

Mountain lion killed in Connecticut had walked from South Dakota

By [Michael Winter](#), USA TODAY

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By Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection via AP

DNA tests show that a 140-pound mountain lion killed last month on a Connecticut highway had walked more than 1,500 miles east from the Black Hills of South Dakota., state officials said today. The epic journey was the longest ever recorded for a mountain lion.

"The confirmation of a wild mountain lion in our state was the first recorded in more than 100 years," said Daniel Esty, commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. "This is the first evidence of a mountain lion making its way to Connecticut from western states and there is still no evidence indicating that there is a native population of mountain lions in Connecticut."

The department explained the genetic sleuthing in [a news release](#):

The genetic tests reveal information about the mountain lion's origin and travels were conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Wildlife Genetics Laboratory in Missoula, Montana. DNA tests show that tissue from the Milford mountain lion matches the genetic structure of the mountain lion population in the Black Hills region of South Dakota.

The Forest Service lab also compared the Milford mountain lion's DNA to DNA samples collected from individual animals occurring outside of the core South Dakota population. This led to a match with DNA collected from an animal whose movements were tracked in Minnesota and Wisconsin from late 2009 through early 2010. DNA from the Connecticut specimen exactly matched DNA collected from an individual mountain lion at one site in Minnesota and three sites in Wisconsin.

The Midwestern DNA samples were obtained by collecting scat (droppings), blood and hair found while snow tracking the mountain lion at locations where sightings of the animal were confirmed. In addition, at least a half dozen confirmed sightings of a mountain lion in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan are believed to be of the same animal. The distance between the first documentation in Minnesota and the spot where the animal was killed by a vehicle is nearly 1,000 miles and is nearly double the longest distance previously recorded for a dispersing mountain lion.

Male mountain lions normally "disperse" in search of females, but usually travel only about 100 miles. The big cat, which was fully grown and younger than six, was hit by a car and killed June 11 on the Wilbur Cross Parkway in Milford, Conn. It had been seen earlier in June in Greenwich.

Read more from the [Hartford Courant](#), which has [a photo](#) of the mountain lion in Wisconsin in January 2010, and [the Associated Press](#).