



PRESS RELEASE

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PROTECT launches new Cougar Watch project

PROTECT will gather reports from the public about cougar sightings in the Adirondack Park and northern New York

Any one who has recently seen a cougar in or around the Adirondack Park is encouraged to make a report

For more information:

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Protect the Adirondacks has started a new “Cougar Watch” project to record public sightings of cougars (*Puma concolor*) in and around the Adirondack Park. The purpose of Cougar Watch is two-fold. First, there continue to be regular reports of cougars across the Adirondacks. PROTECT will manage a database about all reports made available to us. We will investigate sightings based on what information is available, such as pictures/video of the cougar, pictures of tracks, scat samples, among other evidence. Second, if there is a cluster of reports in a specific geographic area, PROTECT will work with cougar experts to try and assess the presence of cougars.

“There are regular reports of cougars throughout the Adirondacks, but there has not been a central public repository to record these sightings. PROTECT will work to organize and map these reports. Anybody who has recently seen a cougar in or around the Adirondack Park is encouraged to make a report,” said Chuck Clusen, chair of Protect the Adirondacks.

Reports of cougar sightings can be file [here](#). More background information [here](#) and [here](#).

PROTECT asks that people have as much information as possible when making a report, including the date, time and location, full contact information as well as any other information such as paw prints, print measurements, hair or scat samples. “We encourage anyone who has recently seen a cougar in the Adirondacks to contact PROTECT and file a report,” said Peter Bauer, executive director of Protect the Adirondacks. “These big cats have been a mystery in the Adirondacks for a long time. By

getting the word out and collecting sightings PROTECT will try to bring some data to this issue.”

PROTECT’s Cougar Watch project follows the work by a PROTECT Board member Peter O’Shea, who for many years recorded sightings of cougars in the Adirondacks. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, O’Shea recorded hundreds of sightings of cougars (also called mountain lions or pumas) from hundreds of people and several times he even tracked cougars in the Adirondacks.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has declared cougars officially extinct in the eastern U.S. Cougars number in the tens of thousands west of the Mississippi River and occupy almost all large mountainous areas in western states. There are an estimated 15,000 cougars in California alone. In recent years, cougars have naturally recolonized several parts of the west including the Black Hills of South Dakota, the Badlands of North Dakota, and the Pine Ridge area of western Nebraska.

A cougar population of around 150 has survived in Florida. It was successfully augmented recently with the introduction of males from Texas to help widen the gene pool. This population is a remnant population from a time when cougars thrived coast to coast in the U.S. The Florida population is considered far beyond the reach of even the most freewheeling and well-traveled young male cougars to reach on their own, despite the great distances that cougars can roam. One cougar was recently documented as having traveled from South Dakota to Connecticut, where it was hit by a car). It was believed to have passed through the Adirondacks.

“In the years ahead, PROTECT plans to provide regular updates on cougar sightings in and around the Adirondacks. This is a great opportunity for people to share their wildlife experiences” said Peter Bauer.

Protect the Adirondacks

Protect the Adirondacks is a privately funded, IRS-approved not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park in northern New York. PROTECT was formed through the merger of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks and the Residents’ Committee to Protect the Adirondacks in 2009. PROTECT pursues its mission to protect the Adirondack Park and defend the public “forever wild” Forest Preserve through citizen advocacy, grassroots organizing, education, research, and legal action. PROTECT is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. PROTECT maintains an office in Lake George. For more information see www.protectadks.org.

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