

# Wyoming Wildlife

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## ON THE GROUND

# Wayward mountain lion relocated after it takes a detour through

JACKSON— Wildlife officials captured and relocated a female mountain lion from a garage at a residence near Hoback Junction in the first week of February. Wyoming Game and Fish received the call from a resident who reported the lion hiding under a pickup truck in the garage. Game and Fish officials responded to the call and realized the cat had a radio-telemetry collar on it and was likely part of a mountain lion research project being conducted in the Jackson Hole area by Craighead Beringia South.

Initial attempts to haze the animal away were unsuccessful, and it was decided to tranquilize the animal and relocate it away from development.

With the tranquilized cat in hand, Craighead Beringia South researcher Howard Quigley identified it as F23, an animal that had been captured in November of 2006 near Alkali Creek in the Gros Ventre drainage.

"We don't know exactly how old



she is, but would estimate her to be about eight to ten years old," said Quigley. The researchers hadn't heard the cat's radio signal in recent weeks. "The last location we had gotten on her was in December near the confluence of Crystal Creek and the Gros Ventre

River." This is approximately twenty air miles away and on the opposite side of the high peaks of the Gros Ventre Mountain Range.

"This cat seemed to have a well-defined home range in the Crystal Creek drainage," said Quigley. "We're not sure why she would make such a drastic move, let alone end up in a garage."

Wildlife officials note that it could be related to the fairly severe winter conditions occurring across much of the West this year.

"With the increased snow pack this winter, we're seeing more wildlife at lower elevations and in developed areas," said Doug Brimeyer, Jackson wildlife biologist for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. "With more deer and elk at lower elevations, it's only logical that predators such as lions would follow them down." This is the second mountain lion to take up temporary residence near a home in a few weeks. The other was at a private inholding within Grand Teton National Park near Moran.

Wildlife officials are reminding



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## a garage

*A female mountain lion peers out from underneath a pickup truck in a garage near Hoback Junction. The cat was one of the subjects of a research project, and it was captured and relocated to the Salt River Range. (Photos by Mark Gocke)*

people to avoid feeding wildlife.

"There are a lot of reasons not to feed wildlife," said Brimeyer. "Often what people feed them is not suitable for their digestive systems, and it usually attracts the animals into conflict situations such as fences, pets, traffic, and so on."

While it is quite rare to encounter a mountain lion, officials recommend always giving the animal an escape route, putting distance between you and the animal, and making noise to scare it away. It is even more rare that a person would be attacked by a lion, but it is always recommended that people fight back during a lion attack. History has shown that even children have been able to successfully deter an attacking lion.

The tranquilized mountain lion was relocated away from development in the Salt River Range southeast of Afton. It was collectively decided between the researcher and Game and Fish to release the lion in this location as some female lions had been legally harvested from this area, and it was believed there could be an open home range available there. Male mountain lions are territorial, sometimes killing other intruding lions, and even female mountain lions show limited tolerance of neighboring lions. Open territories, such as those left by legal take, make it more likely translocated individuals may settle where they are released—  
*Mark Gocke.*