

May 1929

Mountain Lion.

No hunter or naturalist has ever known intimately the life of a wild mountain lion. Many men have spent the greater part of their lives in woods, and yet few have ever seen a lion undisturbed going about in a normal way in the forest. This is partly because often a lion hunts at night or late in the evening or the twilight hours of the morning, and his wits are too keen to ever be discovered whilst stalking or hunting. Of course many people have followed the hounds and seen a lion in a treetop. However, to do this one has to hunt the wilder parts of the west. Lion kittens have occasionally been found and kept because they make admirable pets. Many have trailed the dogs a long chase, but as a rule the sole aim is to kill the lion and the stay is very short under the lion tree. Hunter and dogs are always anxious to hear the crack of the rifle and see the carcass falling to the ground.

We had no interest in the kill but we had one to follow the dogs, see them work and get a lion treed where it could be photographed. We had for days been following Cleve Miller and his four hounds. We had packed from Sim's ranch on the northern slope of the Galiuro Mountains back to the head of Rattlesnake Creek, and made camp for several days, from April 11th to 15th, 1929. It was a rough, rocky country, parched by the sun and the mountains covered with almost impenetrable masses of mountain mahogany, scrub oak, manzanita and other bushes. The higher parts of the mountains were often cloaked with great slabs and boulders, above which were walls of rock, as a rule unclimbable.

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(with difficulty,) ^{and} but he also set a pace that was impossible to follow when carrying a motion picture camera. We, however, adopted the plan

of following along the higher parts of the mountains and keeping the general direction towards the hounds when they were baying.

On April 12th Miller and Sims set out early, and we followed but lost their tracks in the higher mountains: we got them on the return, however. The dogs had followed a lion, but instead of trailing it had taken shelter in the rough rocks. The dogs on a hot trail always go much more rapidly than a man can. When Miller and Sims came up the dogs had the cougar at bay. The cougar tried to get away (from the dogs,) and in the general mix-up they fought through the tangled brush and many big boulders until Miller had a chance to shoot the lion in order to save his dogs from being injured.

The two following days we had again gone back into the mountains and camped. Through the day they found a warm trail.

From the ~~Valiuro~~ ^{Valiuro} Mountains we went on east into New Mexico and back into eastern Arizona, following the canyon of Blue River, picking up another outfit we packed over to MJ Bar trap on Stray Horse Creek where we met Miller and his dogs. He had come in from the other direction, for his home was about 15 miles north and west of this point. We packed in here on April 22nd. On 24th and 25th we hunted but were unsuccessful. On the 26th Miller and Hall started out with the dogs, swinging around to the south and up toward Red Mountain. We followed on the highest peaks but lost Miller and the dogs. Kasper set out to locate them and returned about 3 o'clock saying that they had treed a lion on Red Mountain. Miller had returned leaving Hall and the dogs at the tree. The lion was some 5 or 6 miles away from where we were. To carry the camera up to the place would take till about 5 o'clock, and with the fading light the time ~~would~~ would be short for photographing. The best plan would be to keep the

lion in the tree all night and try for pictures in the morning. Hodges and I got a bite and set out to relieve Hall. Instead of going around to the south, Miller led us ^{by} ~~us~~ Stray Horse to come in toward Red Mountain from the west. The horses we rode were small, not well fed, yet they were tough as Mt. Mahogany. For a living they ranged these mountains, picking up what they could find, and it was surprising to see what they could do on a small amount of feed. My horse would put his head down and start through the rocks and brush; if I could dodge and hold on he would get me there. One's shirt and coat were likely to be torn away, and we should have been minus trousers if we hadn't worn chaps.

Red Mountain has a wide flat top, and all around a high wall of rock. In a few places this is broken down so one could reach the top. Hanging to the horses' manes we were jerked and pulled up through one of these steep notches and worked our way through the manzanite brush to the south side. Here we heard the baying of the dogs about a hundred yards below the rim. On the steep rock and brush-covered slope a lion sat among the top branches of a pine tree. A few stunted pines were on the top but a little lower down in the canyon the pines grew from 50 to 100 feet in height. We had the best view of the lion from the mountain side, looking across, yet the limbs were fairly thick so he was only outlined for a picture. From the base of the tree looking up the view was no clearer.

