



HOUSATONIC GHOST CATS

Watercolor on paper—Walton Ford, 2008 Courtesy of the artist and Paul Kasmin Gallery.



The ECF Update

Newsletter of the Eastern Cougar Foundation
Bringing Back a Legend

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***Featured Article: Five-Year
Review of the Eastern Cougar
– An Update***

ABOUT “HOUSATONIC GHOST CATS” a watercolor by Walton Ford (2008). It was sold for \$400,000 late last year. The cougars in the original are life-sized. Ford is a noted surrealist wildlife artist whose studio is in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts. His watercolors combine the detailed precision of Audubon with the surrealism of Kafka. Many of his works depicts bird and mammals exterminated by humans in the recent past, including passenger pigeons and the elephant bird of Madagascar.

The numerous reported sightings of cougars in the Berkshires, never with any supporting evidence, provided inspiration for the watercolor. Ford envisioned several pairs of ghost cougars copulating in a cemetery, creating more ghost cougars for people to see.

We are grateful to Mr. Ford for sending us this image for use in The ECF Update.

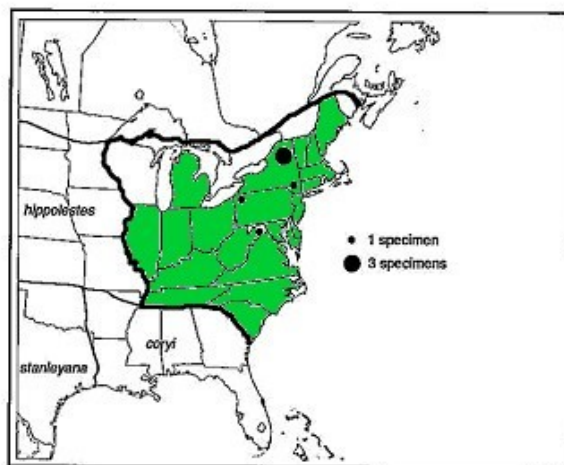
FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF EASTERN COUGAR--AN UPDATE

Last fall, Mark McCollough of the US Fish & Wildlife Service’s Maine Field Office submitted a 170-page draft status review and recommendations for internal review by the Northeast, Southeast, and Midwest regions of the Service. After this review is completed, it will be forwarded to the state wildlife agencies. Then it will be released to the public for comment, probably no sooner than next summer.

The Endangered Species Act requires that status reviews be completed for each threatened and endangered species every five years, but given the Service’s underfunding and staff shortages, they usually are not. The Service recently lost a law suit for not doing the reviews, so they are now completing reviews for all species on the federal endangered and threatened list, including the eastern cougar. The last review of the eastern cougar was the recovery plan completed in 1982. The purpose of the review is to compile and analyze all the scientific information available on the eastern cougar and to make recommendations on the listing status.

We would not be surprised if the Service recommends delisting of the supposed subspecies, *Puma concolor cougar*. Melanie Culver, in her study of the DNA of cougars throughout their huge range in the Western Hemisphere published in 2000, concluded that all cougars in North America belong to a single subspecies. This taxonomic change was adopted by the American Society of Mammalogists in 2005, although not all puma biologists agree with the changes. Some of them argue that several recognizable populations within North America have unique physical and ecological characteristics. Also, no breeding populations of

cougars have been located in the eastern United States.



Heavy line: assumed former range of the eastern cougar as recognized by Goldman (1946) in THE PUMA. Shaded: the “far eastern” United States. Dots: eastern cougar specimens studied by Goldman (1946).

The Service could also decide to delist based on extinction. It has been almost impossible to even confirm the existence of single individual. With the possible exception of Florida panthers and a cougar killed in western Georgia last November, which is considered to be a former captive, the last confirmation of a cougar in the “far eastern” United States was in Maine in September 2000. However, there have been several recent confirmations in eastern Canada (see the article on unannounced confirmations in southern Ontario elsewhere in this newsletter) and in the Midwest.

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Delisting the eastern cougar based on taxonomic changes may have major implications for the listing of the Florida panther. The Florida panther 5-year review was recently released by the Service. Florida panther biologists believe the taxonomic changes (only one subspecies in North America) to be controversial and continue to assert that the Florida panther is a valid subspecies.

In an interview with a reporter with VOA News printed on December 5, 2008, Mark McCollough said that many people are interested in cougars in the East for a variety of reasons.

"This animal and the eastern wolf help to provide a lot of predation on white tailed deer," he explained, adding, "White tailed deer populations are probably at their highest level ever in recorded history here in North America."

"Many areas in the East can't get the forest to recover and regrow after they've been cut because of deer browsing. Also, because of the tremendous populations of deer, some of our songbird populations are declining. And even some of our federally endangered plants are in danger because of deer herbivory. So from an ecological standpoint, a top-level predator is an important component."

