

## Evidence of Mountain Lions in the Ozark, Boston, and Ouachita Mountains

JAMES C. LEWIS

Oklahoma Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, Stillwater

Young and Goldman (1946) reported the last known mountain lion (*Felis concolor*) specimen taken in Oklahoma in 1852; lions continued to exist in Missouri late in the 19th century; observations occurred in Arkansas as late as 1920, and the species was rare or extinct in Louisiana in the 1940's. More recently, Cahalane (1964) reported on the status of cougars in the United States. He estimated a population of 10 in Louisiana but did not comment on cougars in Oklahoma, Arkansas, or Missouri.

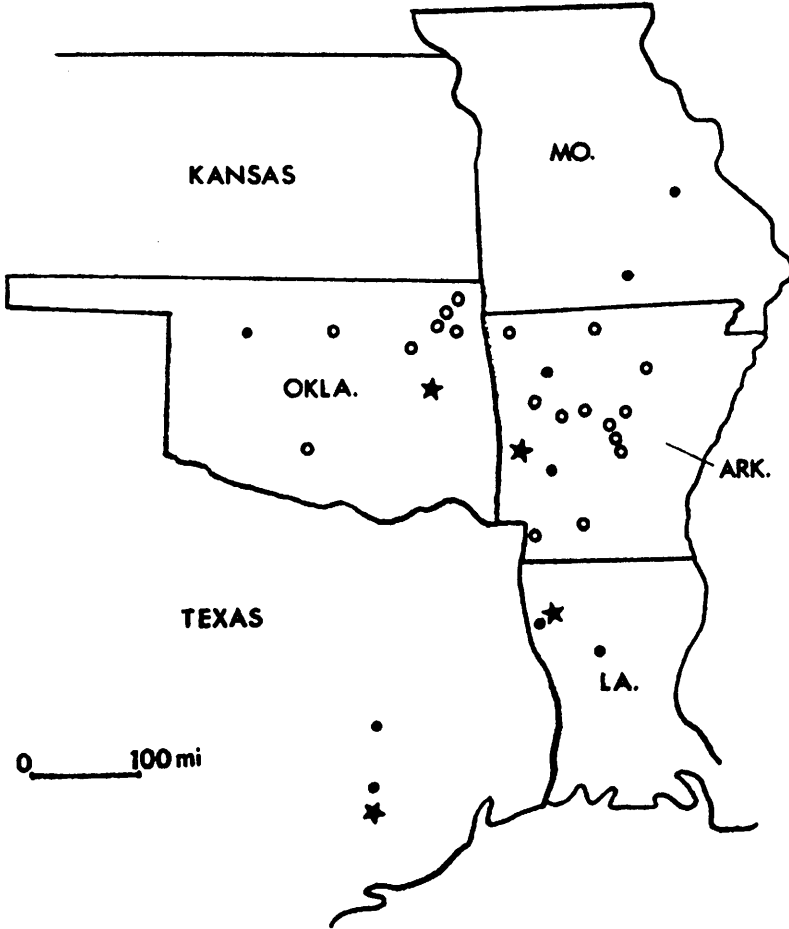
Observations and specimens of cougar are tabulated (Table I) to substantiate the existence of a small cougar population which is probably contiguous with the population in northwestern Louisiana.

Observations are concentrated in eastern Oklahoma, western Arkansas and southern Missouri (Fig. 1). This area contains the Ozark, Boston, and Ouachita Mountains, characterized by dense forest with moderate human populations. Although factual evidence to support the observations is often lacking, the reports by a number of qualified persons cannot be discounted. The eastern Texas sightings are so far from the other observations that they appear to be an eastward extension of the large cougar population in southwestern Texas.

With the continuing shift of human populations to urban areas, habitat acreage expansion through forest increase, and deer herd growth resulting in an abundance of one of the mountain lion's main foods, we can anticipate the maintenance of a small cougar population in this part of the United States.

TABLE I. EVIDENCE OF COUGAR, 1948-68

State	Evidence	Reference
Okla.	Specimen in 1968, plaster casts of tracks in 1963, many observations reported 1961-67.	Lewis, 1968 & 1969 Merrifield, 1953
Ark.	Specimen in 1949, sightings in 14 counties, 1949-1954, sightings 1958 and 1962 among more reliable recent observations. Specimen 1969.	Lewis, 1969 Sealander, 1951 & 1956, Noble, 1970
Mo.	Sightings in 1955 and 1966 are among the more reliable.	Lewis, 1969 Robb, 1955
Tex.	Specimen in 1948, sightings 1948 and 1950 among more reliable.	Meschkat, 1953
La.	Specimen in 1966, tracks 1950, 1964, sightings.	Goertz and Abegg, 1966; St. Amant, 1959
Kans.	Last specimen taken 1904, other animals reportedly responsible for recent cougar sightings.	Linger, pers. correspondence



- ★ specimen
- confirmed observation
- observation

Figure 1. Locations of specimens, observations by qualified personnel, and unconfirmed observations of mountain lion, 1948-1968. Recent observations reported for northeastern Kansas and a specimen taken in Ashley County, Arkansas (note added in proof).

## LITERATURE CITED

- Cahalane, V. E. 1964. A preliminary study of distribution and numbers of cougar, grizzly and wolf in North America. New York Zool. Soc., 12 p.
- Goertz, J. W. and Roland Abegg. 1966. Pumas in Louisiana. J. Mammal. 47(4):727.
- Lewis, J. C. 1968. The lion in Seven-mile Slough. Okla. Outdoors 24(7):16-17.
- ..... 1969. Evidence of mountain lions in the Ozarks and adjacent areas, 1948-68. J. Mammal. 50(2):371-372.
- Merrifield, G. C. 1953. Occurrence of a mountain lion in Oklahoma. Proc. Okla. Acad. Sci. 34:75.
- Meschkat, R. S. 1953. The mountain lion in Texas. Texas Game and Fish 11(8):24-26.
- Noble, R. A. Cougar killed in Arkansas. Southwest. Natur. (in press).
- Sealander, J. A., Jr. 1951. Mountain lion in Arkansas. J. Mammal. 32:364.
- ..... 1956. A provisional check-list and key to the mammals of Arkansas. Amer. Midland Natur. 56(2):257-296.
- St. Amant, L. S. 1959. Louisiana Wildlife Inventory and Management Plan. La. Wildlife Fish. Comm. 329 p.
- Young, S. P. and E. A. Goldman. 1946. *The Puma: Mysterious American Cat*. Amer. Wildlife Inst., Wash., D. C. 358 p.
-