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Mountain lion shocks experts by using culvert to cross highway

By
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A mountain lion known as P-64 surprised researchers by using a 640-foot-long culvert to cross the 101 Freeway in California. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service

March 15 (UPI) -- National Park Service researchers said they were shocked when wildlife camera captured a rare instance of a mountain lion using a culvert to cross a highway.

The [National Park Service said](#) an adult male cougar known as P-64 was outfitted with a GPS collar on Feb. 28 and the next day a wildlife camera captured photos as he used a culvert under the 101 Freeway to cross the busy road in the Liberty Canyon area.

Researchers said they believe P-64 is the same mountain lion responsible for previous evidence they found of a big cat using the culvert.

"It's really interesting that this mountain lion figured out how to use this extremely long and dark culvert under the freeway," said Seth Riley, wildlife ecologist for Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. "We have had many other collared mountain lions come close to the freeway in the Liberty Canyon area and not manage to get across."

NPS officials said the culvert is more than 640 feet long, often floods with water and is always in total darkness.

Experts said the security camera footage highlights the importance of wildlife crossings for highways that run through wilderness areas.

"This discovery is exciting because it reaffirms that the proposed wildlife crossing at Liberty Canyon is going in the right place and, once completed, will be used by mountain lions and other wildlife," Riley said. "Though we clearly cannot count on the Liberty Creek culvert in general for connectivity, it shows the importance of this location and the ability and drive of these animals to find ways to get across."

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