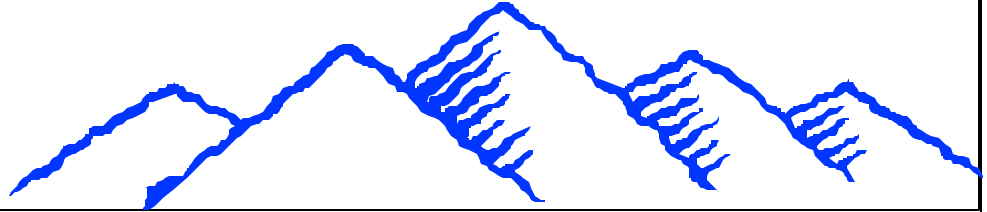


Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

The PackRat



May/June 2005



First view of the Yangtze River.



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The Packrat is published six times a year by the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. We welcome comments, articles, and ideas from our members and, if content is deemed suitable, will be used as space permits.

Email submissions to the newsletter editor at packrat@ramblers.ab.ca or forward contributions to RMRA, c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council, 1111 Memorial Drive NW, Calgary, AB T2N 3E4.

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President's Report...

THE AMAZING SPRING WEATHER IS teasing us all. The hiking itch needs to be satisfied, but beware of the May snow. Ticks have been reported as unwanted hitchhikers, so it is time to start the "tick" check again.

The new computer is in place, and thanks go out to John Duerden for all the efforts. John is working the gremlins out of the system and all will be OK over time. Please be patient, and report any problems to "Webguy". It was timely that we considered upgrading the computer as we were encountering backup issues with the old Server. With the new server, presenters can now bring a CD that was created by Powerpoint. We can even watch a DVD movie, some sound issues still, but we are working on it.

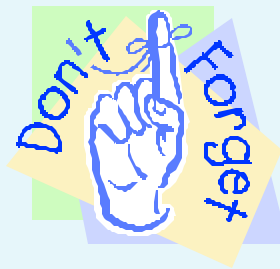
The Wednesday night meeting format continues to change and evolve. If there is a program, we can definitely state the starting time of 7:30 PM to the speaker. Lots of members are just interested in the program and are coming out just for the program. The regular part of the meeting is continuing to shorten in length as trips going out are only reported by the trip announcer and the trips that went out have no one to report details.

I am currently looking for a volunteer to coordinate the

upcoming season of trail maintenance through The Friends of Kananaskis Country. The plan is to have work crews go out on the second Saturday of each month. So if you wish to hang out with fellow outdoor enthusiasts and be part of keeping our trail system one to be proud of, then step forward and volunteer.

Looks like it is going to be an active hiking season. We will be participating in the Alberta Centennial Mountain Expedition celebration by recording some of our hikes. We will participate in "climbing more than 100 summits in the Alberta Rockies". The mountains that have been allocated to the Ramblers are Mt. Allan, Mt. Richardson, Crowsnest Mt., Mt. Baldy and Mt. Cory.

**Deadline
for next PackRat
June 24, 2005**



We Did It!

D. Reimer

Alberta's 2005/6 budget for Parks & Protected Areas tells the story. Community Development's April 18 press release announced a capital budget of \$45M to parks infrastructure projects. While some of this was already in the works (\$13M for Canmore Nordic Centre, \$10M for four Interpretive Centres, \$10M for water & sewer safety projects), there **is** an added \$11M for maintenance, equipment, & renewal of basic park facilities.

K-Country will get some of this extra \$11M but, so far, information on its share is unavailable (translation: KC people aren't "talking").

K-Country's Operating budget has gone up also (in 2004 dollars) from about \$7.8M last year to \$9.7M this year – still well below the 1992/3 figure of \$12.25M.

Kananaskis Trail Users Association put out a press release on this issue, applauding the Government for the increase. The Calgary Herald used our information as the basis for its article on April 15, 2005.

A million thanks to everyone who wrote letters, e-mailed MLAs, donated to KTUA, and generally supported the effort to wake up our politicians to the benefits of K-Country.

A personal thank-you note to your MLA might be a really good idea right now. Just to keep them remembering that we'll still be out here, watching and expecting them to keep their promises!

A letter to the Members...

