

US declares eastern cougar extinct

2 March 2011



actually of other types of cougars.

Of the 21 states in the historical range of the cats, "no states expressed a belief in the existence of an eastern cougar population," it said.

The service's lead scientist for the eastern cougar, Mark McCollough, said the animal has likely been extinct since the 1930s.

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The US Fish and Wildlife Service declared the eastern cougar officially extinct Wednesday, even though the big cat is believed to have first disappeared in the 1930s. The eastern cougar is often called the "ghost cat" because it has been so rarely glimpsed in northeastern states in recent decades. It was first placed on the endangered species list in 1973.

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"The US Fish and Wildlife Service conducted a formal review of the available information and... concludes the eastern cougar is extinct and recommends the subspecies be removed from the endangered species list," a statement said.

"Only western cougars still live in large enough numbers to maintain breeding populations, and they live on wild lands in the western United States and Canada."

The US agency asked for input about the eastern cougar, and determined from the 573 responses it received that any sightings in the area were

APA citation: US declares eastern cougar extinct (2011, March 2) retrieved 13 April 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-federal-declare-eastern-cougar-extinct.html>

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