

Nature Notes

Cougars



Few animals engender the awe and respect that the cougar (*Felis concolor*) does. The cougar has long been part of human mythologies because of its power, speed and hunting ability. With their powerful legs, cougars can jump vertically 5.5 meters and horizontally from 6 to 12 meters and can sprint as fast as 55 to 72 km/hr. As a fierce predator, the cougar can bring down prey four times its size but, being opportunistic, will also eat insects.

Litters of 1 to 6 spotted kittens are born in a den and raised solely by the female. At about the age of two, the kits leave to establish their own territories. By this time, the spots are replaced by the



familiar monocolour. Males are larger (63-90kg) than the females (40-50kg) but both are large, have short-hair, long-tails and range in colour from a reddish to grey-brown.



Cougars have one of the largest distributions of any mammal in the western hemisphere, ranging from northern BC to Patagonia. This large range has resulted in this animal having many names, including puma, mountain lion, panther, painter or catamount. Even though widespread, the cougar's secretive nature means they are seldom seen.

Photos by Wikipedia: Cougars

Though the presence of cougars in the Kimberley Nature Park is most often noticed through their tracks, cougar sightings are becoming more frequent. With the large number of deer in Kimberley and deer being a favoured prey species, it isn't surprising that the big cats seem to have followed their food closer to town.

Attacks on humans are rare but they have been known to take place. If you meet a cougar, do not run and do not turn your back. Do all you can to enlarge your image and appear threatening.

The cougar is a large, powerful predator worthy of our respect.

Visit www.kimberleynaturepark.ca for a hard copy or more information about Nature Park events.