

Cougar

(*Felis concolor*)

Kingdom: *Animalia*
Phylum: *Chordata*
Class: *Mammalia*
Order: *Carnivora*
Family: *Felidae*



The cougar, also known as the puma or mountain lion, is a large, solitary cat found in the Americas. It has a vast range, from Yukon in Canada to the southern Andes of South America. Its primary food is deer but it hunts a range of prey, from insects, mice and rabbits to domestic cats and dogs, alpaca, livestock, and even bighorn sheep and elk. In the Rocky Mountains it sometimes preys on mature cattle and horses. It is a secretive cat that usually avoids people; it will attack humans, though rarely

RANGE:

Southern Canada to Patagonia

HABITAT:

Forest to steppe, deciduous and tropical forest, grasslands and desert

CHARACTERISTICS:

Coats are plain gray-brown or golden. Cubs initially dark spotted, head round and small, body very slender, eyes brown, pupil's circular, tail black-tipped.

BEHAVIOR:

These solitary cats are expert hunters and are capable of taking down an adult male elk. The cougar will leap onto the back of its prey, and by grasping the neck with its canines, pulls back on the head using its powerful rear legs to snap the prey's neck. To prevent scavenging animals from stealing their kill, cougars often bury their prey with sticks and leaves. This enables them to feed from a large kill for several days.

Cougars are excellent jumpers. Using their long tails for balance, they can achieve leaps up to 20 feet from a standstill.

REPRODUCTION:

2-3 cubs are born after a 90-95 day gestation. These cubs are born with a

spotted coat, but the spots fade and usually disappear as the young become adults. Cubs nurse for 3 or 4 months, but begin to eat meat as early as 6 weeks of age. Young cats become independent when they are about 2 years old, and littermates stay together for a few months after leaving their mother.

FACTOID

At one time cougars had a wide range in North and South America. They came to be known by many different names including: mountain lion, puma, catamount, screamer and painter.