



Coexisting with mountain lions

A guide for pet and livestock owners of the North Bay



Get to know the mountain lions living in the North Bay

Quinton Martins/Audubon Canyon Ranch

Mountain lions ...

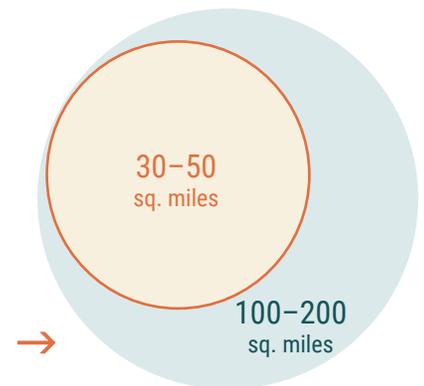
... Can jump 15 feet high and 40 feet across.

... Can fit through a 7-inch diameter hole!

... Are most active at night between dusk and dawn.

... Are essential to a healthy ecosystem!

Territory size for **female** mountain lions in Sonoma County range from 30–50 sq. miles, and for **males** is 100–200 sq. miles.*



-  Mountain lions have large territories, are solitary cats, and occur at low densities.
-  In the North Bay, the main diet of mountain lions is by far the black-tailed deer. However, they will also feed on almost any other animals including birds, reptiles, or even fish.
-  Unprotected livestock and pets can also be viewed as prey by any mountain lion.

-  Mountain lions typically drag their prey to an area with cover to feed. Remains will often be cached (covered with sticks and soil) for them to return to feed on every night until the carcass is fully consumed.
-  Killing a mountain lion for preying on pets or livestock results in the vacant territory being filled by one or more lions and not solving the underlying risk to unprotected domestic animals.

What's on the menu for North Bay mountain lions?

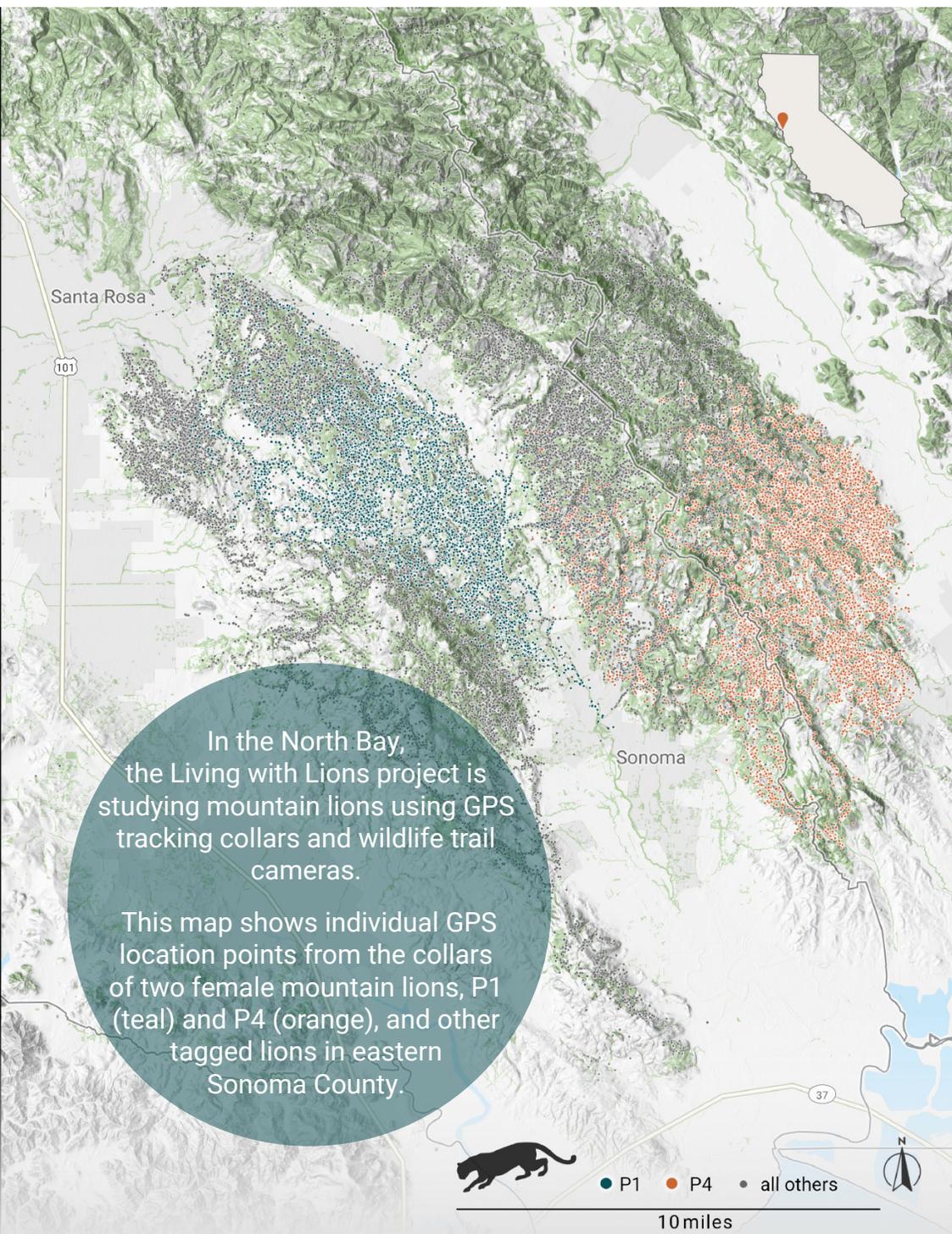
A study of prey found from mountain lion kills in Sonoma and Napa counties during 2021–2023* included:



