

Cougar/Mountain Lion



The Mountain Lion

The cougar (*Puma concolor*), also known as puma, mountain lion, mountain cat, catamount or panther, depending on the region, is a mammal of the family Felidae, native to the Americas. This large, solitary cat has the greatest range of any large wild terrestrial mammal in the Western Hemisphere extending from Yukon in Canada to the southern Andes of South America. A highly adaptable, species, the cougar is found in every major habitat type in America. It is the second heaviest cat in the American continents after the jaguar. Although large, the cougar is most closely related to smaller felines.

A capable stalk-and-ambush predator, the cougar pursues a wide variety of prey. Primary food sources include deer, elk, moose, and bighorn sheep, as well as domestic cattle, horses and sheep, particularly in the northern part of its range. It will also hunt species as small as rodents. This cat prefers habitats with dense underbrush and rocky areas for stalking, but it can also live in open areas. The cougar is territorial and persists at low population densities. Individual territory sizes depend on terrain, vegetation, and abundance of prey. It is a reclusive cat and usually avoids people. Attacks on humans remain rare, but cornering or confronting the animal should be avoided.

Due to excessive hunting following the colonization of the Americas and the continuing human development in some cougar habitat, populations have dropped in most parts of its historical range. In particular, the cougar was hunted to extinction in the eastern United States in the beginning of the 20th century, except for an isolated sub-population in Florida. However, in recent decades, breeding populations have moved east into the far western parts of the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

Physical characteristics

Cougars are slender and agile cats. They are the fourth largest of the cat family cat, adults stand about 2.0 to 2.5 ft tall at the shoulders. The length of adult males is around 8 ft long nose to tail, with overall ranges between 5 and 9 ft . suggested for the species in general. Of this length, 25-38 in is made up by the tail alone. Males typically weigh 115 to 220 pounds, averaging 137 lb. Females typically weigh between 64 and 141 lb.

The head of the cat is round and the ears erect. Its powerful forequarters, neck, and jaw serve to grasp and hold large prey. It has five retractable claws on its forepaws, one a dewclaw and four on its hind paws. The larger front feet and claws are adaptations to clutching prey.



Despite its size, it is not typically classified among the "big cats", as it cannot roar. Like domestic cats, cougars vocalize lowpitched hisses, growls, and purrs, as well as chirps and whistles. They are well known for their screams, as referenced in some of their common names.

Cougar coloring is plain but can vary greatly between individuals and even between siblings. The coat is typically tawny, but ranges to silvery-grey or reddish, with lighter patches on the under body including the jaws, chin, and throat. Infants are spotted and born with blue eyes and rings on their tails; juveniles are pale, and dark spots remain on their flanks. Cougars have large paws and proportionally the largest hind legs in the cat family. This allows it great leaping and short-sprint ability. Horizontal jumping capability from standing position could be from 20 to 40 ft. The cougar can run as fast as 35 to 5 mph, but is best adapted for short, powerful sprints rather than long chases. It is adept at climbing, which allows it to hunt from above. Although it is not strongly associated with water, it can swim.

