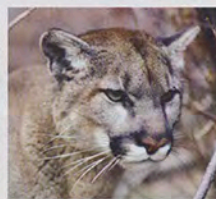
Cougars, also called mountain lions, panthers, or pumas, are the second largest members of the cat family in the western hemisphere (after the jaguar), and the fourth largest species of wild cats in the world. Long before humans arrived, this carnivore lived on the North American continent as well as right here in Washington State.

Cougars are shy, elusive, and rarely observed. Most likely you will never catch sight of a cougar, but as Washington's human population grows, interactions between cougars and humans may increase. To help you avoid an encounter while living, working, and recreating in cougar country, this brochure explains the ecology and behavior of these animals, their signs, role in the ecosystem, and what to do in an encounter.

History and Legal Status

In the 1800s and early 1900s, many people viewed cougars, wolves, and grizzly bears as threats to people, domestic livestock, and game species, and they targeted these large

Photo: Maurice Hornocker



carnivores for extermination. Due to its adaptable nature, cougars were able to survive in the rugged and remote mountainous areas of the West.

Since 1968, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has managed cougars as a game animal in Washington State. Hunting cougars requires both an open season and a hunting license. Under this status, cougar numbers and distribution expanded and they now occupy suitable habitat across the state. While cougar populations are currently stable they are likely to decline in the future due mainly to our increasing human population, loss of habitat, loss of prey, disease, and encounters with humans.



Learn about cougar
behavior, ecology, signs,
and safety tips.