

Mountain Lions (also known as Cougars)

From Montana FWP except as noted



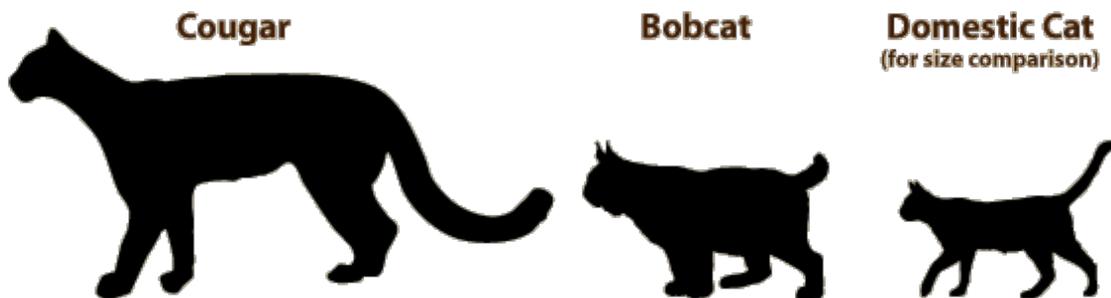
Iowa DNR

Physical Appearance

The scientific name given to mountain lions is *Puma concolor*, meaning “cat of one color.” Yet, their back and sides are usually tawny to light-cinnamon in color; their chest and underside are white; the backs of the ears and the tip of the tail are black.

Males and females vary in size and weight, with males being about 1/3 larger than females. Adult males may be more than eight feet long and can weigh 135 - 175 pounds. Adult females may be up to seven feet long and weigh between 90 and 105 pounds.

Mountain lions are easily distinguished from other wild cats - the bobcat and lynx. Lions, except for their kittens, are much larger than lynx or bobcats, and have long tails, measuring about one-third of their overall body length.



Michigan DNR

Range, Habitat & Behavior

Mountain lions are the most widely distributed cat in the Americas, found from Canada to Argentina. They live in mountainous, semi-arid terrain, subtropical and tropical forests, and swamps. Mountain lions are most common where there is abundant prey, rough terrain, and adequate vegetation. They are active year-round. While mountain lions tend to avoid people, they can and do live in close proximity to humans. They tend to be more active when there is less human presence.



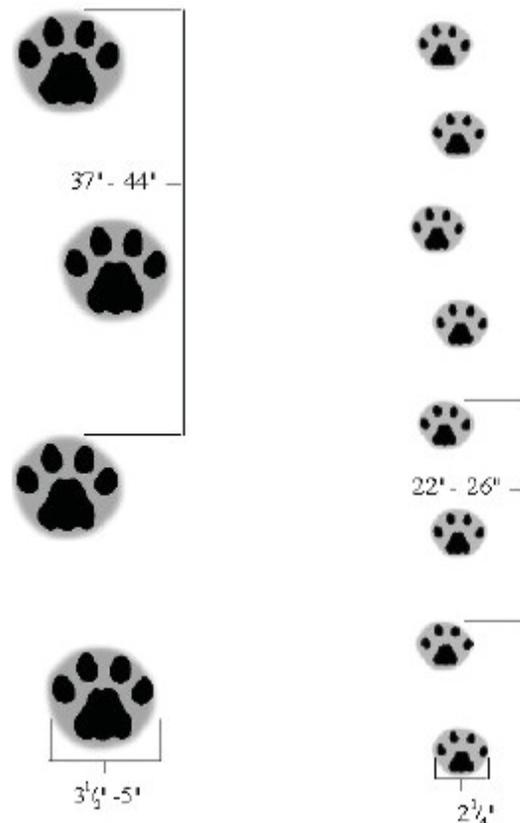
Environment Canada

The lion's staple diet is meat. Deer and elk, the primary prey species, often are killed with a bite that breaks the neck or penetrates the skull or the kill is from a "choking" bite that crushes the windpipe. The carcass is fed upon and the remainder is cached by covering it with leaves, sticks, or conifer needles. After digesting its meal, the lion will return to feed again. This process is repeated until practically all edible portions have been eaten. Lions are also known to prey upon beaver, rabbits, bighorn sheep, raccoons, antelope, turkey and even porcupines. They may also prey upon domestic animals including livestock and pets. Since deer and elk are the animals most preyed upon by lions, lions tend to be most active when they are active - at dawn and at dusk.

Mountain lions are very difficult to find unless you know what to look for. The most obvious "sign" of a lion you might come across are tracks left in new snow or on soft ground. Less obvious, but just as telling, is scat (feces).



Mountain lion scat tends to be segmented, broken "cords" or pellets with small tails - or no tails at all. Seeing hair, bones, and teeth in the scat is common.



Mountain Lion

Bobcat

Are You Certain that was a Mountain Lion?

Yellow lab or shepherd dogs, bobcats, feral house cats or deer are often mistaken as mountain lions. Most reported mountain lion sightings occur at night, in very poor lighting conditions, poor weather conditions, or at very far distances. Bobcats are the most similar relatives of mountain lions and they share many physical and behavioral traits. The mountain lion has a long tail (2.5-3 feet), while the bobcat has a short tail (less than 10 inches). Mountain lions are 7-9 feet, while bobcats are 3 feet long. Mountain lions weigh 90-160 pounds, while bobcats weigh 20-30 pounds. Bobcats tend to be darker brown, with lighter belly fur and spots while mountain lions tend to be more uniform brown, tawny color. Although difficult to see at distance, bobcats have tufts on their ears and facial cheeks. Yellow Labrador and German shepherd dogs have different physical features with less massive shoulders and hindquarters, a longer furred non-cylindrical tail, with longer fur over the rest of the body. Try to use tracks and scat to aid in your identification efforts!