Mountain lion territories cover much of the San Francisco North Bay

- 🐾 Mountain lions like to stay hidden, preferring areas of connected cover provided by bushes, trees, hedgerows, creeks, streams, other drainages, and areas with dense vegetation.
- 🐾 Creeks and rivers are often used as corridors through otherwise open area.

- 🐾 Mountain lions try to avoid people and are most active at night between dusk and dawn.
- 🐾 Mountain lion population densities are strongly linked to prey availability and suitable habitat availability.



Quinton Martins

Protecting livestock & pets also protects wildlife

In the North Bay, the most common attacks on livestock by mountain lions occur on unprotected goats and sheep, owned by people with fewer than 10 animals.

Keeping goats and sheep safe

The best way to keep your small herd safe is to put them in a predator-proof pen overnight from dusk till dawn.

A predator-proof-pen includes these essentials:

- *It is fully enclosed with a secure roof.*
- *It has no gaps bigger than 7" in diameter.*

Never shoot at a mountain lion!

A wounded lion may be unable to hunt its natural prey and may resort to mostly hunting unprotected livestock.



When building a predator-proof pen, there are a few other things to consider:

🐾 Create a visual barrier. Mountain lions are visual predators so having a visual barrier, such as a shade cloth around the lower part of the pen, reduces the chance of livestock being harassed or injured through the fence.

🐾 Avoid thick vegetation. Place the pen in an open area away from vegetation cover and wildlife corridors. When your livestock are out of the pen, keep them in an open area away

from creeks or thick vegetation in the early mornings and late afternoons as a precaution.

🐾 Be consistent. That one time you forget to put the goats away may be the time the mountain lion or another predator happens to walk past.

🐾 Recycle, Reuse, Repurpose! It is often possible to use existing infrastructure or materials to make a secure predator-proof pen.



Technology can help when you're away

If you aren't always home to put your farm animals in their pen, consider getting an automated system. [OPen®](#) is a new, innovative technology that includes live video feed to check on your animals. Visit the demo model at [Sonoma County Wildlife Rescue](#) or contact [True Wild](#) for more information.

