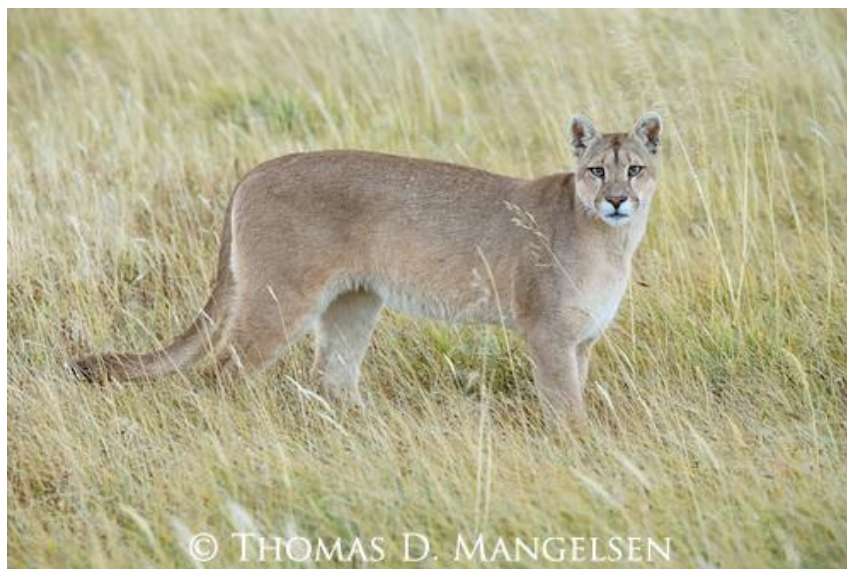


Cougar Craft



Objectives: Students will learn about the life history of the mountain lion including these vocabulary words: Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, bounty, obligate carnivore, ungulate, retractable claws. They will also create their own cougar with moveable legs! They can try and make it look realistic using browns and yellows or they can use their imagination and use any colors they would like. This craft comes from the website [Learn, Create, Love](#).

Audience: This craft is suitable for kindergarten- third grade students. Adults may need to help the little ones with cutting.

Science Standards: K-LS1-1 Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive; 1-LS1-1 Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs; 2-LS4-1 Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats; 3-LS3-1 Analyze and interpret data to provide evidence that plants and animals have traits inherited from parents and that variation of these traits exists in a group of similar organisms.

Background: Cougars, also called mountain lions, are one of the three cat species found in the **Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem** (the area surrounding Yellowstone National Park), along with the bobcat and Canada lynx. They are the largest of the three species, weighing 80-180 lbs and measuring 6-8 ft. from the tip of their tails to tip of their noses when fully grown. (Check out our [cougar fact sheet](#) for more facts about cougars.)

Cougars are a highly adaptable species, which can be found throughout the Americas, from Canada down to Chile and Argentina, mostly in the western half of the continents. Although their range is quite large, it's nothing compared to how big it once was. They used to be found throughout all of North and South America, from the Pacific to the Atlantic Oceans, but were hunted extensively and went almost completely extinct in the eastern half of the United States.

Because mountain lions were such successful and efficient predators, humans were never very comfortable around them. They did not like the big cats killing their deer and sometimes livestock and they were also afraid of them, fearing that they may attack and kill people, especially children.

Bounties (money paid for dead animals) were offered and paid for dead lions throughout the US and Canada. Many, many cougars lost their lives to trappers and bounty hunters over the years.

It has only been since fairly recently that mountain lions have had some protections. They are still legally hunted in most of the states where they live, but usually only at certain times of the year and only until a number designated by the state wildlife agency is met. They have been able to increase their numbers in the west and have even moved to the east into states where they haven't existed for a hundred or more years.

Cougars are very shy and secretive creatures, making them very hard to spot. They are wonderful at hiding and blending in with their surroundings. This is why most of us will never see one in the wild, but that doesn't mean they aren't there. They have very good hearing and a great sense of smell too, so they probably know when humans are anywhere near them and will usually try to avoid us.

As a predator, the mountain lion hunts and eats meat. Unlike other predators, they are **obligate carnivores**, animals that only eat meat, almost never eating plants, mushrooms, and berries like some other predators occasionally enjoy. This means they have to hunt for every meal, and a female cougar with kittens has to hunt for her kittens as well, until they are old enough to hunt for themselves. This is a lot of hard work, as their favorite food is deer and other **ungulates** (hooved animals). Ungulates are big and fast, so the cougar has to be faster and stronger in order to catch them. They have powerful back legs that help them to sprint and jump. They also have sharp curved claws that help them to climb and to hang onto their prey. Because their claws are so important to their survival, they have a special adaptation to protect them. The cougar has **retractable claws**, which they can pull back into their paws. Like other predators, the mountain lion has sharp canine teeth for ripping into flesh as well as eyes in the front of their faces so that they can focus on and track their prey.

