

# When in Cougar Country:

*(taken from the Environmental Stewardship Division of the Ministry of Environment)  
more information at [www.env.gov.bc.ca](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca)*

Cougars primarily occupy the southern third of British Columbia. Most conflict with cougars occurs in rural communities, where people live in isolated settlements. People also encounter cougars while spending leisure time in cougar country.

Cougars are predators - the top of the food chain - and their actions are often unpredictable. We have little understanding about what might trigger an attack, but following these general guidelines will reduce the risk of cougar conflict and prepare you in the unlikely event of an attack.

## **Children:**

Cougars seem to be attracted to children, possibly because their high-pitched voices, small size, and erratic movements make it difficult for cougars to identify them as human and not prey.

- Talk to children and teach them what to do if they encounter a cougar.
- Encourage children to play outdoors in groups, and supervise children playing outdoors.
- Consider getting a dog for your children as an early-warning system. A dog can see, smell, and hear a cougar sooner than we can. Although dogs offer little value as a deterrent to cougars, they may distract a cougar from attacking a human.
- Consider erecting a fence around play areas.
- Keep a radio playing.
- Make sure children are home before dusk and stay inside until after dawn.
- If there have been cougar sightings, escort children to the bus stop in the early morning. Clear shrubs away around the bus stop, making an area with a nine-metre (30 foot) radius. Have a light installed as a general safety precaution.

## **Your yard and home:**

- Do not attract or feed wildlife, especially deer or raccoons. These are natural prey and may attract cougars.

## **Pets:**

- Roaming pets are easy prey.
- Bring pets in at night. If they must be left out, confine them in a kennel with a secure top.
- Do not feed pets outside. This not only attracts young cougars but also many small animals, such as mice and raccoons that cougars prey upon.
- Place domestic livestock in an enclosed shed or barn at night.

## Hiking or working in cougar country:

- Hike in groups of two or more. Make enough noise to prevent surprising a cougar.
- Carry a sturdy walking stick to be used as a weapon if necessary.
- Keep children close-at-hand and under control.
- Watch for cougar tracks and signs. Cougars cover unconsumed portions of their kills with soil and leaf litter. Avoid these food caches.
- Cougar kittens are usually well-hidden. However, if you do stumble upon cougar kittens, do not approach or attempt to pick them up. Leave the area immediately, as a female will defend her young.

## Cougar

### If you meet a cougar:

- Never approach a cougar. Although cougars will normally avoid a confrontation, all cougars are unpredictable. Cougars feeding on a kill may be dangerous.
- Always give a cougar an avenue of escape.
- Stay calm. Talk to the cougar in a confident voice.
- Pick all children up off the ground immediately. Children frighten easily and their rapid movements may provoke an attack.
- Do not run. Try to back away from the cougar slowly. Sudden movement or flight may trigger an instinctive attack.
- Do not turn your back on the cougar. Face the cougar and remain upright.
- Do all you can to enlarge your image. Don't crouch down or try to hide. Pick up sticks or branches and wave them about.

### If a cougar behaves aggressively:

## Cougar

- Arm yourself with a large stick, throw rocks, speak loudly and firmly. Convince the cougar that you are a threat not prey.
- If a cougar attacks, fight back! Many people have survived cougar attacks by fighting back with anything, including rocks, sticks, bare fists, and fishing poles.

**RAPP** - The Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) program is a toll free tip-line and web-based service that allows you to report known or suspected **violations of fisheries, wildlife, or environmental protection laws** – anonymously and without risk of confronting the offender.

## The RAPP Hotline to report wildlife-human interactions

