TRUE WILD CONSERVATION

OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

Will You Love Us When We Are Old?



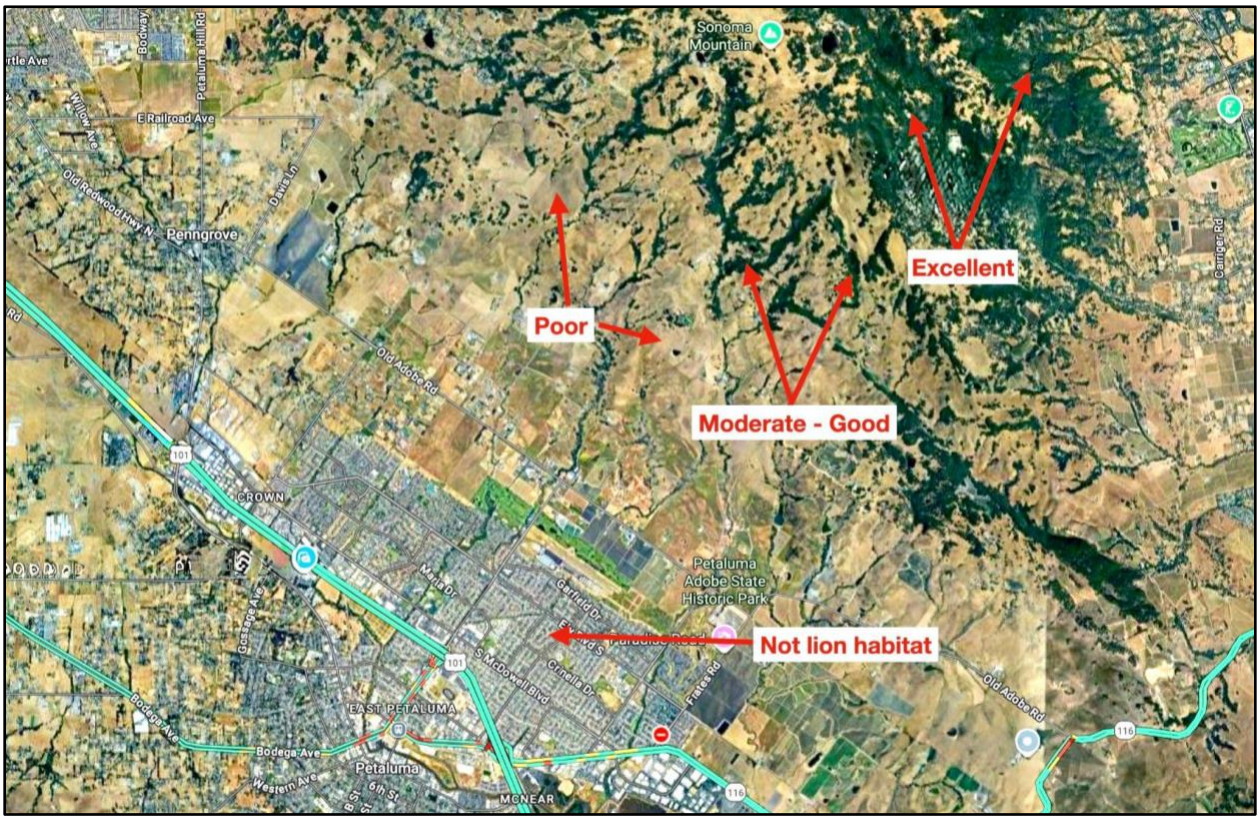
What would you like to read about in our next newsletter?

We'd love to hear from you! If there's a particular topic or question about mountain lions in the San Francisco North Bay that you'd like us to explore, please email your suggestions to quinton@truewild.org. Your ideas can help shape our next newsletter!

In the meantime, here are a few updates since our newsletter earlier this year.

Residents of the San Francisco North Bay: Are You Living with Lions?

Open Google Maps, switch to satellite view, and look at the landscape surrounding your home. If you see plenty of dark green, there's a good chance you're **Living with Lions!**



Google Maps may not always get its place names right (Lake Ontario being a case in point!), but its satellite imagery provides a useful visual indicator of potential mountain lion habitat. Those dark green areas generally represent dense vegetation and tree cover—features that mountain lions favor. As ambush predators, mountain lions rely on vegetation and other natural cover to conceal themselves from prey. They also tend to avoid people, making these vegetated areas particularly valuable as places to move, hunt, and rest relatively undisturbed.

