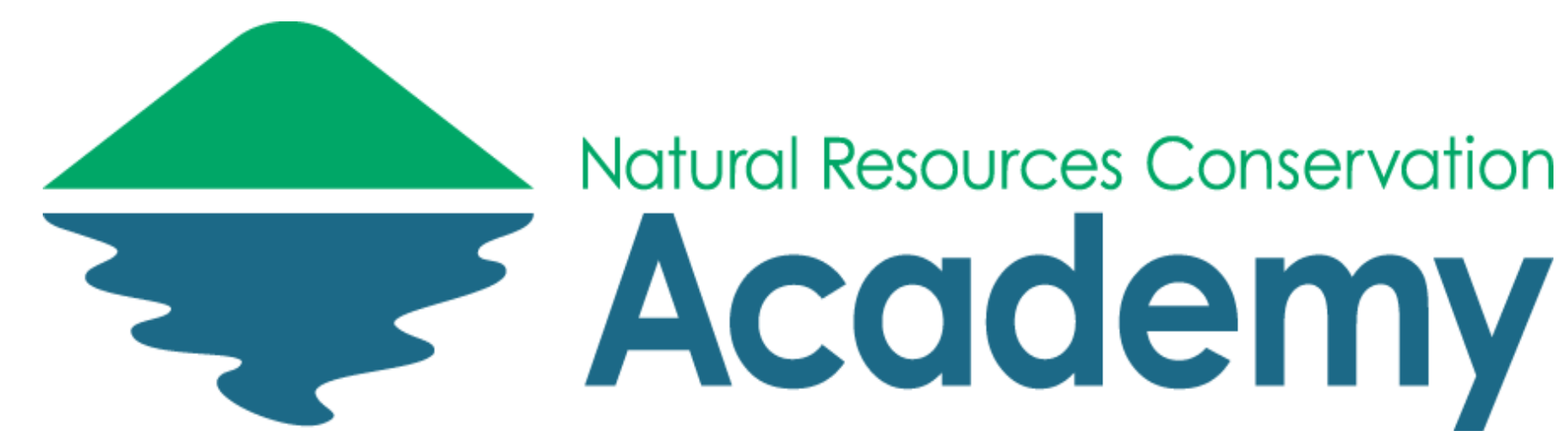


Mountain Lions in Connecticut?

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ABSTRACT

There has been much debate on whether or not mountain lions are living in Connecticut. Friends and family have told many stories about what they have seen. My goal for this project was to finally get to the bottom of this debate.

To start this project a Facebook, Twitter, and Gmail account were made in order to get in contact with those who have sightings. Once we had these stories choices on best places to set up cameras and scent stands were made. Our goal was to get pictures of a mountain lions or what people see and claim is a mountain lions.

INTRODUCTION

This debate has caused controversy in Connecticut (CT). The citizens are saying that mountain lions do live in CT, whilst the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) says that it is not true (Fig. 1). This could affect all of us living in CT because without the state recognizing mountain lions living in CT there are no safety precautions.

“Every state; you’re looking at half a billion dollars...for initial set-up...you’d have to hire the western biologists to come here [to train local officials].” -Bo Ottman, Founder of Cougars of the Valley

Without CT recognizing mountain lions as a species here, the state will not have to come up with safe procedures for handling these cats. Mountain lions primarily eat white-tailed deer, and these deer usually have close contact to humans.

Going into this project, I knew that many CT residents claim to have seen these lions and when they talk to the state they are told that they are just confused. If these cats that people see are mountain lions then I thought that the state should know so that they can take proper precautions.



Figure 1. Cell phone pictures taken by Thomas Deen at Haystack Mountain in Norfolk, CT. The photographer presumed the animal to be a mountain lion; however, conclusive evidence is lacking. Photos by Thomas Deens.



MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Area & Data Collection

- The main camera we got data from was located at 275 East Cotton Hill Road, New Hartford, CT.
- The camera was set up in a wooded area facing a small stream on a tree facing a natural pathway animals used to travel.
- A pile of rocks was sprayed with 100% pure mountain lion urine (Fig. 2).
- I only collected my data from 1 site and then some trusted websites.
- We were looking for the different animals that would be attracted to the scent.



Figure 2. This is the object that was set up as “territory” marked by a mountain lion scent. These cats are known to spray scent on and around things in their territory.

