

# Using Expert-Opinion Surveys and GIS to Model Potential Cougar Habitat and Dispersal Corridors in Midwestern North America



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## Abstract

Confirmations of cougar (*Puma concolor*) presence in Midwestern North America have increased considerably during the last decade. Although increasing cougar presence in the region may be indicative of potential eastward expansion of current cougar range via dispersal, no research has been conducted on cougar potential in the Midwest. Herein, we describe our approach to modeling potential cougar habitat and dispersal corridors in the Midwest (i.e., nine states and two provinces) using expert-opinion surveys, geospatial data, and a geographic information system (GIS). We intend to identify the distribution of potentially suitable habitat in this region where empirical data regarding cougar habitat use is not available. We will also use the map of potential habitat suitability, expert knowledge, and a GIS to evaluate potential dispersal corridors for cougars. Our results will provide information to wildlife biologists for management support, protection, and public education regarding cougar presence in the Midwest.

## About the Authors

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