Of course, with the proliferation of home security cameras and trail cameras, it's becoming increasingly difficult for mountain lions to remain completely under the radar. Yet, despite their presence throughout much of the North Bay, very few residents are fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of one of these elusive and enigmatic cats in the wild.

The map below provides an indication of how mountain lions use our local landscape. Pay particular attention to the narrow, continuous bands of dark green. These often follow creeks and drainages, which can serve as important movement corridors, connecting larger patches of suitable habitat. Remarkably, some of these corridors extend right into urban areas, allowing mountain lions to move through places where few people would ever expect to encounter them.

A memorable example was the mountain lion discovered sleeping in a planter outside Macy's in downtown Santa Rosa in April 2019—the now-famous "Macy's cat."

So, the next time you look at a satellite image of your neighborhood, take a closer look at those green spaces and creek corridors. You may be sharing your landscape with a mountain lion without ever knowing it!



P33 and her two kittens born circa. 23 January 2026

Kittens, Kittens and More Kittens — But That's Not the Full Story

In our April newsletter, we shared the exciting news that P33 had given birth to three kittens on January 23, with Quinton discovering the den on February 2. Sadly, one of the kittens was killed by an unknown predator at just two weeks of age.

Since then, we have been closely monitoring the two surviving kittens, and we're delighted to report that both are still alive and doing well! We've captured some wonderful footage of the youngsters interacting with their mother, giving us a fascinating glimpse into their lives as they grow and develop.

We've also been able to determine their sex—both are males, meaning that the original litter consisted entirely of boys!

On March 25, P49, our GPS-collared female in the Guerneville/Forestville area, gave birth to three kittens in a secluded stand of redwoods. Quinton was able to locate the den and document the tiny newcomers using remotely triggered cameras.

In the months that followed, P49 proved particularly challenging to keep track of. However, in October, Quinton successfully recaptured her and fitted her with a new GPS collar, providing a valuable opportunity to assess how her family was doing. Sadly, we discovered that only one of her three kittens had survived to seven months of age—another reminder of just how challenging life can be for young mountain lions, even in a seemingly ideal habitat.



P49's three kittens born circa. 23 March 2026

Unfortunately, our research has revealed very low survival rates among young mountain lions in the North Bay, both for dependent kittens during their first year of life and for dispersing subadults once they leave their mothers to establish territories of their own.

To date, we have monitored 15 mountain lion dens (36 kittens) and found that only 17% of the kittens have survived to dispersal age. This is a concerning finding, and we are now intensifying our efforts to understand the factors contributing to these losses, while comparing our results with those from mountain lion populations elsewhere.

The encouraging news is that both P33 and P49 have previously demonstrated an ability to successfully raise kittens through to independence. P33's daughter, P50, was confirmed alive as recently as August this year, having already been independent for approximately a year. Similarly, P49 successfully raised two offspring to dispersal age, although their current whereabouts and survival status remain unknown.

These individual success stories offer some encouragement, but they also highlight just how much we still need to learn about the challenges facing young mountain lions in our region. Understanding why so few survive, and what this means for the long-term viability of our local population, is becoming an increasingly important focus of our research.

The Threat of Feline Leukemia Virus

Preliminary results from our ongoing research into Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) indicate that at least nine mountain lions in our study have tested positive for the virus to date. Perhaps most concerning is the finding that 33% of mountain lions sampled in Sonoma Valley have tested positive for FeLV, compared with just 2% in an earlier statewide analysis.

With several samples still awaiting analysis, these findings remain preliminary. Nevertheless, the striking difference raises serious concerns about the prevalence of FeLV in our local mountain lion population and the potential consequences for their health and survival.

Further research will be essential to understand the extent of infection, distinguish between different forms of the virus, and assess its potential impact on the long-term viability of the population.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone involved in this collaborative effort. The dedication and expertise of our research partners have been invaluable in helping us better understand this emerging threat and explore potential solutions to protect our mountain lions.

Cat eyes



All cats are incredibly visually stimulated predators. If it runs, chase it. The morphology of a cat's eye, with a high ratio of rod cells to cone cells clustered in their retinas, allows for excellent low light vision, particularly in detection of movement. Although cats, like mountain lions, have an excellent sense of smell, they, unlike canids and bears, appear not to be driven to do things solely based on smell. A bear, for example, would have no issue ripping open a tent if it smelled food (or even toothpaste) inside. Cats are quite different. If a cat cannot see what it is smelling, it is unlikely to fully investigate the same way a bear would. We have learnt this about lions and leopards when we are on safari in Africa - if you are in a closed tent, you should be safe. As such, we encourage landowners with livestock to be aware of this when it comes to protecting their animals. Even if you have your animals in a fully enclosed wire enclosure, wrap it with a non-permeable material (like shadecloth) to block the visual stimulus for mountain lions.

