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Big Cats: Facing Britain's Wild Predators



Synopsis

Right across Britain, people are making remarkable claims - they are reporting large feral cats resembling panthers, pumas and lynx. Month after month the sightings continue, with citizens from all walks of life having surprise encounters with big cats. They may be driving, walking their dog or riding a horse, but most reports are consistent and many are emotionally charged - people have encountered a big predator, in safe, suburban Britain. Tell-tale signs of the cats include freshly-eaten deer, the odd hair sample and droppings which reveal their diet. As wildlife filmmakers testify, photographing these stealthy creatures is not easy, even in their official countries. How have these cats established themselves? What are their territories, how are they breeding and are numbers viable? This gripping book reviews the evidence and considers the implications of Britain's large cats, for people and for wildlife. The book has many surprises - about the cats themselves and the human reactions. Most people tolerate the big cats they see, and many are wary yet excited. Men and women, young and old, urban and rural, the response is similar - people have experienced something truly wild and their senses have been awoken. They may be awkward to admit to, but these cats are part of our land - evolving in Britain, shaping the ecosystem as a new apex predator. Many people would rather keep it quiet. But it is time to tell the secret, in a measured way. This book explores the dilemmas we face as we come to terms with our emerging big cats.

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Customer Reviews

Big Cats by Richard Minter documents the attempts to prove (or disprove) the existence of large wild cats in Great Britain. There have been eyewitness reports of large wild cats in the British Isles for years now. However, clear photographs or video with a good way to judge scale have been scarce, and actual corpses of big cats have been almost non-existent. Since the last of Britain's native large cats went extinct hundreds of years ago, most authorities have been quite skeptical when told someone saw a panther- or mountain-lion-sized cat in the British countryside. Minter's book details the research of those trying to document the sightings and the attempts to figure out what possible explanations are. As a side note, while Minter clearly believes that there are big cats around in Britain, he does start out the book by saying "Here is my theory and I am going to attempt to prove it", but rather "Here is all the data we have gathered, and here is the analysis and the conclusions we feel are supported by the analysis and the questions that still remain unanswered." The second approach is one that is being used more frequently in books about odd occurrences. Although this book was the first one I read that used this approach, I like it a lot more than books written by an author who has already decided what he wants you to think, leaving the reader to feel as though they were being preached to and wondering what contrary data might have been conveniently left out. Minter's book is not very long, a little over 200 pages, but quite interesting and it goes into a lot of depth on many topics.

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