



CENTER *of*
SOUTHWEST
STUDIES
FORT LEWIS COLLEGE

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**The Center of Southwest Studies and Colorado Division of
Wildlife to present major new exhibit: *Mountain Lion!***

The Center of Southwest Studies and the Colorado Division of Wildlife, in partnership with the San Juan Mountains Association, the Southern Ute Tribe, Sorrell Sky Gallery, and Durango Nature Studies, will open a major exhibit entitled *Mountain Lion!* on August 22, 2009 at the Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado.

The exhibit was developed by the Center of Southwest Studies and the Colorado Division of Wildlife to address the pressing need for greater public awareness on the growing issue of human encounters with mountain lions. Over the last two decades, there has been a dramatic rise in cougar sightings and dangerous encounters on the urban fringes of numerous Western cities. In a few rare cases, there have been fatalities.

The exhibit will kick off with a major public opening on Saturday, August 22. The exhibition will officially open at 10:00 AM. The grand event of the day will take place at 1:00 PM, with a host of family and children's events such as the "Cougar Olympics." The "Cougar Olympics" are designed to teach children about mountain lions through fun interactive activities. Other hands-on activities include science and art stations. These events are being organized by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, San Juan Mountains Association and Durango Nature Studies. Zia Taqueria will provide food for purchase.

The goal of this exhibit is to create an understanding of the nature of these predators and their long, historic relation with people. The exhibit blends science, history and art to provide a comprehensive look at this mysterious predator. *Mountain Lion!* examines the history of cougars starting from the Ice Age when they roamed the continent along with fierce cats like the giant North American cave lion and *Smilodon*, popularly known as the saber-tooth tiger. Another exhibit section will look at the hunting techniques, habits, and physical features of modern mountain lions that have allowed them to survive for thousands of years. *Mountain Lion!* illustrates the different perspectives of Native Americans and early European settlers toward cougars, how opinions about the animal changed, and the ways they continue to be portrayed in fine art and popular culture. Other sections teach visitors how to read cougar behavior, recognize tracks and scat, and offer practical tips on what to do if you encounter a mountain lion. You'll also get the chance to hear the sounds of cougars.

The exhibit will feature dioramas, fossil representations of extinct cougar relatives, hands-on learning experiences, and the work of leading wildlife photographers including Robert Winslow and Claude Steelman.

After a year-long run in Durango, closing in the fall of 2010, the exhibit will travel to museums and nature centers throughout the greater Southwest, including the states of Utah, Colorado, California, Arizona, and New Mexico.

The 2000+ square-foot exhibition is free and open to the public at the Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College. Photos are available on request.