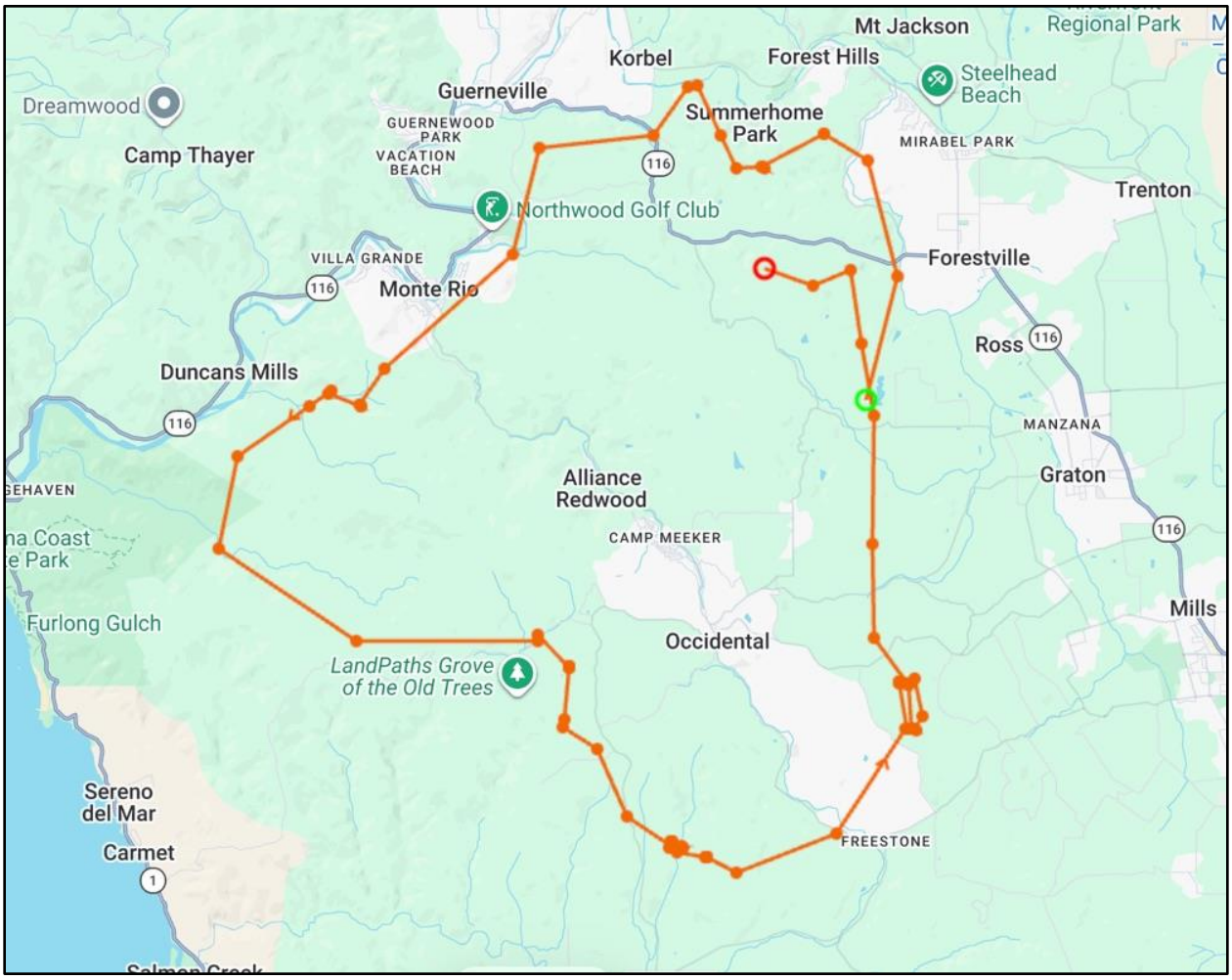
Boys in the Hood

P48's ("Atlas") movement patterns have been particularly fascinating. GPS tracking data reveal that he can travel around the perimeter of his home range in as little as a week, covering considerable distances in the process. Even after making a kill, he sometimes spends no more

than a few hours to a day at the site before moving on, rather than hanging around to fully consume his kill.

One possible explanation is that Atlas is detecting the presence of one or more rival males and is actively patrolling his territory to defend it against potential intruders. If this is the case, the need to maintain his territorial boundaries may be taking priority over spending extended periods feeding at individual kills.

