

29th July 2020

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20201658

REQUEST

I am seeking any information relating to reports, sightings, encounters with or evidence of 'big cats' in Britain.

I use the term 'big cat' to describe any non-indigenous large feline which may be loose in the countryside of the UK, from the year 2016 to the present day; more specific search terms could include "panther", "leopard", "puma" or "lynx".

If it is not feasible to use all of the suggested search terms due to the duration it would take for a full and exhaustive search of your records, then I would be very grateful for a sample of some of the reports.

I am happy for the information to be relayed in any format which is convenient. I would be grateful for any photographs of interest which may show any unusual animals or secondary field evidence such as predation on livestock or unusual carcasses suspected to be the work of a big cat.

CLARIFICATION

South Yorkshire Police has received a number of similar requests to yours in the past:

<https://www.southyorkshire.police.uk/find-out/accessing-information/request-information-under-the-freedom-of-information-act/big-cat-sightings-ref-20190059/>

-Having followed your kind advice, I would like to specify my request to cover the time frame from 1st January 2019 to the present day.

RESPONSE

I approached the administrator for South Yorkshire Police's Incident Management System.

The new Smart system (implemented November 2018) records the majority of calls to South Yorkshire Police requiring the specific deployment of police resources, whether reported by members of the public via 999 or 101 or 'happened upon' by officers and staff in the course of their duties. The log runs as a running commentary of an incident as it unfolds and has limited search capability.

As there is no generic incident title that meets the criteria of your request, our administrator has searched for incidents where the keywords were present within the free text boxes of the incident log.

The explanation of her search is below:

We don't have any opening/closing codes that are specific to big cat, I have searched using all the key words shown above but unfortunately this brings back 824 results due to the Lynx system the forces uses, Puma being a vehicle, Leopard being a print and so on.

Therefore I have searched using the words big cat only, I have read the 7 results and can confirm there was 1 report in 2019 and 1 report in 2020.