Dear Ramblers,

We would like to thank you for the warm send-off you gave us on March 2nd as we prepared for our move to the Gulf Islands of BC. It was great to enjoy another evening with all of you before heading off to unknown places and other adventures.

We would like to thank you for much more than that, though. You have provided an opportunity for us to explore trails and ridges that we would otherwise never have enjoyed. You have given us the chance to bag peaks and take in views that we would otherwise never have seen. You have given us the companionship of good friends that we would otherwise never have met.

However, there is something much more important that we

would like to thank you for. The two of us met each other for the first time, quite by chance, on June 13th 1999, on a Ramblers trip up Mount Yamnuska. The initial stages of our courtship took place on subsequent Ramblers trips that summer. Without the Rocky Mountain Ramblers, we would never have met, never have fallen head-over-heels in love, never have married, and would not now be embarking on the fulfillment of our dreams of living in a rural community by the sea.

So, we owe you a huge debt of thanks for enriching our lives in more ways than just hikes, ski trips and pot-luck dinners.

Thank you so much, Ramblers, for everything!

*Wendy Stewart
Keith Walker*



On March 2, members joined in a farewell celebration for Keith and Wendy and expressed good wishes for their move to the Gulf Islands.

Activities

Hiking, Backpacking,
Skiing, Cycling,
Climbing,
Scrambling,
Mountaineering, Education
& Awareness
Programs, Social
Functions

Meetings

Every Wednesday
evening at 7:30 p.m.

Mail

Rocky Mountain Ramblers
Association
c/o Calgary Area Outdoor
Council (CAOC)
1111 Memorial Dr NW
Calgary, AB T2N 3E4

Trip Info

282-6308 Information Line
and at Meetings

Website

The Packrat is available on
the RMRA website at
www.ramblers.ab.ca. If we
have your email address,
you will be automatically
notified that an electronic
copy of the Packrat is on
the website.

Cougar Quiz

by D. Reimer

THE LATE IAN ROSS STUDIED THE cougars of Kananaskis Country extensively for many years in the late '80s and early '90s. He put together these questions for a day-long cougar-information field trip in 2001 that I attended so I thought I'd share them with you so you can test your cougar savvy. For answers, refer to Page 10 in this issue.

1. Which wild animal has the widest distribution in the Western Hemisphere?
2. Name 3 countries other than Canada where cougars are found.
3. Cougar forepaws are larger than the rear paws. True or False?
4. Which animal is not an important prey of cougars: moose, elk, sheep, snowshoe hare, deer?
5. What time of year are cougar kittens born?
6. Cougars are an endangered species in Alberta. True or False?
7. Cougars are hunted in Alberta. True or False?
8. What is the scientific name for the cougar?
9. Give two common names for the cougar.
10. What does crepuscular mean?
11. Cougars leap from trees to attack prey. True or False?
12. How long do the kittens stay with their mother?

Here is some more interesting information.

While male cougars are territorial and range widely, females are not and tend to stick close to a kill, along with their kittens. The males, on the other hand, will often eat then hide the kill, returning periodically to feed again (or leave it with the female).

In other words, the males don't stick around more than 2 or 3 days at a time. They have other (better?) things to do – like patrolling their territory or mating with other females. Male cougars are definitely not monogamous.

Mortality for the young is negligible when they're still with their mother. The highest mortality occurs in the first year of independence. After this, they get the hang of surviving and do much better.

Sheep prefer rocky open areas (like Windy Point in the Sheep River area) but cougars dislike open spaces, preferring the protection and cover of trees. Neither do they have good skills in rocks. Thus, sheep are not



CONT'D ON PAGE 8

O MY GOODNESS, IT'S 4:00 AM Calgary time in Vancouver and we still haven't made our connection. We are lying on airport seats trying to catch a few zzz's. The plane is coming from New York and has been held up by a snow storm. Rita and I had met at Calgary the previous day to catch the 8:00 PM flight to Vancouver. Calgary has lots of snow and is very cold so we are happy to leave that behind. The plane to Hong Kong was four hours late, thus departing Vancouver at 5:00 AM. The Cathay Pacific plane was full and we've never seen such narrow and closely packed seating and this for such a long journey – 14 hours. It's now 8:27 PM Canada time and we are awaiting take off in Hong Kong for Kunming, Yunnan Province in SW China. The plane, being late and arriving late in Hong Kong, made our Kunming connection a race which we won but our baggage didn't! Having lost a day over the date line the date is now December 28th.

