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PREY AVAILABILITY AND SELECTION BY MOUNTAIN LIONS IN ARAVAIPA-KLONDYKE AREA OF ARIZONA

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ABSTRACT: Prey selection by mountain lions (*Felis concolor*) in the Aravaipa-Klondyke area (2,000 km²) in southeastern Arizona was studied from February 1991 through September 1993. Overall diet from frequency of occurrence as determined from 370 scats was: 48% deer (white-tailed and mule deer combined), 34% cattle, 17% javelins, 6% rabbit (cottontail and jackrabbit), 4% rodent, and 2% desert bighorn. Using a correction factor developed by Ackerman et al. (1984), we also estimated percent biomass and proportion of individuals killed. With respect to biomass consumed, cattle was 44%, deer 40%, javelins 10.9%, rabbits 2.9%, and rodents 0.02%. Based on weights of prey consumed, proportion of individuals eaten changed to rabbits 52.7%, deer 16.3%, rodents 12%, javelinas 10% cattle 8%, and desert bighorn 0.5%. Comparisons with availability as determined from four separate four-day double-count helicopter surveys found that lions selected calves (ate more than expected based on availability alone), killed and ate less deer than expected, and javelins as would be expected.

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