

Oregon's Cannon Beach reopens after cougar sighting on iconic coastal rock led to closure

July 18 2023



Beachgoers walk a dog and fly a kite as they near Haystack Rock, April 4, 2022, in Cannon Beach, Ore. Cannon Beach, a popular tourist destination, reopened Monday, July 17, 2023, after closing due to a cougar sighting near the iconic Haystack Rock. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said Monday the cougar had moved on, as confirmed by wildlife and law enforcement officials. Credit: AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast, File

A cougar that climbed onto a towering rock off the coast of northwest Oregon over the weekend—probably in search of feathered prey—has abandoned the craggy formation, allowing for the popular Cannon Beach to reopen to visitors Monday.

Multiple agencies and organizations, from local and state police to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Parks and Recreation Department, responded to Sunday morning's sighting of the big cat on the iconic Haystack Rock. The beach was closed to protect people and let it return to its usual habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said officials later confirmed that the animal had moved on. A game camera captured an image of it leaving the rock Sunday night, and tracks were also found heading away, federal officials said.

State biologists believe the cougar ventured to Haystack Rock at low tide Saturday night to hunt birds, a behavior they have not previously witnessed at that site.

"While the [forested areas](#) along the coast are prime habitat for cougars, it is unusual that a cougar made its way on to Haystack Rock," Paul Atwood, a biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said in a statement. "Their primary food source is deer, but they will also consume elk, other mammals and birds."

However, cougars have been documented traveling to other similar small offshore islands in Washington state's Olympic Peninsula, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spokesperson Megan Nagel said via email.

Haystack Rock, protected as part of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is abundant with seabirds and sea life in the summer.

From March through September, tufted puffins, common murre, pigeon guillemot and black oystercatcher raise their young on the formation.

Part of the [rock](#) is closed year-round to all public use to protect nesting and roosting birds.

© 2023 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Oregon's Cannon Beach reopens after cougar sighting on iconic coastal rock led to closure (2023, July 18) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-07-oregon-cannon-beach-reopens-cougar.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.