

# **A mounain lion mystery -- what killed P8?**

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Biologists say the killer of a young male mountain lion in California's Santa Monica Mountains may be a previously unknown male cat.

That could be a good omen for the survival of the big cats in the coastal wilderness, Rorie Skei of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy told the Los Angeles Times.

"This just highlights that the Santa Monica Mountains and the open space in Los Angeles and Ventura County areas are true wilderness areas in many respects," said Skei. "And the fact that there does seem to be a heretofore unidentified lion is a very good sign. It signifies that the ecosystem is still healthy."

The dead cat, P8, was one of four born in 2004 to P1 and P2. The litter doubled the number of mountain lions in the area.

But since then P1 has killed his mate and two of his offspring. He was the prime suspect in P8's death until biologists looked at tracking data.

P3 and P4, the other cats in the area at the time, died from eating coyotes containing rat poison.

In addition to P1, a female from the litter remains alive. If another adult male is in the area, that is a potential mate for her.

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