

# English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library

April 23, 2026

## Human and Animal Interactions



Mountain lions are the fourth largest wild cat in the world after tigers, African lions, and jaguars. The scientific name for mountain lions is *puma concolor*. They are also known as cougars (ku-gers), pumas (pu-maz), and panthers (pan-thers).

Mountain lions live throughout North, Central and South America. Their range stretches from the Yukon of Canada all the way down to Patagonia at the southern tip of South America.



Today we will read about mountain lions in California and their interactions with humans. First, answer the warmup questions below and review the vocabulary.

### Warm Up Questions

1. What is the closest encounter you have had to a large wild animal – one larger than a big dog?
2. Do you think you could encounter a mountain lion in the middle of San Francisco?

**Vocabulary:** Match the words to their meanings. The next page has photos of some of these words.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>barrier</b> (bair-ee-er)              | A. an electronic device designed to detect movement                                     |
| 2. <b>distinct</b> (dih-stingk)             | B. no longer living; having ended or died out.  |
| 3. <b>endangered</b> (en-dayn-jerd)         | C. anything that obstructs or controls access to something                              |
| 4. <b>extinct</b> (ik-stingkt)              | D. to claim; to mark  |
| 5. <b>foreseeable</b> (for-see-uh-buhl)     | E. broken up into separate parts; disorganized; disunified                              |
| 6. <b>fragmented</b> (frag-muhn-tid)        | F. the area that an animal defends against intruders, especially of the same species    |
| 7. <b>motion-sensor</b> (moh-shuhn sen-sor) | G. a small porch or platform at the entrance to a house, or the steps leading up to it. |
| 8. <b>to stake</b> (stayk]                  | H. as far as can be seen; able to be known or seen in advance                           |
| 9. <b>stoop</b> (stoop)                     | I. different in nature or quality; not the same; dissimilar                             |
| 10. <b>territory</b> (ter-i -tohr-ee)       | J. threatened with a danger or extinction; in danger of dying out                       |
| 11. <b>lethal</b> (lee-thahl)               | K. a tense situation or confrontation   |
| 12. <b>standoff</b> (stand-off)             | L. deadly; anything dangerous enough to cause death                                     |

ANSWERS : 1 –C; 2 - I; 3 -J; 4 –B; 5 – H; 6 - E ; 7 – A; 8 – D; 9 –G ; 10 – F; 11 – L; 12 - K

## English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library

April 23, 2026

### Human and Animal Interactions

#### Are There Mountain Lions in San Francisco?



In California, scientists estimate there are between 3200 and 4500 mountain lions left. Their **territory** range covers about half the state. While they have a broad range, they are **endangered**, especially those populations near developed urban areas.

On February 12, 2026, the California Fish and Game Commission voted to list six genetically **distinct** mountain lion populations in the state as **endangered** under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). This decision protects about

1400 mountain lions or 30 to 40% of the total state population.

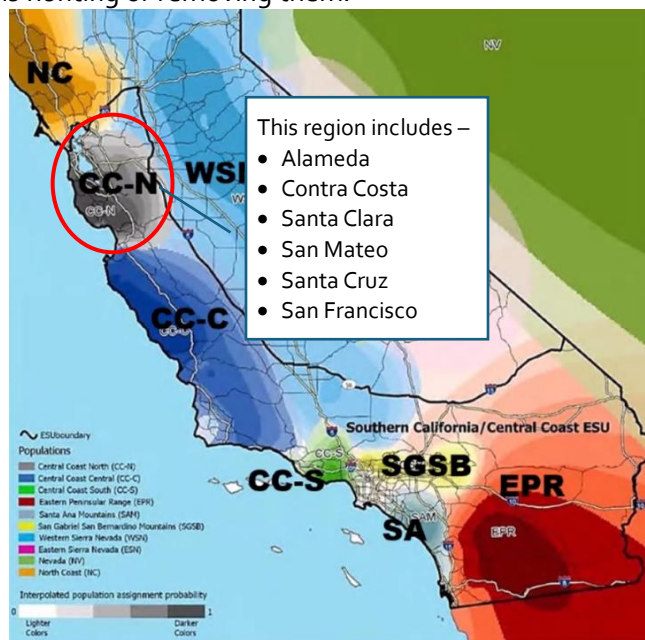
Scientists and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) are concerned that these mountain lions could become **extinct** in the **foreseeable** future. They are **endangered** due to **fragmented** habitat, **barriers** to movement, and humans hunting or removing them.

