

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Mountain lion hoaxes

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

No animal seems to catch the imagination, and flare the passions, of people in the Southern Appalachians like mountain lions.

I recently had a mountain lion sighting reported to me from the Bent Creek area, right outside Asheville. However, within a couple of days the person who first made the claim admitted it was a hoax. A recent press release from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission declared as a hoax a photo of a mountain lion dragging a deer that was making its way around the internet, often claiming to be somewhere in western North Carolina.

Cougars, panthers, mountain lions, they all refer to the same animal. The Southern Appalachians were once home to the Eastern cougar, one of several subspecies of this cat, ranging from the endangered and diminutive Florida panther, to the more common Western cougar.

The Eastern cougar may be out there right now, stalking a rabbit, or lounging in thick brush, however no one has turned up hard physical evidence of its presence in decades. Animals have been found, but they were captive cats turned out into the wild, not members of a reproducing, wild population. Unfortunately the resources don't exist for wildlife biologists to follow up on every lead, but if you have a sighting, a track, or scat, we would be glad to hear about it. And if someone sends you a picture, ask them if they know where it was taken, if not, its probably another internet hoax.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.