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## Grand Canyon News Release

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### **Mountain Lion Kittens Tagged and an Integral Part of Research at Grand Canyon National Park**

**Grand Canyon, Ariz.** - Last week, three five-week old mountain lion kittens were captured and tagged within Grand Canyon National Park by park researchers. The litter of three females was found by mapping GPS locations of their radio-collared mother.

An attempt will be made in a year to recapture these kittens after they have grown large enough to wear a radio collar. These kittens will provide important information on dispersal and movements of mountain lions with origins inside of the park.

Since November of 2003, 16 adult mountain lions have been captured and radio collared inside of Grand Canyon National Park. Nine of these lions (six males and three females) are still collared and being monitored by park staff. The purpose of this research is to monitor how lions use the park and surrounding lands, including the Kaibab National Forest. The research will also provide information on how mountain lions interact (or most often choose not to interact) with humans and how human infrastructure affects them.

“Grand Canyon National Park provides important habitat and prey for mountain lions in all areas of the park including sites frequented by people,” said Grand Canyon National Park wildlife biologist Eric York. “By understanding mountain lion movements, population dynamics and habits, biologists can make efforts to limit the potential negative interactions between lions and

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humans. This data will be utilized to inform and educate visitors on how to safely share the Grand Canyon with mountain lions.”

To date there have been no threatening encounters by lions in the study. However, humans have been responsible for four mountain lion deaths within the past two years - two from vehicle collisions inside the park and two that were legally hunted outside of the park boundary. Another collared mountain lion died due to natural causes. Park biologists have also lost contact with two previously collared lions. It is believed that one collar fell off and the other collar failed. The fate of these two lions is unknown.

Although there has never been a mountain lion attack at the Grand Canyon, there have been lion sightings.

“The number of lions and the increasing number of people utilizing the same areas of the park make an encounter possible,” said York.

The following suggestions may help reduce your chances of having a mountain lion encounter:

- Hike in a group and make noise.
- Keep small children under control; do not let them run ahead.

If you encounter a mountain lion that does not immediately retreat, follow the steps below:

- If you have small children, pick them up.
- While facing the lion, back away slowly; do not run.
- Look big and make a lot of noise – let the lion know you are a human.
- If the lion is not backing away, throw rocks and sticks at it to scare it off.

Please report all mountain lion sightings to a ranger.

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