



Forest Service News Release

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Recent Cougar Interactions Necessitate Trail Closure

On the Baker Lake Trail within the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

EVERETT, Wash. — The Baker Lake Trail and campsites on the East side of Baker Lake, Mt. Baker Ranger District were closed today following several human and cougar interactions in the past two weeks. The reports were of minimal response by the cougar in breaking off interaction after efforts by hikers with shouts and arm waving to discourage the cougar from remaining in the area. USDA Forest Service staff are coordinating with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists in assessing the situation.

Encounters like these can happen in a variety of situations, such as when a juvenile cougar is curious about hiker activities, a cougar is remaining in an area where a kill item has been stashed, or a mother cougar is in an area with young.

Relatively few people will ever catch a glimpse of a cougar much less confront one. If you come face to face with a cougar, your actions can either help or hinder a quick retreat by the animal.

Here are some things to remember:

- Stop, pick up small children immediately, and don't run. Running and rapid movements may trigger an attack. Remember, at close range, a cougar's instinct is to chase.
- Face the cougar. Talk to it firmly while slowly backing away. Always leave the animal an escape route.
- Try to appear larger than the cougar. Get above it (e.g., step up onto a rock or stump). If wearing a jacket, hold it open to further increase your apparent size. If you are in a group, stand shoulder-to-shoulder to appear intimidating.
- Do not take your eyes off the cougar or turn your back. Do not crouch down or try to hide.
- Never approach the cougar, especially if it is near a kill or with kittens, and never offer it food.
- If the cougar does not flee, be more assertive. If it shows signs of aggression (crouches with ears back, teeth bared, hissing, tail twitching, and hind feet pumping in preparation to jump), shout, wave your arms and throw anything you have available (water bottle,

book, backpack). The idea is to convince the cougar that you are not prey, but a potential danger.

If the cougar attacks, fight back. Be aggressive and try to stay on your feet. Cougars have been driven away by people who have fought back using anything within reach, including sticks, rocks, shovels, backpacks, and clothing—even bare hands. If you are aggressive enough, a cougar will flee, realizing it has made a mistake. Pepper spray in the cougar's face is also effective in the extreme unlikelihood of a close encounter with a cougar.

Visit [WDFW's website](#) for more information on how to handle a cougar encounter.

Please plan ahead and visit our [road and trail conditions page](#) before entering the forest.

To learn more about the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest visit us at:

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