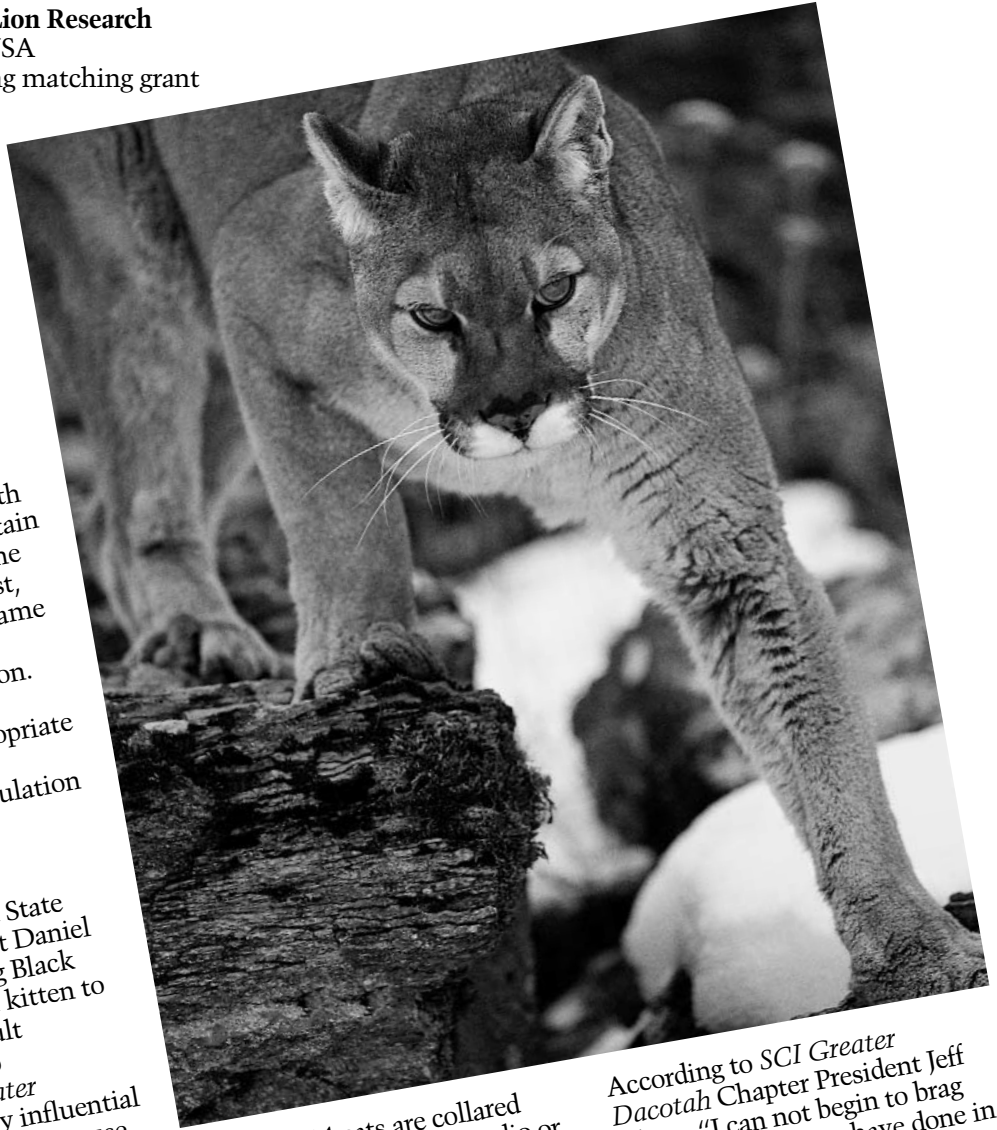


# Making a Difference for Wildlife

Hundreds of local conservation projects are undertaken annually by SCI Chapters. They are reinforced by many notable conservation initiatives funded by the SCI Foundation.



**Greater Dacotah Mountain Lion Research**  
Black Hills, South Dakota, USA  
Total Funds: \$4,000, including matching grant



**I**N THE SUMMER of 2003, South Dakota's Black Hills mountain lions were removed from the state's Endangered Species List, and are being managed as a game animal even though there currently is no hunting season. Effective mountain lion management requires appropriate management and the best possible knowledge of population demographics, trends and distribution.

Therefore, South Dakota State University Ph.D. student Daniel Thompson is examining Black Hills lion survival from kitten to adult, including subadult dispersal. According to Thompson, "SCI Greater Dacotah has been very influential in providing funds which we use to purchase radio collars."

Mountain lions are captured by using hounds, the same technique used in states where lion hunting occurs. Once treed, the animal may be tranquilized, fitted with a collar, and then released. Collared lions are then relocated periodically to determine home ranges and to measure behavior. Since one goal of the project is to determine longevity of South Dakota lions, kittens are collared with their treed mothers.

Currently, 14 cats are collared with either conventional radio or GPS collars. In October alone, 47 lion locations were recorded, revealing that three subadult males had left the study area. This is not unusual behavior for young male lions, which seek unoccupied home ranges as they mature. A cooperative effort with Wyoming will attempt to locate where these animals have emigrated. Lions captured in Nebraska and Iowa also are being sampled for DNA, to determine whether these cats originated in the Black Hills.

According to SCI Greater Dacotah Chapter President Jeff Olson, "I can not begin to brag enough on what we have done in South Dakota with matching grant money from the SCI Foundation. SCI in South Dakota has become the number one conservation group in support of projects on the ground."