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<sup>1</sup>BENT, A. C. 1938. *Life histories of North American birds of prey*. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 170 (Dover Edition, 1961).

<sup>2</sup>BRETZ, J. H. 1943. *Keewatin end moraines in Alberta, Canada*. Bulletin of the Geological Society of America, 54: 31-52.

<sup>3</sup>HENDERSON, A. D. 1915. *Nesting of the Great Gray Owl in central Alberta*. Oologist, 32: 2-6.

<sup>4</sup>HENDERSON, A. D. 1923. *Further notes on the nesting of the Great Gray Owl*. Oologist, 40: 126-127.

<sup>5</sup>HOUSTON, C. S. 1971. *Northern Great Plain region*. American Birds, 25: 869-872.

<sup>6</sup>LAW, C. 1960. *The Great Gray Owl of the woodlands*. Blue Jay, 18: 14-16.

<sup>7</sup>NERO, R. W. 1969. *The status of the Great Gray Owl in Manitoba, with special reference to the 1968-1969 influx*. Blue Jay, 27: 191-209.

<sup>8</sup>NERO, R. W. 1970a. *Great Gray Owls nesting near Roseau*. Loon, 42: 88-93.

<sup>9</sup>NERO, R. W. 1970b. *A visit to a Great Gray Owl nest*. Ontario Naturalist, 8: 4-7.

<sup>10</sup>SALT, W. R., and A. L. WILK. 1966. *The bird of Alberta*. The Queens Printer, Edmonton. 51 pp.

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## Evidence of COUGARS

### Near Nipawin, Saskatchewan

by STANLEY D. RIOME\*

"I believe you" are comforting words to a person who has had the supreme fortune of seeing a cougar and then, rather than knowing the excitement of reliving the experience again and again by telling others about it, has been forced through ridicule, to suppress his feelings and, worse still, to possibly doubt his own credulity! Over the past years it has been my good fortune to meet a number of people who, in my judgement, by the manner in which they related their stories, were completely reliable.

Tom White has written two well documented articles on the cougar (*Blue Jay*, 25: 84-89; 31: 42-43) which have firmly placed the cougar on the list of mammals occurring in Saskatchewan. The following accounts of 13 sightings and reports (each numbered to correspond with the distribution map Fig. 1) will serve to supplement Mr. White's previous data. The observations are generally in chronological order, from 1934 to 1973.

