

Animals of the Chihuahuan Desert



Mountain Lion

Physical Characteristics

Mountain lions look very similar to short-haired cats. They have small heads, with long necks, bodies, and tails, and small and rounded ears. The color of their fur can also vary like a short-haired cat from brownish-red to brownish-orange, to bluish-grey. The fur lining their throats through their bellies tends to be a lighter color and the tip of their tail is the darkest patch of fur.

Diet

The diverse diet of the mountain lion has allowed it to survive in the conditions of the desert. This animal preys on deer, cattle, sheep, horses, cottontails, coyotes, rodents, and even insects! An adult mountain lion needs to eat 8 to 10 pounds of meat per day!

Habitat

When not hunting for food, the mountain lion usually can be found resting in rugged terrain where they can be easily hidden such as small caves. For the most part these animals live alone. Females will sometimes share territory with other females, but the males are very territorial and will not share their range of land with others. However, the mountain lion has learned to live in almost all conditions.

Senses

While this animal has poor sense of smell, it has excellent vision and hearing which allows it to hunt in the early mornings of the day or evenings. It stalks its prey from the back and then uses its powerful legs to jump distances that can reach 40-45 feet!

Predators

Adult mountain lions have very few predators other than human hunters. The young and sick may be hunted by wolf packs or bears.

Interesting Facts

- Mountain lions have a lot of different names! They are also called cougars, panthers, pumas, catamounts, or painters.
- Kittens are born blind up until three months and have spots on their fur that disappear when they reach about nine months. Around the same time they are taught to hunt!
- Mountain lions, unlike their name suggests, cannot roar. This is due to the structure of their voice box. Instead they produce a high-pitched scream.
- The mountain lion can leap more than 18 feet in the air and jump distances of more than 20 feet!