

Dear Members;

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SIGHTINGS OF A COUGAR IN THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS AT FISHHAWK LAKE.

This week it was seen on Fishhawk Road. There have been at least two other sightings since last summer.

PLEASE KEEP YOURSELF AND YOUR PETS INSIDE ESPECIALLY AT DAWN OR AT DUSK.

Here are helpful tips regarding cougars from Dave Smith, a naturalist and avid outdoorsman who has worked in Yellowstone, Glacier, Denali and Glacier Bay National Parks, and has long counseled people on how to avoid unpleasant encounters with wild animals...

Limit your outdoor activities at dawn and dusk.

- Avoid cougar kill. Cougars will cover a kill with dirt and debris and return to feed; be alert for birds and other scavengers that might tip you off to a carcass and avoid dead animals in general.
- Travel in a group. In particular, running or jogging alone is a bad idea.
- Keep small children within reach; a cougar will watch and wait for an opportunity to grab a child that strays from the group. Have an adult at the front and rear of the group.
- Carry a walking stick; it could be used in your defense.
- Don't count on a dog to protect you; aside from packs of well trained lion hunting hounds, even large dogs have little or no value as a deterrent in cougar country (and they may actually lead a cougar back to you)

If you do encounter a cougar;

- Don't run. This is especially important for children. Flight might trigger pursuit. Face the cougar. Don't turn your back on a cougar. Stand up.
- Maintain eye contact with the cougar. Cougars prefer to ambush prey from behind. If the cougar knows you've seen it, an attack is less likely.
- Adults: Pick up the kids. Given that children tend to frighten easily, adults should pick them up to prevent them from running or making sudden movements. Another alternative is to instruct kids to grab your leg and hang on. At the very least, children should crowd around an adult.
- Children: Don't move if you are closest to the cougar. If there's group of children scattered around an adult, the children behind the adult should move toward him or her; if there's a child between an adult and the cougar, the adult should move toward the child.

If the cougar is within 50 yards and is intensely staring and making an effort to hide or conceal itself:

- Do all of the above.
- Make yourself look bigger. Raise your hands overhead. If you've got jacket or a pack hold it up so you look even bigger and bulkier.
- Attempt to move to safety. Don't run, but if there's a safer location (a building or car) nearby, move toward it slowly while facing and watching the cougar. Try to get on higher ground than the cougar.

If the cougar is staring intensely and trying to hide, combined with crouching and/or creeping toward you:

- Do all of the above.
- Throw things at the cougar if it's close enough.
- Smile. Show the cougar your teeth. To the cougar, you're displaying weapons.
- Yell, shout, and make intimidating noises. Your goal is to convince the cougar that you are not prey, and in fact be dangerous.

If a cougar is staring intensely, with its tail twitching, body low to the ground/crouching, and ears erect, the cougar is waiting for a chance to attack. If the cougar's rear legs are also pumping or moving up and down and its ears are turned fur side forward, an attack is imminent:

- Do all of the above.
- Launch a preemptive strike by taking aggressive action toward the cougar.
- If you have a weapon, use it. If you have a tree branch or walking stick, quickly run toward the cougar and shove the stick in its face. If you don't have a stick, yell and run toward the cougar with your hands overhead but stop before you're within reach of its paws.

Please be safe!

FLRC Communications Committee