Upon our approach the dogs were excitedly baying. For a lion dog the excitement is when the hunter approaches and with a loud report of the rifle the lion comes tumbling to the ground to be pounced upon by the dogs. The kill is generally speedy for as a rule it is a long way back to feed, water and camp. Miller's dogs had treed many lions and knew exactly what to expect. The four

stood around the base of the tree with heads up, eyes wide, and throats pouring out a volley of deep throated dog music that roared and echoed across the mountain. The events that followed were most unusual as far as the dogs were concerned. They bayed and waited. They saw a man climbing through the brush and pointing with a stubby-looking black gun that merely buzzed instead of making a sharp report. Still they waited while ~~was~~ ^{he} cleared away a little space on the steep slope and built up the rocks in a circle to build a little fire. It had to be walled in to keep from catching the dry leaves and brush.

Miller had sneaked away, leaving Hodges and me with the dogs. After an hour passed and there was no shot, the dogs seemed rather mystified. They began looking around and old Blue got a sniff of Miller's trail and started off to see why he had gone away without shooting the lion. He responded, however, to our sharp command to return to the base of the tree. Here Sandy, a red-haired hound, had been standing at the time, with his head turned up, never taking his eyes from the big cat in the tree top. The other dogs were troubled. The lion above was watching our movements. The dogs were hungry and thirsty, but still they had faith that eventually we would wake up and shoot the lion. 6 o'clock came and then 6.30 We were gathering wood for the night watch and cutting away brush so as to have space just above the fire to sit and rest. Finally old Blue seemed to sense the situation, for a few feet from the base of the tree he dug into the mass of sticks and dry leaves and made himself a bed. As darkness began to settle and we sat at the fire the other dogs ceased even an occasional long drawn out wail and settled down for the night.

Our horses were tied about 50 feet up. There was not even a level place for them to lie. Hodges loosened the saddles and said

they would sleep as comfortably as we did, standing up. At this season of the year, in a high altitude, the days may be fairly warm but as soon as the sun sets the cold creeps in and takes possession. The little fire had a cheerful warmth on one side, but the contrast from the warmth to the cold was anything but comfortable. The best we could do was to take turns toasting one side and freezing the other. This became a mechanical operation during the night. Resting on the rocks was very much like sitting on a picket fence.

It is safe to say that the old lion above was not having his usual night of comfort for while he could straddle the limbs and rest fairly well, his feet got tired occasionally and he had to change positions.

It is difficult to explain why a big carnivore the size of a mountain lion is so afraid of dogs and men. ~~If~~ he were inclined he could easily kill a pack of four dogs and perhaps do the same to two men, for the only weapon we had to sh^{ot}^{with} was a camera. There was the possibility of the lion getting tired and climbing down sometime during the night, so it was just as well that we could not rest comfortably. If he came down part way and leapt to the mountain side the dogs would perhaps hear him and tree him lower down in the canyon. When night really settled down we could not see the lion above. The flames of the little fire lit up only the base of the tree. The spirit of the whole thing kept me awake until long toward midnight. While I could not see I felt the presence of the old lion above. One of the dogs snored in comfort: Sandy, however, was alert occasionally, sniffed and turned, perhaps wondering what it was all about. Toward morning I heard a crunch in the bushes above and the rush of something that made me think the lion had departed. Then another crunch coming directly toward me from the mountain above. My heart stood still

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In the hurry of leaving camp we had taken half a dozen sandwiches, a gallon jar of water and a small canteen. It was a good two or three miles to another drink. About dark I began looking for something to eat. I discovered from our supply of six sandwiches Miller had given one ^{to} each dog; also he had let them lap a gallon jar of water, and part of what was in the small canteen. This left Hodges and me with one sandwich and half a pint of water each for our supply of supper and breakfast. This I presume was a fair adjustment as good dogs are more effective in treeing cougar than men. They are, as it were, the front rank troops, and while Miller said his dog would not leave a lion treed, yet there was the possibility of them turning over the night watch to us and going back 6 miles to camp. My experience with Miller's lion hounds is that they are faithful to the trust, yet living in a rough, hard country they know how to look out for themselves. They, of course, were always hungry, keenly ~~xxxxxxx~~ alert to grab a bite whenever opportunity offered. I had laid down my sandwich and turned to open a little jar of jam when I looked around. The sandwich had disappeared and Blue had a wistful but thankful expression on his face. In camp everything had to be kept above the dogs' reach. Carl, our cook in the Galiuro Mountains, had discovered this the second day for he had cooked up a big mess of beans. They were in a dutch oven with a heavy iron top and were left on the ground to cool. The next morning the top was off, the beans were gone, and old Blue was so sick the following day he could not go on the hunt.

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