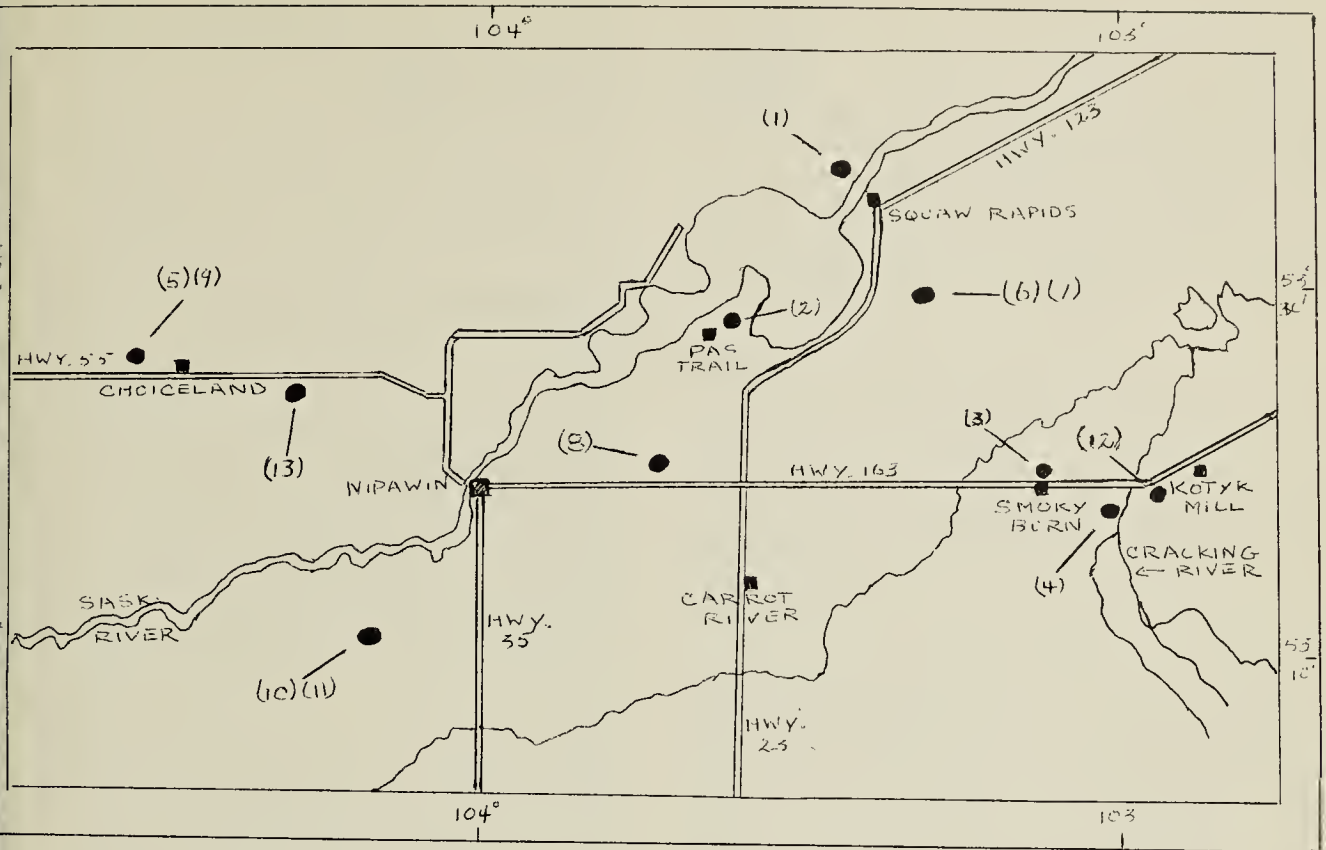
Mr. Ellis Hamilton has been a farmer

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and trapper continuously for over 40 years in the Ravendale district, 18 miles east and 18 miles northeast of Nipawin. In March, 1934, he noticed his dog team become extremely excited as they were picked up and bounded off along an animal trail which he followed for 10 miles northwest of the present site of the Squaw Rapids Power Dam. Mr. Hamilton, a highly skilled and respected woodsman and naturalist, knew at that time that the animal was not a wolf, as the track was round rather than elongated, the trail was curved rather than straight and the dogs were excited rather than subdued. He was not aware that cougars were present in the area until later years when he became aware that the animal had been a cougar. (No. 1 on map)

Bill Weighill, son-in-law of Ellis Hamilton, saw "an animal with a tail as long as itself, which did not move like a wolf, but loped." This sighting was made near Pas Trail, 14 miles east and 10 miles north of Nipawin in 1961. (2)

Mr. William Kotyk is a man who has spent his lifetime working in the bus



Locations of cougar reports.

and presently owns and operates Kotyk's Mill near the Fir River Department of Natural Resources Cabin on Hwy. 163, 45-1/2 miles east of Nipawin. While cruising timber on the Cracking River in the winter of 1968-69, 1-1/2 miles south of Hwy. 163, with Mr. George Lidster of White Fox and Mr. Lorne Olenius of the Saskatchewan Timber Board, the three men saw tracks in the snow which they all agreed were neither wolf nor lynx but could have been made by no other animal than cougar. They also located what they called a "scratch place" but, as the object of their labour was timber and not natural history, they did not make a more detailed investigation.(4)

Mrs. Stewart Kenney reported that Mrs. George Traub of Chociceland was witness to a cougar killing a calf on the Kenney pasture, 3 miles west and 1 mile north of Chociceland in 1969. The other cattle were terrified and stampeded out in an erratic manner never before observed by the Kenney family.(5)

Mr. Ellis Hamilton had the luck to see his first cougar standing in a field (53-10-W2) near his farm in June, 1970. As Mr. Hamilton drove towards the animal it plunged into the brush in which, a quarter of a mile distant,

two deer fled in panic into another open field. Some days later, Mr. Larry Ogren reported to Mr. Hamilton that he had seen a cougar in the same general area. (6, 7)

Mr. John Dahmer, who farms 14 miles east and 1-1/2 miles north of Nipawin, was summerfallowing in July, 1970, when he saw what he thought to be a deer bedded down. Mr. Dahmer stopped the tractor and walked toward the animal to investigate. He was terror struck to see a cougar stand up. It walked slowly away, occasionally looking back over its shoulder, as Mr. Dahmer walked gingerly in the opposite direction looking frequently back over his shoulder.(8)

Mrs. Stewart Kenney, who lost a calf to a cougar on the family pasture in 1969, reported that for several days in July, 1972, the cattle had "spooked and ran about at break-neck speed from place to place in terror", exactly as they did in 1969. The Kenneys assumed that a cougar was the cause of the extreme anxiety and they kept the cattle in the home yard.(9)

Mr. Leslie Lokken, farmer and trapper, saw an animal in broad daylight in September, 1972, which he knew instantly to be a cougar, 2 miles north, 1/2