There have been several evaluations of habitat and prey suitability for cougar recovery in the East, including recent published studies in the Midwest and Southeast. These studies will be summarized in the 5-year review. The recently released Florida panther recovery plan calls for the establishment of two populations of 240 or more panthers each in the Southeast. If reintroduction occurs, this would have major implications to cougar recovery in the East. If successful, cougars would obviously disperse elsewhere in the East where suitable habitat and prey exist. Many sites were recently evaluated throughout the Southeast for potential Florida panther restoration. Currently, the social and political realities of restoring panthers are daunting.

The Service has invested considerable funding and recovery planning for the jaguar in the Southwest where one of only 2 or 3 animals believed to exist was captured and radio-tagged in February. This jaguar, "Macho B," died of kidney failure shortly thereafter.

Cougars expanded their range into North and South Dakota in the last 20 years and are now dispersing into Midwestern states with increasing frequency, but there is no parallel effort to protect and study these dispersing animals. Some biologists believe

that if adequately protected. these dispersing cougars will eventually reoccupy some of their lost historic range in the East. It is ironic that jaguars and Florida panthers have received such interest in recovery by the Service and not the cougar. It may be an opportune time for the Service to evaluate the ecological, social, and political potential for cougar conservation and recovery throughout North America.

The ECF hopes that the Service will recommend active restoration of cougars in the East and that individual eastern states will protect wild cougars no matter what their ancestry as *Puma concolor* without regard to subspecies.

For more information on the Five-Year Review, read the article in the March 2007 issue of the ECF newsletter, which can be downloaded from our website.



FROM THE PRESIDENT: GRAVEYARDS OF THE GHOST CAT

by Chris Spatz

I like cemeteries; the older the better. I used to visit one in winter, in colonial Trenton, NJ, where dozens of crows would settle among the angels carved on 18th century tablets, roosting in perfect pitch against the snow. Along the Shawangunks near my home, unmarked fieldstones – their angular heads barely peeking from mantles of moss – stud abandoned hamlet plots; tiny, anonymous memorials to the hardscrabble lives of subsistence farmers, tanners, and stone-cutters who first settled the ridge. Oases of reverence and reflection, cemeteries remain shrines of silence with the ubiquity of chatty gadgets invading even libraries and my venerable climbing crags. Seems the dead, at least, inspire immunity from the insistence of flatscreens and ringtones.

Walton Ford, the acclaimed wildlife artist with a scrupulous wit for colonial era-induced extinctions, generously donated his shrewd take on the eastern cougar phenomenon gracing the cover of this issue's newsletter. His Housatonic Ghost Cats (a depiction near where I've chased phantom sightings) copulating in a colonial cemetery, breeding specters, captures the parable of a predator hounded into memory, stalking our modern imaginations. It is an image many of us who care about cougars don't wish to see repeated in the tragedy playing out in southern Florida, lest the home of the panther becomes a living graveyard. There are cemeteries, and then there are cemeteries.

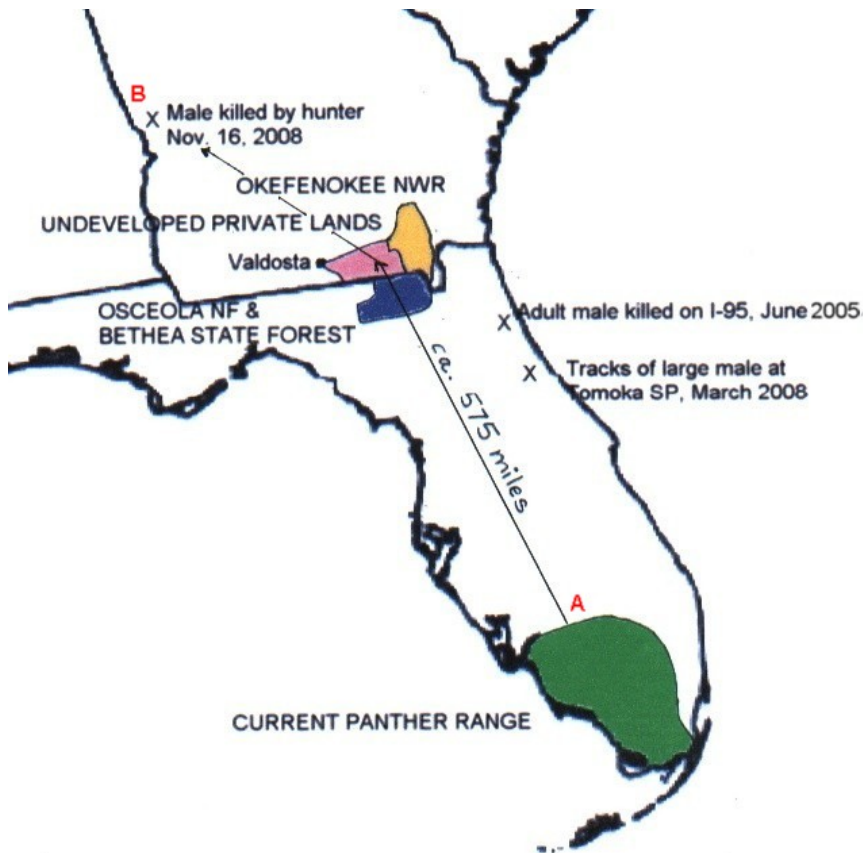
The latest iteration of the USFWS's Florida panther recovery plan released in December – the third in eighteen years – if not a death sentence, keeps the poster animal for the Endangered Species Act on interminable life-support. As Stephen Williams from the Florida Panther Society warned in the September '08 issue of the *ECF Update*, without a timeline for reintroductions outside the southern cougar's current range, the recovery plan is a dead letter. Marooned by development and natural barriers in the palmetto thickets and hardwood hammocks of the Big Cypress Swamp, the panther is essentially an island survivor, susceptible to all the attendant hazards of island life: inbreeding and pathogens, habitat destruction, and severe climatic events like hurricanes. Islands can make quick cemeteries.

