

Two more lion sightings in Cabrillo College area

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APTOS — Mountain lion warnings are in effect at both colleges in Santa Cruz County.

At Cabrillo College in Aptos, notices were first posted last week after a jogger saw a lion eating a deer.

Since then, there have been two more sightings, said Cabrillo College Police Chief John Barker.

On Friday, a campus worker was atop a water tank up Observatory Road when he saw a mountain lion walk by.

He described her as a large female who looked like she had a recent litter, Barker said.

On Saturday, a woman on Nathan Court, southwest of the college, also reported seeing a mountain lion.

Authorities searched the area and found tracks in the mud that measured about six inches in diameter, Barker said.

Cabrillo officials also found prints in the area near Observatory Road on campus, he said.

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As a result, college authorities issued a new, stronger warning about the mountain lion.

The first notice said the animal that had been seen eating the deer on Wednesday may have been a bobcat.

It is the first such warning for the campus, according to Barker.

"We'll keep in communications with (state Department of) Fish and Game," he said.

He said his main concern was for children going into the woods behind the main campus.

These recent sightings follow reports of a mountain lion at UC Santa Cruz.

A jogger and his dog were

chased by a big cat Sept. 10, but were unharmed. It was the fifth documented lion sighting at UCSC since May.

University officials are creating permanent metal warning signs to post at the fire and bike trails on the wooded campus, said spokesman Rob Irion.

The signs will tell hikers and bikers they are entering mountain lion habitat.

A fence also will be built behind the family-student housing complex and the woods on the west side of campus to keep children out of the undeveloped area.

Campus authorities are still urging people to use the back trails with caution, Irion said.

Officials are also reminding people that dogs are prohibited on campus.

Children and animals are especially at risk, according to authorities. They said the mountain lion may have been interested in the man's dog.

According to the state Department of Fish and Game, the mountain lion population has been growing. In 1920, there were about 600 lions in the state by a rough estimate.

Since then, more accurate estimates and field studies judged the number at 2,000 in the 1970s. Today, the population estimate ranges between 4,000 and 6,000, according to Fish and Game experts.