

Feasibility Assessments for Restoration Efforts

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Cougar Research Collaborative



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Who makes up the CRC?

- Three conservation non-profits
 - Panthera
 - Mark Elbroch, Axel Moehrenschlager, Rana Bayrakcismith, Vanessa Castle, Emily Carrollo
 - Tompkins Conservation
 - Sawyer Downey, Tom Butler
 - Northeast Wilderness Trust
 - Tom Butler, Shelby Perry
- Three university researchers:
 - The Ohio State University
 - Jeremy Bruskotter and Ben Ghasemi
 - Michigan Technological University
 - John Vucetich

Who am I?

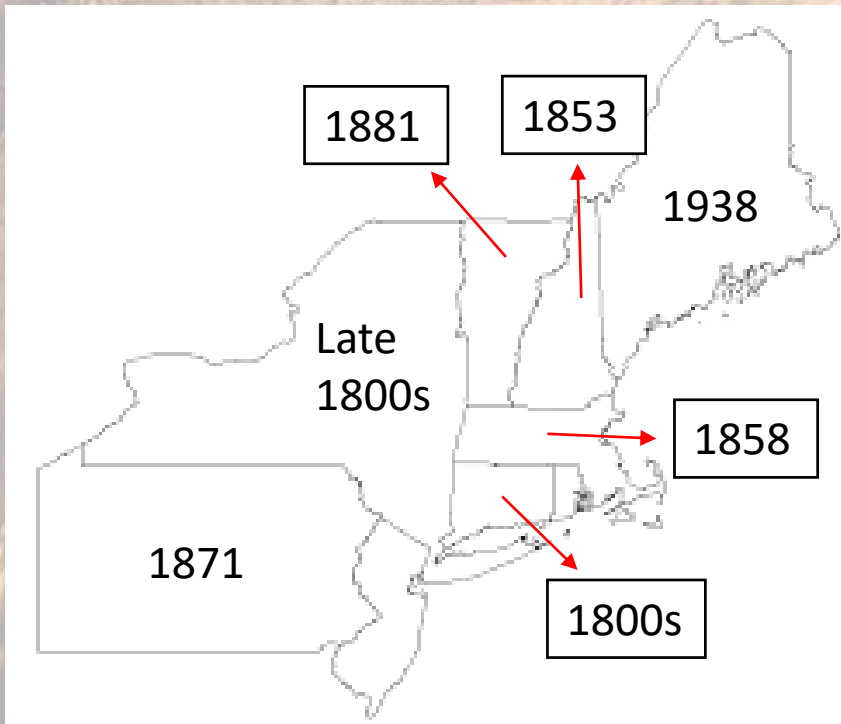


Northeast Reintroduction History



Cougar History in the East

- Why are they gone? Habitat loss, overharvest, and persecution.



Important Considerations

- Feasibility: the possibility that something can be made, done, or achieved, or is reasonable
- Feasibility will be addressed through the lens of set objectives
- State wildlife agencies preferably in leadership role
- Feasibility assessments will take time (1-2 years most likely)
- Establishment of a working group may be necessary (and helpful!)



American Marten Reintroduction

A Feasibility Assessment
for Pennsylvania

2022



Environmental Assessment for Experimental Release of Elk (*Cervus elaphus*) in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park

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Cougar History in Vermont

- Any historic information regarding cougars in Vermont (i.e., distribution, management/research efforts, ecology, etc.)
- Address why cougars are gone, and if those reasons for extirpation have been addressed



Vermont Historical Society

Alexander Crowell allegedly shot the last cougar in VT

Ecological Feasibility

- Life history and ecology of cougars: who are we talking about
- Habitat needs, considerations and assessments
- Diet
- Inter specific species interactions
 - SGCN species
 - Game species
- Genetic considerations





Social and Economic Considerations

- Public opinion
- Stakeholder group engagement
- State agency needs (funding, personnel/time)
- Human-cougar conflict considerations
- Recreational activity considerations and opportunities



Legal Implications

- Species classification and their implications
- Potential legal scenarios
 - Land management
 - Cougar response plans



Considerations for Restoration Efforts

- Some context about what a restoration effort would look like
 - Wildlife management personnel and funds to manage the species
 - NGO involvement
 - Identifying potential source cougar populations
 - Regional and state wildlife researcher assistance
 - History of prior state wildlife restoration efforts
 - Identifying other cougar and/or large wild cat translocation efforts



Florida panther release. Photo by Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The Why

Ecological, social, economic, cultural, and other reasons why cougar restoration may be supported that's not described in earlier assessment sections





Recommendations for next steps

- This is important for each scenario of there is feasibility or there is not feasibility
- Identifying what to do with this information helps managers provide informed management decisions

Questions?



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