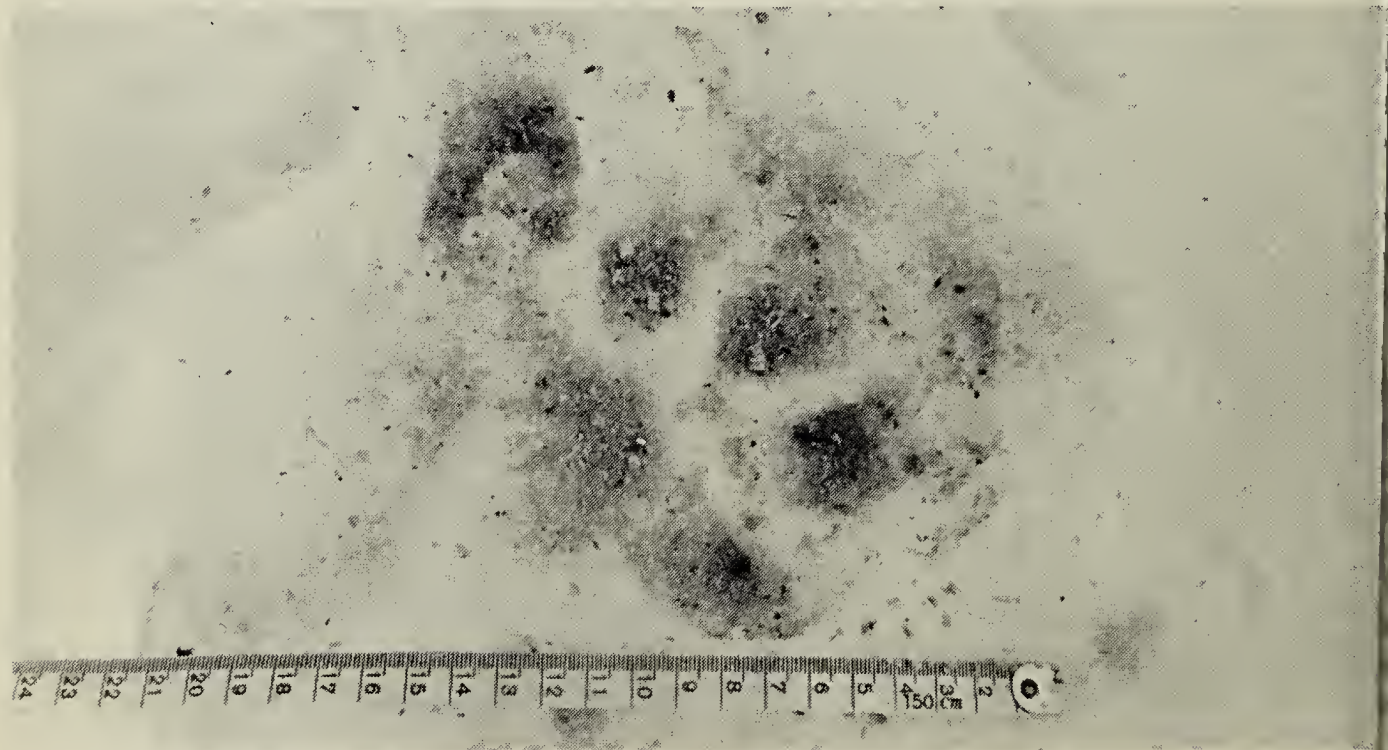
mile west of his farm which is located 13 miles south and 10 miles west of Nipawin (28-48-16-W2). Mr. Lokken was pleased to be able to thereby confirm a sighting made a few days earlier by his neighbour, Mr. Cecil Pierson who had seen a cougar in the headlights of his car in the same area.(10, 11)

Mrs. Don Kotyk, age 22, whose father-in-law operates Kotyk's Mill, 45-1/2 miles east of Nipawin, was driving the children home from school on December 15, 1972, when she and they saw an animal which they assumed to be their dog, walking along the edge of the road in the same direction that the car was travelling. In a flash the animal turned and leapt to the side of the road and stood facing them on a small rise. Mrs. Kotyk stated that the animal had a long body, a long tail and a small head. By its action and its shape she knew that it was a cougar. She said: "It was darker than the one I saw when I was 14 years old (1964) in my father's field in Smoky Burn. That one was golden colour."(12, 3) Mrs. Kotyk told her sister-in-law, Miss Judy Kotyk, of the 1972 sighting. The latter contacted me and I studied and photographed the tracks on December 17, 1972. One track was closed and measured approximately 110 mm round, the toes were of nearly equal size, the back pad was large and no claw marks were visible. The other

track was splayed, but of the same general configuration. The animal had moved off along a well beaten rabbit trail in dense willow so that stride measurements were not possible. Since Mrs. Kotyk had been thoughtful enough to cover the tracks with cardboard boxes when she first saw them they were still in excellent condition when Tom White of Regina observed and photographed them on December 30, 1972. (Fig. 2)

Mrs. Pat Hoover, while being driven on Hwy. 55 near Garrick, Saskatchewan, in February, 1973, by her husband, Staff Sergeant Warren Hoover R.C.M.P., saw a very large, light brown animal with a long tail, which she described (with her hands) as being about 2-1/2" in diameter at the base. "It looked like a great big pussy cat." The animal was running parallel with the car at a distance "as far as from here to across the street." Mrs. Hoover's 14 year-old son, Craig, also saw the animal but her entreaties, unfortunately, were not sufficient to cause her husband to stop the car.(13)

There is no doubt that cougars occur in the Nipawin area of Saskatchewan. It is hoped that they may continue to move freely about, to live their lives their way and not be forced through the predations of man to "hole up" in the Wildcat Hill Wilderness Area deep in the Pasquia Hills.



Cougar print in the snow.