This could also help explain why he appears willing to take advantage of easily accessible prey, including unprotected livestock, as he moves through his range. While we cannot yet confirm what is driving this behavior, his movements offer an intriguing glimpse into the territorial dynamics of mountain lions in our region—and highlight the importance of protecting livestock.



P48 patrolling the full extent of his home range in 1 week

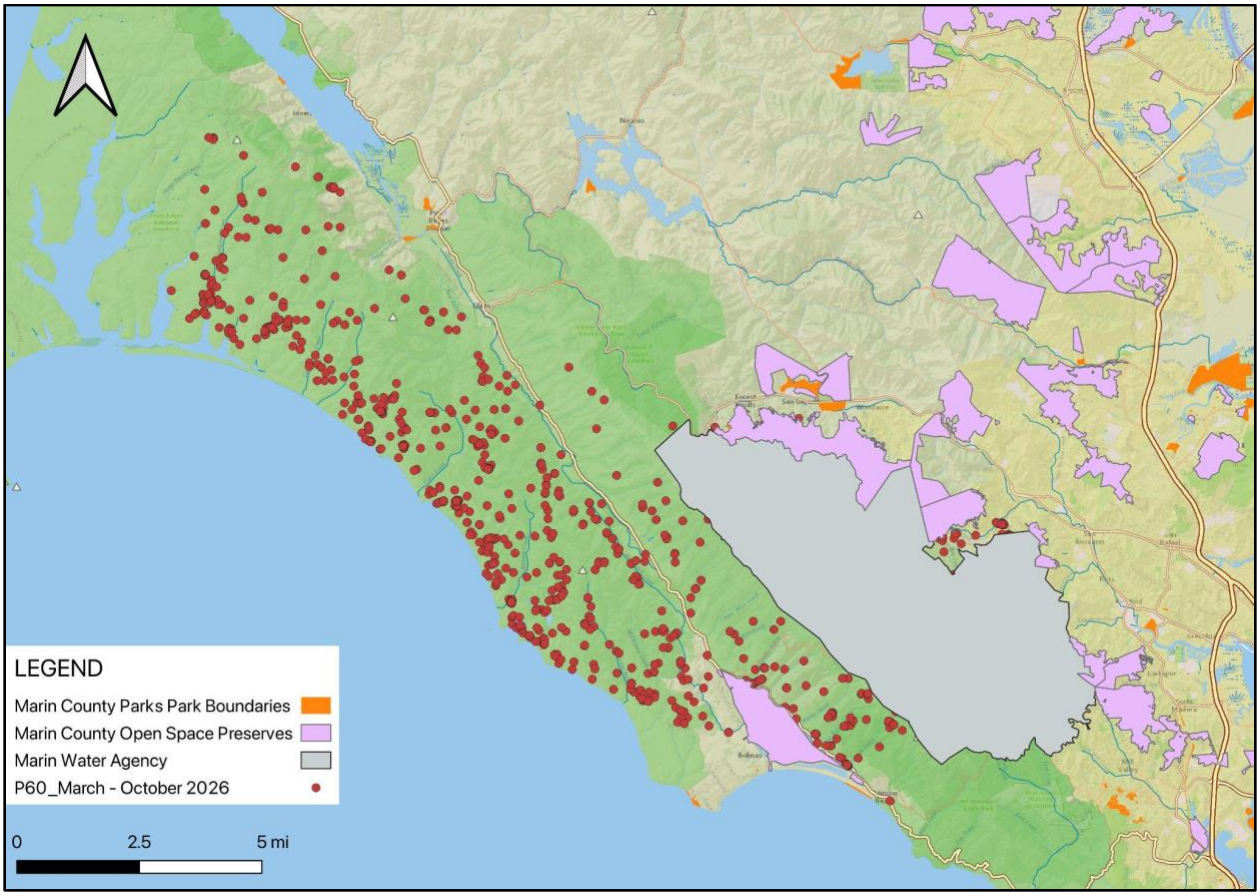
“Pangui” (P60)

Pangui has been doing the rounds in Marin. GPS points suggest he has swum across Kent Lake multiple times! The GPS clusters we have investigated have all been deer kills. More effort will be invested in recording his diet over the coming months, particularly by our Living with Lions partners - All Hands Ecology - based nearby in Marin. The map below shows Pangui's (P60) GPS data points from March - October 2026. On request from the agencies concerned, GPS location data are masked beneath agency map boundary layers.

