**RN: Off Track**

**Big Cats in the Bush**

**NAME: /70**

[**https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/past-programs/**](https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/past-programs/)

Rumours of pumas and leopards roaming the Australian bush have been around for more than a century. There’s plenty of anecdotal evidence but to date no definitive proof. Join in the search for a mythical cat in this re-issue of a classic ***Off Track.***

**Listen carefully to the Off Track podcast and answer the following questions in dot point form, unless asked to do otherwise.**

1. Who is the presenter of Off Track and what is the Radio National (RN) program

she hosts about? **(2 marks)**

2. Name three characteristics of the animal the first male speaker describes. **(3 marks)**

3. Name three characteristics of the animal the second male speaker describes. **(3 marks)**

4. For how long have there been rumours of big cats in the Australian bush? **(1 mark)**

5. Who are two of the country’s most determined big cat myth enthusiasts? **(2 marks)**

6. Who joins them in the Otway Ranges? **(1 mark)**

**7.** Who originally hosted this segment of Off Track? **(1 mark)**

**8.** What trap did Simon and John set and how does it work? **(2 marks)**

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9. Name the book David Waldron wrote. **(1 mark)**

10. What is this book about? **(1 mark)**

11. Name two things Waldron finds interesting about big cat folklore. **(2 marks)**

12. What is the root of this myth? Name one. **(1 mark)**

13. Name two Victorian government reactions to rumours about big cats in the Aussie bush. **(2 marks)**

14. Both men name the type of cats they believe are out there. What three breeds are named? **(3 marks)**

15. Why does the commentator say the animals are highly intelligent? **(2 marks)**

16. Name three places where these cats are said to live. **(3 marks)**

17. How many animals does the commentator think are out there living in the bush? **(1 mark)**

18. Did Peter Meekcaust find any convincing evidence that proves the cats exist or

do not exist? Explain. **(2 marks)**

19. Name two interesting facts about the scat found in southern Victoria? **(2 marks)**

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20. How does Peter Meercaust explain this evidence of Barbara Triggs’? **(2 marks)**

21. What details are given about the large black cat shot in the Gippsland a few

years ago (this was in 2013)? **(2 marks)**

22. Why doesn’t Peter Meercaust want to say these animals do not exist? **(2 marks)**

23. Name two reasons why people are intrigued by the myth about feral cats. **(2 marks)**

24. Identify three things different about the trap set by the two men. **(3 marks)**

25. The men examine the photos back at the house. What do they see? **(1 mark)**

26. Amanda Smith reported that the government believes “signs and sightings of

the panther are in all likelihood mostly going to be feral cats” Tony Buckmaster

from the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre outlined the characteristics

of feral cats. What did he say? **(1 mark)**

27. Name three observations about feral cats that Buckmaster makes. **(3 marks)**

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28. How many feral cats are there in Australia? **(1 mark)**

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29. What harm do feral cats do? Name two. **(2 marks)**

30. What is the feral cat’s favourite food? Name two. **(2 marks)**

31. What is the main problem with controlling feral cats? **(1 mark)**

32. Is Sally Hall’s research into non-surgical sterilisation a workable solution to

the problem of feral cats? Name two possible responses to this question. **(2 marks)**

33. Is eradication of a feral animal from the mainland the aim of feral cat

programs? Name two possible responses to this question. **(2 marks)**

34. Does Tony think the panther exists? **(1 mark)**

35. In one paragraph and referring to what you have heard in this program,

do you think big cats exist in Australia? Explain your response. **(8 marks)**

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**Answers**

1. Who – Anne Jones

What about - all about nature and the environment

2. Name three characteristics of the animal the first male speaker describes.

* Big boofhead
* Big male
* Sitting on its backside
* Tail
* Jet black
* Big head, small ears
* Very muscular in the shoulders
* Nearly one metre high at the shoulder
* Extreme speed

3. Name three characteristics of the animal the second male speaker describes.

* It was feline
* Well over 2 metres long
* Massively muscled
* Trying to get awayfrom us with a sort of belly crawl
* Had most malevolent stare
* Few seconds sighting
* Yellow eyes

4. For how long have there been rumours of big cats in the Australian bush?

* 1 century

5. Who are two of the country’s most determined big cat myth enthusiasts?

* Simon Townsend
* John Turner

6. Who joins them in the Otway Ranges?

* Dylan Bird

7. Who originally hosted this segment of Off Track?

* Amanda Smith

8. What trap did Simon and John set and how does it work?

* Dead sheep set out for a week
* cameras with sensors and infra- red.
* Have DNA collection kits
* Collect tissue samples from bite marks on sheep
* Collect saliva from bite marks on sheep

9. Name the book David Waldron wrote.

* “Snarls from the Ti-tree.”