Keeping cats and dogs safe

The best way to keep your pets — and wildlife — safe is to keep your pets indoors or on a leash.

*Free roaming feral and pet cats have a devastating effect on wildlife, including reptiles, songbirds, and small mammals. A recent survey of the U.S. estimates a minimum of 1.3 billion birds and 6.3 billion mammals killed annually by domestic cats.***

Add these 5 strategies to your pet care routine:

-  Build an outdoor enclosed area, like a “catio,” to give your cats the benefit of being outside but the safety of being inside. **Always keep cats and other small pets indoors at night.**
-  Keep dogs leashed unless in an enclosed dog park. Pay attention to their behavior as pets can often sense wildlife long before you do.
-  Feed your pets inside and keep pet food in a secure and locked container. Accessible pet food can often attract smaller mammals such as raccoons or opossums, which then can attract larger predators like coyotes, bobcats, and even mountain lions.
-  Don't feed or provide water to wild animals.
-  Connect with local non-profit organizations working to support healthy populations of wildlife by reducing the most common areas of conflict.

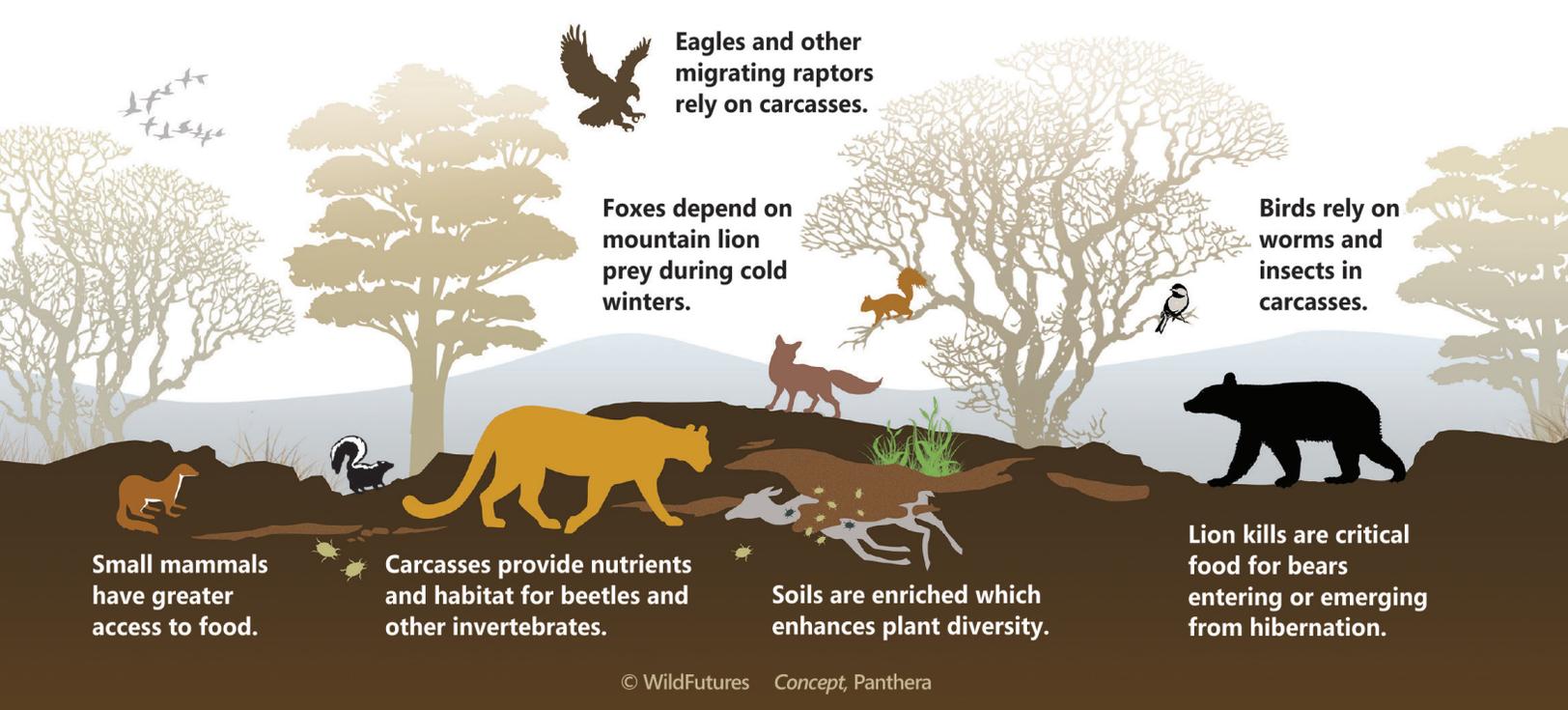


Spot a mountain lion? Do this:

Encountering a mountain lion in the wild is a rare occurrence. Furthermore, they typically are not a threat to people. Enjoy the sighting and consider these general safety guidelines:

-  **If you encounter a mountain lion, never approach it and never run from it.**
-  **If the lion approaches or acts aggressively toward you, wave your arms, stand tall to look bigger, shout at it, and throw rocks or wield a stick if it attacks.**
-  **Mountain lions have been known to give up on attacks when people fought back.**





Eagles and other migrating raptors rely on carcasses.

Foxes depend on mountain lion prey during cold winters.

Birds rely on worms and insects in carcasses.

Small mammals have greater access to food.

Carcasses provide nutrients and habitat for beetles and other invertebrates.

Soils are enriched which enhances plant diversity.

Lion kills are critical food for bears entering or emerging from hibernation.

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Mountain lions contribute to resilient lands and waters

As an apex predator, mountain lions have an influence on deer and small mammal populations and can have a positive effect on the environment. For example, by hunting deer, lions influence deer