You can read about our expansion into Marin in an article in the Marin IJ: https://www.marinij.com/2026/04/19/mountain-lion-captured-in-marin-as-wildlife-project-expands/?share=orwoonwtmiapheimpiei



Pangui (P60) In Marin

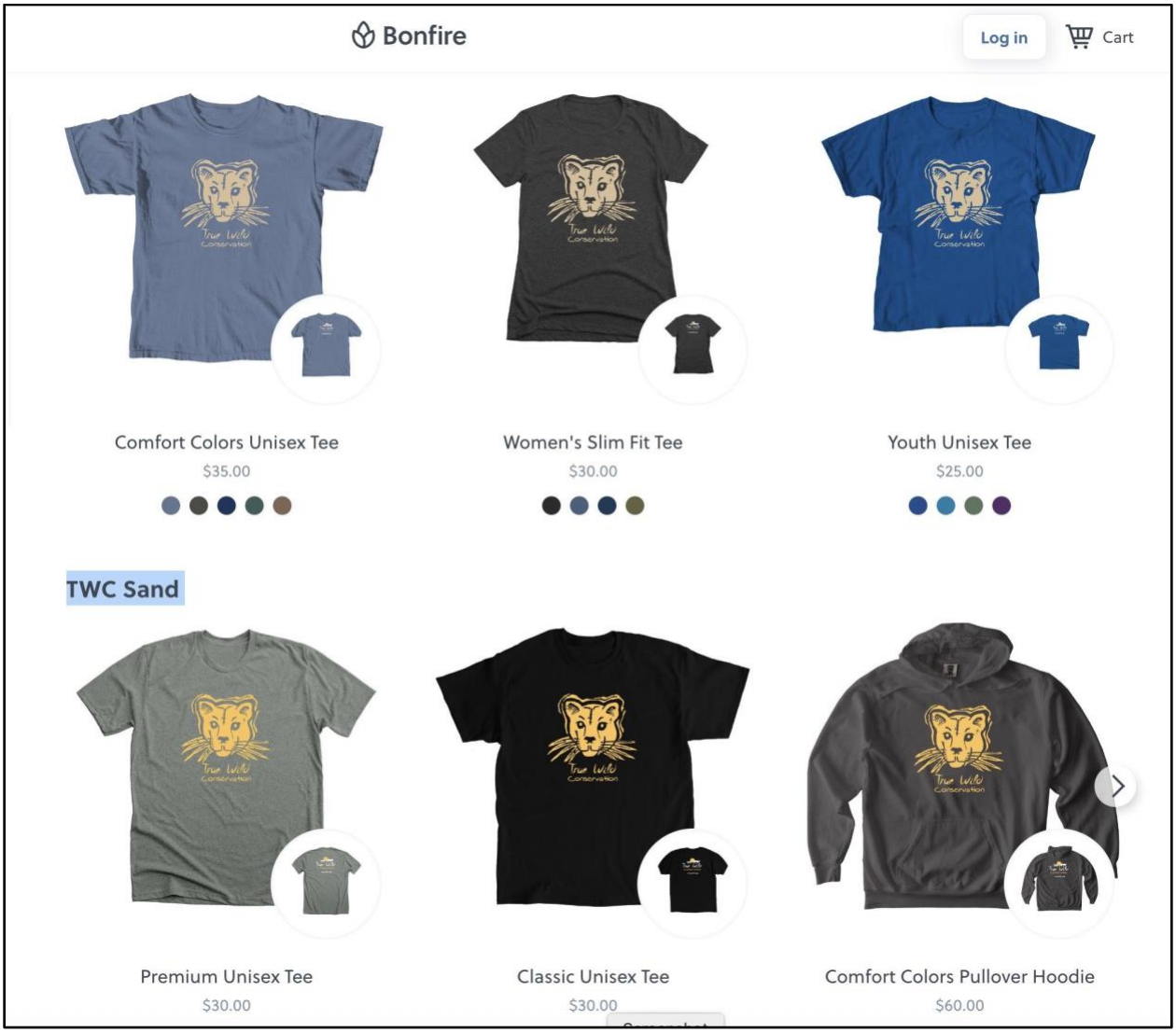


Pangui (P60) GPS data points from March - October 2026. On request from the agencies concerned, GPS location data are masked beneath agency map boundary layers.

Show Your Wild Side!

We're excited to announce a new collection of **True Wild Conservation T-shirts and sweatshirts**, now available to order online! Whether you're out exploring the wild or simply want to show your love for wildlife, we've got something for you.

Check out the collection HERE and find your next favorite True Wild garment!



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