

# Sierra Club Wilderness Basics Course — 2006 Animal Encounters



The **Mountain Lion** — swift, silent, and deadly, and rarely seen and even more rarely encountered in any form. **AVOIDANCE** is the best policy.

- Try not to travel on trails alone, go in groups of two or more.
- Big cats are crepuscular — they are abroad at dawn and dusk. Don't travel at these times or use extra caution if you do.
- If you find fresh tracks or fresh sign, use extra caution.

**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT.** If you are confronted by a Mountain Lion here are the rules:

- **DO NOT RUN!!!** Do not turn your back! Face the critter!
- Look as **BIG** as you can. Pull your shirt loose; hold your pack to your side on one are; take a really deep breath. **DO NOT** bend down — that makes you look smaller.
- If there are children, put them behind you. Its hard for them to look big, so take them out of the line-of-sight.
- Yell, cuss and generally exclaim in a really loud voice what you are going to do to the cat if it doesn't leave.
- If you have things to throw, then throw them!
- When the Cat's behavior changes from aggression, begin to back away slowly, do not run, and never take your eyes off the cat.

The **Grizzly Bear** — only in restricted parts of the lower 48-states but an awesome presence never to be under estimated or toyed with. **AVOIDANCE** is not a policy, it may mean survival:

- Stay at least 100-yards from Grizzly when you are on foot.
- Avoid areas with fresh sign, tracks, scat, or where Grizzly have been raiding camps or trash.
- Bear-proof food storage is a requirement. Keep food in metal, odor trapping containers.

**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT.** However, when all else fails here are the rules (make sure your will is in order) when charged by an aggressive Grizzly:

- If you have time, climbing a tree can be an effective means of defense
- Special "bear" sprays are quite effective if you have the time and accuracy to use them.
- Stand your ground or move slowly away while trying to intimidate the bear by shouting, yelling, banging objects, using an air horn.
- Stand your ground or move slowly away but remain relatively quite and attempt to be non-threatening
- Immediately drop to the ground and play dead.
- Run away.



## Additional Information and Recommended Reading

- Hansen, Kevin. 1992. Cougar - The American Lion. Northland Publishing, Flagstaff, AZ., xiv + 129 pp. [An interesting, readable account of the biggest kitty in North America]
- Herrero, Stephen. 1985. Bear Attacks - Their Causes and Avoidance. Lyons & Burford Publishers, New York, NY, 287 pp. [The emphasis here is on prevention of Grizzly attacks]
- Lowery, James C. 2006. The Tracker's Field Guide. FalconGuide, Guilford, Conn., viii + 408 pp. [Perhaps the best tracking guide available, highly recommended, lets you track them instead of the critters always tracking you]
- McMillion, Scott. 1998. Mark of the Grizzly. Falcon Publishing, Helena Montana, xvii + 249 pp. [readable accounts of recent bear attacks in the western United States with commentary as to prevention]
- Storer, Tracy I., and Lloyd P. Tevis, Jr. 1955. California Grizzly. Univ. of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, xix + 335 pp. [wonderful, readable, historical account of the Grizzly in California]
- Wilson, Don E., and Sue Ruff, eds. 1999. North American Mammals. Smithsonian Institution Press, Wash., D. C., xxv + 750 pp. [A exquisite guide to all of the North American mammals]