The six protected mountain lion groups live along the California coast and the inland mountains from the San Francisco Bay Area down to California's southern border including San Diego. The geographic areas of the six genetic populations are shown in the map to the right.

One population region is called the Central Coast North area (CC-N) which includes the Santa Cruz Mountains and Santa Clara County. The Saratoga Library is included in this region.

As the human population continues to grow in California and more land is used for housing, roads, and infrastructure, habitat for mountain lions and other wildlife will decrease. There are fewer places for the animals to live and competition among them will become tougher. Some will have to travel far away to **stake** out their own territory.

That is exactly what one mountain lion known as 157M did in early 2026. Here's his story.



#### The Encounter on January 26, 2026 at 3:00 AM

Roxanne Blank was being dropped off at her apartment by a coworker after a going-away party. While sitting in the car, they noticed a large animal on the sidewalk. At first, they mistook the animal for a large dog. However, as it moved, Roxanne saw its long tail and realized with a shock that it was a mountain lion!

## English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library

April 23, 2026

### Human and Animal Interactions



The lion walked right up the steps to her apartment **stoop**, triggering the **motion-sensor** lights. This provided a clear, brightly lit view of the animal just a few feet away.

Roxanne and the mountain lion locked eyes for roughly five minutes. She described the moment as "super magical".

The encounter ended when her dog began barking from inside the apartment, which startled the lion. It gracefully descended the stairs and ran off toward a nearby park. The following morning, Roxanne found deep scratch marks in the concrete where the lion had stood on her **stoop**.

### Later that Evening

Later that Monday evening around dinner time, traveling nurse Lindsey Ann Cummings arrived at a patient's home carrying bags of takeout food. Her dog, a Great Dane, was with her as they approached the house.

As she walked toward the stairs, she looked up and saw 157M just three feet away, crouching in the shadows of the porch. She later described the animal as being "in position to attack".

After locking eyes with the lion, she and her dog backed slowly into the house's garage and then went upstairs to check on her patient. She called 911 and stayed at the house for the next three hours yelling to neighbors and people who walked by that the lion was still there.

San Francisco Animal Care & Control (SFACC) officers responded to the call and conducted a sweep of the area. But they did not find the mountain lion.

Lindsey felt a professional responsibility as a nurse to protect the neighborhood, particularly the elderly residents she knew. While she was standing guard, Mayor Daniel Lurie happened to be in the area and stopped his car to speak with her and other neighbors.

Around 11:00 PM, she heard rustling in the backyard and called officials again for a second sweep. Only after they completed a second sweep of the area did she feel safe enough to finally leave her patient's home.

However, the mountain lion was still on the loose as several residents caught sight of it dashing through the streets of San Francisco. Madrey Hilton took a video of the animal and alerted authorities: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUAFyQNiLz/>



### Captured



The mountain lion was finally found Tuesday hiding in a garden between two apartment buildings, San Francisco Fire Department Lt. Mariano Elias said. Researchers and veterinarians from the San Francisco Zoo, the Santa Cruz Puma Project and CDFW rushed to the standoff.

Authorities shot the feline with tranquilizers. Elias said. "They covered his eyes and bound its paws, just to make sure it wasn't going to run anywhere." Veterinarians then examined the cat before it was placed in a cage. They tested it to ensure it was healthy.

## English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library

April 23, 2026

### Human and Animal Interactions

Richie King, a field biologist with the Santa Cruz Puma Project, immediately recognized 157M when he saw the animal's identifying features. While heading to San Francisco during the **standoff**, King received word that the mountain lion had a **distinctive** orange tag on its left ear. He thought to himself, "Oh, I know who that is".

King has a long history with the cat, having encountered him four separate times. He was part of the team that first found 157M in the animal's den near Cupertino and fitted him with his original "kitten collar" in April 2024.

