



NORTH SHORE
BLACK BEAR
SOCIETY

THE NORTH SHORE IS

COUGAR

COUNTRY



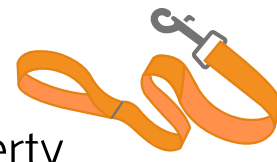
The North Shore Black Bear Society Supports Coexistence Through Education northshorebears.com

We share British Columbia with an estimated 3500 cougars. Coexistence with these big cats is possible if we learn more about their behaviour, their reasons for being in urban areas, ways to reduce attracting cougars to our homes and our responsibilities when out enjoying their home. Reports of cougar activity are increasing due to habitat fragmentation and loss, which often gives them no choice but to travel through urban areas. Accessibility of trail cameras and an increase in home surveillance are capturing activity that previously went unseen. As we continue to encroach on their habitat with development, industry and recreational activities, sightings and encounters may increase. Most urban sightings involve young cougars, who have recently been dispersed and are navigating life independently of their mother, and old or injured cougars, who are struggling to find food in the wild. Extremely elusive, encounters between cougars and humans are rare. Cougars have survived by being predominantly nocturnal, but they can be active at any time of day throughout all seasons. Cougars travel extensively and have large home ranges; it is normal for us to see increased activity over winter, as their search for food brings them to lower elevations and closer to people.



Help to keep pets and cougars safe

- Feed pets inside and store excess food indoors
- Supervise dogs closely if off-leash on your property
- Keep dogs leashed and carry bear spray and a flashlight if you are outside with your dog between dusk and dawn



Outdoor cats encourage increased coyote and cougar activity. Roaming cats are at risk year-round, at any time of day or night. We encourage raising cats indoors with outdoor time on a harness or in a supervised and secure catio.

Off-leash dogs are involved in more than half of all negative wildlife encounters. Keeping your dog on a short leash on trails and in wilderness areas greatly reduces the risk to everyone. A cougar could see your pet as food and harassment from off-leash dogs can pressure a cougar to act defensively. Cougars may seek safety in a tree. Leave the area and do not corner them.

Exploring in cougar country

Cougar attacks on humans are exceptionally rare. Cougars regularly travel through urban areas and local trail systems without incident. To help further reduce risk to people, pets and wildlife, follow these best practices when exploring in cougar country:

- Travel in groups. Avoid hiking alone
- Be aware of your surroundings, making sure to observe in all directions
- Avoid wearing headphones
- Never approach wildlife intentionally
- Make noise to alert wildlife of human presence. Be louder on low visibility trails and by water sources
- Keep children close and in sight. Their small size and erratic movements make it harder for cougars to identify them as human
- Avoid hiking between dusk and dawn when cougars are most active
- Keep dogs on a close leash
- Be alert for sign (tracks/scat) or food sources, such as deer in the area
- Cougars cache their food. If you find dead wildlife, slowly leave the area
- Cougar kittens are well hidden, but if you happen to find their hiding spot, leave the area as females may defend their young
- Carry bear spray. Have it immediately accessible and know when and how to use it. Practice with inert spray

Help to reduce activity close to homes

Make sure you are not creating food opportunities for cougars around your home. Not inviting smaller wildlife to your yard will go a long way to reducing a cougar's reason for being in the neighbourhood. Cougars that spend time in urban areas are at increased risk of being killed by vehicles or for being visible in residential areas.

Deer make up much of their diet, with an adult male surviving on one deer for up to three weeks. Coyotes, hares, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, mice and rats (common in urban neighbourhoods) are all part of this carnivore's diet. Make efforts to avoid attracting these animals into our community.

- Seeds, nuts and suet bring a variety of wildlife close to homes. Instead, plant to encourage birds. Never intentionally feed any wildlife
- Keep garbage and organics as odour free as possible. Keep in a secure area until collection morning
- Collect fallen fruit daily and store in a secure area
- Install and maintain electric fencing to secure chickens and livestock
- Wildlife and pets are suffering and dying from rodenticides. Remove rodent attractants or use humane methods. Never use poison!

If you encounter a cougar

- Stay calm. Keep the cougar in sight and maintain eye contact
- Pick up small children and pets
- Slowly back away
- Be present. Focus on the situation and not your phone

If the cougar shows interest or approaches:

Make yourself look big and intimidating. Show the cougar you are not food. Use a firm tone to assert dominance and identify yourself as a human. If possible, throw rocks or sticks, but don't crouch for long to find them. Maintain eye contact. Prepare your bear spray and continue to use a firm voice as you slowly distance yourself. Fast movements could trigger a natural chase response. Be sure the cougar has a clear escape route. Bear spray (also known as wildlife spray) is a non-lethal tool that teaches wildlife not to enter our personal space and it could save your life. In the rare event of a close encounter where the cat does not leave, deploy your spray. Wildlife spray is only to be deployed if you are in danger and must be used responsibly. If a cougar makes contact, fight back with all you have. Focus your attack on their eyes and face. Share and practice with your family!

Cougars play an important role in maintaining a healthy and balanced ecosystem. Seeing these magnificent cats in a natural environment (from a respectful distance) is something few of us will ever experience. Understanding your responsibilities as residents and visitors to cougar country, and acting on advice, will help to keep people, pets and wildlife safe and reduce the number of human-caused cougar deaths in BC.