

Cougar Corridors and Bay Area Regional Planning



Sierra Azul Wildlife Connectivity Workshop
11 October 2006
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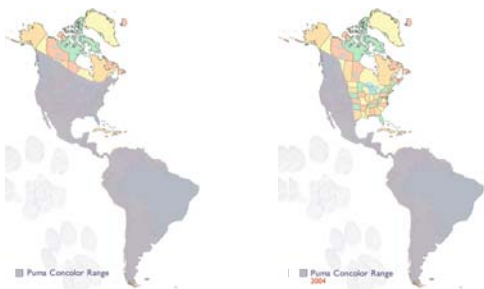
Objectives of Talk

- Cougar Distribution
- Potential Habitat in Santa Cruz Mountains
- Human/Cougar Conflicts
- Dispersal
- Corridors and Regional Planning – starting in Southern Santa Cruz Mountains



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Cougar Distribution Then and Now



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Cougar Range In California

- 90,000 sq mi of habitat
- Occurs from desert to high Sierra in California
- Oak woodlands/ chaparral communities are very productive



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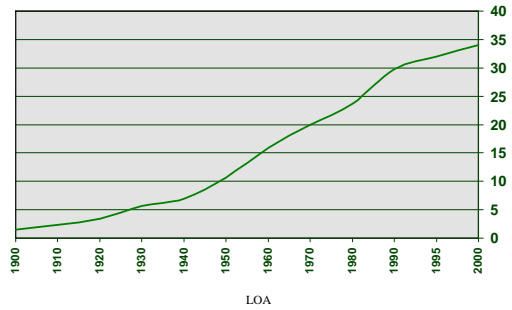
Potential Cougar Habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains

- The Santa Cruz Mountains comprise 1400 mi² – 74 miles long
- In 2000, 258 mi² potential lion habitat (only 130 of core) in Santa Cruz County (445 mi²)
- Area of potential habitat in other counties unknown
- Is there enough at present to support a viable population for 100 years without immigration?



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Human Populations In California (1900-2000)



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Human Population Growth in Santa Cruz County

- The State of CA Department of Finance:
- 260,248 in 2000
- 367,196 by 2020
- A 41% increase!



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Juvenile Dispersal

- Males may roam up to 35 miles to find their own home range
- Sub-adult males most likely to get into trouble



Photo: Rocky Spencer

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Humans Conflict With Cougars

1. Extirpated the cougar east of the Rockies
2. Present development patterns fragment remaining habitat
3. Hysterical fear



Photo: Tom Mangelsen

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Habitat Fragmentation

- Cougars require large habitat patches
- Fragmented landscapes are increasing rapidly in 5 County Area
- Development continues to threaten remaining landscape linkages



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Benefits of Corridors

- Reduce extinction rates
 - Genetic
 - Demographic
 - Environmental
 - Catastrophic
- Reduce inbreeding depression
- Allows for natural colonization rates - dispersal



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Juvenile Dispersal

- Juveniles disperse between 15 to 22 months of age
- Males may roam up to 35 miles to find their own home range



Photo: Rocky Spencer

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Regional Planning - What Needs to Happen

- Open Space
- We need to identify viable movement corridors
- We need to connect core habitat areas to one another
- We need to secure corridors and appropriate buffers BEFORE tract housing and commercial developments are signed off on.

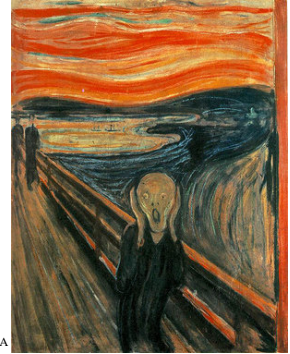


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The Scream of Nature

*“... and I stood there
trembling with anxiety –
and I sensed an infinite
scream passing through
nature.”*

Edvard Munch



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