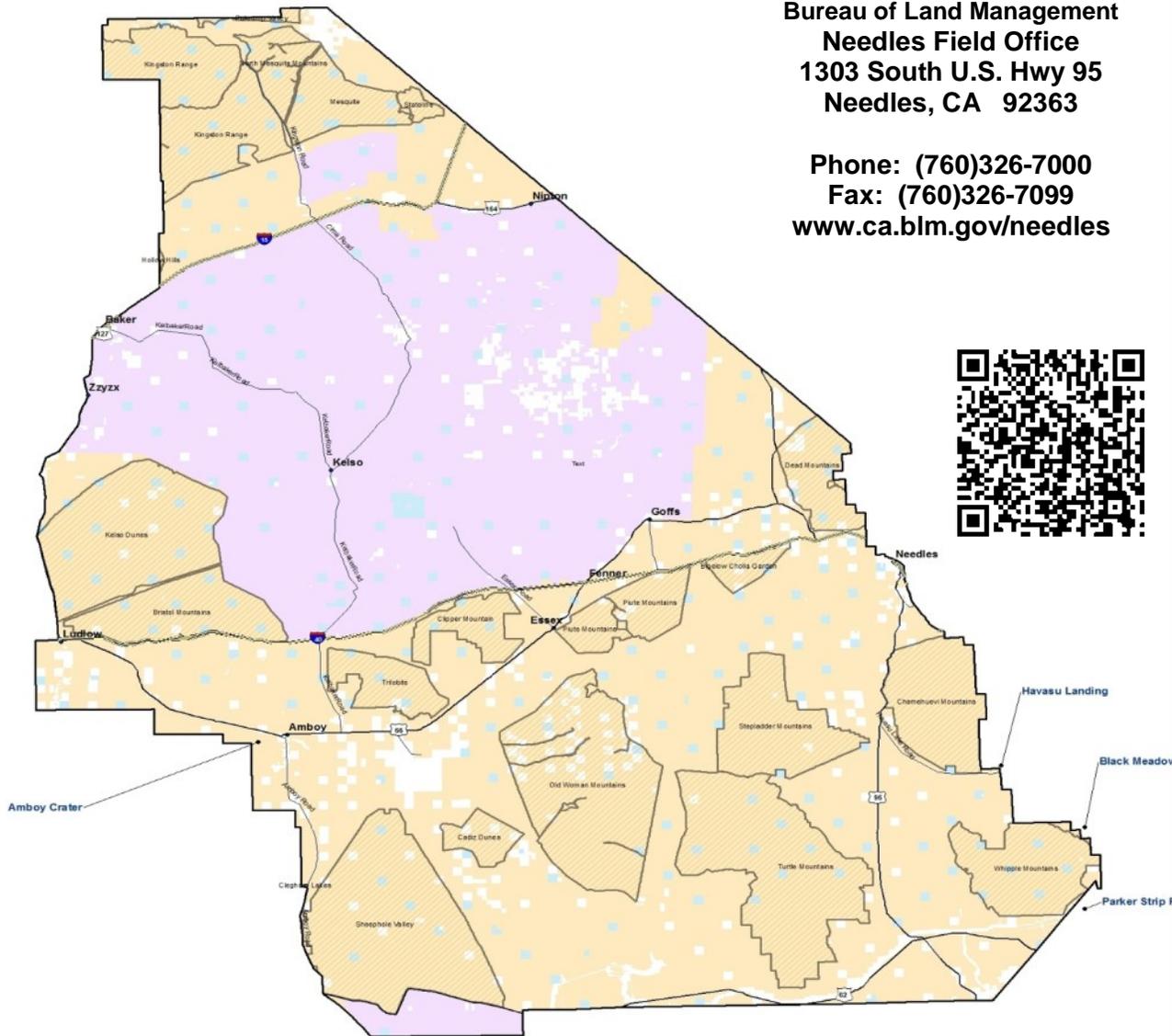
Cougars have large paws and proportionally the largest hind legs in the cat family. This allows it great leaping and short-sprint ability. Horizontal jumping capability from standing position could be from 20 to 40 ft. The cougar can run as fast as 35 to 5 mph, but is best adapted for short, powerful sprints rather than long chases. It is adept at climbing, which allows it to hunt from above. Although it is not strongly associated with water, it can swim.



Needles Field Office Boundary

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Needles Field Office
1303 South U.S. Hwy 95
Needles, CA 92363

Phone: (760)326-7000
Fax: (760)326-7099
www.ca.blm.gov/needles



Newsbytes

Subscribe to News.bytes a FREE
Weekly email Newsletter
www.blm.gov/ca

OHV Use

Off-highway vehicles (OHVs) provide fun, entertainment, and discovery. However, many of the desert's most attractive and fragile resources can be destroyed if vehicle access is not properly controlled. Resources, cultural and natural, can be unintentionally damaged or destroyed by uncontrolled vehicle use. We all have the responsibility for the proper use of vehicles, so please remember to TREAD LIGHTLY on public and private lands. Stay on open routes of travel

NO CROSS COUNTRY TRAVEL

