

# SPECIES AT RISK in New Brunswick



## Cougar

Scientific name: *Felis concolor*

N.B. Status: Endangered

### Cougar

#### Description & Biology

Cougars are the biggest representative of the cat family in North America; they can reach 2 m in length. They are generally tan in colour, and have a long cylindrical tail with a black tip.

The Eastern Cougar is a source of mystique and controversy in New Brunswick. There exists little concrete proof that it is a permanent resident of the province, even though there are often reports of sightings. Therefore, the little we do know does not allow us to determine if the Eastern Cougar actually exists as a separate population that is distinguishable from other populations of cougar.

#### Habitat & Survival

Most of our understanding of the ecology of the cougar in New Brunswick is based on observations from the western population of cougars. The cougar's habitat varies, but it tends to occupy large forests where human disturbance is minimal. It is a solitary animal except during mating season. It is also territorial and the males can occupy regions from 200 to 1800km<sup>2</sup>.

In the west, large ungulates are the major food item for cougar, but in New Brunswick, moose and deer would be their main prey. Other animals included in the cougar's diet are snowshoe hare, porcupines, mice, and certain birds.

#### Distribution

Documented occurrences of cougar in the province have been rare. Scat and tracks believed to be that of cougar were located near Deersdale in 1992. Previously, the most recent proof available had come from a cougar caught close to the Maine-Quebec border in 1938. There was also a case where a cougar had been shot in Kent County in 1932.

There have been numerous unconfirmed observations of cougars in New Brunswick, though they have sometimes been confused with other animals such as fishers, coyotes, lynx, and domestic dogs. The state of the population is equally vague in Nova Scotia, southern Quebec and southeastern Ontario.

Cougar still has the most extensive range of any mammal in the western hemisphere;

covering an area from southeastern Alaska to southern Argentina and Chile.



NB Distribution  
of Cougar