

Mountain Lions

Mountain lions are large cats with solid-colored coats. They have long, heavy tails and their coats are usually a tan color. They are slender and very agile animals that can climb rocks and find their way into narrow crevices. Mountain Lions are thought to have more than 40 different names. Some examples are cougar, puma, panther and catamount. They have so many names because they are found in almost every part of the western hemisphere from the Yukon in northern Canada to South America. These cats are loners who avoid each other for the most part. Males and females meet to breed, and young mountain lions stay with their mothers for about a year and a half to two years before they go off on their own. Baby mountain lions are born with spots, but the spots disappear soon after the cubs are born. An adult male mountain lion weighs between 110 and 180 pounds and females weigh between 80 to 130 pounds. This makes them about the same weight as humans.

Mountain lions prey mainly on deer. If they can't find deer, they will feed on rodents, birds, porcupines, fish or raccoons. Mountain lions that live near farms are a threat to livestock. Like many cats, mountain lions rely on excellent vision and speed for hunting. They can jump 15 feet straight up and can drop from a height of 60 feet without making a sound. Mountain lions are also able to spring forward a distance of 40 to 45 feet in one leap. They are also the largest cat that can purr, but they do not roar. Mountain lions also makes sounds that are like a bird chirping or a person whistling, though they are usually very quiet.

Each mountain lion has its own territory that may be as large as hundreds of square miles or as small as 25 square miles. Mountain lions need a lot of space, especially in areas where they compete with other animals such as bears for prey. In the summer, a mountain lion's territory is usually larger than in winter. These cats are most active at night or at dawn or dusk and are rarely seen during the day. Because of this, mountain lions have been nicknamed *ghost cats*. Since they are so hard to observe in nature, scientists sometimes trap mountain lions and put a special collar on them that sends out a signal so researchers can tell where the animals go and how much ground they cover. The idea is to find out how much space they need in the wild so that their habitats can be protected. Although mountain lions are not an endangered species, they are considered "threatened" because of competition with humans for territory.

Mountain Lions Questions

1. Another name for mountain lion is
 - a. puma.
 - b. cougar.
 - c. panther.
 - d. All of the above

2. Mountain lions do not live in
 - a. Africa and Asia.
 - b. Canada and the United States.
 - c. Central and South America.
 - d. Mexico.

3. Mountain lions
 - a. live in groups called prides.
 - b. are loners.
 - c. spend half their time in groups and half their time alone.
 - d. hunt in pairs.

4. Mountain lions weigh
 - a. much more than people.
 - b. less than people.
 - c. about the same as people.
 - d. more than any other cat.

5. Mountain lions rely on excellent _____ and _____ for hunting.

6. How high can a mountain lion jump?

Mountain Lions Questions (Cont'd)

7. Which is not a sound that a mountain lion makes?
 - a. a chirping sound
 - b. a purring sound
 - c. a whistling sound
 - d. a roaring sound

8. Why are mountain lions nicknamed *ghost cats*?

9. Scientists trap mountain lions and put special collars around their necks to
 - a. find out where the cats go.
 - b. find out how much territory the cats need.
 - c. study them so they can help preserve their territories.
 - d. All of these

10. Which statement is true?
 - a. There are more mountain lions now than at any other time in history.
 - b. Mountain lions are an endangered species.
 - c. Mountain lions are a threatened species.
 - d. People are not a threat to mountain lions.

Name _____



Date _____

Mountain Lions Answers

1. d
2. a
3. b
4. c
5. eyesight, speed
6. 15 feet
7. d
8. They are rarely seen during the day.
9. d
10. c