

## South Dakota Mountain Lion Status Report

John Kanta, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, 3305 West South St., Rapid City, South Dakota, 57702 USA, [john.kanta@state.sd.us](mailto:john.kanta@state.sd.us)

**ABSTRACT** Mountain lions historically occurred in South Dakota but were nearly extirpated in the 1900s due to bounties and unregulated hunting on this animal from 1899 to 1966. Since receiving legal protection in 1978, the population has reestablished in the Black Hills of South Dakota. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (SDGF&P) has invested a large sum of money and time to conduct research on mountain lions to determine population size and distribution, evaluate population fitness, evaluate the effects of sport harvest, and assess genetic structure of lions and numerous other objectives. Based on this extensive research as well as other information SDGF&P collects, the Department offered a limited harvest on cougars in 2005 as well as 2006 and 2007. SDGF&P has collected data on lion mortality since 1996 with a total of 233 mortalities documented to date. SDGF&P began recording mountain lion reports in 1995 and continues to collect these data on a yearly basis.