Loss of large predators has disrupted multiple ecosystems and is humankind's most pervasive influence on the natural world due to cascading effects on ecosystems.

- National Science Foundation
Mountain Lions In CA and Bay Area

Though Felidae Conservation Fund activities span the globe, our organization is based in the Bay Area. Threats to pumas in the Bay Area are unique. Pumas and their smaller cousin, the bobcat, face problems that are specific to highly urbanized areas. One of the main conservation issues that threatens pumas is a lack of education, which can lead to a misunderstanding of these beautiful creatures and their important role in the ecosystem.

Our education and outreach program is geared towards educating residents of the Bay Area and California about these wild cats that share our backyards, their role in the ecosystem, and how we can all help the conservation of the Bay’s remaining predators.

Those who are lucky enough to call the Bay Area home are also lucky enough to live with lions. Though urbanization and growing human populations can be a problem for our wildlife, Felidae hopes to teach others that coexistence with these animals is necessary for the survival of these keystone species.
Encounters between people and pumas are very rare. In California, and especially the Bay Area, we are lucky enough to live in close proximity to beautiful open areas that many wild species also call home. It is possible that some of us may encounter pumas and bobcats when recreating in open areas.

For those of us who live in areas where we might come in contact with these species, it is important to remember how important these animals are and that they do not pose a threat to us. In fact, like most animals, mountain lions are more afraid of us than we are of them. However, there are some steps we can follow to make the relationship between humans and pumas safer for all:

**For Residences in Puma Territory:**
- Trim vegetation surrounding the house
- Remove plants that attract deer, raccoons, etc.
- Do not feed deer or attract other wildlife
- Do not leave pets or pet food outside at night
- Fence livestock and keep contained

**When Recreating in Puma Territory:**
- Avoid hours between dusk and dawn
- Keep children in front of you and close by
- Never approach a puma of any size, especially a kitten
- Never approach a wildlife carcass

The risk of death from a mountain lion attack is 1 in 6,246,778.5

Living in Lion Country
As predators, pumas and bobcats are considered keystone species. Mountain lions control deer populations, and other prey animal populations, and thus regulate the balance of trophic levels throughout the food chain.

Bobcats are mesopredators that regulate smaller prey species numbers. They also compete with other mesopredators, such as coyotes and raccoons, for resources. Both pumas and bobcats have been extirpated from much of their range. Puma populations are no longer found east of the Mississippi River Valley as a result of overhunting and habitat loss.
Pumas and Bobcats are both members of the big cat family Felidae and subfamily Felinae. Both are New World felid species and are only found in the western hemisphere.

Mountain lions are large ambush predators found from mid Canada to the tip of Argentina and can be found in a wide variety of habitats. Bobcats are medium sized predators that are mostly found in the United States and do not utilize the dense tropical rainforests as pumas do.
In an unbalanced system like the Bay Area, deer populations go unchecked and create problems for the rest of the ecosystem. Not only is there overgrazing of vegetation, which can disrupt nutrient cycles, but a boom in deer populations leads to an increase in the number of car strikes with deer, which can be dangerous for drivers.

Pumas are important predators. These animals regulate the number of deer and prey species in the ecosystem. In turn, prey species regulate the amount of vegetation in a system.

"They keep the deer population in check, keep disease out of the system, nurture the landscape by being there. Human health is affected by having this predator here. ... They reduce Lyme disease, for one, and probably tick-borne diseases we don't even know about yet."

Researcher, Zara McDonald
Mountains lions, also known as pumas or cougars, have more names than any other mammal. They have an expansive range across the Americas and have picked up dozens of different names from the cultures that have come into contact with them.

As members of the family Felidae, and also of the subfamily Felinae, which also includes Jaguarundis, Cheetahs and Ocelots, Pumas are technically the world’s largest small cat.

Pumas are territorial animals. An adult male mountain lion requires between 100-400 square miles of habitat. Pumas defend their territory and maintain borders with many different forms of territory marking.

Facts About Mountain Lions

95% of all mountain lion sightings are actually not mountain lions. 

source CDFW
Puma scat tends to be segmented with a diameter of an inch or larger. It often contains hair and bits of bone which may give it a white coloration. Unlike canine scat (canines are omnivores), puma scat will not contain seeds and other plant matter, since pumas are carnivorous. Pumas leave scat near scrapes, along trails, in arroyos, under overhangs, in caves, and near kills.

Puma Tracks

Since pumas retract their claws, puma tracks typically do not show claws in their tracks. Their tracks also have the following characteristics: they are asymmetrical, have three lobes on the bottom of their heel pads, and notch on top of their heel pad (in a clear print). Pumas also have a 'leading toe' that allow trackers to distinguish between the left and right track.
When Pumas Meet People

Pumas have a large home range and often live near borders of highly urbanized areas. In 2010, a male puma was shot and killed in downtown Berkeley. These events are not uncommon, especially in the Bay Area. Unfortunately, many people are highly misinformed about the reality of human-predator relationships.

Many people see mountain lions as dangerous predators that live in our backyards and pose a threat to our way of life. In reality, interactions between pumas and humans almost always end poorly for pumas.

Human encroachment into puma territory results in more negative interactions for pumas, including hunting as well as road strikes, which occur as we build more roads in puma territory.

What to do if you meet a puma?

▶ Maintain eye contact
▶ Pay close attention to body language
▶ Give it a wide berth
▶ NEVER turn your back or run away

If the puma is 'interested'

▶ Appear as big as possible
▶ Pick up children
▶ Speak loudly and firmly
▶ Throw rocks, sticks, water bottle
▶ Fight back if attacked
How You Can Help

Share what you learned.
Word of mouth helps to raise awareness.

Other ways you can help:

- Volunteer and get involved
- Prevent disinformation
- Make a donation at felidaefund.org
- Support us on Amazon Smile and Escrip when you shop
- email us at info@felidaefund.org
- Follow us on social media @felidaefund

To donate, scan this QR code with your camera
Felidae Conservation Fund is a non-profit research and conservation organization founded in 2006 to advance the conservation of the world’s wild cats and their ecosystems.

Our comprehensive model integrates critical field research, innovative K-12 programs, community involvement and enrichment, and cutting edge technologies. Felidae activities span the globe. We lead strategic research studies and collaborate on conservation projects worldwide providing strategy, funding, analysis, modeling, field support, planning and logistical assistance. Felidae’s education and outreach programs are designed to increase understanding and awareness, and thus enable the conservation of entire ecosystems.