

The Berkshire Eagle

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Section: Letters to the Editor

If it looks like a cougar, it is one

Thursday, October 16 – When will Mass Wildlife acknowledge that there are, in fact, mountain lions in residence in Western Massachusetts? Brushing off "sightings" by claiming that images are doctored and others are cases of mistaken identity is nothing short of silly. Sightings come from all types of people, woodsmen or not, and to insult their intelligence by insinuating that they cannot tell the difference between a Boxer and an Irish Wolf Hound is ridiculous. While I am not a biologist, or for that matter an expert on cats, I can say with confidence that I can distinguish between a bobcat weighing 35-50 pounds and a **mountain lion** weighing 150-200 pounds. Could it be that the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife chooses not to acknowledge their presence because they have no regulations or guidelines regarding management of that species of cat? Maybe there is the thought of rampant hysteria?

Whatever the case, I believe the DF&W has a responsibility to keep people informed, and ignoring or doing all it can to discredit the fact that big cats are here does nothing to help educate the public about these animals and only creates distrust of the agency created for such purposes. There is no conspiracy theory, no hunter vs. scientific community or biologist vs. woodsman, only this simple fact — if it looks like a cougar and acts like a **mountain lion**, chances are, it isn't a duck.

PAUL BURGESS, Lanesborough

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