In Kunming, after the locking of horns with a seedy baggage man at Dragonair, we went to our hotel with our guide Sophie without baggage. On a second trip to the airport Rita retrieved her bags but mine took a couple more days to catch up. We met the Peregrine travelling group, went for a meal and, there being a change of plan, hopped on to the VIP sleeper overnight to Dali. Anyway the train provided luxurious accommodation and Rita and I managed to get a



Town of Dali

cabin to ourselves and get in a short sleep.

Up and at 'em early at 6:00 AM we stepped out of the train into the cold air of Dali where a couple of small buses took us all to our hotel, the Funcun He Hotel. What a beautiful place, continuous courtyards, walls, flowers and so lovely and imaginatively Chinese it's hard to describe. It's set in "old Dali", home to the Bai people. The day warmed up to be really quite hot. We scaled the Cangshan Mountain by cable car and had a short walk at the middle area. At the top of the lift we even saw a few birds defying the destructive edicts of Chairman Mao.

After lunch we travelled by gaily decorated horse carriages to some Buddhist temples and pagodas and watched some of the locals cutting and polishing marble which is locally quarried

and for which the area is known.

Later three of us enjoyed a lovely Bai meal at Jack Daniels Restaurant having safely negotiated our way over the charcoal fire at the restaurant doorway. It was just a metal dish filled with burning charcoal which could be moved around at will and was the sole method of heating.

We went to a "Donga Dance and Music Show" in the evening. There was full orchestra. The costumes were very colourful and I particularly enjoyed the singing of a woman soloist about her daughter marrying and leaving home to live with her new husband's family. This was not the northern traditional type of high pitch voice, still



Donga Dance and Music Show

Chinese but very melodic to our western ears. It became quite cold in the theatre as there is no heating in any of these places.

As it was New Year's eve, some of us went to a bar afterwards and welcomed in the New Year.

The next day we loaded up into the bus and travelled through some of the most beautiful winter countryside. This was up through mountainous and wooded hills, the trees being a type of pine with very long frondy needles. We descended the pass by way of tight hairpin bends towards our first view of the Yangtze River. This view far below in the valley was under perfectly blue skies and warm sunshine in this winter season. At a roadside store, I had bargained for and purchased 2 red jade dragons representing prosperity. They are lovely but I'm not sure about the reality of red jade. We stopped for lunch at the Middle House at 2,500 m elevation by the Yangtze River and had a marvellous meal. It comprised chicken broth over a charcoal fire and throwing in lots of unrecognizable deep green veggies for a quick cook. Is there no end to this wonderful food?

After lunch we drove up the valley to a little market town straddling the river, the bus struggling through the narrow streets and then parking on the far side of the river. Led by Frankie, our guide for the Tiger Leaping Gorge portion of our trip, we took our day packs and started up a steep and dusty trail. Soon we had to cast off our warm long johns. The foot trail soon led us to stupendous views of the Tiger Leaping Gorge area with the huge north facing wall of the Jade Dragon Snow Moun-

tain massif on our left which it rises an amazing 3,000 m. above the river. Our path became quite exposed in places. We saw some mules with dirty but colourful blankets on their backs. Someone



Tiger Leaping Gorge

reported seeing one toss its rider. There are some spots where that would prove fatal.

We are staying in the Naxi family traditional guesthouse which is lovely again, clean and traditional. The Naxi family are very tall and handsome. They fed us well. Rita and I had a room facing the courtyard with good foams and warm cotton batton type comforters.

We left the guesthouse at about 8:30 AM stopping for lunch at another guest house where we sat in the warm sunshine overlooking the steep valley. The weather is quite warm, especially once the sun hits. We are becoming quite dusty and dirty. It seemed a way before we arrived at the Halfway

House, Frankie's place, and which is undergoing construction. He has great plans for expansion but is worried about slippage because of the tree clearance by both the local people and the nearby tungsten mine cooking requirements.

There are also plans to flood this beautiful valley for a hydro scheme. In the evening we sat with our group on one of the verandas and watched the shooting stars and eventually the rising moon before going to our cosy beds.

