

MOUNTAIN LION: RMNP'S TOP PREDATOR

AUGUST 22 - 23, 2020

COURSE LEVEL: III COURSE #: S3003

FEE: \$160 PER ADULT AGES 16 AND OLDER



INSTRUCTOR: CAROLINE KRUMM & DR. DON HUNTER

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LOCATION: Rocky Mountain Conservancy – Field Institute & Conference Center
1895 Fall River Road, Estes Park, Colorado

TIME: 9:00 AM- 5:00 PM EACH DAY

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This two-day class focuses on Colorado's top predator, mountain lion (*Puma concolor*). Experienced mountain lion researchers will lecture on mountain lion ecology, ongoing research, human-mountain lion interaction, and community stewardship of our wildlife resources. The class is arranged to include equal portions of class time and time in mountain lion habitat. Morning presentations and lectures in the classroom are followed by hands-on instruction in the field, including demonstrations of research methods, tools, and data collection. In addition to an ecological overview of the species, students will receive practical instruction on how to "read" the signs left by mountain lions. They will learn also about mountain lion safety, the latest research techniques, key management issues, and how communities across the West are becoming involved. After taking the course, students will be better equipped to understand the role of the mountain lion in western ecosystems, including its relationship with the people and communities of the Front Range.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Introduce students to the ecology of mountain lions.
2. Provide a factual basis for understanding human-mountain lion interaction.
3. Describe mountain lion research in Colorado, including RMNP.
4. Provide students basic instruction in "reading" mountain lion sign and using research tools.

COURSE LEVEL: III

Moderate hikes of less than five miles per day with elevation gain of less than 1,000 feet.

BRIEF INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY (additional information available at www.RMConservancy.org):

The course is team-taught by professionals that have conducted mountain lion research in Rocky Mountain National Park and the northern Front Range. Instructors established and run the Rocky Mountain Cat Conservancy, a nonprofit, nongovernment organization dedicated to wild cat conservation, research, and community stewardship. Caroline Krumm, director of RMCC, completed a master's degree on mountain lions, looking at whether or not they exhibit a "prey preference" for chronic wasting disease-infected mule deer. Dr. Don Hunter is science director for RMCC. He directed a study on mountain lion ecology in RMNP that complemented his research on snow leopards in central Asia.

EXPECTATIONS: Professional conduct will be expected from participants at all times. Individual ideas will be respected. Except during course breaks, cellular phones, pagers, and personal entertainment devices are strictly prohibited in the classroom and during field sessions.

CAR-POOLING: Rocky Mountain Conservancy - Field Institute courses utilize car-pooling to limit vehicles traveling into the park. Car-pooling makes it easier to keep the group together, reduces transit time, and allows courses greater access because fewer parking spaces are required at destinations. In addition, it provides an opportunity for participants to discuss course material in small groups during transit. Typically, a few participants from each course volunteer the use of their vehicles for car-pooling to course locations.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

- **Day One** begins with a morning of lectures and computer presentations that cover the basic ecology of the mountain lion, such as: physical characteristics, habitat preferences, prey base, ecological niche, life history details, and human-lion interaction. In the afternoon, the class ventures to mountain lion habitat, learning some basics of map reading, habitat characterization, prey identification, and mountain lion movement.

9:00 AM Welcome/introductions and course agenda
10:00 AM General ecology of mountain lion/management issues
11:00 AM Break
11:15 AM Research methods and tools (noninvasive)
12:15 PM Lunch
1:15 PM Field exercises
Camera site selection
Checking cameras
Sign identification (tracks, scat, scrapes)
5:00 PM Depart

- **Day Two** focuses on the science of studying mountain lions, including an overview of the ongoing research in Colorado and related studies of other large cats internationally. The morning classroom lecture covers the marking behavior of mountain lions, movement patterns, and field survey techniques including remote camera trapping, GPS navigation, and radio telemetry. The afternoon is devoted to using these tools in the field.

9:00 AM Review/questions
9:30 AM Research methods and tools (invasive)
10:30 AM Break
10:45 AM Research: Rocky Mountain National Park/Front Range
Noon Lunch
1:00 PM Field exercises
Capture methods
Telemetry
GPS to a kill site
Evaluations
5:00 PM Depart

Note: Afternoon outdoor class time will include moderate hikes of one-three miles. We recommend bringing season-appropriate field clothing, a daypack with lunch, water, sunblock, and field notebook. Optional: GPS unit, digital camera, small measuring tape.

REMEMBER TO BRING THE 10 ESSENTIALS: ADD ANYTHING SPECIFIC TO YOUR CLASS.

Rocky Mountain National Park recommends that hikers always carry the 10 essentials in their daypacks.

- Raingear
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Pocketknife
- Sack lunch, snacks and water
- Map and compass
- Candles
- First-aid kit
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Matches or other fire starter
- Extra layers of clothing

Note: Rocky Mountain Conservancy - Field Institute recommends that participants for all courses dress in layers and wear comfortable, sturdy hiking boots/shoes. Participants should be prepared for sudden changes in temperature and weather conditions.

RECOMMENDED READING:

Beast in the Garden, by Dave Baron

Soul of the Lion, by Harvey Shaw

Desert Puma, by Ken Logan and Linda Sweanor

A Field Guide to Mammal Tracking, by James Halfpenny

Vanishing Tracks, by Darla Hillard

Snow Leopard: Stories from the Roof of the World, by Don Hunter

REFUND POLICY:

Cancellations received at least 14 days prior to the start of a class will qualify for a refund minus a cancellation fee of \$25 per participant for a one-day class, \$50 for a multi-day class, \$5 per kid's class and \$15 per half-day class or bus tour seat. Registration money transferred to another class will be subject to a \$10 switch fee.

Cancellations received less than 14 days prior to the start of a class or bus tour will not generate a refund. If the Field Institute cancels a class, every effort will be made to place the participant in another class; otherwise, a full refund will be given.

TEACHER RECERTIFICATION CREDIT:

Most courses are eligible for teacher recertification credit through the Centennial Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES). The fee is \$25 per class (.5 unit) or \$25 per series of threaded courses (1.0 - 3.0 units). A list of threaded courses can be found online at www.RMConservancy.org. Participants must enroll in all courses of a threaded series in order to qualify for the \$25 multi-unit fee. Please be prepared to pay for this credit with a check, made payable to BOCES, on the first day of a class or on the final day of a threaded series of courses.