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Study tracks where cougars roam in Washington

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By [GLENN FARLEY](#) / KING 5 News



Associated Press/ File photo

AUBURN, Wash. - You can't see them, but they can see you. A new study of mountain lions in western Washington shows just how close the big cats are coming to homes and businesses. They're showing up virtually unnoticed in green belts and patches of forest in Auburn, Covington, and on the Sammamish plateau - only tracked by their GPS collars. The good news is that cougars don't seem to care about humans.

Brian Kertson is wrapping up his Ph.D. at the University of Washington. For four years, he's been trying to get the lowdown on the movements of cougars, and a major aspect of his study is how much time the mountain lions are spending in town.

As part of his study, Brian Kertson tracked 32 cougars equipped with radio collars and GPS antennas. "They are following the deer," Kertson said.

Unlike bears, cougars don't go for people's garbage, but he has an example of one female that kept hanging around a chicken coop. Kertsen says people who feed deer and raccoons and other wildlife on the cougar's menu are likely to attract the big cats.

Kertson tracked 32 cougars equipped with radio collars and GPS antennas, which regularly record just where the cougars have been. Field work started in 2004, and ended in 2008. The study area is mostly eastern King County and portions of Southeast Snohomish and Northeast Pierce County.