The recovery plan acknowledges this, yet its primary goal lies in protecting existing and potential range, expanding north into central Florida, a region of admittedly marginal habitat capable of supporting another twenty to forty panthers; maybe 150, total, if it works. By the recovery plan's own prediction models, a population this small stresses the limits for sustaining genetic viability, with or without the taxonomy debate (is this mongrel of beleaguered natives, feral captives, and introduced Texas cougars truly a distinct subspecies?). We need a timeline for putting cats on the ground, now.

Habitat suitability studies have been done, eleven locations in the Southeast have been identified for restorations, and a successful trial introduction has even been completed before the panthers were recaptured in the Osceola National Forest of northern Florida. Yet we remain no closer to achieving the plan's parallel goal of establishing 240 cougars in two new southeastern regions. Meanwhile, under the same mandates governing recovery protocols in the Endangered Species Act, predators such as red wolves, bald eagles, and peregrine falcons are reclaiming their former southern range.

In 2000, the Eastern Cougar Foundation organized a petition endorsed by more than forty wildlife and conservation organizations requesting Similarity of Appearance protection for any cougar found north of Florida.

The petition was presented to Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, and rejected, but we learned that a small advocacy group can at least catch the attention of the most senior federal wildlife officials.



In the coming months (and years), the ECF will attempt to organize another petition, enlisting congressional aid that was so vital for initiating the Northern Rockies' wolf recovery, and building public support to establish a timeline for panther restorations. Eighteen years since the first reintroduction proposal, more than forty years since it was first listed as endangered, the southern cougar population remains one of the most vulnerable big predator enclaves in the world. One nasty bug, one big hurricane – to say nothing of sustained development and hereditary pressures – and the Big Cypress could join the rest of the East breeding ghost stories.

panther, potential reintroduction area on the Florida-Georgia border, and location of the November 2008 kill in Georgia. It is approximately 575 miles from Point A to Point B.

The recovery effort deserves an ovation for husbanding the panther population to carrying capacity in the Greater Big Cypress region, but it is high time to seed new ground.

↖ Current range of the Florida



The Spooner Cougar, a beautiful male in a tree in northwestern Wisconsin. Early March. See Page 7 for the story.



NEWS FROM THE BLANK SPACE

←Historic range of the cougar.

Range of the cougar ca. 1990→



Maps of the cougar's range produced in the 1990s show a vast blank space in eastern and central North America—habitat that the big cat used to occupy before it was eliminated by persecution and near-elimination of its natural prey—the white-tailed deer. Above are maps from Kevin Hansen's 1992 book Cougar: The American Lion. The Eastern Cougar Foundation is dedicated to the restoration of cougar populations in suitable areas of the eastern portion of that blank space and advocates responsible management when they recolonize former habitat.

UPDATE ON THE KILL OF A COUGAR IN GEORGIA

As reported in the last issue of The ECF Update, a deer hunter in a tree stand shot a cougar on November 16, 2008 near the community of Abbottsford, just north of West Fork Lake not far from the Alabama line. It was a male weighing about 140 pounds. Based on an excellent photograph of the open mouth of the dead cat, John Laundré speculates that it was a young adult. Because it had few if any intestinal parasites, a thick layer of subcutaneous fat, and its paws were scuffed, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) concluded it was almost certainly a former captive.

Previously, the DNR had decided that wild cougars do not exist in the state, and thus gives them no protection. However, Georgia is adjacent to Florida, home of the Florida panther, which is protected by federal law as an endangered species. The possibility that the West Fork Lake cougar was

a disperser from southern Florida is unlikely but possible. (*See map on previous page.*)

The map shows the two northernmost panther confirmations in Florida recognized by the Cougar Network since 1990. A 125-lb male panther killed in June 2005 on I-95 was near the border of St. Johns and Flagler counties. Florida authorities believe it was an uncollared panther, not a former captive.

