

## LA Species Information Guide

### **Lesson 1- Mountain lion**

#### Description

- Mountain lions are the most stable mammal in the Americas.
- Mountain lions can live up to 18-20 years in the wild.
- Mountain lions are capable of running at speeds of up to 45 miles per hour.
- In the western United States, there are about 30,000 mountain lions.
- The scientific name for a mountain lion is puma concolor meaning “lion of one color.”
- Lions can bound 40 feet while running, leap 15 feet up into a tree, climb a 12-foot fence, and sprint up to 50 mph!

#### Location

- The range of a mountain lion depends heavily on the abundance of prey, terrain, and vegetation.
- Mountain lions can live at elevations of up to 10,000 feet.

#### Identification

- Typically 6.7-7.9ft in length - the average is 6.25 ft long.
- 2-3ft long tail.
- The color of an adult mountain lion is tawny.
- Males are larger than females; they are slender cats with short fur yellow to greyish. Throat and chest are white and a pinkish nose.
- Females weigh 85 to 120 pounds. Males weigh 120-180 pounds.
- Lions typically live 8 to 10 years in the wild.
- Lion tracks measure roughly 3". They have a bi-lobed main pad with four teardrop-shaped toes.

#### Hunting

- Mountain lions may kill more animals during an attack than they can eat; they have been known to kill large numbers of livestock at once.
- Mature mountain lions are not preyed upon by any other species in the wild, though they may have conflicts with other predators and scavengers, such as wolves and bears.
- They primarily prey on elk and deer, mice, and rabbits but will also prey on other animals - including porcupines.
- Lions silently stalk and ambush their prey when they have the opportunity to pounce.

### Significance/Conservation

- Top predators regulate prey populations and prevent plant-eaters from destroying habitats. Having plant life is important because it provides other homes for other animals.
- Risk of hunting, habitat destruction, and conflicts with livestock. This means they are an umbrella species and help with the preservation of habitat.
- Eastern cougars are deemed extinct by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, and Florida panthers are critically endangered.
- Mountain lions often have to compete with gray wolves and bears for resources in their territories. Grey wolves are particularly troublesome, and in an area where wolves are prevalent, the mountain lion may have to kill much more prey than usual because it gets chased from its prey by the pack.

### Fun Facts

- They don't roar, and female screams to attract mates.
- Mountain lions hold the record for the animal with the most names. They have over 40!
- Mountain lions are skilled climbers, frequently dwelling in trees.
- Full-grown mountain lions require 8 to 10 pounds of meat per day to survive.
- Mountain lions are the largest cats that can purr.

### **Lesson 2- Coyote**

#### Description

- Canis latrans.
- Lives up to 14 years.
- Run 40 mph.
- Less likely to form packs than wolves, usually in small pairs.
- Coyotes are less territorial than wolves.
- Coyotes have long lifespans by canine standards.
- The coyote population is steadily growing.
- Coyotes are smaller than wolves and are called prairie wolves.

#### Location

- Roam in forests and mountains and populations are at an all-time high.
- Found in North and Central America
- Tolerant human activities can be in suburban, agricultural, or urban areas.
- Coyotes rarely build their own dens. They usually take over an abandoned one.
- Deforestation in the region allowed coyotes to spread to the eastern USA by the 1890s.

#### Identification

- 20-50 pounds

- Erect ears and drooping tail. Grayish to yellowish-grey on upperparts, throat and belly are white.
- The tail is half their body length and is bottle shaped with black tip. Smaller than wolves but larger than foxes.
- A coyote's fur depends on where it lives.
- Coyotes stand between 60 to 70 cm tall at their shoulders.
- The scientific community recognizes 19 coyote subspecies.

#### Hunting

- Form packs for better hunting.
- Coyotes will eat just about anything.
- Coyotes have excellent vision and a great sense of smell.

