


Eastern Cougar Foundation



S P R I N G 2 0 0 2

Eastern Cougar Presentation Coopers Rock, Saturday, August 3rd

The Eastern Cougar Foundation will present a program on eastern cougars in the WESTVACO Center at Coopers Rock State Forest near Bruceton Mills, West Virginia, from 4:00-8:00 PM on Saturday, August 3rd. Topics to be discussed include: Do cougars live in West Virginia and elsewhere in the eastern forests, or are they extinct? If they still live here, how is evidence of their existence found and evaluated? What is the prognosis for the recovery of this magnificent top predator in our eastern wild areas?

The program includes:

4 PM -- a tour of the Cooper's Rock Mountain Lion Sanctuary by Mark Jenkins. Visitors will meet each cougar individually and learn their stories and the history of the shelter.

7 PM -- Todd Lester, president of ECF, will address the topics mentioned above, focusing on West Virginia. He will display casts of tracks, skins, skulls and scats of several wildlife species and exhibit a display showing sites of verified cougar evidence.

8 PM -- Bob Wilson of Garden City, Kansas will present photos of wildlife "captured" in "candid" moments with infrared remote-triggered cameras. Cougar populations are recovering on the Great Plains and are reoccupying former habitat from the Rocky Mountains eastward. Wilson has yet to record a cougar on film but has many delightful shots of white-tailed and mule deer, coyotes, bobcats and raccoons. He will also pass on tips on how to use remote cameras in seemingly bleak terrain.

Chris Bolgiano, award-winning author of *Mountain Lion: An Unnatural History of Pumas and People* and *The Appalachian Forest*, and Vice President of the ECF, will sell autographed copies of her books.

Refreshments will be served, and there will be time to talk with other eastern cougar advocates. Camping is available at Chestnut Ridge Park, right next to the WESTVACO Center, and in the nearby State Forest for \$17.00 per night. For reservations in the Coopers Rock State Fork campground, call 304-594-1561.

There are several motels in Morgantown, and the Maple Leaf Motel is in Bruceton Mills (304-379-4075).

To aid the ECF in planning, please contact Helen McGinnis at 304-227-4166 or helenmcginnis@meer.net if you plan to attend.

News of Cougar Sitings

Specimen of Cougar Found in West Virginia.

Handley, C.O.Jr., R.Stafford, and E.H.Geil.
1961. A West Virginia Puma. J. Mammal.
42:277-278.

A skeleton of a puma was discovered in Higginbothams Cave No. Four, 1.3 miles west of Frankford, Greenbrier County, West Virginia, in August 1959. The skeleton lay on a surface of a mudbank, 30 feet above a subterranean stream. The bones were sent to the National Museum and were considered to be the recent *Felis concolor couguar* Kerr, and the bones and teeth matched closely those of a skeleton of *F.c.couguar* from Capon Springs, West Virginia (USNM 848).

Minnesota DNR concludes police acted appropriately in cougar shooting (6/6/02)

Bloomington police officers acted appropriately when they shot and killed an adult female cougar on the evening of May 30 near the Minnesota River in Bloomington, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has concluded.

Col. Bill Bernhjelm, DNR Enforcement Division director, said that "under the circumstances, the officers acted appropriately. The cougar showed no fear of them and it refused to leave the area. That is very unusual behavior for a wild cougar and a cause for concern, especially since the cougar was in an area near people's homes and a public hiking trail. From a public safety perspective, they acted responsibly."



A necropsy report conducted by the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Lab and the DNR determined that the cougar was a mature female that appeared to have been in good physical condition. Its stomach was empty at the time it was killed, according to DNR Pathologist Joe Marcino.

"It's not possible to say if it had been in captivity at some time and either escaped or was let loose, or the much less likely possibility that it was a wild cougar that wandered into the state," Marcino said. "We were not able to find any evidence that it had been a captive animal, such as tags, tattoos or other markings. And it had not been declawed or spayed."

Marcino said testing of the cougar is continuing.

Cougar Skull found in Michigan

A skull was found in the woods of Michigan's Upper Peninsula in Chippewa County and turned into the Michigan DNR.

Zoologists at Michigan State and the University of Michigan confirmed that it is indeed a cougar skull. The skull measures 7 3/8 inches long, 4 3/4 inches wide, and the canine teeth measure 1.28 inches on the left and 1.16 on the right (the right tip is broken). Several biologists think it's the skull of a 2 year old female that weighed about 100 pounds.

Dr. Pat Ruzs of the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation, has documented cougars in several areas of Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas in the last year. The DNR gave him access to the skull for measurements and DNA testing. Results of the DNA testing will be posted in a future newsletter

Field Notes by Todd Lester

June 15, 2002 scat was found in Greenbrier County, West Virginia. A couple of good cougar sighting reports have been made in the area. One in November 2001 and one in May 2002. This scat will be sent off for DNA testing.

A turkey hunter reported that he watched a large cougar chase a deer in May 2002 in Kanawha County, West Virginia. On July 05, 2002 I made a search of the area and found a large scat. The scat was weathered, from recent rains and hot temps, but still was 1 1/4" in diameter and contained deer hair. It will be sent off for DNA testing.

The three scat samples we sent off for DNA testing earlier this year are still on the waiting list for testing at the lab. I contacted them to get an update, and was told that results could be available around August 2002.

I tried to follow up on a good cougar report in the Panther State Forest of McDowell County, West Virginia but recent flooding has washed away the roads, and the area is closed for the near future.

Sighting reports have remained strong from several areas of the east. We now have volunteer trackers looking in these areas for evidence. We hope to include reports from ECF Trackers in future newsletters. If you would like to become an ECF Tracker please contact us for details.

Grants Update

Thanks to the hard work of the ECF grants committee, we have now applied to two sources for a possible grant and funding for an automatic remote infrared camera setup.

If we get this funding, it will be used to purchase the cameras and set them up in remote areas of the eastern US where possible breeding populations of cougars could exist.

Rapid Response Camera

An anonymous donor has sent funding to the ECF for the purchase of an automatic infrared camera to be used as a "Rapid Response Camera".

This camera will be used at places such as fresh deer kills in hopes of getting photographic documentation of cougars. The camera has been ordered and should be arriving shortly.

The ECF would like to extend our sincere thanks to this donor, for making the camera possible. It will be a great asset to our efforts in the field.