Dispersers from the Black Hills of South Dakota have traveled as far as 650 miles in a straight line, so it is possible that a dispersing panther *could* reach Georgia. The "shoot first, ask later" policy apparently condoned by the DNR is unacceptable. No one in the field could determine if a cougar is or is not a Florida panther. Only DNA analysis can do that. Tissue samples from the Georgia cougar have been submitted to the National Cancer Center. As of mid February, the results were not yet available. When they are, the DNR will inform the ECF.

COUGARS BEING DOCUMENTED IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO

In the past few years, Dr. Rick Rosatte of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has been engaged in an intense effort to find evidence of cougars in Ontario and document their range. He has been using remote cameras, hair snares and is on the lookout for potential cougar tracks and scat, as well as following up reported sightings. A high percentage of sightings are coming from an area nicknamed "the cougar corridor"; the north boundary being Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury to North Bay and its southern limit being Owen Sound to Peterborough to Ottawa. Rosatte and Stuart Kenn, President of the Ontario Puma Foundation, are evaluating tracks. Some of them are definitely cougar. We look forward to publication of these data in a scientific journal within the next few years.

Southern Ontario showing cities on the “cougar corridor” and announced confirmations (*) since 1990 in and immediately adjacent to the province.

1992 – Lake Abitibi, male shot, DNA analysis determines its ancestors lived in Chile.

2002 – Cougar bites man at Cornwall after attempting to enter goat pen.

2004 – Scat from Wainfleet Bog determined to be North American cougar.

2004 – Tracks found near Niagara Falls.



NORTH DAKOTA



The state’s fourth cougar hunting season closed in Zone 1 on February 23rd when the quota of 8 cats was filled. The statewide season began on August 31st and would have closed on March 31st had the quota not been met. Zone 1 encompasses the known breeding population in the Badlands. There is no quota in the rest of the state, and no cougars have been taken since the season began.

North Dakota’s first cougar season began on September 2, 2005. In each of the four seasons, the quota in Zone 1 has been filled before the season ended. Here are the kills for

each year’s seasons: 2008-2009–8; 2007-2008–6; 2006-2007-5; 2005-2006– 5.

COUGAR TREED IN NORTHWESTERN WISCONSIN

An adult male cougar, estimated to weigh between 100 and 120 lbs and apparently in good health, was sighted and subsequently treed by hounds on three consecutive days in early March near the town of Spooner in Washburn County, a mixture of farmland and woods. (See photo on page 5.)

This was the second confirmation of a cougar in the state in modern times. Last winter another male cougar was tracked through the southeastern part of the state, on the way to his death in Chicago. Before then, you have to go all the way back to

1903 and 1905, when the presumed last native cougars were killed in Barron and Douglas counties, also in the NW part of the state.

Snow tracks of the Spooner cougar were noted by a resident of Sawyer County on March 3rd. He notified a friend who is a houndsman. The houndsman and two friends put two hounds on the trail and treed the cougar within 20 minutes. They photographed it and notified the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The DNR returned the next day, and the houndsmen treed the cougar again. An attempt to tranquilize the cat so that a blood sample for DNA analysis could be taken and the cat could be outfitted with a radiocollar. But being conservative and not wanting to harm the cougar, the tranquilizer was inadequate and the animal escaped.

On March 5th, the DNR returned. The houndsmen who first trailed and treed the cougar refused to participate, fearing the cat was being unduly stressed. Other houndsmen were recruited, and the cougar was treed yet again. Again the tranquilizer failed. At this point, the DNR temporarily called off the hunt, fearing that the cougar might be chased back into Minnesota and not wanting to cause it undue stress.

COUGAR KILLED IN BOSSIER CITY, LOUISIANA

Charles Colgin was in his parents' yard with his son when he spotted what initially appeared to be a tiger in a tree. It turned out to be a cougar. Police were notified and secured the area, requiring people to stay in their homes. Representatives of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) arrived. They darted the cat, which reacted to the pain of the dart and was shot while readjusting its position. The death of the cougar was recorded on video and was still available online as of late February:
<http://arklatexhomepage.com/content/fulltext/?cid=49361> It was the first apparently wild cougar killed in the state since 1965.

The cougar was a male. Judging from the condition of its teeth, Maria Davidson, manager of the DFW large carnivore program, said that it was probably about 3 or 4 years old. A necropsy of the carcass revealed no obvious health problems. It wasn't fat, but neither was it obviously thin. Davidson believes it was a wild animal, not a former captive. She speculates that it was the same individual that was captured by night-motion cameras in September in two different Louisiana parishes in east-central Louisiana. She said that the barring on the insides of the front legs of that/those animals was similar to that of the Bossier City cougar. Both of these photographs are in the Cougar News section of the ECF website.

MAN PAYS \$75.00 FOR KILLING FIRST COUGAR IN KANSAS IN 104 YEARS

In early January Norman Johnson of Medicine Lodge reportedly accepted a diversion agreement of \$75.00 for shooting a cougar in November 2007. Johnson was chopping wood at his home in Barber County, in south-central Kansas near the Oklahoma line, when he saw the cat. He took a shotgun from the back of his truck and killed it. He took it to a taxidermist in Oklahoma to be mounted. (The Cougar Network recognizes 9 cougar confirmations in Oklahoma since 1990.) Officials of the Kansas Department of Parks and Wildlife got word of the incident and obtained the skin from the taxidermist in March 2008. When queried about the kill, Johnson initially lied. DNA analysis showed that the cougar was not of South American origin, so it was most likely a wild animal.

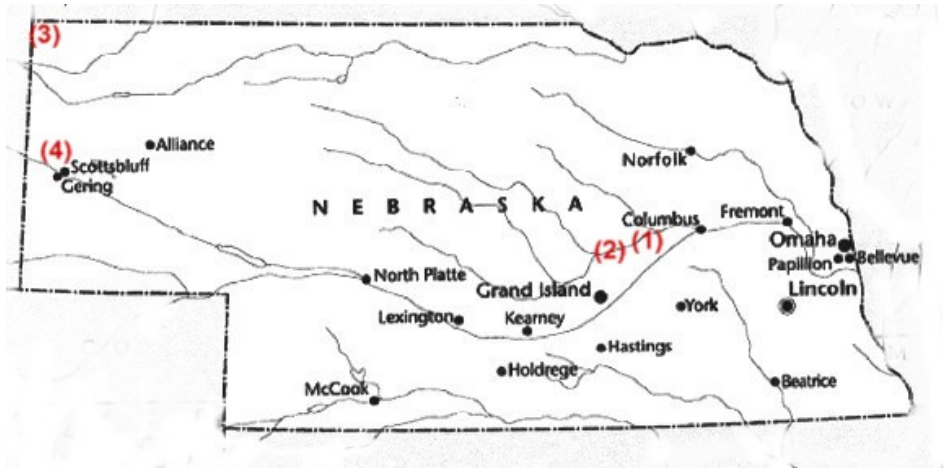
Cougars are not specifically protected in Kansas, but all wildlife species not mentioned by state law are protected. Theoretically, cougars cannot be killed unless they pose an immediate threat to a human or livestock.

If the first cougar killed in Kansas in more than 100 years is worth only \$75.00, how much is a deer worth? They are not rare and or protected. As of 2008, deer hunters trespassing on private land were to be fined not less than \$500 or more than \$1,000. In November 2004, eight hunters from North Carolina were fined more than \$36,000 for shooting 11 trophy bucks out of season in Kansas and transporting them across state lines.

FOUR CONFIRMATIONS IN NEBRASKA SO FAR THIS YEAR

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (GPC) has announced 3 separate cougar confirmations. Snow tracks were found near the Loup River west of Columbus on January 30th **(1)**, and a cougar was photographed at its deer kill in Nance County, also along the Loup River, on January 12th **(2)**. Also, the Cougar Network has made available yet another trail camera photo, taken on March 2nd in the extreme northwestern corner of the state **(3)**. The camera is operated by Bob Marsteller.

Sadly, the fourth recently documented cougar (4) was killed. A 70-lb female wandered into the city of Scottsbluff on January 25th. She was spotted in a tree near Scottsbluff High School. Consistent with the GPC's "Zero Tolerance" toward cougars in cities and towns, police shot her when she came down from the tree. Critically injured, she ran and hid in a garage a few blocks away. She was found and euthanized.



She was the third cougar killed in Scottsbluff. Others had been killed in October 2003 and February 2008. Another cougar, a male, was wounded in Omaha in October 2003, captured, and to the best of our knowledge, is still in the Henry Doorly Zoo.

Cougars are protected in Nebraska. It is illegal to hunt or trap them. NGPC spokesman Sam Wilson repeatedly emphasizes this fact in interviews with the media.

SOUTH DAKOTA CONTROVERIES CONTINUE

The Black Hills was the first region to see the recovery of a breeding population of cougars after the species had been extirpated. Their management and future continue to be a center of controversy.



Historical Background: Cougars occurred throughout the state into the late 1800s and were considered abundant in the Black Hills. In 1899 a bounty was imposed to eradicate them from the state. The last record was in 1906 until the early 1930s, when two pumas were killed in the western Black Hills. In the 1960s they began showing up in the Black Hills again. These individuals may have descended from a few survivors in the Black Hills but it is more likely that they came from the Laramie Mountains to the southwest, in Wyoming.

The Black Hills Mountain Lion Foundation held a Wildlife Educational Seminar at the Journey Museum in Rapid City in December. Two billboards were temporarily available when they were vacated by politicians after the November election. Dr. Tom Huhnerkoch, his wife Kay, and a friend took advantage of the situation and paid to have the seminar publicized in a most unusual way.

Hunting Seasons: The puma was listed as a state threatened species in 1978. It was delisted in 2003, and in 2005, the SD Department of Game Fisheries & Parks (DGFP) proposed the state's first cougar hunting season. The Mountain Lion Foundation sued to stop the hunt, but their appeal was rejected. The quota has risen from 25

(or 5 breeding-age females) in 2005 to 35 (or 15 females) in 2009. The DGFP estimates 250 cougars currently live in the Black Hills.

