

Living with Mountain Lions

Human Safety

In the past 110 years, over 130 people have been attacked by mountain lions/cougars, 28 of which were fatal. No mt lion attacks have occurred in Iowa. Generally, a mountain lion will sense human presence before humans know they are in the area and quickly vacate the area. Urban sprawl into mountain lion country in the west has caused more human encounters with mountain lions, however mountain lion attacks are uncommon considering the high human and mountain lion populations in some states (Table 1). People that have been attacked are usually unaware of mountain lion presence and commonly cross-country skiing, jogging, or biking. The animal is probably surprised by their presence and the fast movement away from the mountain lion stimulates the animal to chase and sometimes attack.

Table 1. Mountain lion numbers in populated states.

State	Human Population	Mountain Lion Population
Arizona	7.6 million	2,500-3,000
California	40 million	4,000-6,000
Colorado	6 million	3,500-7,000
Nevada	3.3 million	2,000
Oregon	4.3 million	6,000
Utah	3.5 million	2,500-4,000
Washington	8 million	1,500

We anticipate humans will rarely encounter mountain lions in close proximity in Iowa because there are so few mountain lions in the state. However, if one has an unexpected encounter with a mountain lion, the following guidelines are recommended.

1. DON'T RUN! Running will stimulate certain animals to chase you (like a dog that wants to bite especially if you run).
2. Stand tall, look big, puff up, and lift your coat over your shoulders.
3. Take control of the situation. Scream loudly and throw objects.
4. Gather children in close and slowly back away keeping your eye on the animal.
5. If attacked, fight back vigorously with sharp objects and poke the eyes of the animal.

Depredation

There have been some reports of livestock damage/depredation in Iowa, but only a few have been identified as possible mountain lion kills. In almost all cases, it was from dogs or self-inflicted injuries on fences or gates around the stock pens or pastures. It is possible for a mountain lion to attack/depredate livestock, however research shows that white-tailed deer and other wild animals, especially mammals, are the preferred prey. Even so, predators are generally opportunists and if hungry they will take what is available. Please contact the local DNR office (www.iowadnr.gov) if you have reasonable evidence that a mountain lion is attacking your animals.

Sources:

Arizona Game & Fish Department

California Department of Fish & Wildlife

Colorado Parks & Wildlife

Nevada Department of Wildlife

The Mountain Lion Foundation

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife