



Eastern Cougar Foundation

Newsletter



ECF Newsletter

Spring 2001

Update on ECF Activities

During the fall of 2000, we discussed ways of proving a breeding population of cougars in the eastern US, with some of the board of directors and a few other cougar experts. We recieved some good input, and appreciate all the help and advice that was given.

Most agreed that we should focus on areas that have been reporting cougars with cubs over the years, and wilderness areas that are big enough to support a small breeding population. We hope to begin field searches in these areas in March 2001, and will report our findings.

We also discussed ways of raising funds, for the ECF and its efforts both in the field and through educational outreach. Some good ideas have been shared, and a strategy should be in place by May 2001.

If anyone has some ideas or advice on these issues, we would sure appreciate the help.

Tracking/Scent Stations

Over the last few years, I have tried several different methods of looking for evidence of cougars in the field. I tried one type of tracking/scent station 2 years ago using catnip. It wasn't successful for cougars, but did attract about every other animal in the woods. Last year I focused mainly on road track surveys. The road surveys are good, when the weather is right but in these mountains you only get a small window of opportunity, and the roads dry out quick, and become hard.

This year we are setting up a new type of tracking/scent station. From what I can find out, no one has tried it yet. We will be using captive cougar urine & scat, as the attractant. The urine and scat is graciously being supplied by Mark Jenkins-Owner of the Cooper's Rock Mountain Lion Sanctuary, and Mark is also on the ECF board of directors. They will be setup in low gaps or saddles between large drainages, as this is usually travelways for cougars and sites for scrapes and markings. We are hoping that any cougars passing through will smell it and leave his own scrape and/or scat. The ground will also be setup to record tracks.

New Web Site Coming Soon

The ECF's old web site thru geocities (<http://www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318>)

has been an extremely valuable tool, for spreading the word about cougars in the east. Its educational benefits are also just being realized. We are continuously getting thank you messages from students that are using it for class projects, term papers etc. In only 2 months this year, the site has registered close to 15,000 visits, and is ranked number one on several of the search engines for eastern cougar information on the internet.

The web site at geocities has several draw backs, one being a very long and hard to remember URL (listed above). Plus a limited amount of storage space, restrictions as to what you can do on the site, and advertisements & banners from geocities. The good part has been, that its free.

John Canan, visited the old site, and decided to help us out. He graciously purchased the domain name: www.easterncougar.com, for the ECF and has paid for web hosting. This will be a tremendous step forward for the ECF and will open up alot of opportunities in the near future. Easy to remember URL, tons of storage space, and no outside advertisements & banners appearing on every page. The old site will continue to be up and running this year, until the new one gets established. The new site will get a better professional look, and will contain alot more information.

6th Mountain Lion Workshop

Chris Bolgiano presented a paper for the ECF at the 6th Mountain Lion Workshop in San Antonio, Texas in December 2000. It was entitled: "**Field Evidence Of Cougars In Eastern North America**". The paper will be published in the proceedings of the 6th Mountain Lion Workshop in late 2001, and may not be published earlier. The entire paper can be seen on the web site at: <http://www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318>. Here is the abstract:

Field Evidence Of Cougars In Eastern North America

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Todd Lester, Independent Researcher and President of the Eastern Cougar Foundation, North Spring, WV 24869.

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Abstract: Confirmed physical field evidence of cougars (*Puma Concolor*) living wild in several regions of eastern North America is beginning to accumulate. Related issues of legal status, habitat management, and social acceptance are also intensifying as media attention grows. We document 10 instances in which various items of field evidence have been confirmed by biologists: 3 cases involving live animals, a dead body, or body part; 4 cases of scats; 2 cases of tracks; and 1 video. The geographic range of these incidents is New Brunswick to Missouri and the date range is 1976 to 2000. Each case entails consideration of significant details, including the history of cougars in the local area, the circumstances of local habitat and prey, evidence of reproduction, credentials of confirming biologists and the possibility of fraud.

Possible sources of these animals include remnant natives, escaped or released captives, and colonizers from known cougar populations in Florida and Texas. Since spring of 1998 at least 3 radio collared Florida Panthers have crossed north of the Caloosahatchee River for the first time since fieldwork began 20 years ago. The potential for reestablishment of a viable population is more likely to be limited by social intolerance than biological constraints, especially in rural communities near public lands. An ecological benefit of a cougar population in the east might be to return an evolutionary selection force and population check on over-abundant deer. Outdoor recreationists and hunters are also likely to express interest in cougars.

 Dr. Melanie Culver, ECF Board Member also presented a paper at the workshop and it too will be published in the proceedings later this year. It is entitled: "A phylogenetic study of pumas (*Puma Concolor*) using mitochondrial DNA markers and microsatellites".

New Confirmation in Missouri

Officials with the Missouri Department of Conservation have confirmed another mountain lion sighting, this one near the state's northeast corner. Michael Sharpe, 18, was sitting in his tree stand on private land in Lewis County at 1:30p.m. New Year's Eve when a large, adult mountain lion appeared. Sharpe had opted to "hunt" deer with a video camera instead of with his bow, and he documented the big cat's passage on tape. This video brings the number of confirmed mountain lion reports in Missouri in recent years to **FIVE!**

Reports recieved during 2000

Numerous states reported cougar sightings and possible cougar activity to the ECF during 2000. The top 5 states were as follows:

<u>West Virginia:</u>	<u>Virginia:</u>	<u>North Carolina:</u>	<u>Pennsylvania:</u>	<u>New York:</u>
Tan: 57	Tan: 27	Tan: 27	Tan: 11	Tan: 09
Black: 26	Black: 04	Black: 02	Black: 02	Black: 00
Cubs: 08	Cubs: 03	Cubs: 03	Cubs: 01	Cubs: 04

Other states and Canadian Provinces reporting sightings and activity during 2000 were: **Alabama, Illinois, Maine, Kentucky, Massachussetts, Wisconsin, Louisiana, New Jersey, Maryland, Vermont, Ohio, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Indiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, Conneticut, Michigan, Delaware, South Carolina, Missouri, Georgia; Ontario, Canada, and New Brunswick, Canada.**

New Video from West Virginia

On July 01, 2000 in Raleigh County, WV around 10:30a.m, a coal company security guard managed to video tape, what he said was a large cougar. I made several trips to the site and got a copy of the video. I have also investigated numerous other cougar sightings in the surrounding mountains over the years. Below is a still picture of the animal from the video, although it appears black in the picture, it was actually brown on the original video. Also 2 pictures have been added from a known cougar for head and body shape comparison.



Mission Statement:

The Eastern Cougar Foundation (ECF) is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to scientific documentation of cougars in the East and advocacy for their protection.

Goals of the Eastern Cougar Foundation:

***To scientifically document the existence of wild, reproducing cougars in the eastern United States.**

***To assure official protection for all such cougars.**

***To build acceptance of wild cougars in the rural east through educational outreach.**

The Eastern Cougar Foundation maintains one of the largest data bases of information on cougars in the eastern US. We record sighting reports, perform field searches looking for evidence, like tracks, hair, scat etc.

We offer a free informative & educational brochure, that tells all about cougars. Its called: "Living With Cougars In The Appalachian Mountains". Send a self addressed, stamped envelope for the brochure.

Officers:

Todd Lester-President

Chris Bolgiano-Vice President

Jaquetta Lester-Secretary/Treasurer

Board Of Directors

Mark Jenkins

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Web Sites:

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