

As part of a continuing series portraying wildlife, the Canadian Post Office has issued a series of stamps, created by artist Robert Bateman, drawing public attention to endangered species.



Eastern Cougar

Also known as the panther, painter, puma, mountain lion, catamount, Indian Devil, and pi-twal—the long-tailed one. It is one of five cougar races living in Canada. The Eastern Cougar and its colleagues evolved during the heyday of the sabre-toothed tiger and spread from Atlantic to Pacific and from northern Canada to southernmost South America. The white man drastically transformed the cougar's environment and because of fear or a desire for status as a hunter, killed the animal whenever possible. Soon everyone concluded the cougar was extinct in eastern Canada and anyone claiming to have seen one was suspected of being overly fond of the bottle.

Oddly enough, man's activities inadvertently saved the Eastern Cougar from annihilation. Logging, farm abandonment and fires changed the character of the New Brunswick forest, making it ideal territory for deer, the cougar's favourite food. The naturally solitary panthers took to the remotest parts

of the backwoods where there was plenty to eat and little human activity. The cougar population stabilized and even increased somewhat.

A male cougar can grow up to nine feet long and weigh 280 pounds but the average male is six to eight feet long and weighs between 100 and 200 pounds. Females are generally one-third smaller. The cougar's coat varies from reddish brown to greyish brown or even black. Females start breeding when two or three years old and produce an average litter of two cubs. A cougar's vocal repertoire ranges from purrs, hisses and mews to growls and screams. One commentator feels that a noisy cougar started the legend of the Dungarvon Whooper, reputedly a murdered New Brunswick lumberman who returns from the spirit world to lament his fate.

The cougar preys on a great variety of animals which it stalks by day and night. The big cat kills deer by snapping the victim's spine. It rarely makes ferocious unprovoked attacks on man, but is nevertheless regarded in dread. Yet it on more than one occasion has been treed by a small, yapping dog.



Peregrine Falcon

If the environment is too polluted for the peregrine falcon, perhaps humanity itself will one day succumb. The new endangered wildlife issue thus conveys a sombre warning.

The peregrine falcon, or "duck hawk", inhabits all but the remotest or harshest places on earth. Three races are found in Canada—one on the British Columbia coast, one in the far North, and a third in other areas.

The effects of DDT and other insecticides have stricken the once indestructible peregrine and other raptors such as the bald eagle, the osprey and Cooper's hawk. With every meal they absorb small quantities of chemicals which become concentrated in the body to such an extent that the buildup of noxious substances eventually either kills the birds or disrupts reproduction. Conservationists and environmentalists are concerned that seemingly innocuous chemicals now entering the environment could eventually destroy mankind.