Sightings Map

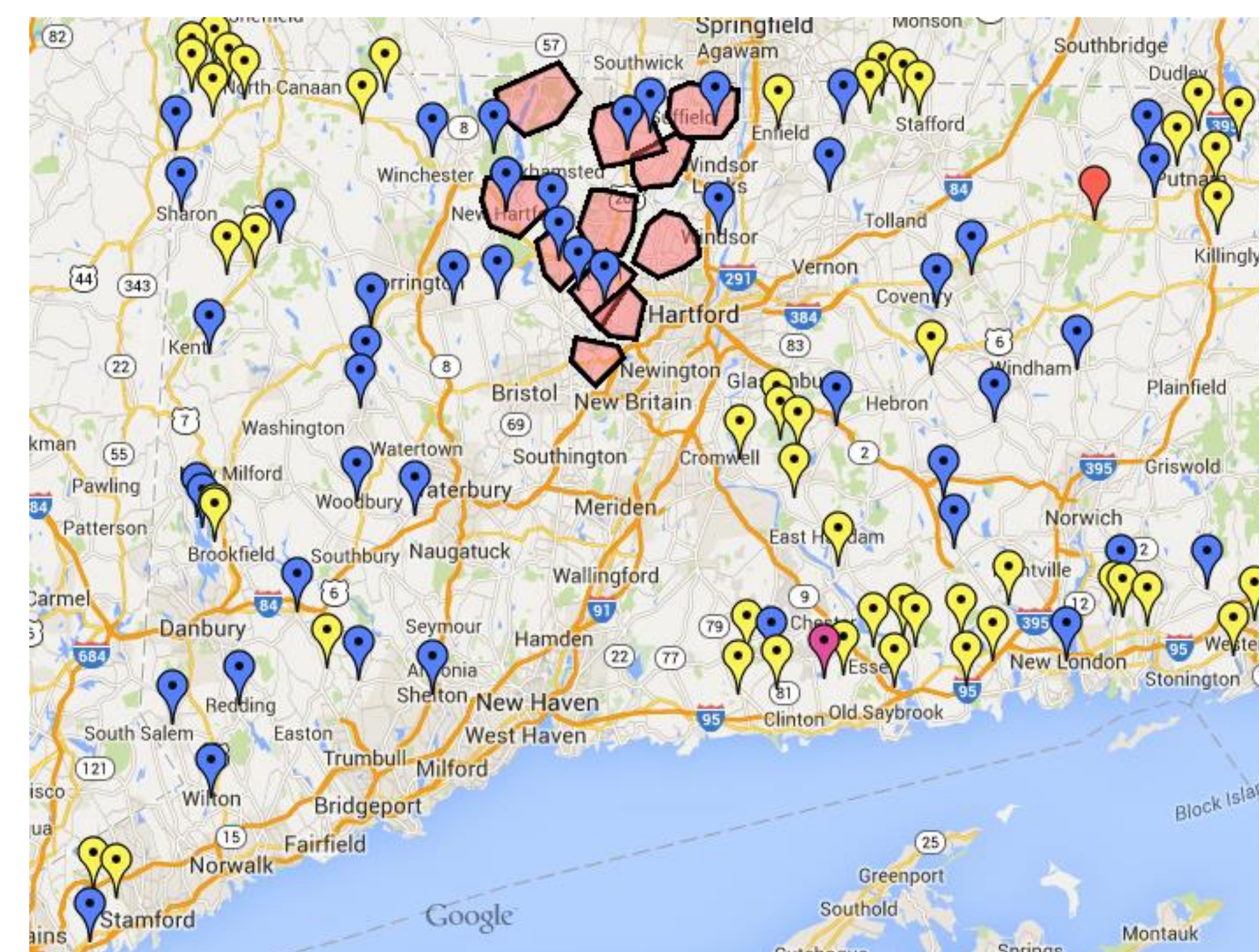


Figure 3. A sightings map. All points on the map indicate apparent sightings of mountain lions. The different colors indicate whether or not the sighting has a picture or not.

RESULTS

We found that many organisms including several coyotes, raccoons, rabbits, and bobcats were photographed at the scent area. We were able to see a lot of what people may see and confuse for mountain lions.

- A bobcat ran by the camera and is seen in Fig. 4.
- A few coyotes were curious of the scent as seen in Fig. 5



Figure 4. A curious bobcat examines the rock that the scent was sprayed on.



Figure 5. A few coyotes who are also curious examine the sprayed area.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of our camera trap, we can conclude that the “mountain lions” that residents in Connecticut seem to see most likely are bobcats or other large animals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

Some of the information and the Sightings Map are from “Cougars of the valley” from their website <http://ctmountainlion.org>.