

Mountain Lions In Farm Country: A Myth?

BY DR. MIKE ROSMANN

While taking a late summer walk on the mile-long dirt road alongside our western Iowa farm several years ago, Marilyn noticed large paw prints in the soft dust. When she completed her energetic exercise, she returned home for a camera, took some photos and searched the internet for pictures of mountain lion tracks.

Sure enough, they matched. When I got home from my office, my wife and I drove together to the paw print site.

The cougar's tracks were evenly spaced for several hundred feet. Deer tracks merged onto the road from the ditch.

Gradually the deer tracks became long strides and the cat's tracks also lengthened until its bounds were a dozen feet apart. The deer and mountain lion tracks both steered off the road into a nearby cornfield toward an unknown outcome.

In 2001, a male mountain lion was hit and killed by a vehicle on Highway 59 on the west side of Harlan, Iowa, our address. Are these events involving the big cats anomalies or common occurrences these days?

Among the many myths about living in rural places is that mountain lions are being released by federal and/or state wildlife agencies to reduce the deer population. The felines are touted as the bane of farmers because they are known to sometimes kill livestock; occasionally they also attack pets and humans.

According to an article by Shane Griffin in the latest issue of the Wapsipinicon Almanac, breeding populations of cougars, catamounts, pumas, or panthers-as they are variously called, have slowly expanded their range recently from the western U.S. into parts of their former range where they were exterminated many years ago.

Young male mountain lions may migrate hundreds of miles, even across rivers by swimming or taking a highway bridge, in search of suitable territories and mates when they are forced out of their home territories by dominant males. DNA tests confirmed a 140 pound male cat killed in Connecticut in 2011 matched the DNA of mountain lions in the Black Hills of South Dakota, 1,500 miles away.

Invariably, only toms are killed by hunters, farmers or motor vehicles in places like Iowa and Missouri, where mountain lions have not been native for decades. Females' territories may overlap as long as there is sufficient food, and they usually expand only into adjacent regions as their numbers increase beyond the carrying capacity of their original territories, and not Iowa and Missouri yet.

What do mountain lions eat? Documented evidence indicates the cougars survive mostly on deer and small animals such as rabbits and birds, but around metropolitan areas they may prey on

pet or feral house cats, dogs, birds and occasionally they rely on unconsumed pet food left in the back yard.

Will the animals harm people? The "List of Confirmed Cougar Attacks in the United States and Canada 2001-2010" (www.cougar-info.org/attacks3.htm) indicates that less than one person per year is killed by a mountain lion in the US and Canada but several people are injured each year. Often the cat attacks are near or in suburban areas where houses have been built recently. Expansion of people into catamount territories often drives out their usual prey and the big cats have to find whatever is available for food.

Furthermore, cats that attack humans often are elderly or weakened by injury or illness and in need of food. Usually reclusive and nocturnal, these mountain lions may attack persons during the daytime.

The persons whom the animals attack are frequently engaged in physical activities such as running, which triggers predatory behaviors. The big cats are doing what comes naturally-or in these cases-what they need to do to survive in crowded environments.

Several states and provinces have declared the animal a protected species and some allow regulated mountain lion hunting. How that happens can be interesting.

A few years ago I camped at "The Pines," a picturesque conglomeration of 1920s' cabins at Long Pine, Nebraska and next to Pine Creek, a good fishing stream. While fly-fishing the next morning, I noticed cat prints larger than a bobcat's in the moist sand next to the stream.

The next day while providing training to University of Nebraska Extension personnel at their annual conference, I mentioned my discovery. A conference attendee said, "Officially, we didn't used to have mountain lions, even though ranchers and rural postal delivery persons said they saw the cats regularly."

"Then a mailman hit and killed one with his vehicle and took it to the Nebraska Park and Game Commission. The next year the cats were a protected species!"

Marilyn still takes walks on the dirt road by our farm. She carries a water bottle.

She says laughingly when she leaves the house for her hike, "If I don't return in an hour, come looking for me. Look for my blue water bottle and start your search from there, because probably the mountain lion won't carry me too far."

Dr. Rosmann is a Harlan, Iowa, farmer and psychologist, available at: www.agbehavioralhealth.com.

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Dr. Mike ROSMANN

Visiting Hours

The Childhood Obesity Epidemic

BY DAVID WITHROW
Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C.

The South Dakota Department of Health collected data in 2004 and 2005 on our current rates for childhood obesity. For children between the ages of five and 19 years of age, our rate was 16.4 percent. This is just slightly higher than the national average. Native Americans between the ages of five and 19 had the highest rate at 26.1 percent. Clearly, we need to address childhood obesity now, to protect our children's health later.