The scheduling of the hunt changed in 2008 after as many as 14 dependent kittens were orphaned when their mothers were killed in the 2007 season. Conservationists led by the Black Hills Mountain Lion Foundation persuaded the DGFP to delay the season until after the deer season. Although cougars can give birth at any time of the year, more kittens are born in August. Delaying the season would mean that the average kitten would be older and would have a better chance of survival if orphaned. The beginning of the season was moved to January 1, 2009. Thus the lion season was no longer concurrent with the deer and elk seasons; so hunters with only a casual interest in cougar hunting did not buy licenses. Only about half as many cougar licenses were sold (ca. 1600).

The quota of 35 (or 15 females) was reached on February 14, 2009. Three spotted kittens were killed, and an adult female with two 9-10-month-old kittens was killed. However, it is not at all certain that kittens of this age can survive on their own because they normally stay with their mothers until they are 16 to 18 months old.

State Legislature Considers Bills: The State Legislature considered two bills affecting cougars. As passed by the full House, HB 1004 would have allowed anyone who *perceived* a cougars as a threat to human safety or livestock to kill it, even if they didn't have a license. Some people consider ANY cougar as a threat, so this bill would have declared open season on cougars. The Eastern Cougar Foundation issued an alert on the bill, urging people to contact legislators expressing opposition to the bill. The Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee amended the bill, removing *perceived*, and the full Senate passed it. The final version of the bill does not change the present policy of the DGFP.

SB 75 would have allowed up to 10 cougars to be harvested with the use of dogs during each season. The DGFP does not allow hound hunting, in part because commissioners didn't want dogs chasing lions across the properties of private homeowners and businesses throughout the Black Hills. The ECF took no position on this bill. Hound hunting advocates argue that hound hunters get to see their quarry up close and can identify females and kittens more easily and avoid killing them. Also, state wildlife agencies pay attention to the wishes of hound hunters. On the con side, many people find hound hunting of cougars morally unacceptable.

ECF NEWS: Speakers Bureau: The ECF now has a speakers bureau. Kerry Gyekis, Chris Spatz and John Laundré are making presentations in New York, Pennsylvania and adjacent states. We hope to add more speakers and add to our range as time goes by.

William Stolzenburg Joins ECF Board of Directors: Will is a science writer and a former editor of The Nature Conservancy magazine. He is the author of the acclaimed book WHERE THE WILD THINGS WERE, an inspiration to ECF's mission of restoring and protecting biodiversity through reintroduction of our lost native carnivore, the cougar. He lives in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Dr. John Laundré has also joined our Board. He was formerly an Advisor. John was introduced to ECF members in the September 2008 issue of the *Update*.

Donations: We thank Amelia Fusaro and Bill Everitt of Atlanta for another generous contribution. Also, a special thanks to the 8-year-old sister of Zoe Martin-Parkinson. She donated \$25.00 to ECF. Zoe's mother, Lisa Martin-Parkinson of San Diego, explained that Zoe loves all cougars. We are also grateful to Dr. Ramon Bisque for donating 51 copies of his book LIONS OF THE LYONS. You can order a copy for \$10.00 from our online store or by sending a check made out to the Eastern Cougar Foundation directly to PO Box 300, Harman, WV 26270.

Dues Increase: Our present dues of \$15.00 (\$5.00 for students) are no longer sufficient to cover our day-to-day operation costs including the printing and mailing of the newsletter. Renewal notices will be sent out later in March.

REINTRODUCTION OF LARGE MAMMALS INTO THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK — PART 1: RED WOLVES AND ELK

By Ben Shrader

The Great Smoky Mountain National park encompasses 521,000 acres (814 sq. mi.). Including surrounding national forest the range is about 1.5 million acres or 2340 sq. mi. In 1991, the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reintroduced the red wolf to the Great Smoky Mountains with the release of one family group to assess the interactions between red wolves and people, livestock, and coyotes. This period also served as an opportunity to demonstrate the Service's ability and commitment to responsibly manage red wolves in an area of high human use (nearly 10 million visitors annually), including domestic livestock operations. Results of that initial release showed that restoration was feasible, and biologists subsequently released 37 red wolves from late 1992 through 1996. Adult red wolves weigh from 45-80 pounds. Although they often have a reddish cast, they can be gray, yellow, or black.

Although the exact diet of red wolves is difficult to determine and varies depending on available prey, a study of approximately 2,200 scats (feces) of wild red wolves from northeastern North Carolina estimated that their diet consisted of about 50 percent white tailed deer, 30 percent raccoons, and 20 percent small mammals, such as rabbits, rodents, and nutria. Non-mammalian prey, domestic pets, and livestock were uncommon as prey items, but they did occur in very low numbers (less than 2 percent). A red wolf consumes about two to five pounds of food per day.