Cougars are very cool animals and now you get to make one of your own!

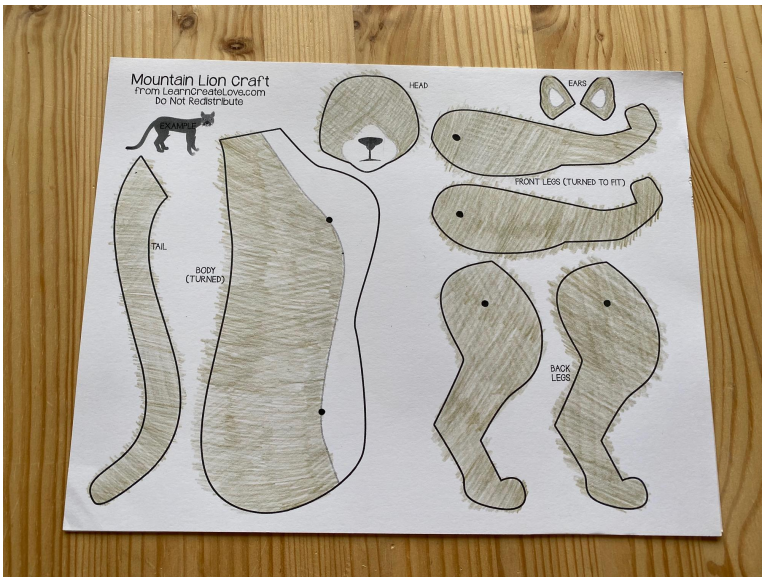


Supplies: Scissors, glue, crayons, markers, or colored pencils, 2 brads, googly eyes, mountain lion printout.



Instructions:

1. Print out the mountain lion sheet found at the end of this lesson.
2. Color all of the parts of the cougar's body. It doesn't need to be precise as they will be cutting them all out.



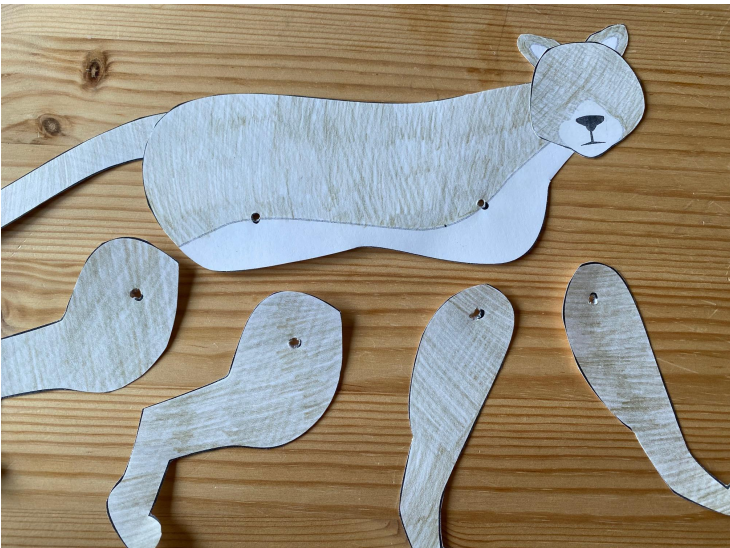
3. Cut out the different parts of the cougar's body.



4. Glue the ears to the head, the head to the right side of the body, and the tail to the left side of the body.



5. Use scissors or a hole punch to make holes in the body and legs where the black dots are drawn. These are for the brads.



6. Insert the brads into the holes with the pointy part going first through the 2 legs then into the body for both the front and back legs. Open the brad in the back.



7. Glue on the googly eyes and draw whiskers if desired. The cougar is finished and the front and back legs should be able to move!



Extensions:

1. Research other wild cats and use stripes, spots, or other physical characteristics to make your cat look like a cheetah, tiger, lion, or lynx.
2. Blow up or shrink down the template and create a family of mountain lions.
3. Put on a play or skit with your cougars by gluing them to sticks and using them as puppets.

Discussion:

1. Why aren't cougars found in most of the eastern United States? What happened to them?
2. Why don't many people see cougars in the wild?
3. Which characteristics of cougars help them to be good hunters?

Mountain Lion Craft

from LearnCreateLove.com

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