

UCF ANIMALS  
UCSC  
SJM JUL 2 1 1993  
warns of  
resident  
lions

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Mountain lion sightings on campus and the discovery of a deer carcass with lion markings earlier this year have prompted officials at the University of California, Santa Cruz to issue a mountain lion warning.

"I don't think people should be worried; they should be aware," said Deb White, UC-Santa Cruz's animal control officer.

Mailed campuswide last week, the bulletin outlines facts about mountain lions and includes a list of tips telling students, employees and visitors how to avoid injury if they run across one of the big cats on UC-Santa Cruz's sprawling, 2,000-acre property.

#### Attacks on humans rare

Mountain lion attacks on humans are extremely rare; there were five in California last year, none fatal. The elusive animals are shy and generally stay in remote areas.

But because of liability concerns and an increase in encounters between humans and mountain lions statewide, said White, the university wanted to increase awareness.

"As humans push further into their habitat and deer become more abundant on campus, it is inevitable that people will confront mountain lions more frequently," the notice states.

The UC-Santa Cruz campus borders several large wilderness areas. Gray Whale Ranch, Wilder Ranch State Park and Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park all are considered potential mountain lion habitat.

There have been 10 to 15 reported sightings of mountain lions on campus since 1989, said White. Most were by joggers and hikers in the forested wilderness preserve on the north side of campus. In every case, the animals ran away without incident.

Last year, a mountain lion was seen near the UC arboretum.

#### Telltale deer carcass

In February, a dead deer was found under redwood tree branches about 50 feet from the UC-Santa Cruz Cowell Student Health Center. The carcass, a doe, had large bite wounds at the base of the skull. The neat manner in which it had been gutted and partially buried "raised eyebrows," said White, and led her to conclude that it probably fell prey to

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UCSC officials urge  
'awareness' of lions

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a mountain lion that included the campus in its hunting range.

At first, she delayed in issuing a public warning.

"I didn't want to instill panic," she said.

But after consulting with university attorneys, administrators gave the go-ahead. Similar bulletins have been put out this year by Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks and by the state Department of Fish and Game.

#### AVOIDING ATTACKS

What to do when encountering a mountain lion:

- Don't run. It may chase you. Back away slowly.
- Don't bend over. Try to appear larger. Raise your arms or open your jacket.
- Stay calm. Talk firmly to the animal.
- Do not approach a lion. Give it an escape route.
- Keep children close. Lions are more likely to attack children because of their size.
- If attacked, fight back. Lion attacks have been thwarted by people with rocks, sticks and garden tools.
- Don't hike alone. Carry a sturdy walking stick.

Source: Department of Fish and Game

All realize that the penalty for doing nothing could be costly.

In 1991, a jury in Santa Ana awarded \$2 million to the family of a 5-year-old girl who was attacked by a mountain lion in Ronald W. Caspers Wilderness Park in Orange County in 1986. Jurors ruled that the county was negligent in failing to notify hikers about the potential for mountain lion attacks. The girl was partially paralyzed and lost sight in one eye when a mountain lion attacked and grabbed her head in its mouth.

The county's appeal will be heard in September, said Barry Allen, the attorney representing Orange County.

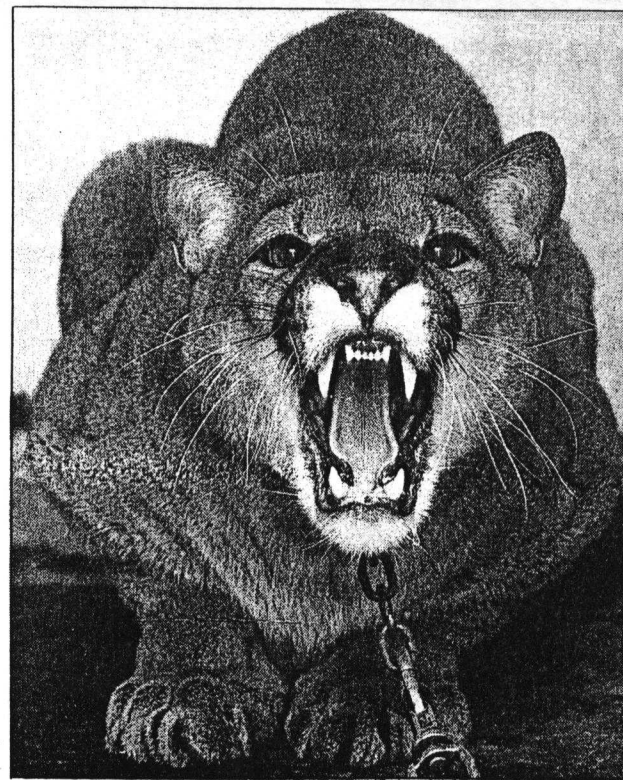
"You can't be responsible for the acts of wild animals," said Allen. "If this stands, government entities would have to post warnings for everything from spiders to rabid squirrels."

Mountain lions roam throughout rural California, in remote areas from the Trinity Alps through the Sierra Nevada to Southern California deserts.

Also known as cougars or pumas, the animals can reach eight feet in length and 150 pounds. They stake out wide territories, and stalk their prey from the rear.

California's mountain lion population has more than doubled in the last 20 years to between 5,000 and 6,000, largely because the state has not permitted mountain lion hunting since 1972.

After legal challenges raised



The chances of getting this close-up a view of a mountain lion may be rare, but UCSC officials want students and visitors to be aware that the campus very likely is home to some of the big cats.

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FILE PHOTOGRAPH

the possibility of a new hunt, voters in 1990 banned sport hunting of mountain lions with the passage of Proposition 117.

There has never been a documented case of a person being killed by a mountain lion in California. The only fatalities in modern times occurred in 1909, when a woman and child survived an attack but later died of rabies, according to state records.

"The odds of being attacked are quite a bit less than being struck by lightning," said Terry Mansfield, chief of the wildlife management division at the state Department of Fish and Game in Sacramento. "People are more likely to be injured by deer."

At the same time, people have been steadily moving into mountain lion territory. Occasionally,

lions have roamed into suburban areas inhabited by humans to attack livestock or pet dogs and cats.

Last year, a 9-year-old boy in Santa Barbara was seriously injured in a mountain lion attack. In 1991, an 18-year-old high school student jogging in a suburb of Denver was chased and killed by a mountain lion.

Ongoing construction to build College 9 in a wooded area near the UC-Santa Cruz Health Center known as Elfland "most definitely" increased chances of mountain lion and human encounters, said White.

"We don't want people to change their recreational habits," said White. "But if they are going into the woods they should be aware."