10. What is this book about?

* Tales about big cats in Australia and the folk lore surrounding them

11. Name two things Waldron finds interesting about big cat folklore.

* People trying to come to terms with an alien landscape
* People releasing exotic animals into the bush e.g. rabbits

12. Where is the root of this myth?

* People making sense of stock kills
* Africans saying these kills match African stock kills

13. Name two Victorian government reactions to rumours about big cats in the Aussie bush.

They’d go out and shoot the biggest dog they could find in the area and blame it..

Got Aghan people out cobing the bush looking for tigers

14. Both men name the type of cats they believe are out there. What three breeds are named?

Californian pumas or south American

Malyasian leopards

15. Why does the commentator say the animals are highly intelligent?

* Look in windows and not afraid of humans

16. Name three places where these cats are said to live.

Grampians, Otways, up into the great dividing range into NSW

17. How many animals does the commentator think are out there living in the bush?

100 animals spread over 100, 000 sqaure kms of territory.

18. Peter Meekcaust Did Peter Meekcaust find any convincing evidence that proves the cats exist or do not exist??

- no definitive primary evidence

Lots of anecdotal evidence

19. What was interesting about the scat found in southern Victoria?

* Barbara Triggs – decided it was distinctive in odour, colour and form.
* Extracted black hairs. Microscopically matched back leopard hairs.
* Dna from hair lined up with leopard dna

20. How does Peter Meercaust explain this evidence of Barbara Triggs’?

* Can’t explain it. No evidence to explain how it got to be there.
* Found by a farmer and handed in to a government department.

21. What details are given about the large black cat shot in the Gippsland a few years ago (this was in 2013)?

Shot by hunter who did not keep all of the cat – he photopgraphed it and kept the tail

Fur from tail analysed by Monash Uni

Found to be a very large domestic cat

No convincing evidence of a wild carnivorous animal in Vic

22. Why doesn’t Peter Meercaust want to say these animals do not exist?

* Intelligent people say they have seen them
* Hgaven’t been able to prove the animals do exist

23. Why are people intrigued by this story?

Romance

Something mysterious and dangerous out there

Want to prove they exist as he believes they do

24. Identify three things different about the trap set by the two men.

* Face has been eaten
* Nose was chewed off
* Sheep was gutted and guts eaten
* Ribs chewed off
* Blood licked out
* A lot of meat taken

25. The men examine the photos back at the house. What do they see?

* Two Wedgetailed Eagles ate the sheep

26. Amanda Smith reported that the government believes “signs and sightings of the panther are in all likelihood mostly going to be feral cats” Tony Buckmaster from the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre outlined the characteristics of feral cats. What did he say?

* Same species as the domestic cat – no different

27. What myth about feral cats does Buckmaster explain?

* Feral cats are not bigger than domestic cats
* Biggest cat just 6kgs his cat is 10kgs
* Feral cats are great survivors
* Cats have not lost hunting instinct so can still hunt and catch prey

28. How many feral cats are there?

* 5.3-18 million cats
* Increase and decrease depending on season

29. How much harm do they do?

* Hard to work out predation rates
* Don’t know numbers
* Unless they reduce prey population numbers you don’t know they are there
* Becomes a problem when cats predate on endangered species

30. What is the cat’s favourite food?

* Baby rabbits.
* small mammals, lizards and birds. Cats prefer live prey rather than eating what is left.

31. What are the problems in controlling cats

* anything you use to harm feral cats can hurt domestic cats

32. Is Sally Hall’s research into non-surgical sterilisation a workable solution to the problem of feral cats?

* Yes – it will work and become one weapon
* It won’t be a magic bullet
* Every cat has to be susceptible – through a bait. Every cat will not eat the bait or be near the bait
* Another method is injection – problem = catching the cats

33. Is eradication of a feral animal from the mainland the aim of feral cat programs?

* Have had success on islands
* Australia is too large an island to get rid of all pests
* Need to manage the damage they do rather than eradicate

34. Has Tony ever seen a big panther in the wild?

* No

35. Does Tony think the panther exists?

* It may have happened but it would have to be the world’s longest living panther (if released in 1942)

36. What do you think was the purpose of this program?

37. In one paragraph and referring to what you have heard in this program, do you think big cats exist in Australia? Explain your response.