movement and population sizes which may prevent areas from being overgrazed leading to erosion. Their leftovers also provide food for many other species.

Additional resources for learning to coexist with mountain lions of the North Bay

The Living with Lions project

Audubon Canyon Ranch
<https://egret.org/living-with-lions/>

True Wild
Free livestock protection consultation
Learn more about the research.
<https://www.truewild.org/>

Sonoma County Wildlife Rescue / A Wildlife Exclusion Service
Predator exclusion services
<https://awces.com>

UC Cooperative Extension Human-Wildlife Interactions Advisor
Carolyn Whitesell, cawhitesell@ucanr.edu

CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
<https://wildlife.ca.gov>

Resource Conservation Districts

Marin County: <https://www.marinrcd.org>

Sonoma County: <https://sonomarcd.org> and <https://goldridercd.org>

Napa County: <https://naparcd.org>

UC Davis California Mountain Lion Project
<https://camountainlions.com>

Institute for Wildlife Studies
<https://www.iws.org/>

Mountain Lion Foundation
<https://mountainlion.org>

Preventing Conflicts with Mountain Lions in California (pdf): https://issuu.com/mountainlionfoundation/docs/cdfw_mlf_conflict_brochure_booklet_final_2020



Status of Mountain Lions in California

The passage of the California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990 (Proposition 117) by California voters established that mountain lions are a “specially protected mammal” in California. It is unlawful to possess, transport, import or sell any mountain lion or part or product thereof (including taxidermy mounts). This status and other statues prohibit CA Despartment of Fish and Wildlife from developing hunting season or take limits for this species. The act established certain exemptions from that prohibition such as: mountain lions may only be harvested 1) if a depredation permit is issued to take an individual that has killed livestock or pets; 2) to preserve public safety; 3) to protect federally-listed bighorn sheep populations.***



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* Living with Lions unpublished data

** “The impact of free-ranging domestic cats on wild-life of the United States,” *Nature Communications*

*** California Department of Fish and Wildlife

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