Obesity is a risk factor for a variety of conditions in adulthood. Those conditions include cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis and psychological problems. Although commonly thought of as an adult disease, obesity is a growing problem in children and adolescents. As healthcare providers, we are seeing a number of children with elevated cholesterol and triglycerides, which is a risk factor for heart disease as an adult. We are also seeing some children with elevated blood pressure as adolescents, secondary to their obesity. Type II diabetes, known as insulin-resistant diabetes, is now starting to appear in adolescents. In the past, this has been a disease of obese adults. However, the biggest problem of obesity in children is psychological. As a culture that prefers thinness,



Withrow

overweight children have increasingly become targets for discrimination. Many of these children tend to develop a negative self-image. Being overweight as a child increases the chance that that person will be overweight as an adult. A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 1997 addressed this very issue. The study reported that 69 percent of overweight children between six to 10 years will be overweight as adults. For children between the ages of 10 and 15, their chance of being overweight as an adult was 83 percent.

Prevention of childhood obesity needs to be a team approach. That team needs to include parents, children, teachers/coaches, school nutritional staff, school administrators/board members, school nurses and healthcare professionals. We need to promote healthy eating and increase physical activity while decreasing inactivity. We must be careful not to encourage weight preoccupation, inappropriate eating habits and extreme amounts of exercise — all of which can be associated with eating disorders in youth. Parents have to be the leaders of this team. We need to be role models by being physi-

cally active and eating a healthy, balanced diet that is high in vegetables, fruits and whole grains. We need to make physical activity a fun family event, such as a bike ride at the lake or a ball game in the backyard. A huge problem for children is the television or video games. The current recommendation is to limit television watching or video games to no more than two hours per day.

Fortunately, Yankton is a community that offers a wide variety of both competitive team sports and non-competitive fitness activities. Our city does a very nice job with its summer programs for children. We are fortunate in Yankton to have the addition of a beautiful ice rink on the east side of town. This is one more opportunity for children to be physically active.

Obesity is a huge problem for children and we need to do something about it. We need to be role models by being physically active and eating healthy. We need to provide healthy food choices for children at meals and snacks. We need to encourage children to be physically active and make physical activity a fun family event.

Withrow, MD, FAAP, is a Board Certified Pediatrician at Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C.

Beadle Bugs Deliver



ROB NIELSEN/P&D

Ten kids from Beadle Elementary School helped deliver needed food supplies to the Contact Center last Thursday. The students estimated they'd donated upwards of 1,700 items.

SCHOLASTICS

MINNESOTA STATE MANKATO

MANKATO, Minn. — The Academic High Honor and Honor lists (Dean's lists) for the past fall semester at Minnesota State University, Mankato have been announced by Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Marilyn Wells.

Among 3,011 students, a total of 698 students qualified for the High Honor List by achieving a 4.0 straight "A" average, while 2,313 students earned a 3.5 to 3.99 average to qualify for the Honor List.

To qualify for academic honors, undergraduate students must be enrolled for at least 12 credit hours for the semester.

Minnesota State Mankato, a comprehensive university with 15,409 students, is part of the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities system, which comprises 31 state institutions.

Area honorees include:
• Beresford — Ashley Ambur, High Honor List;
• Dakota Dunes — Taylor Koolstra, Honor List;
• Jefferson — Jessica Minor, Honor List;
• Vermillion — Philip Munkvold, High Honor List.

BELLEVUE UNIVERSITY

BELLEVUE, Neb. — Bellevue University proudly acknowledges the accomplishments of students who have earned degrees from June to

December 2013 — 1,097 total, including 366 master's degrees and 731 bachelor's degrees.

Bellevue University offers more than 50 undergraduate degree programs and 21 graduate degree programs, with more programs in development. Those programs apply the University's unique active learning approach which allows students to attend class in a classroom or online, and meet with fellow students, discuss lessons with instructors, complete assignments and conduct research.

Bellevue University has more than 7,000 online students from all over the globe enrolled in more than 400 courses. Overall, more than 13,000 students attend the University throughout the calendar year, making it the largest private university in Nebraska. The University recently earned a top twenty ranking by the U.S. News 2014 Top Online Education Program Rankings in the category of best online bachelor's degrees. Bellevue University is ranked second among all Nebraska institutions conferring degrees and first among independent institutions, according to the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education.

Area graduates included:
• Elk Point — Ryan Sporer, BS in Systems and Network Administration;
• N Sioux City — Dustin Allan, MA in Management;
• Vermillion — Gary Girard, BS in

Adult Education, Cum Laude; Cheryl Havermann, BS in Marketing Management.

