

## Eastern Cougar Sightings in Pointe au Baril Vicinity

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Last winter, a photograph was taken of a paw print in the snow found near Payne Marine, which



was confirmed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to be that of an Eastern Cougar ([Puma concolor cougar](#)). This animal is not to be confused with the larger Western Cougar found in British Columbia, Alberta, and southwestern United States.

On Friday August 4, a catlike animal was spotted near a boathouse on one of the outer islands, moving away from the person, then suddenly disappearing. This one was described as being pale blonde like a yellow lab, but with a wide body, a long tail, and maybe no more than 20 inches tall. This sighting was initially thought to be a bobcat

because of its small size.

This past week, there was a sighting of another catlike animal in the tall grass on the shore of a large island not far from the main channel, and described as follows:

*It was a pale yellow colour with no spots and stood about 36 inches high to the back. The tail was most notable - it was very long with short hair like a cat and held up like a cat. It bounded away with huge strides in a jumping motion.*

This description suggests this might be a male, which is considerably larger than the female.

Just like in the cases of the above-mentioned sightings, if you chance on a cougar, **the cat most likely will be long gone before you realize what you've seen!** They are very elusive and want nothing to do with human beings! While their main prey are white-tailed deer, they also are known to eat wild geese, grouse, and small animals such as rabbits, mink, beaver and the like. Their tracks are distinguished from dogs, bears or coyotes by their size, shape and absence of claws. [Click here](#) to learn more. The males inhabit an area of between 150 and 1000 square kilometres; the females about half that. Unlike the domestic variety of felines, they are strong swimmers.

Eastern Cougars, which once roamed the Maritime provinces, Ontario and Quebec a hundred years ago, were thought to be extinct until recent sightings suggested that they may be still present and perhaps different from those found in southern Ontario (where DNA tests confirmed they were likely exotic pets that had inadvertently escaped or purposely let loose). As a result, in 2007 the Eastern Cougar was placed on Ontario's list of endangered species. **Hunting them is strictly prohibited by law. These are very elusive creatures and easily frightened away. But as with any wild animal, they should not be abused or chased.** For the sake of privacy and the fact that they are known to travel many miles a day in search of prey, we have purposely kept the location of the Pointe au Baril sightings vague.

On the other hand, the three sightings in the Pointe au Baril vicinity are particularly important because each was reported without prior knowledge of the others. Unfortunately, the only means of proving whether these cougars are descended from the original species is by using DNA tests on the hairs found in their scats.

For this reason, it is important to notify any clear sighting to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (head office in Peterborough), the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the [Ontario Puma Foundation](#), (the latter is specifically dedicated to the study of these animals.) The OMNR is currently conducting a five-year study of the Eastern Cougar and reports should be directed to the

attention of Dr. Rick Rosatte. According to Dr. Rosatte, there have never been any confirmed cougar attacks on humans in Ontario.

*"However, if someone sees a cougar it should be treated cautiously as with any other wild animal such as a bear or wolf – slowly back away and leave the area of the sighting. If you feel there is a public safety issue call the police."*

***We would stress that your chances of encountering an Eastern Cougar extremely remote – and in Ontario, little chance of ever being attacked by one.***