

# north shore news

## Cougar shot in North Vancouver backyard

Jane Seyd / North Shore News

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Conservation officers put down a juvenile cougar Monday in the Edgemont Village area. Photo Michelle Ellison

Conservation officers shot and killed a cougar in an Edgemont backyard Monday morning after becoming concerned it could pose a threat to the public.

A day later, elementary school students at Braemar were also kept inside over lunch after another cougar was spotted on school grounds.

On Monday, conservation officer Todd Hunter went out to the North Vancouver neighbourhood in the 3000-block of Highland Boulevard just after midnight, after getting a call that the cougar had killed a house cat in the owner's backyard.

Hunter said he was worried about that, because the yard is in an area close to a school, bus routes and a construction site.

At 3 a.m. the same person called back to say the cougar had returned and killed two raccoons in the yard.

Hunter said that's when he decided to call in the cougar hounds — dogs used to track the big cats.

Michelle Ellison, who lives next door to the backyard where the cougar was spotted, said by 8 a.m. Monday, conservation officers were back on the scene with the dogs.

About 15 minutes after she heard the dogs howling, she heard gunshots as the conservation officer shot the big cat.

Hunter said the cougar didn't go far — it was found in thick bush only about 30 metres away from the yard where it had been spotted.

Hunter said he shot the cougar because it was displaying unusual and threatening behaviour by hunting in a

populated area.

"It's learned to hunt and adapt to this area," he said.

The cougar was a young female, about 12 months old.

Ellison said with two young children and a cat, she's feeling relieved that the cougar has been shot.

This is the second time in a month that conservation officers have shot a cougar on the North Shore.

In May, officers killed a cougar that had been prowling a Lower Capilano neighbourhood near Park Royal in West Vancouver. In that case, officers deemed the big cat a potential danger after it was spotted on a number of balconies and patios in the middle of the day.

Chris Doyle, another conservation officer, said it's likely that the cougar shot in West Vancouver and the one shot in North Vancouver were part of the same family group — possibly mother and daughter — and that both cats were part of the cougar family spotted this spring in the Seymour area.

There have been a number of sightings of the normally elusive animals on the North Shore in recent months.

Doyle said what often happens is a mother cougar moves into an urban area after discovering a food source and ends up habituating the cougar kittens to the area. When the young cougars get bigger and the family unit disperses, those cougars will often stay in the populated area — and end up generating a higher-than-usual number of calls to the conservation office.

Just a day later, two staff members at Braemar elementary who were looking out the window spotted another cougar on school grounds.

RCMP officers were called to the area, but didn't find any further signs of the big cat. Hunter said that sighting has not yet been confirmed as a cougar.

As a precaution, however, elementary school students were kept inside over lunch, said Victoria Miles, spokeswoman for the North Vancouver School District.

The principal at Mountainside secondary also warned students to stay off trails and out of wooded areas.

The recent rash of sightings is unusual, say conservation officers. Most of the time, "We really don't see much cougar activity," said Doyle, because the animals tend to stay away from people.

Hunter said Tuesday it's very possible that the same family group has been responsible for a number of the recent cougar sightings.

Another reason for the recent spike in cougar sightings is that there have been more deer down low on the hillsides this year, he said.

Hot, dry weather can make it more difficult for cougar to track prey because the scent quickly dries up, said Hunter, which can lead to the big cats turning to domestic pets as a potential food source.

Hunter said residents should take care not to leave their pets unattended outside.