

Mountain Lion Olympics Activity Plan –Leigh Gillette, CDOW and Gabi Morey SJMA

Overview: As they travel through 5 challenge stations, students will compare their own physical abilities to those of the mountain lion in order to appreciate the lion’s unique adaptations as a predator. At one station, students will learn how to behave if they encounter a mountain lion.

Materials: , heavy duty hatchery bags for water, watch with second hand or stopwatch, surveyor flags or other distance markers, masking tape, tape measures (at least 2), branches or straw or leaves (optional, for pull like a lion station), “sighting circle” sheet with degrees marked, water “noodle” and large car wash sponges to simulate sticks and rocks for lion encounter station, lion tattoos or other prizes to award kids at the end of their successful Olympics completion.

Site requirements: large open space (gymnasium or playing field), water source (ideally via hose!), wall/flagpole/ vertical surface for vertical leap marking.

Staff/Volunteers required: Minimum 5, 1 person to staff each station. More are certainly welcome! Staff/volunteers read activity plan in advance, and guide students through their station activity.

Station #1: Run like a Lion:

Background: Mountain Lions can run 35 miles per hour, or 52 feet per second. Interestingly, this is the same speed that their mule deer prey run as well.

Task: Lay out a 100 foot sprinting course, with starting and finishing lines. Have students run the race course, and then convert their feet-per-second to miles-per-hour. To do so:

Example: Child runs $\frac{100 \text{ feet} \times 60 \text{ seconds} \times 60 \text{ min}}{5 \text{ seconds} \times 1 \text{ min} \times 5280 \text{ feet}} \times 1 \text{ mile} = 13.6 \text{ miles per hour}$

Station #2 Leap Like a Lion:

Background: Lions can leap vertically 15 feet, and horizontally 45 feet. This leaping ability enables them to successfully ambush their prey in varying habitats (forest, canyons, etc)

A. Horizontal Leap: In advance, place a marker at 45 feet, the maximum distance of a lion’s horizontal leap. Lay out a long jump course, with “jumping line”. Lay out a tape measure, and then let the kids take a running leap forward, long -jump style. Record their length, and then show them that lions can leap 45 feet!

B. Vertical leap (needs to be done near a smooth and accessible vertical surface such as a wall or flagpole): In advance, mark a place 15 feet above the ground. This is a lion’s vertical leap. Measure student’s height. Give student a small piece of tape, and have them jump as high as they can to stick the tape to the vertical surface. Measure the height at which the tape was placed and subtract student’s height from that number to determine their vertical leap. After they leap and get their measurement, show students the marker placed at 15 feet – the distance of the mountain lion’s vertical leap.

Station #3 Pull Like a Lion:

Background: Mountain Lions will take prey as small as mice, ground squirrels, rabbits, skunks, porcupines, and birds, but deer are their preferred food. Deer can weigh 200-400 lbs.

Task: Let students try to drag bags of water of varying weights to simulate a lion dragging or carrying it's prey.

Optional : ask students to cache their prey once they've dragged it by burying it with leaves, loose grass, or branches. Because lions can only eat 20-30 lbs of meat per sitting, they hide (cache) the leftovers and remain near their cache to continue feeding for several days.

Station #4 See Like a Lion:

Background: Lions have a surprising range of peripheral vision - 287 degrees – which allows them to glimpse their well-camouflaged prey from many angles.

Task: Place picture signs of various prey animals along a mnt lions vision range (0-287 degrees) Have students stand in the center of the sighting circle and focus directly on the picture of the prey species ahead of them. Have them tell you which other animals they see, and point at them. Allow them to turn their heads to finally see the animals out of their peripheral range.

Station #5 Lion Encounter:

Background: While mountain lion encounters are rare, they are certainly possible anywhere deer are found. In an encounter, it is critical for humans to resist the urge to run from the lion or otherwise “act like prey”. In lion encounters, humans that stand their ground, act large, and -in rare instances – fight back when attacked have an excellent chance of walking away after the fact.

Task: Instructor simulates a stalking lion – they can even don an optional lion mask. Ask students walk along a designated trail where they will notice a lion following them or otherwise watching them.

Students will be required to:

- face the “lion” at all times
- speak loudly and calmly to it to demonstrate their “humanity”,
- hold their hands up and act large
- pick up rocks (sponges) or sticks (water noodle) and throw them at the “lion” if it gets too close.

When students complete all the required actions, the “lion” retreats.

Reward: Once a student has completed each station, he/she is given a temporary “ I learned about lions” tattoo