



ARIZONA-SONORA
**DESERT
MUSEUM**

Media Release

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Mountain Lion Cub Makes Debut at Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

Tucson, AZ (May 20, 2013) The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is pleased to announce that the Museum's new mountain lion cub will make its public debut on Monday, May 20th. Visitors will be able to view the new cub in the Mountain Woodland habitat on the museum grounds beginning at noon that day.

The Desert Museum traditionally adopts orphaned mountain lions, which have not been suitable for release into the wild, including the Museum's newest addition, a five and a half-month-old male cub found in San Jose, CA in March weighing only 15 lbs. Rescued and nursed back to health by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, but unsuitable for reintroduction into the wild, its adoption by the Desert Museum was arranged through the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

"Once the cub was in good health suitable for transport, California departmental agents traveled nine hours to rendezvous with Desert Museum staff in Blythe, California," states Shawnee Riplog-Peterson, the Museum's Curator of Mammalogy & Ornithology. "After arrival at the Museum, the cub was quarantined in the exhibit's night-holding area at which time veterinarians and keepers monitored its well-being and began training efforts," she continued.

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Initial training consists of teaching the animal to respond to keepers' cues to safely move from one area to another upon request. All training is conducted with positive reinforcement techniques. "He is thriving," relates Riplog-Peterson "and we are pleased now to share him with visitors who will appreciate his energy and youthful curiosity."

After delighting visitors for over 13 years, the Desert Museum recently retired its two aging mountain lion siblings. "The mountain lions previously in the exhibit needed a residence which could better suit their physical limitations brought on by arthritis," states Craig Ivanyi, Executive Director. "A new behind-the-scenes habitat has been designed where the lions will spend their much deserved retirement years." Each sibling was weighed and received a full health evaluation prior to retirement. Mountain lions in the wild have an average life expectancy of thirteen years.

The mountain lions' retirement area is not open to the public. The new habitat offers comfortable and safe surroundings, where animal keepers can provide a variety of enrichment options to keep them psychologically engaged. The new quarters include a resting platform and indoor/outdoor areas with cooling and heating systems when needed. The retired animals are 13+ years old.

Known scientifically as *Puma concolor*, mountain lions (a.k.a. pumas or cougars) are the largest of the small cats. Even though they are referred to as lions, they lack the ability to roar. They are consummate predators, with a small head, muscular body, powerful shoulders, strong legs, large paws, and a long tail. Cougars have powerful claws and jaws armed with impressive canines. They are stalking, ambush hunters that normally live solitary lives.

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is one of the nation's leading outdoor, living museums, featuring more than 230 animals and 1,200 varieties of desert plants. Its purpose is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the bi-national, Sonoran Desert region. The museum is located at 2021 N. Kinney Road, in Tucson Mountain Park adjacent to Saguaro National Park (West). It is open daily year round with operating hours varying by season. Call (520) 883-2702 or visit www.desertmuseum.org for more information.