A year and a half later, in September 2025, King was the biologist who tracked 157M to a residential backyard in Saratoga, where he tranquilized the lion and removed the collar he was beginning to outgrow.



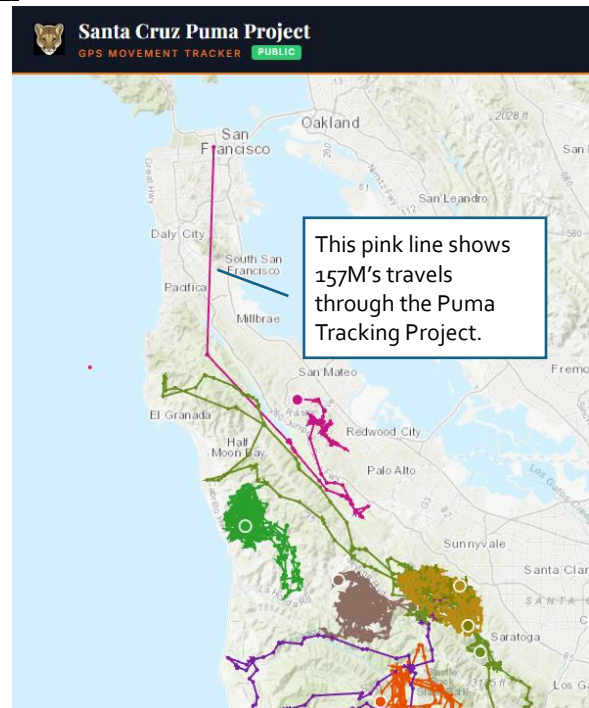
Because King was already familiar with 157M's history and physical markings, the Santa Cruz Puma Project was able to confirm the lion's identity and life story shortly after he was cornered in Pacific Heights.

King placed a new tracking collar on 157M. The mountain lion was then driven to a remote area of the Santa Cruz Mountains that includes his original birth territory. 157M can now be tracked with his new collar.

You can track 157M's movements through the Puma Tracker on the [Santa Cruz Puma Project website](#).

### Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind when you hear "mountain lion" or "predator"?
2. How often do you look and listen for signs of wildlife (like tracks or calls) if you go hiking in a remote or natural location?
3. If you encountered a mountain lion in your yard, what steps would you take to stay safe?
4. What measures, such as securing garbage or installing motion lights, do you take to discourage predators from visiting your property?
5. Do wild animals come around where you live? What are they?
6. How do you feel about **lethal** versus non-**lethal** management methods (e.g., relocation vs. killing) for animals that wander into urban zones?
7. Would you support more funding for educational programs about urban- wildlife interaction?
8. Did you encounter much wildlife in the country where you grew up? Describe it.



Here are some videos about encounters with 157M.

## English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library

April 23, 2026

### Human and Animal Interactions

- Roxanne Blank talking about her encounter: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUCU7rPknx4/>
- 157M's capture: <https://sfist.com/2026/01/28/videos-show-capture-of-mountain-lion-who-went-wandering-around-pacific-heights-and-his-release-to-the-wild/#:~:text=What%20is%20this%20collar%20had%20somehow%20come%20off.>
- 157M's release: <https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaDFW/posts/cdfw-returned-a-mountain-lion-to-natural-habitat-early-this-morning-after-the-yo/1202234598751815/>

### References

The material for this week is based on the content from these sources.

- <https://www.courtsenews.com/california-adds-mountain-lions-to-its-endangered-species-list/#:~:text=wildfires%20and%20disease.-,Scientists%20believe%20there%20to%20be%20between%203%2C200%20and%204%2C500%20mountain,the%20end%20of%20this%20year.>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cougar>
- <https://mountainlion.org/us/california/#!habitat>
- <https://www.endangeredspecieslawandpolicy.com/mountain-lions-protected-under-CESA#:~:text=On%20February%2012%2C%202026%2C%20the,in%20various%20combinations%20comprise%20ESUs.>
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/rare-mountain-lion-standoff-in-san-francisco-ends-peacefully-after-a-30-hour-search-180988082/>
- <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/mountain-lion-157m-21318647.php>
- <https://www.santacruzpumas.org/2011/08/puma-tracker/>