We had climbed up the portion of the mountain behind the Halfway House the previous evening and Frankie showed us the remains of a village, Lama Temple Relics, where the people had died off about 30 years ago. Up in that area, it must have been a hard life although they could hunt the wild goats. This is very steep country with a huge drop off to the river below.

Another 8:30 AM cool start continuing cool because of the shade in the steep and deep valley. At one point we had to duck under a waterfall and that was refreshing. It was really windy and the sun caught us up as we descended to Tina's place down on the paved highway near the base of the gorge.

The bus and baggage awaited us and off we set on the very exposed road back. We did stop at the place of the Tiger Leaping Rock, climbing down the steep stairs to get a closer view of the raging waters. Apparently in 1991 an international team of rafters came to a sticky end in this gorge. I can understand

that. From this point, a huge landslide has occurred, probably from blasting the road. We were all a little nervous in the bus on this precipitous trail and glad to reach flatter ground. We had a basic rice meal, a stroll around the town and then set off for Zhongdian. The bus climbed through Bai country which is very poor; mostly up a dark valley. There are signs of snow but we have been lucky in that it is warm just now. We eventually came out on to a brown grassy plateau where the "Tibetans" live and visited one family. They live in large Tibetan style wooden ornate houses painted and carved the interiors of which are dreadfully dark. However, the people were welcoming and cheerful. They made us yak butter tea which I thought surprisingly good and some ground roasted barley and yak tea mix which was tasty. They spin and do weaving on a narrow loom for carpets which are then sewn together in strips to make one big one for the bed. The people look quite dirty. Maybe there is little water although there is some piped in. The little black pigs live in the courtyard and seem clean and happy. Nothing smells except for the omnipresent wood smoke.

We left our new friends and entered the town of Zhongdian (Sangri La), checked into our hotel the JingDi Hotel and dashed for the washing facilities. All the mechanics of the plumbing seemed to fall apart. The bath spout fell off and the water just came in from the wall. But we even have heating in the bedrooms as it's pretty cool at

this altitude which is about 3500 m.

We ate at the "Tibet Café" and had yak meat at an extortionate cost for China and were subjected to a digital visual performance

outside which included symbols and two big horns and tried a little clumsy dancing. We wondered how they could keep warm in their sleeveless outfits. The latest Llama statute was huge,



Zongzanlin Monastery

by the boss of all his good deeds in this community. The smoky air and cold for those at the end of the table proved a little much and we were glad to get out and go to bed.

Driving next day we saw snow capped and glaciated mountains surrounding these grasslands making a wonderful setting for Buddhist Monastery, called the Zongzanlin Monastery, a 300-year old Tibetan monastery, reconstructed after recent decimation by Chairman Mao. Magnificent in size and decoration it is really colourful and ornate with prayer wheels and silk prayer scarves. It needed a good clean inside and out. Some of the young monks were practicing their music

golden and draped in the main entrance of the monastery.

In the afternoon we looked for and found the endangered black necked crane (*Grus Nigricollis*) on some of the drying up lake bed in the grasslands. Apparently they were down to 70 pairs but now that they are protected they have increased their numbers to 200 pairs. They winter here and summer in Tibet. They are huge with a black head, neck and beak, white body and a black tail.

The next day we flew back to Kunming. Our flight passed over rugged and wooded country. It has all been browned by the winter season and must be quite different in the summer. We were told that it had been covered in

snow the week before we had arrived but little remained. Pollution is pretty grim in Kunming but it seems a fairly modern place which helps to make its living by the business of cigarettes. Sophie said "welcome to civilization"! No wonder as the hotel is good and the tap stays in the wall.

After a lunch we travelled about 1 hour to the Stone Forest, karst country which was quite lovely. A small portion preserved in a big area, a lot of fun and very pretty. Many hawkers selling cross stitch items.

A quick turn around and we went to the theatre in Kunming and saw an amazing theatrical display. It incorporated wonderful music, singing, costumes and vibrant dancing. The production was called "A Grand Primitive Song and Dance Medley" and the main female dancer became almost liquid in her movements. It's said that she sold her home to promote a world tour of this production. Surely it is a great success. Her name is Li Ping. Such sophistication was followed by my first tasting of tripe and a lovely spicy sauce, which was even enjoyable, in a Chinese restaurant.

