



Male mountain lion cub, named Larabee

Image courtesy of the ABQ BioPark Society



Mountain Lion on the prowl

Image courtesy of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History

Front cover:

Image in the public domain

Explore History, Where It Happened
Visit New Mexico Historic Sites and explore the state's most important places. These seven historic sites and one historic property highlight the traditions and culture of New Mexico. It is an experience you won't forget.

Help Preserve Fort Selden
Help us preserve Fort Selden by becoming a site volunteer or by making a designated gift to the Museum of NM Foundation for the Fort's preservation and interpretation. 100% of your gifts will be used to support Fort Selden.

Become a Friend of Fort Selden
Join other community members as we work to form a non-profit group to support the Fort. Call us for more information at 575-202-1638.



Fort Selden Historic Site
1280 Ft. Selden Rd.
Radium Springs, NM 88054

Phone (575) 526-8911
Regional Office: (575) 202-1638
nmhistoricsites.org

FORT SELDEN

HISTORIC SITE

MOUNTAIN LION



At about 250,000 square miles, the Chihuahuan Desert covers a large portion of North America from Northern Mexico through the Southwestern United States. It is home to around 1,000 different species of animals. Each of these animals have specific characteristics that help them survive in the desert environment.

In this brochure, learn about the mountain lion, one species found in the Chihuahuan Desert.

Physical Characteristics

Mountain lions look very similar to short-haired cats. They have small heads, with long necks, bodies, and tails, and small and rounded ears. The color of their fur can also vary like a short-haired cat from brownish-red to brownish-orange to bluish-grey. The fur lining their throats to their bellies tends to be a lighter color and the tip of their tail is the darkest patch of fur.

Diet

The diverse diet of the mountain lion has allowed it to survive in the conditions of the desert. This animal preys on deer, cattle, sheep, horses, cottontails, coyotes, rodents, and event insects! An adult mountain lion needs to eat 8 to 10 pounds of meat per day!

Habitat

When not hunting for food, the mountain lion usually can be found resting in rugged terrain where they can be easily hidden such as small caves. For the most part these animals live alone. Females will sometimes share territory with other females, but the males are very territorial and will not share their range of land with others. However, the mountain lion has learned to live in almost all conditions.

Senses

While this animal has a poor sense of smell, it has excellent vision and hearing which allows it to hunt in the early mornings of the day or evenings. It stalks its prey from the back and then

uses its powerful legs to jump distances that can reach 40-45 feet!

Predators

Adult mountain lions have very few predators other than human hunters. The young and sick may be hunted by wolf packs or bears.

Interesting Facts

- Mountain lions have a lot of different names! They are also called cougars, panthers, pumas, catamounts, painters, and even ghost cats. In fact, they are listed in dictionaries under more names than any other animal in the world!

- Kittens are born blind up until three months and have spots on their fur that disappear when they reach about nine months. Around the same time they are taught to hunt!

- Mountain lions, unlike their name suggests, cannot roar. This is due to the structure of their voice box. Instead they produce a high-pitched scream.

- The mountain lion can leap more than 18 feet in the air and jump distances of more than 20 feet!

- Mountain lions are carnivores and rarely eat vegetation. They seem to prefer deer in much of their U.S. range, but as opportunistic hunters, mountain lions will also go for moose, bighorn sheep, or even smaller prey. Mountain lions play a crucial role in managing deer populations, and don't pose a risk to prey populations in their range. When both wild game and domestic animals

are accessible and available, research suggests that they prefer wild prey.

- Mountain lion cubs have spots and blue eyes. Only about 1 in 6 mountain lion cubs survive to adulthood.

- The only wild cat bigger than the mountain lion is the jaguar.

- The scientific name of the mountain lion, *Puma concolor*, means "lion of one color."

- Mountain lions are skilled climbers, frequently dwelling in trees.

- Mountain lions can live at elevations of up to 10,000 feet.

- Mountain lions are the largest cats that can purr.

- In the western United States, there are about 30,000 mountain lions.

- According to the National Wildlife Federation, mountain lions are solitary and avoid humans. Their nature is to avoid humans. However, if you DO encounter a mountain lion, here's what to do:

- Don't run away. Remember how fast they run? Bad idea.
- Give it a way out. It wants to avoid you. Allow it a path to get away.
- Slowly back away.
- Make yourself big and loud. Put your hands up and talk in a loud voice.