



ECF Newsletter

Summer 2001

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**Important Confirmation: Spotted Cougar Kitten Killed in Kentucky**  
**By: Chris Bolgiano**

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The following is excerpted from a letter I received this past April on Commonwealth of Kentucky letterhead from Steve Thomas, Wildlife Biologist, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Frankfort office. The letter was accompanied by two photographs of the kitten:

"Sometime after dark in June 1997 a 19 year old man was heading south on KY highway 850 in western Floyd County when he hit and killed a puma kitten. He stopped, picked up the kitten, and took [it] to Jason Plaxico [regional wildlife biologist for the KY Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources]. Jason put the kitten into his freezer. I was told about the specimen in late August 1998 and decided to have DNA analyses conducted. I sent out two tissue samples on Feb. 15, 1999. One went to Dr. Melanie Culver at the National Institutes of Health. The other was sent to Dr. Holly Ernest at the Univ. of CA. [Dr. Culver] found that the kitten's mother had a genetic type that is identical to a type found in South America. Dr. Ernest found that the other parent was most likely of North American ancestry.

[The kitten] is a female, weighs 8.8 pounds, is 805 mm long, has a tail of 300 mm... All toe nails are sharp, intact, and there are no visible human markings. When I questioned the man on Feb. 27, 2001, he told me he saw a large shape and then a smaller shape cross the road in front of the kitten he hit. It seems most likely that the young kitten was following its mother and sibling(s)."

This is the first indisputable evidence that at least one cougar is raising a litter in the eastern wilds. It also points to the possibility that an escaped/released female pet cougar with South American genes (or a descendant of such an animal) met and bred with a native, wild North American male cougar. And, finally, it is an

instance of a cougar being killed on the road, something the experts say would surely happen if there were any cougars out there. From all perspectives, the unfortunate Kentucky kitten is one of the most important confirmations the ECF has documented to date.

### **Field Notes**

**By: Todd Lester**

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On April 7, 2001 Jackie Lester and myself found a couple of tracks in the snow at over 4,000 feet elevation in the Cranberry Glades Wilderness of Pocahontas County, WV. The tracks were melting and the heel pad was obscured by loose snow. The tracks were photographed and sent to Dr. Lee Fitzhugh in California. Some measurements and toe angles suggested cougar, but the tracks could not be positively identified.

On June 30, 2001 Todd Lester, Mark Jenkins and Dave Rohm conducted a field search in the Dolly Sods Wilderness area of Tucker County, WV. West Virginia Public Television went along and filmed the search for a documentary which will air this fall. A couple large cat scats were found and collected for future analysis.

On July 4, 2001 another search in the Cranberry Glades Wilderness of Pocahontas County, WV produced a large cat scat that was also collected for future analysis.

If anyone would like to participate in future field searches, just get in touch with us. The more eyes we have, the more area we can cover in a limited time. Or pass on your field notes for future newsletters.

### **ECF Members**

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Ecf is building a strong network of members who are deeply interested in cougars in the East. They are following up on sighting reports and tracking down possible evidence. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Marolyne Nabors-VA has been following up on reports in her area, and managed to track down and get a copy of a possible cougar video. The video is currently being evaluated. 6 pictures from the video can be seen on the old web site:

[www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318](http://www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318)

Chris Baker-VA has also been documenting reports in his area and hitting the woods looking for evidence.

Jason Rose-GA has been working hard documenting reports in northern Georgia and Alabama.

Doug Goodrich-PA sent us a copy of a video he filmed and other reports of sightings in his area.

Jim Shobe-WV is constantly following up on reports we receive from the eastern pandhandle of WV.

### **ECF In The News**

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In the past six months the ECF has been highlighted in Sierra Magazine, Audubon Naturalist, Pennsylvania Game News, Florida Outdoors Magazine, Wild Earth, and many newspapers that ran an Associated Press story on cougar resurgence in the East. Its likely the future will bring more attention as the ECF grows.

### **ECF President Completes Wildlife/Forestry Program By: Chris Bolgiano**

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In May, 2001, Todd Lester successfully completed a 13-course program in forestry and wildlife management offered by the distance learning organization Harcourt Learning Direct. Established in 1890, Harcourt Learning Direct is part of the Harcourt family of companies, which includes the well-known publisher. The school is accredited by the PA Department of Education, the Distance Education and Training Council in Washington, D.C. and the International Association for Continuing Education and Training. This last body confers Continuing Education Units (CEUs), which are nationally recognized measurements of academic coursework. One CEU is defined as 10 contact hours of participation under qualified instruction. Todd has earned 16 CEUs, a sizeable chunk of academic achievement. He spent 3 years working on papers and tests while holding down a full time job and graduated with an average of 93 %. Courses included cold and warm water fish management, wildlife law, big and small game management, and how to control predators(!). Congratulations, Todd!

## Web Site News

On the old web site: [www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318](http://www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318) We have put some comparison photos up of cougar scat compared to bobcat scat for you trackers. The cougar scat came from captive cougars at Mark Jenkin's -Cooper's Rock Mountain Lion Sanctuary which were being fed deer meat at the time. And the bobcats were also in captivity.

Also on the old site, you can view 6 pictures from the VA video, 2 pictures of the cougar kitten killed on the road in Kentucky and a picture that was received yesterday from Massachusetts.

The new web site: [www.easterncougar.com](http://www.easterncougar.com) is starting to come together. We haven't had a lot of time to work on it lately, but its up and running and drawing a lot of attention.

## Scent/Tracking Stations

The Scent/Tracking Stations that were put out in early spring 2001 didn't work out, due to adverse weather conditions. The first week the scats suffered from constant freezing and thawing temperatures and then hard rains set in and completely eroded the scats. No leaves were present on the trees to block the hard rains. We hope to obtain some more scat and try it again during the later summer months.

We are also looking into purchasing some Camtrakker units to set up in these areas. The Camtrakker is a fully automatic 35mm camera triggered by a passive infrared motion detector. These units can be seen at: [www.camtrakker.com](http://www.camtrakker.com)

## New Stuff For Trackers

Dave Rohm told me about a company that specializes in Crime Scene Investigation Equipment. A lot of their products can be used in our field searches for cougars. They make a snow print wax that you can spray into tracks in the snow before casting them, that prevents the snow from melting due to the exothermic reaction to hardening plaster or dental stone.

They also produce Dental Stone which I hear is better than plaster of paris. Lightning Powder Company, Inc.

1230 Hoyt Street SE

Salem, Oregon 97302-2121

800-852-0300 or check out their web site: <http://www.redwop.com>

*Ordered  
10/29 →*

*Order  
Catalog:  
"Impression  
evidence"*

## **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 brochure, that tells all about cougars. Its called: "Living With Cougars In The Appalachian Mountains". And also a brochure about the ECF. Send a self addressed, stamped envelope for the brochures.

### **Officers:**

**Todd Lester-President**

**Chris Bolgiano-Vice President**

**Jaquetta Lester-Secretary/Treasurer**

### **Board Of Directors**

**Mark Jenkins**

**Dr. Donald W. Linzey**

**Thomas Linzey**

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**Dr. David Maehr**

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**Susan Morse**

**Eastern Cougar Foundation**

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**304-664-3812**

**WEB SITES:**

**[www.easterncougar.com](http://www.easterncougar.com)**

**[www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318](http://www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318)**