

The Mountain Lion
Once Endangered, Now a Danger

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English 4

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Outline

Thesis statement: Although society often distorts human and animal relationships, in reality a strong wildlife management program would reduce the number of lion attacks on humans and in the long run would also protect the lions.

- I. Brief background of the once-endangered mountain lion
 - A. The object of reverence
 - B. All out war on the mountain lions
 - C. The elimination of the lions
- II. The resurgence of the mountain lion
 - A. The lion population has rebounded dramatically in California
 - B. There have been increases in population across the country
- III. Human attacks by mountain lions are on the rise
 - A. Violent encounters between humans and lions
 - B. The reasons for attacks on humans
 - C. Many serious attacks in California
- IV. The 1996 California referendum
 - A. Proposition 197 and the misinformation
 1. The groups involved
 2. The type of language used in the proposition
 - B. The groups against the proposition
 - C. The groups in favor of the proposition
- V. Wildlife management: a reasonable solution
 - A. Population control is the only option

- B. The various ways to control the population
 - 1. Using sport hunting to control the lion population
 - 2. The state directed wildlife management team to control the lion population

Main Point

- * By looking at the thesis as well as the Roman Numerals of the outline, the reader should be able to grasp the main point.

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On April 23, 1994, as Barbara Schoener was jogging in the Sierra, foothills of California, she was pounced on from behind by a mountain lion. After an apparent struggle with her attacker, Schoener was killed by bites to the neck and head (Rychnovsky 39). In 1996, because of Schoener's death and other highly publicized attacks, California politicians presented voters with Proposition 197, which contained provisions repealing much of a 1990 law enacted to protect the lions. The 1990 law outlawed sport hunting of mountain lions and even prevented the Department of Fish and Game from thinning the lion population. The proposition was rejected by a large margin, probably because the debate turned into a struggle between hunting and anti-hunting factions. Although society often distorts human and animal relationships, in reality a strong wildlife management program would reduce the number of lion attacks on humans and in the long run would also protect the lions.

Thesis Statement

- * Asserts the writer's main point
- * Questions to ask yourself.
 - Is the thesis clear?
 - Is the thesis focused?
 - Is the thesis challenging?
 - Does the introduction draw the reader into the paper?
- * As you proceed through the paper does the writer continue to support the thesis statement?

First, one must examine the once-endangered mountain lion. To early Native Americans, mountain lions—also known as cougars, pumas, and panthers—were objects of reverence. The European colonists, however, did not share the Native American view. They conducted what Ted Williams calls an "all-out war on the species" (29). The lions were eliminated from the eastern United States except for a small population that remains in the Florida Everglades.

While in the west the lions lingered on but in smaller numbers. At least 66,665 lions were killed between 1907 and 1908 in Canada and in the United States (Hansen 58). As late as 1969, the country's leading authority on the big cat Maurice Homocher, estimated the United States population as fewer than 6,500 and probably dropping (Homocher 40).

However there has been a resurgence of the mountain lion in the western states today. The mountain lion is no longer in danger of extinction. In fact, over the past thirty years, the population has rebounded dramatically. In California, Fish and Game officials estimate that since 1972 lion numbers have *increased* from 2,400 to at least 6,000 ("Lion").

Similar increases are occurring outside of California. *For instance*, for nearly fifty years mountain lions had virtually disappeared from Yellowstone National Park, but today lion sightings are increasingly common. In 1992, Hornocher estimated that at least eighteen adults were living in the park (Hornocher 59). In the United States as a whole, some biologists estimate that there are as many as 50,000 mountain lions, a dramatic increase over the 1969 estimate 6,500 (Williams 30). For the millions of Americans interested in the preservation of animal species, this is good news, but unfortunately the increase has led to a number of violent encounters between human and lion.

Transitions

- * A clear transition prepares the reader for the next section.
- * It also helps the reader by referring back to the thesis.

There is no doubt that more and more humans are being attacked. -Ray Rychnovsky reports that lions since 1890 have mauled thirteen people (41). "What's more startling." **writes Rychnovsky**, "is that nearly three-quarters of the attacks (nine of the fatalities and 43 of the maulings) have taken place in the last twenty-five years" (43). Particularly frightening are the attacks on children. **Kevin Hansen points out** that children have been "more vulnerable than adults, making up 64 percent of the victims" (69). This is not surprising, since children, being small and active, resemble the lion's natural prey. **Lion authority John Seideesticker reports** that when he worked for the National Zoo in Washington D, C., he regularly observed cats stalking children who passed by the lion cages.

Signal Phrase

- * The quotation above is introduced with a signal phrase
- * The summary above is introduced with a signal phrase.

Since 1986, four children have been attacked in California (Mountain 7). One of these attacks was serious enough to prompt officials to place Gaspers wilderness Park off-limits to children (Tran 8). In July 1997 alone, two attacks on children, one fetal, occurred in different national parks in Colorado.

In California, the state where the lion is most fully protected, 1994 was a particularly bad year. Los Angeles Times writer Tony Perry reports that two women were killed by lions in 1994 and that the year brought a dramatic increase in mountain lion sightings, "many in suburban and urban areas where the animal had previously not been spotted" (Perry 1). With two killings in one year and an increasing number of sightings, it is not surprising that California politicians responded with Proposition 197, aimed at repealing the ban on hunting the lions.

Topic Sentence

Clear topic sentences, like the one below, used throughout the paper.

