



Media Contact

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March 7, 2016—Stinson Beach, CA – Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR), a leader in conservation science, land preservation, and nature education, announced today the launch of the [ACR Mountain Lion Project](#), a community-based research and education project in the Mayacamas Mountains of Sonoma and Napa Counties that will increase scientific and public understanding of mountain lions, identify priority habitat areas for conservation, and increase appreciation for these important top predators.

ACR’s principal investigator on the Project is Dr. Quinton Martins, a leading expert on large mountain cats and a skilled predator trapper. Dr. Martins is the former founder and CEO of the Cape Leopard Trust, a successful predator conservation NGO based in South Africa. He has over 20 years of field experience having worked in wilderness areas throughout Africa, Saudi Arabia and the USA.

Together with a team of ACR staff and advisors, Dr. Martins will study mountain lions within an area that encompasses approximately 1,000 square miles, primarily in the Mayacamas Mountains (areas east of Hwy 101 and west of Hwy 29) in Sonoma and Napa Counties. “By expanding our knowledge of mountain lion behavior, population size, feeding habits, home range, and movements, we can contribute to their conservation,” said Dr. Martins, ACR Wildlife Ecologist.

The ACR Mountain Lion Project is part of the Bay Area Puma Research Cooperative, which includes the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, Felidae Conservation Fund, and Panthera. Permits for the capture and collaring of mountain lions have been submitted to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and are currently being processed. In the interim, Dr. Martins and other ACR staff have been laying the groundwork by reaching out to local landowners,

developing research partnerships, and surveying communities on their perceptions of mountain lions.

“We know the cats are out there” said Martins, who noted that the camera trapping work carried out by ACR and other conservation organizations for the past several years, combined with citizen reports of sightings, provide ample evidence. “We don’t know how many there are, whether the population is healthy, or how they are moving through the landscape. It’s really exciting as this study addresses those unknowns.”

ACR’s research goals include using the data on how mountain lions actually move in the landscape to inform conservation efforts. “Mountain lions are top predators in our terrestrial ecosystem and can be seen as both “umbrella” and “keystone” species. Because mountain lions have large ranges and special habitat requirements, their conservation leads to broader environmental protection, connectivity and species preservation, said Jeanne Wirka, ACR’s Director of Stewardship. “Long-term sustainability of a mountain lion population represents maintenance of an intact and functioning ecosystem.”

ACR’s research will be paired with an extensive education and outreach program. “ACR recognizes that conservation is most successful when people feel personally connected to nature,” said John Petersen, ACR’s Executive Director. “There is a terrific level of interest in large mammals living within the Sonoma-Napa-Lake mountain ranges and little doubt that mountain lions inspire awe, curiosity, and sometimes fear in a way that few other animals do.”

The ACR Mountain Lion Project will build on ACR’s deep ties to local communities in the Bay Area through its school program (serving over 6000 elementary school students each year), lifelong learning, and public programs. ACR staff are also reaching out to and meeting with individual landowners in the study area to involve the community in the research as well as offering ideas on how best to mitigate human-mountain lion conflict.

About ACR

Audubon Canyon Ranch is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit environmental conservation and education organization. It was founded in 1962 to safeguard Bolinas Lagoon from irresponsible development, leading the way for the protection of Tomales Bay.

Today, ACR acts as guardian of four main nature preserves in Marin, Sonoma and Lake counties. These 5,000 acres of tidal flats, marshlands, coastal prairie, oak woodlands and redwood groves provide significant habitat to wildlife and have been placed in our care by generous donors to steward and protect in perpetuity.

ACR’s programs are made possible thanks to the contribution of thousands of hours of volunteer service, and donations from caring individuals, foundations and businesses. Look for ACR on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For more information, visit www.egret.org, call 415-868-9244, or email acr@egret.org.

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