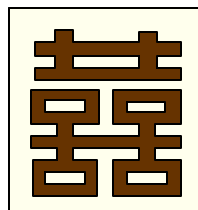
A good self-serve breakfast at this Haikun Hotel followed by a trip around Kunming's main attractions. We visited a Buddhist temple, called Yuantong Temple, a park full of too many gulls and a couple of strange ducks and yet another market; this one being a flower and bird market. We had "under the bridge" rice noodles, which is a bowl of very hot broth into which is put fish, beef, port, a

quail's egg and some greens to cook. Back to the hotel followed by a final celebration evening for our group all together eating pizza.



This has been a wonderful experience meeting many interesting and differing tribal people, seeing a great variety of country and eating lots of wonderful food amongst everything else. It's also good preparation for the remainder of our journey to other parts of SE Asia.

*Carolyn Croasdale,
March 2004*



popular prey for cougars, though occasionally a wily cougar figures out how to catch them.

How many cougars in Alberta? Hard to be sure. Ross thought around 800 throughout the province. He also learned that cougars inhabit at least 800 km² (his survey area) but only 50 km² are protected (the Sheep River Wildlife Sanctuary). This statistic is something to think about when we review Kananaskis Country's future management plans for the Sheep/Bluerock Parks.

Finally, regarding attacks of people by cougars. In June, 1970, the late Daphne Smith, a Rambler in the 70s, survived a cougar attack while hiking in Kootenay National Park. Her report, contained in the Club's publication, "The Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association - The first 27 years", is valuable information.

The most important thing to remember is BIG for cougars. Make yourself appear as large as possible (without looking the animal in the eye, of course).

PACKRAT ADVERTISING RATES

The Club offers advertising space in **PackRat** and the following rates apply:

Quarter Page	\$10
Half Page	\$20
Full Page	\$40

Payment **MUST** be received prior to publication.

Bear Spray vs. Bullets

Which offers better protection?

AT FIRST GLANCE, THIS QUESTION may seem like a no-brainer. After all, aren't guns made to kill, while pepper spray (so-called "bear spray," when it comes in big cans) does not? Unlike an attack by a human assailant, who may be able to use your own weapon against you, that safety/survival argument for using pepper spray doesn't apply to a human-bear encounter... or does it?

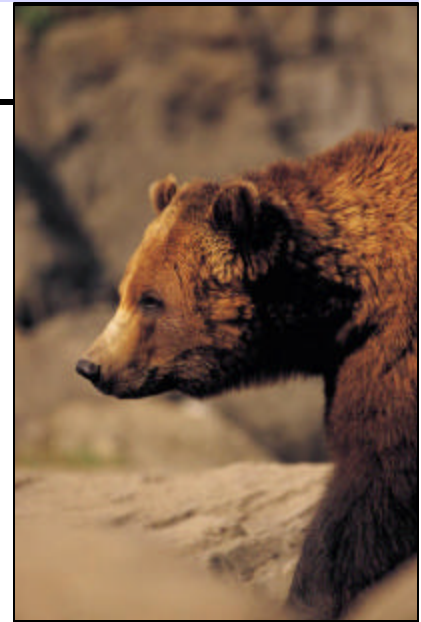
When it comes to self defense against grizzly bears, the answer is not as obvious as it may seem. In fact, experienced hunters are surprised to find that despite the use of firearms against a charging bear, they were attacked and badly hurt. Evidence of human-bear encounters even suggests that shooting a bear can escalate the seriousness of an attack, while encounters where firearms are not used are less likely to result in injury or death of the human or the bear. While firearms can kill a bear, can a bullet kill quickly enough- and can the shooter be accurate enough - to prevent a dangerous, even fatal, attack?

The question is not one of marksmanship or clear thinking in the face of a growling bear, for even a skilled marksman with steady nerves may have a slim chance of deterring a bear attack with a gun. Law enforcement agents for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have experience that supports this

reality - based on their investigations of human-bear encounters since 1992, persons encountering grizzlies and defending themselves with firearms suffer injury about 50% of the time. During the same period, persons defending themselves with pepper spray escaped injury most of the time, and those that were injured experienced shorter duration attacks and less severe injuries. Canadian bear biologist Dr. Stephen Herrero reached similar conclusions based on his own research - a person's chance of incurring serious injury from a charging grizzly doubles when bullets are fired versus when bear spray is used.

