



Contact:
Emorie Broemel, Communications Coordinator
The Cougar Fund
emorie@cougarfund.org
307-733-0797
307-733-7129 (f)
www.cougarfund.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Cougar Fund, a Wyoming based national nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of the cougar throughout its present and historic range and the use of sound science in the development of conservation and management strategies would like to comment on the North Dakota's Game and Fish Department's decision to increase the number of mountain lions that can be killed by hunters this season in zone one, from five to eight.

With the state of North Dakota so recently declaring that there is a viable and huntable cougar population in the state, we find it extremely reckless that out of only two total zones the state supports one where there is an unlimited quota and another where all cougar mortality is not counted towards the quota.

Despite the fact that a quota of 8 seems very minimal, the state fails to clarify that this is just a fraction of the lions that are killed each year. Among the excluded kills are those dozens of cougars killed by the department, private landowners, vehicles and incidental deaths by trapping. Lions taken on Indian lands are also excluded from the quota.

The Cougar Fund urges the North Dakota Game & Fish to set a quota that includes ALL cougar mortality, as is the case in many other western states. Such a system gives game managers the ability to set cougar harvest strategies in a framework of adaptive management objectives. Linking semi-isolated subpopulations by dispersal events, using a source-sink structure and recognizing that cougar populations vary in response to habitat features, prey abundance and current and past exploitation are crucial to a progressive management strategy.

SAFETY IN COUGAR COUNTRY

Preventative Actions

- Be aware of your surroundings and recreate responsibly. Consider hiking, biking and running with others.
- Supervise children and do not leave them unattended, especially at dawn or dusk.
- Keep all garbage, pet food or food scraps indoors to avoid attracting prey.
- Keep pets and livestock in a secure area, especially at night.
- Install outdoor lighting where you walk after dark or install motion activated lighting.
- Do not feed wildlife. Predators follow Prey!
- Minimize vegetation in your yard where a cougar could hide and avoid planting foliage that attracts prey.
- Never approach a cougar!

ENCOUNTERING A COUGAR

- Stay clam and back away slowly. Do not turn your back, run or bend over.
- Avoid looking like prey. Try to make yourself appear as big as possible, make eye contact, open your jacket, raise your arms.
- If a lion is aggressive, throw rocks and sticks, yell as loud as you can. Always fight back and do not play dead.

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