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State Verifies Mountain Lions In Kan.

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) staff have verified that a mountain lion was photographed by a deer hunter northwest of Wakeeney. The sighting is the first ever live wild mountain lion documentation in Kansas, although many other reports have been received in the past.

The hunter who took the photographs was sitting in a tree stand when the mountain lion materialized near a pile of corn the man was hunting over. The hunter grabbed his camera and took multiple photos as the lion approached within 10 feet of the tree stand. The animal looked up at him, then moved out of sight. The entire encounter lasted less than a minute, and the lion never stopped walking.

"KDWP received photographs of the animal, and staff were able to verify that the location was in Kansas, and the story seemed legitimate," said Matt Peek, KDWP furbearer research biologist.

Although the origin of this mountain lion is unknown, mountain lions have appeared with varying frequency in other Midwestern states since the 1990s, presumably moving from western populations that have increased for decades. Most of these animals have been young males, which are capable of moving hundreds of miles in search of females and suitable habitat.

This is the second apparently wild mountain lion verified by evidence in Kansas in modern times. In November, 2007, a young male mountain lion was shot by a landowner in Barber County. Prior to that, the last documented occurrence was in 1904.

"KDWP receives numerous reports of mountain lion sightings annually," Peek added, "but almost all have either been cases of mistaken identity or lacked physical evidence indicating a mountain lion had been present."

There is no open hunting season for mountain lions in Kansas. Landowners may kill wildlife on their premises, including mountain lions, for damage to property or for being in or near buildings, but such animals may not be possessed with intent to use.

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