Red wolves were native to the Smoky Mountains. Hunting and habitat loss eliminated them from southern Appalachians in the late 1800s. While gray wolves survived in Canada and Alaska, the red wolf populations shrank until 1973, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service captured the world's last 14 free-ranging red wolves, and placed them in a captive breeding program.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's red wolf program provides three release areas. Alligator National Wildlife Refuge (ARNWR), in coastal North Carolina, Cades Cove and the Great Smoky

Mountains, and a third site that is in the selection process. Restoration began with 4 pairs of red wolves released into the ARNWR in 1987. Today 100-120 red wolves call northeastern North Carolina home. This is the world's only wild population of undoubted red wolves. (Some scientists believe that wolves in and around Algonquin Provincial Park in southern Ontario are also red wolves.) Unfortunately the Smoky Mountain re-introduction had to be abandoned and the red wolves were removed from the park in 1998. Successes and setbacks mark the program. The wolves reproduced in the wild, and a few pups reached adulthood. A poacher killed one wolf, and another died of anti-freeze poisoning. Tracking studies show the wolves prefer areas outside the Park boundaries. If people in the surrounding communities do not support the effort, problems will follow. Christopher F. Lucash, Biologist U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said that although there were some problems, public acceptance of wolves was better in the Smokies than in any other wolf re-introduction site.

Park and wildlife officials did all they could to prevent incidents. Lucash and others spent much of their time tracking the wolves, which had been fitted with collars containing tiny radio transmitters. Their aim: to keep the animals from killing farm livestock or pets, or prowling around cabins or campsites. "We thought the public relations was going to be the difficult part," says Lucash. "Most of our effort was at keeping the animals out of trouble." Three wolves were returned to captivity after they showed a disturbing tolerance for people; tourists were caught tossing them food in one case. Officials also spent a lot of time trying to reassure other tourists and locals that the wolves posed no threat.

But it was the habitat, not public hatred, that apparently doomed the effort. Although there was plenty of small prey in Cades Cove, deer and other large animals were hard to come by in the rugged terrain that makes up most of the park; deer like the edges of woods, not deep forests.

Many wolves released in the mountains went looking elsewhere for food. There are 1.5 million acres of national forest adjoining the park, but the land is peppered with many private farms and home sites, which proved too much of a temptation for some wolves. While captive-bred wolves may have lost some of their innate fear of humans, biologists had hoped the wild-born pups would have the necessary reticence to avoid trouble. That was not to be. One litter of pups was found dead of the canine parvovirus. Others had to be removed when their parents died or were recaptured.

The experimental release of elk into Great Smoky Mountains National Park began in February, 2001 with the importation of 25 elk from the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area along the Tennessee-Kentucky border. In 2002, the park imported another 27 animals. All elk are radio collared and being monitored during the five-year experimental phase of the project, which has been extended and is still experimental. If the animals threaten park resources or create significant conflicts with park visitors, the program may be halted. Project partners include the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Parks Canada, Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, Friends of the Smokies, the U.S.G.S. Biological Resources Division, and the University of Tennessee.

Bob Miller, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Management Assistant, says the program is going very well. Sixteen of 19 calves survived this year putting the herd now at 95. All data is in the process of being reviewed to determine if the program is to continue. Predation on calves has

presented some obstacles, with black bears taking the greatest toll. Coyotes are also suspected of having preyed on some calves. The park is also home of about 1500 bears. Bears were trapped and relocated to other parts of the park during calving season. Although the bears returned, the calves had matured enough to fend for themselves.

A primary mission of the National Park Service is to preserve native plants and animals on lands it manages. In cases where native species have been eliminated from parklands, the National Park Service may choose to reintroduce them. Successful wildlife reintroductions in Great Smoky Mountains National Park have included the river otter, Peregrine Falcon, and three species of small fish.

Bobcats and mountain lions are the only felines native to Cades Cove. Bobcats still live in the cove. They usually eat small game, but will kill small deer. Bobcats grow up to three feet in length and weigh up to 40 pounds. They are nocturnal and seldom seen.

Most biologists believe hunters eliminated the cougar from the region in 1920, although there are unconfirmed reports of kills of cougars as late as the 1970s. However, persistent sightings since the 1960s led to a study in the 1970s commissioned by the National Park Service. No definitive evidence of their presence resulted. Cougar presence in the Smokies is currently unknown.

[PART II will consider the feasibility of reintroducing cougars to the Smokes.]

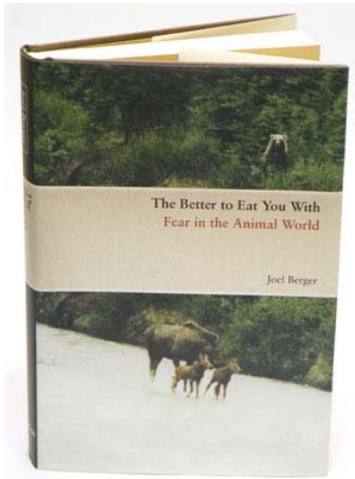
BOOKS FOR SALE: ECF member Norman Davis, who has a long time interest in cougars in the East, is selling some of his out-of-print books. Among them are some classics. If you are interested, please send your check directly to Norm at 66 Clinton St., Galeton, PA 16922:

- The Puma by Young and Goldman, soft cover, \$12.00
- The Ghost of North America by Bruce Wright, hard cover, \$55.00
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*Books in like-new condition.

