

# Field Museum News

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## NEW GROUP SHOWS A MOUNTAIN LION AND HER KITTENS IN THEIR ROCKY DEN

A habitat group of mountain lions has been added to the series of American mammal groups in Hall 16 of the Museum. In the group is shown an adult female at rest, with her two kittens playing about her fore paws. No male appears because of the fact that the males do not associate with their mates while the young are dependent on the mother. It is believed they return to the family after the kittens are sufficiently grown to care at least partly for themselves.

The animals are shown in a scene representing their rocky den, typical of many such dwelling-places of animals on mountain-sides in the central Rockies. The bleakness of the locale is relieved by evergreen trees and brush.

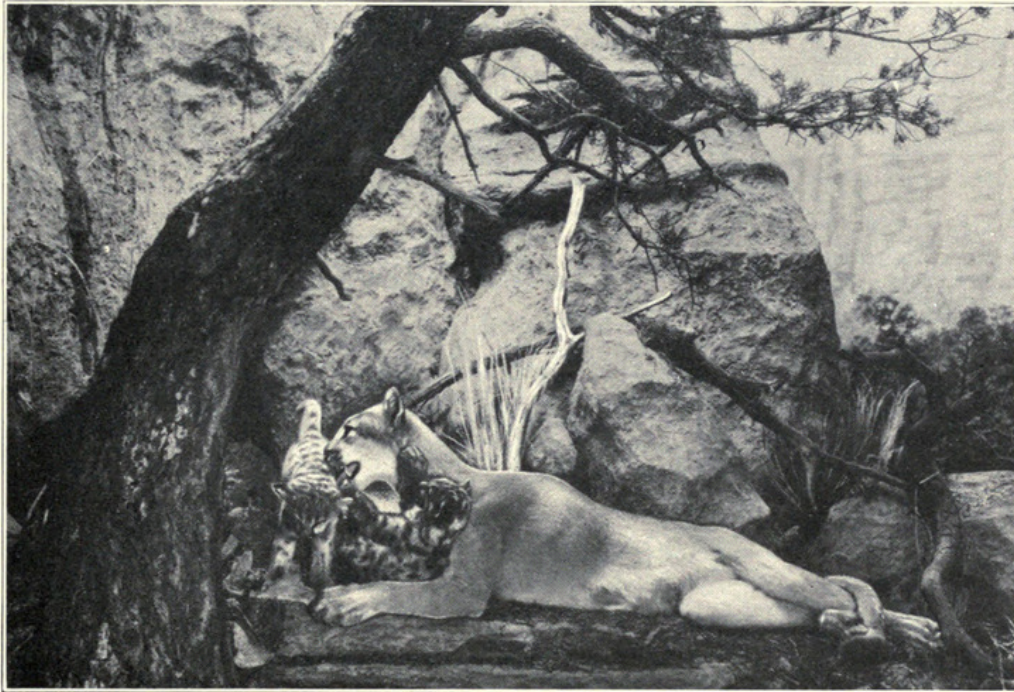
The mountain lion has probably the widest range of any single species of American mammal, according to Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Curator of Zoology. It occurs all the way from British Columbia to Patagonia in the tip of South America. It is known by many other names, such as puma, catamount, cougar and painter. Formerly it was found in most parts of the United States, being common in the early days even in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Today, however, it is practically extinct east of the Rocky Mountains.

West of the mountains it still flourishes, and is a serious pest to live-stock raisers. It preys upon cattle, sheep, colts, and other domestic animals, and also upon deer and other small game animals. It is almost wholly nocturnal in habits, and little observation of its life has been possible.

Most animals which are found over such wide ranges, including cold, temperate, and

tropical climes, show considerable variation in physiological structure, coating, habits, and other characteristics. In the case of the mountain lion such small variations as exist are so slight as to be practically indiscernible except to the keenest observer, and become apparent only after close study.

As the Museum's group shows, the young are radically different in appearance from the adults, their coats being darkly spotted in contrast to the plain tawny color of the full-grown animals.



New Habitat Group of Mountain Lions Installed in Hall 16.

Many wild and terrifying tales have been told of vicious attacks made upon human beings by the mountain lion, but few of them can be substantiated. The fact is that the animal is cowardly and slinks away at the sight of a man. Only under the most unusual circumstances, such as extreme provocation of a cornered animal, or the imperiling of the kittens in the presence of

their mother, will a mountain lion attack a man. One of the rare authenticated instances of such an attack was experienced by Curator Osgood, while in Venezuela some years ago on an expedition for the Museum. Returning from an afternoon of hunting, he suddenly encountered a mountain lion in his path, which, sighting him, began an unprovoked charge toward him. Raising a rifle loaded only with buckshot, Dr. Osgood shot at the animal, wounding it in the head, and stunning it so that it fell to the

ground. But while Dr. Osgood was reloading his rifle to kill the lion, it regained consciousness, and rising to its feet darted out of sight. Dr. Osgood is convinced that the only reason for the attack was that the animal was in a corner when he came upon it.

The group is the twenty-first in the series of American mammals mounted in natural attitudes amid reproductions of scenes typical of their environments. Only one more group remains to be done for the completion of Hall 16. Because it is found on both continents, the mountain lion provides a connecting link between the North and South American groups, and its location in the hall was selected with this in mind. A male specimen may be seen in Hall 15.

The mountain lions in the group were mounted by L. L. Pray, of the Museum's taxidermy staff, and the background was prepared by Staff Artist Charles A. Corwin. The Museum is indebted to J. D. Figgins, Director of the Colorado Museum of Natural History at Denver, for supplying photographs and accessories necessary in the preparation of the group.

### Brazilian Plants Received

The Companhia Ford Industrial do Brasil has established at Boa Vista, Brazil, on the Tapajoz River (a tributary of the Amazon), a large plantation for growing Pará rubber. Roy Carr of this company has forwarded to Field Museum a collection of 135 plants, mostly trees, that grow wild on the plantation. These have been determined by Associate Curator Paul C. Standley and found to include material of several important timber trees not represented previously in the Museum Herbarium. One, a member of the brazilnut family, proved to be a new species, which has been named for Mr. Carr, *Eschweilera Carrii*.

The collection contained beautifully prepared specimens of several varieties of the Hevea rubber trees that produce nearly all the rubber of commerce. Mr. Standley has prepared for publication a list of the trees and shrubs represented in the collection.

### Fossils from Rancho la Brea

A collection of fossil bones of prehistoric animals obtained from the famous Rancho la Brea asphaltum pits in the city of Los Angeles, has been placed on exhibition in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38). These animals lived during the Pleistocene period, one to one and one-half million years ago.

Complete skeletons of the saber-tooth tiger, and a prehistoric type of wolf are included. Other animals, represented by partial skeletal remains, are a prehistoric kind of horse, a ground sloth, a primitive coyote, and bison, condor and eagle.

Fossils were first discovered in these tar pits in 1908, and since then scientists have unearthed some ninety species of prehistoric creatures there, according to Elmer S. Riggs, Associate Curator of Paleontology.

Another addition to the exhibits in this hall consists of two skulls of rhinoceroses which lived in the Bad Lands of Nebraska in the Oligocene period, about thirty-five to thirty-nine million years ago.





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