Awareness of bear behavior is the key to mitigating potential danger. Detecting signs of a bear and avoiding interaction, or understanding defensive bear behaviors, like bluff charges, are the best ways of escaping injury. The Service supports the pepper spray policy of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, which states that bear spray is not a substitute for following proper bear avoidance safety techniques, and that bear spray should be used as a deterrent only in an aggressive or attacking confrontation with a bear.

Like seatbelts, bear spray saves lives. But just as seatbelts don't make driving off a bridge safe, bear spray is not a shield against deliberately seeking out or attracting a grizzly bear. No

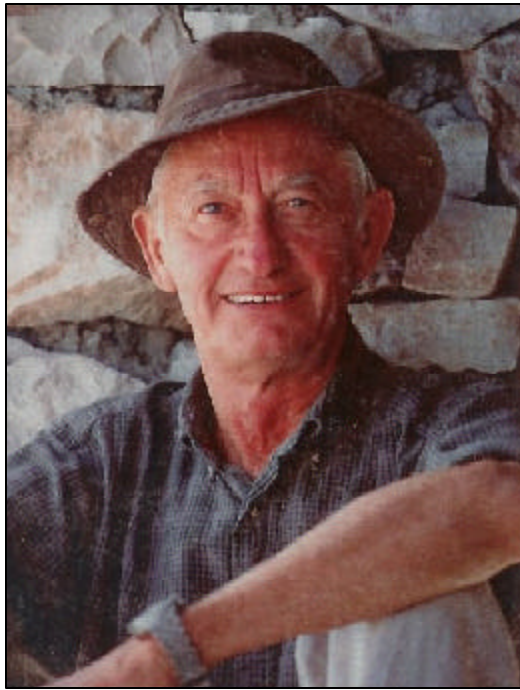


deterrent is 100% effective, but compared to all others, including firearms, proper use of bear spray has proven to be the best method for fending off threatening and attacking bears, and for preventing injury to the person and animal involved.

Because the grizzly bear is federally protected in the Lower 48 States as a threatened species, it is a violation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to shoot one, except in self defense and defense of others during an imminent attack. Penalties under the ESA include up to 6 months in prison and a \$100,000 fine. Additional penalties may *also apply to violations of state law.*

For more information about bear spray and its effectiveness, see: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc>

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



**IN LOVING
MEMORY
JOHN MICHI
1934 - 2005**

JOHN MICHI, A FORMER RMR member who was president in 1987-1988 passed away on March 21, 2005 at the age of 71. John was born in the former Yugoslavia and immigrated to Canada in 1956. Besides his wife, Pat (Evans), also a former Rambler, he leaves two sons and a daughter.

John was active in many areas: Nature, Photography, Gardening, Bird Watching, Music, Winemaking and Traveling. He also embraced technology. When Zita Morgan, a Rambler member, passed away

in 1994 and had no family in Canada, John took it upon himself to photograph the outing that we organized to spread Zita's ashes in Kananaskis Country. He then used this footage to produce a video tape which also included the many activities involving Zita and members in happier times-this all set to appropriate music and in a format compatible for British viewing. This is just one example of John's thoughtfulness and kindness for which he will be fondly remembered.

Submitted by Del Lavallee

***“Seek not good from without,
seek it within yourselves, or
you will never find it.”***

Author Epictetus (2nd century)

Cougar Answers

1. Cougar
2. Take your pick. U.S.A., Mexico, Peru, Bolivia. They range between 60° N. Lat. to 56° S. Lat. That's from the north border of Alberta to the tip of Tierra del Fuego.
3. True
4. Snowshoe hare. Cougars pretty well exclusively go for big game. So if you're in an area where there are only hares, squirrels, pine martens, and the like, the odds are you'll not see any cougar sign.
5. The kits are born year round with a peak in July and August.
6. False.
7. True. No, I don't know how many.
8. puma concolor (which means a puma of one colour)
9. Again, take your pick. mountain lion, tatamount, panther (black), puma, painter, and, of course, cougar
10. Crepuscular means active in twilight and refers to the time of day/night when cougars prefer to hunt. This does not mean that they won't attack when they find you happily munching your lunch at mid-day – but it would not be the cat's normal behaviour.
11. False.
12. Kittens hang out with mom for their first 14 to 18 months.