The debate over the 1996 California referendum Proposition 197 was inflamed by campaigns of misinformation on both sides of the issue. The pro faction included the National Rifle Association (NBA), The Safari Club, and Gun Owners of California. On the other side were the animal rights groups such as the Sierra Club, the Fund for Animals, and the Mountain Lion Foundation. The proposition itself, introduced by Republican Tim Leslie, is laced with legalese and deceptive phrasing. **For example**, in a provision aimed at amending section 4801 of the Fish and Game Code, the word hunters does not appear, though the legalistic term designee clearly includes hunters:

The department may remove or take, including, but not limited to, an appropriate government agency with public safety responsibility, an appropriate governmental agency with wildlife management responsibility, or an owner of land, to remove or take, one or more mountain lions that are perceived to be an imminent threat to public health or safety or livestock anywhere in the state park system. (State)

Elongated Quote

- * The quotation set off from text above is clearly introduced.
- * The direct quote clearly supports the writer's ideas.
- * Another solid transition used above.

The proposition's euphemistic language, such as remove or take, was echoed by the hunting factions, who spoke much about "controlling," or "thinning" the lion population, avoiding such words as kill or shoot.

Supporters of Proposition 197 were not above exaggerating the dangers posed by mountain lions, preferring lurid accounts of maulings and killings to solid statistics. For example, writing on the Internet in an attempt to sway voters, Terrence M. Eagan, Wayne Long, and Steven Arroyo appeal to human fears of being eaten: "Two small children woke up one morning without a mother because a lion ate her." **To underscore the point**, they describe a grisly discovery: "A lion preying upon neighborhood pets was found with parts of five different puppies in its stomach" (Hansen 46).

Topic Thoroughly Developed

- * The underlined example above clearly shows how the writer supported his ideas.
- * The words in bold both above and below, show an attempt to use sophisticated and vivid language

Whereas the pro-hunting groups **spoke in euphemistic language** and exaggerated the dangers posed by lions, the pro-lion groups invoked inflammatory language and ignored the dangers. A Web page written by a coalition of wildlife preservationists is typical. Calling Proposition 197 "a special interest trophy hunting measure," the coalition claims that the Gun Owners of California, The NRA, and the Safari Club "rammed" the proposition onto the ballot while "hiding behind a disingenuous concern for public safety." **After asserting that the mountain lion poses a minimal threat to humans**, the coalition accuses the Department of Fish and Game of "creating a climate of fear" so that the public will choose to **reinstate** lion hunting ("California"). While it is true that human encounters with mountain lions are rare, some pro-lion publications

come close to ridiculing Californians who fear that lion attacks on humans and pets will continue to accelerate unless something is done.

Quotations

- * The above quotations help show sound thorough research.
- * They again help demonstrate support fro the writer’s ideas.

Without population control, the number of attacks on Californians will almost certainly continue to rise, and the lions may become bolder. As lion authority John Seideusticker remarks, "The boldness displayed by mountain lions just doesn't square with the shy, retiring behavior familiar to those of us who have studied these animals." He surmises that the lions have become emboldened because they no longer have to contend with wolves and grizzly bears, which dominated them in the past. The only conceivable predator to reinstill that fear is the human.

Sadly, the only sure way to reduce lion attacks on humans is to thin the population. One basic approach to thinning is sport hunting, which is still legal, though restricted in various ways, in every western state except California. A second approach involves state-directed wildlife management, usually the hiring of hunters to shoot or trap the lions.

Sport hunting is a poor option—and not just because it is unpopular with Califomians. *First*, it is difficult to control sport hunting. *For instance*, a number of western states have restrictions on killing a female lion with kittens, but sport hunters are rarely knowledgeable enough to tell whether a lion has kittens. *Second*, because some sport hunters are poor shots, they wound but do not kill the lions, causing needless suffering. *Finally*, certain hunting practices are anything but sport. There is a growing business in professionally led cougar hunts,

as a number of ads on the World Wide Web attest. One practice is to tree a lion with radio-equipped dogs and then place a phone call to a client to come and shoot the lion. In some cases the lion may be treed for two or more days before the client arrives to bag his trophy. Such practices are so offensive that even the California Park Rangers Association opposed Proposition 197. As a spokesperson explained, "We support managing the lions. But they shouldn't be stuck on the wail in a den" (Perry 1).

Transitions

- * The transitions above help readers move from one topic to another.
- * The transitions also help logically organize the writer's ideas.

We should entrust the thinning of the lion population to wildlife specialists guided by science, not to hunters seeking adventure or to safari clubs looking for profits. Unlike hunters, scientific wildlife managers have the long-term interests of the mountain lion at heart. An uncontrolled population leads to an ecological imbalance, with more and more lions competing for territory and a diminishing food supply. The highly territorial lions will fight to the death to defend their hunting grounds; and because the mother lion ultimately ejects her offspring from her own territory; young lions face an uncertain future. Stephanie Cruickshank, a spokesperson for California Lion Awareness (CLAW), explains, "The overrun of lions is biologically unsound and unfair to the lions, especially those forced to survive in marginal or clearly unnatural urban settings" (Robinson).

Therefore, wildlife management would benefit both Californians and the California lions. Although some have argued that California needs fewer people, not fewer lions, humans do have an obligation to protect themselves and their children, and the fears of people in lion country are

real. As for the lions, they need to thrive in a natural habitat with an adequate food supply. "We simply cannot let nature take its course," writes Terry Mansfield of the Department of Fish and Game (Peny 1). In fact, not to take action in California is as illogical as reintroducing the lions to Central Park and Boston Common, places where they once also roamed.

Conclusion

- * An insightful conclusion written in the writer's own words
- * It contains both implications and reflections about the paper.

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