

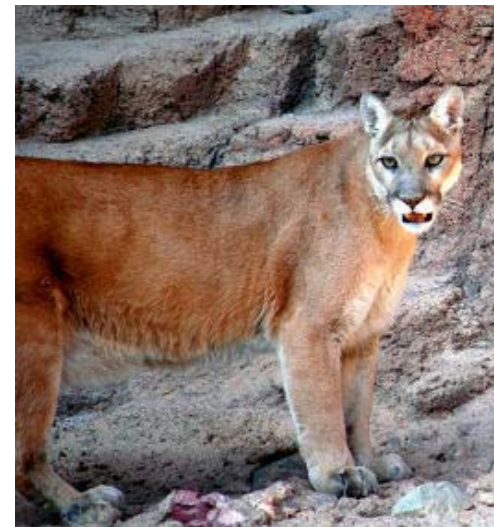
MOUNTAIN LION ATTACK? NOT LIKELY

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attacks take place in wilderness areas in California. On average, there is one mountain lion attack in California every two years, and one death every five years. You are far more likely to be killed in an auto accident or struck by lightning than to die in a cougar attack.

The cougar was almost hunted out of existence in California, but a law was passed forbidding hunting them. Now it is estimated that there are about 6,000 mountain lions in the state.

These beautiful beasts are important to our ecosystem. For example, they are the main predators of deer. If the mountain lions became extinct, the deer population would explode.



Deer eat food crops, and also carry ticks that infect people with Lyme disease.

Even if you hike in the wilderness every week, you probably won't be attacked by a mountain lion. You might not even see one. Your best chance at seeing a mountain lion might be to visit your local zoo. ♦

TIGER ATTACKS MEN AT ZOO

On Christmas day in 2007, a 250-pound Siberian tiger at the San Francisco Zoo named Tatiana escaped from her enclosure and attacked three young men. One of the victims died from his wounds, and the other two suffered claw and tooth wounds to their heads, necks, arms, and hands.

At first, zoo officials had no idea how the tiger could have escaped without human help. The enclosure is surrounded by a 15-foot wide moat, and the walls are 13 feet high. An investigation revealed that Tatiana clawed her way up the wall, and may

have latched onto one of the victim's legs, which were dangling over the enclosure. Footprints from one victim were found on top of the wall. The victims later admitted they taunted the tiger, and pine cones and sticks were found inside the enclosure. Several of the victims had been drinking just before the incident, and all three had marijuana in their system. One victim's blood alcohol level was twice the legal limit for driving.

Police responded to a 911 call from the zoo and shot the tiger. ♦

BIG CAT ATTACK!

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RESEARCHERS FIND AFRICAN LIONS MORE LIKELY TO ATTACK AFTER FULL MOON

If you were a child in Tanzania, Africa, your worst nightmare might be a lion attack on a dark night.

Imagine you are helping your parents protect your crops from wild bush pigs on a moonless night. Bush pigs can grow up to 330 pounds and destroy your crops, leaving your family nothing to live on. You sleep out in the fields, alert to any sounds.

Suddenly, you hear the roar of a lion. These predators can be heard up to 8 km (about 5 miles) away. Is the lion nearby? Is he hungry?

Or perhaps you don't hear any roaring—just a slight rustle in the

grass. Then you feel the sharp, fierce bite of a lion as he drags you away. Your father will be powerless to save you.

Your nightmare is not too far-fetched. Between 1998 and 2009, lions attacked more than 1,000 Tanzanians. They killed and devoured two-thirds of them. Lions can weigh over 300 kg (650 pounds) and run almost 80 km (50 miles) per hour! A lion can eat 36 kg (79 pounds) of meat in one meal. They have a bite force of 600 pounds per square inch—which reduces your flesh and bones

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LION ATTACKS IN THE UNITED STATES

Lion attacks in the United States are rare, but they do happen. Mountain lions are called cougars, panthers, or pumas. They are found as far north as Canada, and as far south as the lower Andes Mountains in South America.

But don't worry too much about mountain lions stalking you in the streets. Most of these

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A cougar on the prowl in its mountain habitat

LIONS MORE LIKELY TO ATTACK AFTER FULL MOON

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to dinner and dessert in no time.

Researcher Craig Packer says, "No one ever forgets one of these lion attacks." He has been studying lion attacks to see if they have increased. He and other researchers want to find ways to help humans and lions co-exist with fewer attacks. They have learned some interesting facts. Lions are most likely to attack people after a full moon. That is when it is darkest, and lions are hungriest. There are logical reasons for this.

Lions like to surprise their prey in the darkness. When the moon is full, it is easier for the prey to spot the attacking lion and flee. So during the period after the full moon, the lion is hungriest. Most attacks occur after dark, between 6:00 and 10:00, when people are still active outdoors. Scientists found that on the ten nights after the full moon, humans were up to four times more likely to be attacked.

Packer says researchers recommend



that people not sleep out in their fields at night, or at least not after a full moon when the risk is highest. But he's not sure poor village farmers will take this advice, because they can't afford to allow the bush pigs to destroy their crops. And they can't try to hunt and kill the bush pigs, either—because bush pigs are one of the most common animals lions hunt in Tanzania. And we don't want those lions to go hungry, do we? ♦

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MEET A LION

While it's not likely that you'll meet a lion on your way to school, or in the park, it might be useful to know how to deal with one just in case! Here are some tips from experts:

- Travel in groups. Lions are less likely to attack groups.
- Don't hike with your dog—a tasty little dog looks like bait to a lion.
- If you meet a lion, stop and make yourself look as big as you can. Pick up small children and put them on your shoulders. Wave a big stick and yell.
- Defend yourself and don't run away. You want the lion to think you will not be easy prey. ♦

TIGER ATTACKS IN INDONESIA

Several recent tiger attacks in Indonesia were caused by the loss of the animal's natural habitat, experts say. Illegal logging is destroying the rainforests where the tigers live. There are now less than 400 Sumatran tigers left in the wild.

The deforestation has become a crisis in Indonesia, but the weak central government does not have the power to stop it. Many villagers make their living by cutting down and selling logs from the country's nature preserves. They often can find no other employment. Nearly every natural park has been damaged by illegal loggers with chainsaws. People are also cutting down the forests to clear land for farming.

The destruction of forests is highest on the island of Sumatra. This deforestation has caused an increase in attacks by elephants, who are losing their habitat, too. Deforestation also

contributes to flooding and landslides, which kill many more people than animal attacks.

For hundreds of years, people lived in harmony with tigers with few conflicts. But over the last twenty years, as loggers cut down their forests, the tigers began coming to villages to find food.

"It seems that tigers attack humans to eat them," said a forest ranger. "Most of the tigers we catch are thin. I think it's because they cannot find their usual food. They go into villages and eat whatever they find: goats, cows, humans."

Even though experts blame deforestation for the tiger attacks, some local people believe the tigers kill for other reasons. They believe tigers are punishing people for violating a moral code, such as sleeping with someone who is not your spouse, or stealing. ♦

