

MOUNTAIN LION

The 2023/24 Black Hills season opened on December 26, 2023 and closed on April 30, 2024. The harvest limit was 60 total or 40 female mountain lions. After the Black Hills season closed, anyone with a valid 2024 license who did not take a mountain lion could hunt through December 25, 2024 on land that was located outside the Black Hills Fire Protection District.

There were 2,842 resident mountain lion licenses issued prior to the end of the 2023/24 Black Hills season. A total of 75 access permits were also issued for Custer State Park (CSP), 15 of those allowing the use of hounds.

Email survey requests were sent to all hunters who purchased a license before the Black Hills season ended and had a valid email address listed in the license database. The survey response rate was 47%. Active hunters reported hunting an average of 7.3 days outside of CSP and 4.0 days inside CSP. Average hunter satisfaction within the Black Hills Fire Protection District was 4.93 and 4.99 inside CSP. Satisfaction was based on a numerical scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied), 4 being neutral.

The overall Black Hills success rate was 4.22%, with a total of 47 mountain lions harvested, 30 of which were females. Hunter success for active mountain lion hunters in the Black Hills (excluding those with a CSP access permit) was 3.88%, whereas success for those with a hound access permit in CSP was 33.3%. Check station data for the Black Hills showed that 12 mountain lions were harvested in Custer County, 18 in Lawrence County, 13 in Pennington County, 2 in Fall River County, and 2 in Meade County. Five mountain lions, 1 of which was a female, were harvested within Custer State Park, all by hunters with access permits that allowed the use of hounds.

A total of 8 mountain lions were harvested on the prairie outside of the Black Hills Fire Protection District from May 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024, which included 4 sub-adult males, 3 adult males, and 1 adult female.

2023/24 Black Hills Mountain Lion Harvest Projections

Last Revised:
20-Jun-24

Unit/Type	Resident Licenses		Response Rate	Active Hunters		Active Hunter Success	Harvest Reports						Total Lion Harvest	Mean Satisfaction Rating		Average Days Hunted	
	Avail.	Sold		Black Hills	CSP		Males			Females				BHills	CSP	BHills	CSP
							Adult	Subadult	<1 year	Adult	Subadult	<1 year					
Black Hills (no CSP permit)	Unlimited	2,767	47%	1,082	---	3.88%	6	6	1	15	13	1	42	4.86	---	7.2	---
CSP Boot Access Permit	60	60	52%	31	29	0.0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.00	4.93	10.6	3.1
CSP Hound Access Permit	15	15	67%	1	15	33.3%	1	3	0	0	1	0	5	6.00	5.10	10.0	5.7
Totals		2,842	46.8%	1,115	44	4.22%	7	9	1	15	14	1	47	4.93	4.99	7.3	4.0

Harvest statistics for 2014/15 - 2023/24 Black Hills Mountain Lion seasons (excluding CSP)

YEAR	Season Length (Days)	Licenses Sold	Active Hunters	Harvest		Average Days Hunted	Average Satisf
				Males	Females		
2014/15	96	3,211	1,689	18	20	7.1	4.58
2015/16	97	3,102	1,529	11	24	7.1	4.75
2016/17	96	2,561	1,153	10	13	6.9	4.51
2017/18	96	2,878	1,199	7	15	7.3	4.87
2018/19	96	2,818	1,132	8	6	6.9	4.81
2019/20	127	2,907	1,144	15	25	8.3	4.65
2020/21	126	3,208	1,214	17	22	7.1	4.68
2021/22	126	2,894	1,025	10	24	6.2	4.58
2022/23	126	2,628	999	12	25	8.1	4.89
2023/24	127	2,842	1,115	13	29	7.3	4.93

Harvest statistics for 2014/15 - 2023/24 Custer State Park Mountain Lion seasons

YEAR	Season Length (Days)	Permits Issued	Active Hunters	Harvest		Average Days Hunted	Average Satisf
				Males	Females		
2014/15	96	136	90	3	2	3.4	4.60
2015/16	97	57	30	5	1	5.6	5.44
2016/17	96	57	37	4	3	3.7	5.13
2017/18	96	57	41	5	4	4.0	5.26
2018/19	96	57	38	5	2	4.3	5.63
2019/20	127	74	39	9	2	5.0	5.18
2020/21	126	75	42	6	3	4.3	4.95
2021/22	126	68	36	6	2	4.6	5.22
2022/23	126	67	24	4	3	5.6	5.41
2023/24	127	75	44	7	1	4.0	4.99

Reported participation and mean days hunted by Custer State Park permit period

2023/2024 CSP Lion Season	Mean Days Hunted									TOTAL
	Dec. 26 Jan 8 ^a	Jan 9 Jan 22	Jan 23 Feb 5 ^a	Feb 6 Feb 19	Feb 20 Mar 5 ^a	Mar 6 Mar 19	Mar 20 Apr 2 ^a	Apr 3 Mar 16	Apr 17 Apr 30 ^a	
Permits Issued	3	15	3	15	3	15	3	15	3	75
Sample (n)	3	15	3	15	3	15	3	15	3	75
Responded (N)	3	7	1	8	2	9	3	7	1	41
Response Rate	100%	47%	33%	53%	67%	60%	100%	47%	33%	54.7%
Reported Did Not Hunt	0	2	0	6	0	6	0	2	0	16
Reported Hunted	3	5	1	2	2	3	3	5	1	25
Projected Hunted	3	11	3	4	3	5	3	11	3	45
Projected Days Hunted	26	21	6	15	17	20	16	34	6	161
Mean Days Hunted	8.7	2.0	2.0	4.0	5.5	4.0	5.3	3.2	2.0	3.6
Lions Harvested ^b	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	5

a. hunting with hounds allowed.

b. total lions harvested based on mandatory check-in data, not returned surveys.

Lion hunters' preference for mountain lion population over the next 5 years

	All Licensed Lion Hunters	Inactive Lion Hunters	Active Lion Hunters	Harvested a Lion
Decrease A Lot	18.3	18.8	17.7	12.0
Decrease A Little	20.6	19.8	21.5	12.0
Stay About the Same	39.3	37.7	41.3	52.0
Increase A Little	11.5	10.7	12.5	24.0
Increase A Lot	3.4	3.4	3.5	—
Not Sure	6.97	9.62	3.65	—
N	1,176	655	521	25
Mean*	2.58	2.56	2.61	2.88

*Mean preference is based on a scale of 1-5, where "1" is decrease a lot, "3" is stay the same, and "5" is increase a lot.