

January 29, 2009 Senate Hearing
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Until March 10, 1981, I did not believe cougars existed in the U.P. At that time the closest known cougar population was in Montana.

When on my way to the Stephenson DNR office that morning of March 1981, I clearly saw a cat walk from the M-35 shoulder towards the tree line. When about half way to the tree line it made a big jump and landed next to the cedar swamp protection. During the landing portion of its jump, I viewed one of the most distinguishing characteristics of a cougar - its long thick tail. As it landed its tail went straight up at its root, curved down and then back up - forming a big "U". Its tail then smoothly flowed to a hanging position. At this moment I knew I had seen a cougar! As soon as I arrived in Stephenson I sat down and drew a sketch of the cougar in the landing position and wrote down what happened.

This report was the first of about 1,100 anecdotal reports that I have collected to date. Many of these reports document features that could only be one animal - a cougar, or in some cases a cougar with kittens. In recent years, I was directly involved in the collection of three cougar scats that were DNA tested at Central Michigan University. I can attest to the place collected, time and circumstances of the finding of these three scats. I personally found one of the scats, a logger friend found another, and a fellow DNR employee, Sergeant John Fisher found the third and also saw a cougar at least once.

Within the area of my 1981-sighting, there have been many prior and later sightings, suggesting a small breeding population in that area. Two different trappers reported catching a cougar in this area. One trapped near Sunny Brook in 1987, about 3 miles north of my 1981 sighting, pulled up the stake as the trapper approached. The other trapping, in 1964, was 3 miles west of my 1981 sighting. This cat was shot and killed by the trapper. He said "it was about 60 pounds and a rack of bones" and "was lactating". Twenty years later I was told of the incident and interviewed the trapper. He told me that he had reported this to the DNR. I checked our office files and found the note. No one had investigated this report. The trapper also said he had caught what he believed to be a "Tom" cougar on three occasions. Twice the trap broke and once the drag chain broke. Sometime after shooting the female, the male apparently left the area as he never saw its tracks again.

I have seen what I believed to be cougar tracks on six occasions. I was personally trained by cougar expert Harley Shaw who also trained many Michigan DNR biologists. March 2008, I found an estimated 300 cougar tracks about 2 miles from my 1981 sighting. The DNR District Biologist and his Technician "verified" the tracks as being made by a cougar. I have attached one picture of the track to this report. I could go on and on documenting the presence of cougars in the U.P. , but my time is now up. Thank you for this opportunity to share this small portion of my 28 years of personal research that tells me that there is, in fact, a small population of cougars in the U.P.