Notes on . MOUNTAIN LION.

The mountain lion is the biggest of the Cat family in America. It ranges from Canada to Mexico, and is found in South America as well. In the south it is generally called puma; in other places it has variously been called panther, painter, cougar and catamount. While it formerly ranged throughout the United States it has for many years been exterminated in the eastern part of the country, and is now only found in the wilder sections of the west, where a continuous warfare is waged against the animals by state and federal hunters, using guns, traps and strychinine. The commoner way of killing the animal is with a pack of lion dogs.

Although the mountain lion is larger, more powerful and could easily kill any ordinary hound, it has the ancient tendency of the (ordinary) house cat to follow the line of least resistence and run up a tree if pursued by a dog. It makes no pretence of fighting unless cornered, and then will only strike in order to get a chance to run away. From this standpoint it might be called cowardly in the extreme. It is a big animal, weighing from 85 to almost 200 pounds, with big padded feet, sharp claws, powerful teeth and jaw muscles so it can crunch the bones of a deer without difficulty.

As a general rule lions are hunted in winter rather than in summer. If snow lies on the ground or the soil is wet it is much easier for a dog to track a lion. Those dogs I have seen in the north have difficulty in tracking a lion in warm weather: those, however, we used in Arizona seem to have keener noses, and can follow the track of a lion even over sandy and rocky country. The dogs we used were able to nose out the track of a lion several hours old. Four of them could even work it out perhaps when twelve hours old. If a lion

had passed by within an hour or so the dogs were able to follow the track full speed, loping along as easily as a horse on a roadway.

As far as the human nose is concerned, the lion when killed has no more scent about its feet or body than an ordinary animal, perhaps not as much as a dog has. The hounds trained to hunt lions have a most remarkable development of the nose, which shows a training that is akin to the wonderful muscular development of a racehorse, or the highly perfected eye of an eagle that is accustomed to hunt for its living.

On the other hand the mountain lion is the keenest and most accomplished hunter in all American wild life. It may occasionally stalk rabbit or smaller game, but the animal that supplies its bread basket is the deer, swift of foot, with keen eye, ear and nose and always shy. Against the hoof of the deer is matched the big padded paw of the lion that is always more stealthy in movement. He hunts singly and since the deer often travel together for added safety, the lion has to outwit the whole herd. He is heavy in the back quarters and has to depend upon a stealthy stalk and a leap or short run. He has no real speed for a chase, but his muscles are of the hair trigger type that can launch 150 pounds through the air and land before a deer gets under way.

The mountain lion, or cougar, is the eternal enemy of sportsmen, who are interested in killing deer for themselves, and who claim that a lion in good deer country will average at least a deer a week. In the wilder sections, where stockmen turn their cattle loose to graze in mountainous and forested country, the mountain lion often finds a calf or a colt easy prey. He is the eternal enemy, therefore of all men who have any kind of domestic stock roaming the hills. While he is practically never a menace to the human race, his build,

power and strength always put fear in the hearts of timid people. In our economy of nature, where everything must be worked out to the benefit of man, the mountain lion has no place. He is an animal to be completely exterminated, according to the ideas (in the minds) of the majority of American people. The only friends perhaps he has are a few naturalists, or nature lovers who have keen feeling that no wild animals should be exterminated, but in the wide extent of our country there should be at least some places kept in primitive conditions. The idea has frequently been advanced that this should be the case of national parks. If deer and other wild animals are completely protected in such areas they increase to an extent where either the food supply is exhausted or they may be taken by disease. In this case the suggestion is offered that the lions in such places hold more truly the balance of nature and keep the big game down to normal numbers.

The mountain lion is one of the easiest animals to be taken by a trained woodsman with a good pack of dogs. Dogs follow the trail with ease and never fail to tree a lion when on a hot scent. A well placed bullet quickly ends the hunt. To those sportsmen who love dogs and a hard hunt, trailing lions is one of the most exciting of sports in America today. As a rule it is far keener than hunting deer, elk, mountain sheep, goats, antelope and other big game. It is an easier accomplishment than hunting bear with dogs, for a black bear is a good runner, and much harder to put up a tree.

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