BOOK REVIEW: THE BETTER TO EAT YOU WITH: FEAR IN THE ANIMAL WORLD

by Joel Berger. 2008. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 305 pp.



This was the second most popular book on animal fear of predation published in 2008. The other, **WHERE THE WILD THINGS WERE** by William Stolzenburg, was reviewed in the September 2008 edition of this newsletter.

Stolzenburg focuses on how fear of predation by plant eaters affects both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems; he does not pay much attention to how individual prey animals react. Berger studies the behavior of ungulate prey, especially hoofed animals such as moose and elk. He was studying cow moose behavior and calf survival in the vicinity of Grand Teton National Park when the first wolves, descended from those reintroduced to Yellowstone, arrived. Before wolves, 90% of calves lived at least 2 months; in the year after wolf arrival, more than half did not. Would cow moose learn that wolves are dangerous even though they had been absent from the area for decades?

To determine responses of moose cows to danger, Berger played recordings of wolf howls, raven calls (which often accompany wolves), and benign sounds such as running water and the roaring of howler monkeys. Would the cows ignore the sounds, show mild interest, become alert, bunch together, or flee? Berger analyzed ungulate responses to these sounds and a few others across the Northern Hemisphere—mainland Alaska, where caribou and moose must beware of both wolves and brown (grizzly) bears; overbrowsed Kalgin Island off the Alaska coast, where moose were introduced but wolves are absent; bison in Wood Bison National Park, the only bison that are regularly preyed upon by wolves; and Siberia, where moose and elk must watch out not only for wolves and brown bears but also Siberian tigers. (Here Berger played his recordings to moose from a suspended

climbers platform to avoid becoming tiger food.) On Svalbard Island, inhabited by a small fat race of reindeer (known as caribou in North America) which have never been subjected to wolf or bear predation in recorded history. And other wilderness regions throughout North America, Greenland, and Asia.

Berger concludes that prey animals that have not been subjected to wolf predation for decades are initially naïve but quickly “remember” and become wary. Only bison seemed unconcerned about wolf sounds, even in Wood Bison NP. Citing other research, Berger makes it clear that on islands where prey animals evolved without modern placental carnivores, prey do not learn how to avoid nonnative predators. The native marsupials of Australia and Tasmania, for example, fare poorly when foxes and feral house cats are introduced.

Cougars aren't mentioned often in this book, probably because a cougar stalking prey is silent (except in some Hollywood movies). Berger does mention that a herd of European red deer (which we know as elk) introduced to Argentina were initially naïve about pumas but learned quickly.

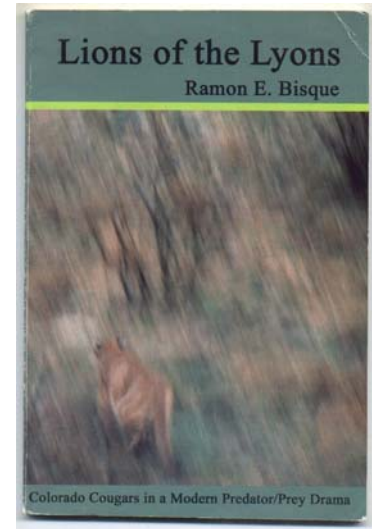
The relevance of this book for advocates of cougar recovery in eastern and central North America is that it reinforces evidence that deer and elk naïve to the fact that cougars are dangerous may initially be vulnerable but will catch on quickly and become wary.

You will find some sloppy research. On page 260, Berger addresses habituation and says sport hunting of cougars has been banned in California for more than 2 decades. "Since 1990, several joggers and a mountain biker have been killed. In contrast, less than twenty people died from cougar attacks in the entire United States during the prior hundred years. It seems likely that a loss of persecution has prompted the large cats to become less shy. Habituation to people has led to a change in behavior and a change in food habits." In actuality, one jogger, one hiker, and one mountain biker have been killed in California since 1990 - http://tchester.org/sgm/lists/lion_attacks_ca.html

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Plaster casts of the right forefoot of a cougar, in natural white or bronze, with hanging loops. \$8.50 each. Short-sleeved white T shirts with WANTED logo, XL, L, M and S, \$12.50 each



LIONS OF THE LYONS by Ramon Bisque. What it’s like to live in the middle of a thriving deer and cougar population. \$10.00 each

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Klandagi**	\$60	\$80
Catamount	\$105	\$155
Other	\$Up to You	

*Lakota word for cougar

**Cherokee for cougar (Lord of the Forest)



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