

REPORT ON MOUNTAIN LION SURVEY, GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Submitted by Roy McBride

Portions of Guadalupe Mountains National Park were surveyed for signs of mountain lions and other predators during the period 19-22 March 1980. The following is an account of the survey.

19 March: I travelled up the bed of Upper Dog Canyon to a point somewhat beyond the spring, crossed over the ridge on the east, and returned to the Dog Canyon Ranger Station via "Bear Canyon". Some old scrapes were seen in the header of "Bear Canyon". Evidence of mountain lions was more abundant near some pour-offs not too far from the Dog Canyon Ranger Station. Many scats and scrapes were found under these pour-offs. The most recent signs were at least 2 to 3 weeks old, but there were many old signs, as well. This area has been utilized for some time. Signs of bear were also quite evident in "Bear Canyon".

20 March: Early in the morning the track of a small female mountain lion, left during the night, was spotted near the Upper Dog Canyon Ranger Station. I hiked to Lost Peak and on south to near the Mescalero Camp, then headed onto South McKittrick Canyon and walked to the mouth of McKittrick Canyon. Several deer kills and a bull elk that had died sometime during the winter were discovered in the header of South McKittrick. A few old scrapes were discovered in the upper portions of South McKittrick Canyon along with the old tracks of a female mountain lion. This was probably the same female whose tracks were seen earlier in the morning at the Ranger Station. There was also ample evidence of bear in the upper portion of this canyon. No signs of predators were seen from the point where the trail leaves McKittrick Ridge to the stone house in the canyon. Sign of a bobcat was seen just below the stone house.

21 March: The old sign of a bobcat was seen near the Pine Spring Canyon trailhead. I hiked on up Pine Spring Canyon, and in the gap located about 20 yards from where the trail tops out, the fresh tracks of a large female mountain lion were seen. On the way to Bush Mountain, several scats and old scrapes were seen in the low places and gaps. From Bush Mountain, north along Blue Ridge, and on into and including PX Flat, lots of signs were seen of the cats. I followed the tracks of a male north for some distance in PX Flat, and fresh scrapes were seen along the rim on Blue Ridge. No fresh signs were seen in West Dog Canyon, up S. O. B. Trail, or on topping out before heading down to the Dog Canyon Ranger Station. Some old signs were seen in West Dog Canyon near the boundary fence.

22 March: Old scrapes were seen in Bone Canyon and a small female was discovered just down from the spring. It appeared to have been dead 2 to 3 weeks, had no apparent broken bones and the skull was intact. Many signs of coyotes were seen on the West Side and 3 of these animals were observed just inside the south boundary of the park near the West Side gate.

At least three mountain lions were in the park during the survey. In my opinion, at any given time there are at least one or two lions in the park. The number is more likely to be three or four most of the time, but would never exceed five or six adults at any time.

Mountain lions are known to be in the Delaware and Eagle Mountains south of the park, and north of the park in the Guadalupe Mountains. As lions frequenting the park leave or die, they are replaced by young born in the park or by ones from outside the park.

Bear signs were evident in the upper reaches of South McKittrick Canyon above The Narrows, and in "Bear Canyon" in the Upper Dog Canyon drainage system. Bobcats did not appear to be plentiful in the park, but signs

were seen in McKittrick Canyon near the stone house, and near the Pine Spring Canyon trailhead. Coyotes appeared to be abundant along the south boundary of the park, especially on the West Side.