



Cougar Frenzy

Pamela McDowell

Illustrated by Kasia Charko

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About the Book

When Cricket McKay and her best friend, Shilo, discover that a cougar has been seen in the town of Waterton, they are thrilled that school is closed for a few days as a precaution. But the townspeople are worried. They want the cougar caught and relocated, which could be disastrous for the cougar. Cricket's dad, a national park warden, is receiving reports of the cougar causing all kinds of trouble around town, but it's the type of trouble a cougar would be unlikely to get into. Then Cricket and Shilo find evidence that another animal may be to blame. With the help of a visiting researcher who is in Waterton studying cougar behavior, Cricket and Shilo must convince the townspeople, and Cricket's dad, that they're after the wrong animal before it's too late.

This is the fourth title featuring Cricket and her friends, following *Bats in Trouble*, *Ospreys in Danger* and *Salamander Rescue*.

About the Author

Pamela McDowell's first career was in education, teaching junior high and high school. She began writing when she left teaching, and she has now written more than 50 books for children. Pamela grew up in Alberta, and she enjoys writing about the diverse animals and habitats of her home province. Her interest in prickly, furry, slimy and slinky animals dates to her days as a teenager volunteering at the Calgary Zoo, where she befriended Peaches the porcupine and spent part of each day cuddling Rosie the boa constrictor. Pamela lives in Calgary.

About the Writing

Waterton is a magical place in the winter, and Pamela loves snowshoeing on the trails with her family and friends. One day they discovered some really big animal tracks beside the trail and took a picture of them. The warden said the tracks were made by a dog—but what if it had been a cougar? Pamela’s imagination took off with that idea, and she knew it would make a great adventure for Cricket and her friends. Cougars are rarely seen in Waterton, and Pamela has never seen one in the wild. Before she could write this story, she did weeks of research. She interviewed scientists to learn how they study cougars and what kind of equipment they use. Although she never wants to meet a cougar on the trail, Pamela still hopes to see one someday.

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections*Prereading Ideas*

- Waterton gets a lot of snow in the winter. Do you get snow where you live? Have you visited a snowy place in winter? What are some challenges people face during snowy winters?
- What do you think a frenzy is? Have you ever been excited or frightened by something that turned out not to be true? Were you disappointed or relieved when you found out?
- People often form expectations about animals from stories and movies. What are some of the things you already know about cougars? How do you expect a cougar to behave in the wild? How do you think it would behave if it wandered into the city?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. Warden McKay and the students discuss ways to stay safe in cougar country. Can you remember any of their suggestions?
2. Why does Jeremy put collars on cougars? Can you think of other animals that scientists track or study by using collars? What kind of information does a scientist get from the collar? Do you think this is a good way to study an animal? Why or why not?
3. Cricket begins to gather evidence that a different animal is causing the trouble in town. What are four clues she finds to prove it is not a cougar?
4. Why does Cricket stay silent during the town meeting? Why doesn’t she tell everyone about the evidence she has gathered? Have you ever been afraid to speak up about something? What advice would you give Cricket in this situation?

Suggested Activities

- Create a poster to show people how to stay safe in cougar country.
- Cricket and her friends learn how to identify cougar tracks. Divide a piece of paper into four squares. In one square, draw a cougar print and in another square, a wolf print, being careful to show how they are different. Choose two other animals and draw their prints in the remaining two squares.
- Draw a map of your neighborhood, including all the places you have visited over the last two or three days. Be sure to include your house and school.

- Research project: Where do cougars live? Create a map of North and South America showing the cougar's range.
- Draw a food web for the cougar. What would happen if there wasn't enough food in a cougar's territory?
- Research project: Young cougars are called kittens. Find information about a young cougar's first two years of life, including what it looks like and what it eats. Write a short report.
- The solution to the mystery, which comes at the end of the book, would be big news in the town. Write an article about it for the newspaper. Be sure to include comments from one or two townspeople.
- People enjoy a lot of outdoor activities in Waterton in the winter, including skiing, snowshoeing, hiking and skating. How many students in your class have done these activities? Create a tally chart of their answers, then use this data to draw a bar graph showing your results.
- Plot the coordinates below on graph paper, then connect them in order to form a picture:

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|----------|----------|
| • 2, 9 | • 18, 20 |
| • 3, 7 | • 17, 21 |
| • 6, 5 | • 15, 20 |
| • 6, 4 | • 13, 18 |
| • 9, 1 | • 10, 19 |
| • 11, 1 | • 7, 18 |
| • 14, 4 | • 4, 21 |
| • 14, 5 | • 3, 21 |
| • 17, 7 | • 2, 20 |
| • 18, 9 | • 2, 16 |
| • 18, 12 | • 3, 14 |
| • 17, 14 | • 2, 12 |
| • 18, 18 | |

Websites of Interest

Cougar Safety: adventuresmart.ca/tripplanning/cougarsafety.htm

Cougar Management and Conflict Prevention: albertaparks.ca/media/4477103/preventing_conflict_with_wildlife-cougars.pdf

Animals of Waterton Lakes National Park: pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ab/waterton/nature/faune-wildlife

Winter Safety in Waterton: pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ab/waterton/securite-safety/neige-snow

National Geographic Kids: kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/mountain-lion

About Cougars: sierraclub.bc.ca/cougar

Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

Bats in Trouble

Ospreys in Danger

Salamander Rescue

Reviews

Cougar Frenzy

“Accessible, entertaining, and empowering for young naturalists...Young environmentalists will appreciate seeing how facts can defy frenzy.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Intended for young readers, but the vocabulary is not restricted...Does a good job of presenting the concerns of both sides of the problems of living in an area with predators.”

—*Resource Links*

“Each chapter in *Cougar Frenzy* is just as entertaining as the last, and the language is very accessible for young readers...Cricket’s engagement will encourage animal lovers to take a stand and empower them to become animal activists themselves.”

—*CM: Canadian Review of Materials*

Bats in Trouble

“Effective in delivering an environmental message and encouraging action.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Ospreys in Danger

“This story fits well within the Orca Echoes theme of social responsibility, and teaches readers about osprey and what can happen when wild animals and human infrastructure intersect. There is also information about the true story that informed the book, and further information about osprey. Interesting and engaging, with a happy ending.”

—*Resource Links*

Salamander Rescue

“Simple, accurate descriptions of specific research methods and of salamander features shine. Unsubtle empowerment for young environmentalists.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

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