HILEY CAMMOCK

ITHACA, N.Y. — Cornell University's Hiley Cammock of Yankton has been placed on the Dean's List of the College of Arts and Sciences for Excellence in Scholarship for the Fall 2013 semester.

The College of Arts and Sciences is Cornell University's largest undergraduate college. It provides a high-quality liberal arts education to its own students, and its courses are also accessible to all other students at Cornell. The college's faculty includes national and international leaders in their respective disciplines.

CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY

OMAHA, Neb. — Full-time students who rank in the top 10 percent of their class for the semester and earn a 3.5 grade-point average or better on a 4.0 scale are eligible for the Dean's List at Creighton University.

The following students from your area were named to Creighton University's fall 2013 Dean's List:

• Michael Kotrous, of Niobrara, a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences
• Ian Fallon, of Randolph, a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences

Scholarship Deadline Approaches

The deadline for submitting a Yankton College 2014-15 scholarship application is Feb. 14 and eligible students are encouraged to apply.

The Yankton College Scholarship Program awards several \$1,000 scholarships each year from endowed funds to deserving high school seniors and post-graduate students with a YC connection and attending an accredited college or university. Students are ranked on merit and criteria from applications.

Download an application at www.yanktoncollege.org or visit the Yankton College office at 1801 Summit St., Door #9, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

• Luke Buffington, of Gayville, a sophomore in the Heider College of Business

• Matthew Gubbels, of Yankton, a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences

• Amy Johnson, of Yankton, a junior in the Heider College of Business

KAYLA SYLVESTER

LEXINGTON, Va. — Kayla Sylvester of Yankton, a member of the class of 2017 at Washington and Lee University, has earned dean's list status for the recently ended winter term 2013.

Dean's list status at Washington and Lee represents a term grade average of at least 3.4 on a 4.0 scale.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

MANHATTAN, Kan. — More than 3,500 Kansas State University students have earned semester honors for their academic performance in the fall 2013 semester.

Students earning a grade point average for the semester of 3.75 or above on at least 12 credit hours receive semester honors along with commendations from their deans. The honors also are recorded on their permanent academic records.

Area students earning semester honors include:
• Jefferson: Shirley Robinson
• Marion: Erin Wilson

St. Rose To Host Annual Unity Supper Feb. 8

CROFTON, Neb. — On Saturday, Feb. 8, guests at the St. Rose (Crofton) Unity Supper and Grand Auction in Crofton will be treated to an evening of "glamour and glitz" with this year's theme, "Puttin' on the Ritz." The highlight of the evening will be a raffle drawing for a chance to win a trip for two to New York City.

Doors will open at 3:30 p.m. for silent auction bidding ("early bidders" names will be put in a special drawing); Mass at 5 p.m.; social time begins at 6 p.m.; catered meal at 6:30 p.m. and Grand Auction bidding begins promptly at 7 p.m. While guests are encouraged to wear their "dress up" attire, they are not required to and can choose whatever makes them the most comfortable, however prizes will be awarded for "best dressed."

A 50-inch TV will also be raffled during the evening of festivities. Cash and door prizes will be given away

throughout the event too.

Through the contributions of countless businessmen, individuals, community members, parishioners, farmers, retirees, students, alumni and area residents, St. Rose has raised thousands of dollars to assist in the operational expenses of St. Rose School. Again this year, amazing items will be auctioned off including: specialty meals, quilts and quilt racks, seed corn, various toys and toy tractors, farming and veterinarian supplies, Husker packages, brunches, foods, desserts, tailgate party supplies, vacation get-aways, gift certificates, family trips, specialty meats and baskets, concrete, kitchen utensils, sports and tools, subscriptions, propane, gas, diesel, plus hundreds of useful and unique one-of-a-kind items. With thousands of dollars' worth of items donated for this year's auctions, there will be something for everyone at

every price level. It is St. Rose's largest yearly fundraiser.

Due to this year's bountiful corn harvest, a "Grain Bank Auction" has been set up at the Crofton Elevator and will be on the list of items to be bid upon also.

To donate Grand Auction items, call Joyce Stevens at 402-388-2477 or 605-661-5736. For Silent Auction donations, call Wendy Wieseler at 402-388-2642 or drop them off at Uptown Style, Crofton.

Windsor loin, roast beef, cheesy baby potatoes and all

the trimmings will be offered as this year's menu, brought back by popular demand.

There's still time to buy supper tickets at in advance; they can also be purchased at the door. To purchase tickets, contact St. Rose School or Parish Office. Tickets are also available at several Crofton businesses including People's Grocery, Kayton International, Farmers and Merchants State Bank or Crofton Farm Supply. New York City raffle tickets are also available at the same locations.

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