

The recent cougar sightings at the south end of Jackson provide a wonderful opportunity for all of us to examine how we live and play in this beautiful place.

It is not WHY we live here but HOW we live here that really matters. Species diversity is what enhances our ecosystem. We must acknowledge our own responsibility and gain the knowledge necessary to prevent tragic encounters with wildlife. From the way we drive our cars to the way we dispose of our garbage, we have choices.

If we decide to jog through foliage at dawn and dusk, or leave our pets unattended, we are increasing the vulnerability of our wild co-habitants. Our families, pets and livestock rely on us. They rely on the decisions humans make. When we choose actions that put those we care about at risk, we also put the exquisite natural world that drew us here at risk.

Please let this well publicized incident be a catalyst to examine how you are interacting with your environment.

Contact your favorite organization or agency and ask for information. They are always willing to help with education and awareness. The Cougar Fund website www.cougarfund.org has comprehensive resources for living safely in overlapping habitat, Feel free to call or visit us at the office.

Start conversations with friends, neighbors and family to make sure they know how to avoid attracting wild animals and how to respond to the rare possibility of an encounter.

Thank the public servants who responded positively and with concern not only for the citizens but also to try and ensure a safe resolution for the cougar.

Please remind yourself that how you live, directly impacts where you live. The beauty and wildness is what we love about Jackson. Be wise about wildlife and we can all continue to enjoy it safely.

Penny Maldonado
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The Cougar Fund