#### Significance/ Conservation

- Coyotes have been hunted but they thrive.
- Keep many small mammals in check and compete with other hunters for deer, rabbits etc. If populations of small mammals got too large, it would result in habitat degradation.
- The coyote has few natural predators. They include bears, mountain lions, and wolves.

#### Fun Facts

- Have distinctive calls.
- Coyotes are very good swimmers but poor climbers.
- Coyotes are monogamous, which means they have one mate their whole life.
- Coyotes have a respected place in Native American folklore.
- The name coyote has Aztec origins.
- You can tell apart different canines from the way they run. Dogs run with their tails up; coyotes run with their tails down.

### **Lesson 3- Red-Tailed Hawk**

#### Description

- SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Buteo jamaicensis*.
- AVERAGE LIFESPAN IN THE WILD: 21 years.
- North America's most common hawks.
- These prey species are also known as buzzard hawks and red hawk; chicken hawk is another name.
- Very territorial.
- Red tailed hawks struggle to make it to adulthood.

## Location

- Found in the Nearctic region in open areas including urban parks, forests, plains, urban and suburban areas.
- Choose open areas with scattered elevated places to perch.
- Found in North America.
- The red-tailed hawk's breeding range extends from central Alaska through Canada and across the entire United States, south through Mexico, and Central America. In winter, many of the northern birds move south; however, red-tailed hawks are commonly seen as far north as Minnesota each winter.
- The red-tailed hawk is found around open fields, especially near woodlots close to farms and cities. Not a bird of the deep woods, it is usually found in grasslands or marsh-shrub habitats. It is also found in urban areas.

## Identification

- WEIGHT: 24.3 to 51.5 ounces.
- Brown to auburn in color with lighter underbelly, brownish-red tail.
- Males and females look alike but females are larger. As with most raptors, the female is nearly 1/3 larger than the male and may have a wingspan of 56 inches.
- The bird's underside is usually light with a dark belly band, and a cinnamon wash on the neck and chest. However, both light-colored and dark-colored races confound this.

## Hunting

- Carnivore.
- Use claws to eat mostly and are carnivores eating mostly small rodents - 85 -90% of the red-tailed hawk's diet is composed of small rodents.
- Binocular vision and can see colors humans can and some we cannot see -100 feet high.
- Red-tails wait for prey and snatch it instead of chasing.
- Spot their prey in open spaces next to highways.
- Red-tailed hawks feed on a wide variety of prey. Mammals commonly make up a large part of their diet and include everything from small mice to rabbits and hares. They will also take medium-sized birds and reptiles such as lizards and snakes.

## Significance/ Conservation

- Hawks control populations of small rodents and provide habitat to some small bird species.
- They steal prey and have prey stolen from competitors.
- They are not at risk of being endangered and are protected under the US Migratory Bird Act.
- A common hawk across its range, the red-tailed hawk has made a spectacular comeback since the days of hawk bounties.

### Fun Facts

- Red-tailed hawks are monogamous and may mate for life.
- Albinism is relatively common in red-tail hawks.
- They build nests in tall trees, cliff ledges, tall cactus, or even high power lines poles.
- Red-tailed hawks are sacred in Native American cultures.
- The red-tailed hawk has a hoarse and rasping 2- to 3-second scream that is most commonly heard while soaring. They are loudest when defending their nest.

### **Lesson 4 - Comparisons to all**

- Coyotes are omnivores, while red-tailed hawks and mountain lions are carnivores.
- All of these animals are predators.
- All of these animals help regulate their ecosystem by keeping their prey from overpopulating.
- Hawks fly while the other two crawl.
- They all can be found in suburban areas and in LA.
- Mountain lions are the largest and red-tailed hawks are the smallest.
- Red tailed hawks are the most colorful because they have a red tail which makes them blend less in their environment.
- Coyotes and mountain lions are both mammals.
- Red-tailed hawks primarily use their claws for hunting.
- They are all vertebrates.