

Occurrence of a Mountain Lion in Oklahoma

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Is the mountain lion, *Felis concolor*, extinct throughout its former wide range in Oklahoma? This question is being asked by numerous people and for a valid reason by investigators in western Oklahoma.

On March 13, 1953, the writer was informed of a very large unknown animal track being found on an area southeast of Canton Reservoir, Canton, Oklahoma. Immediately upon receipt of this news a complete investigation was made.

The tracks were very distinct and judged to be approximately one day old, having been made since the last rain. The writer followed these tracks for approximately 300 yards across a plowed field. No evidence was found of human footprints for the last 250 yards. The tracks were spaced approximately 35 inches apart. A plaster cast was made in what appeared to be the most distinct track. The plaster cast is compared with a black mountain lion pad print in Figure 1. Both are shown on the same scale and a similarity is immediately evident. The length and width of mountain lion tracks range from four to five inches.

The cast was taken to Oklahoma A. and M. College where Dr. Bryan P. Glass indicated that it could be only a mountain lion track. This he based on the lack of claw marks and on the measurements. The lack of claw marks placed the track as that of a member of the cat family. The measurements identified it as that of a mountain lion.

It is entirely possible that we still have one or more resident lions. The area to the east of Canton, Oklahoma is in the Gypsum Hills with their numerous caves. It is an area where very few people reside, being for the most part grazing land and an area where it is possible for a lion to range. If a lone lion lives here, this could be the reason for scattered reports of large cat tracks almost every year. A lion would travel a long distance in an attempt to find a mate during mating season. Being primarily a nocturnal animal it could travel our western river system with little chance of being seen.

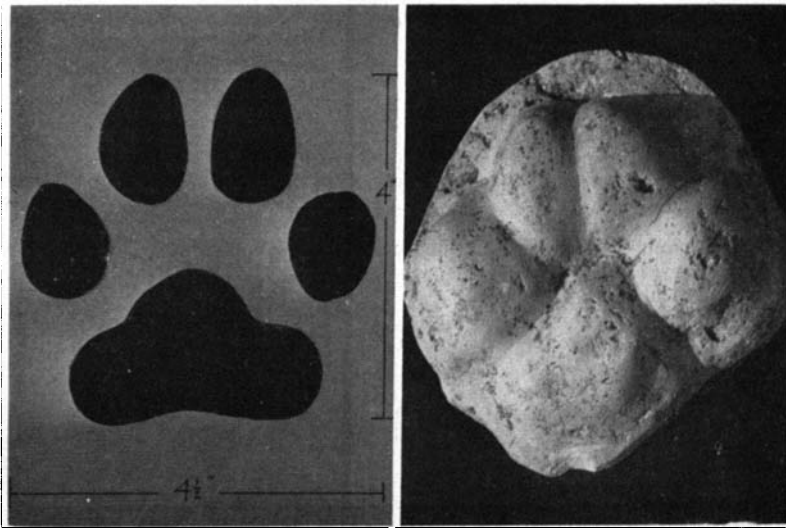


FIGURE 1. Pad Print of Black Mountain Lion (left) Compared with Plaster Cast of Track Found Near Canton, Oklahoma.