

ever, see the animal. Darwin states that the puma does not often utter cries. He writes: "It is a very silent animal, uttering no cry, even when wounded, and only rarely during the breeding season."

In captivity the puma purrs when pleased, after the manner of the cat, and the female has been heard to utter a mewling sound.

The flesh of the puma is eaten by certain of the South American Indians, and was likewise eaten by the natives of North America, according to Catesby. Darwin, who tasted it himself, states that it is white in color and has the flavor of veal. Numerous other explorers and travellers make the same comment. Azara says on this point: "I have known my peons to eat it in preference to beef, even when that meat was to be had in abundance."

The puma is known under a multiplicity of English names. Among these are panther, painter, cougar, catamount, wild cat, American lion, California lion, silver lion, mountain lion, and tiger.

The word *puma* is the native Peruvian name, according to Garcilasso de la Vega, La Condamine, Tschudi, and other authors.

Cougar is an English form of the word *couguar*, which Buffon derived by abbreviation from *cuguacu-ara*. This latter word, lengthened to *cuguacuarana*, is, according to Markgrave, the native Brazilian name. Azara, however, states that the ancient name, used by the Guarani Indians of Paraguay was *güazúard*. Others called it *yagüá-Pitá*, meaning red *yagüá*, or *yagüatí* meaning white *yagüá*.

The word "painter" is a corruption of panther. It is unfortunate that this latter name has gained general acceptance in the United States, since the true panther is a spotted, Old World cat, very different in appearance from the puma.

The name mountain lion is not altogether inappropriate, as the puma somewhat resembles the female lion in color and general form. From the earliest days the puma has been called the lion (*Leon*) by Spanish Americans and the name is still used.

The names catamount, or catamountain, and wild cat have no special applicability to the puma. They have been used by English writers to designate the European wild cat (*Felis catus*) and lynxes, and by Americans have been applied to the lynxes of this country.

Besides those names which are in common use, there are some which have been invented from time to time by various authors, and are known to zoologists as "book-names." Buffon's name *Couguar* really belongs to this class, as do also the names Brazilian cat (die brasilianische Katze of Müller), the brown tiger of Pennant, and the red tiger (*Tigre Rouge* of Barrère).

As already stated, the puma is called the lion (*Leon*) by Spanish-Americans, while the jaguar is styled the tiger (*Tigre*). Early Spanish writers, however, did not always distinguish between the two, and sometimes mentioned the puma under the name of tiger, or used the name in some modified form, as red tiger, etc. Molina states that it is called *Pagi* in Chili, and according to Clavigero, it was known to the Mexicans as *Mitzli*.

The puma is the *Felis concolor* of Linnæus. This name has been adopted by subsequent authors, almost without exception. Schreber, however, has two figures of the species in his work on mammals, one of which is styled *Felis discolor*.

Molina, in 1782, gave it the name of *Felis puma*, and Lesson, that of *Felis unicolor*.

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ASTRONOMICAL NOTES.

A New Comet.

A VERY faint comet was discovered by Denning of Bristol, England, on March 18. Its position is, R.A. 22 h., 44 m., Dec. + 59°. The daily motion is north, preceding. The comet has been observed by Spetator of Vienna, and the following is his position: March 19.4338 G.M.T., R.A. 22 h., 46 m., 47.1 s., Dec. + 59°, 17', 43".

Winnecke's Comet.

Winnecke's periodical comet has been found and observed. The observation is from Vienna, and the following is the position: March 18.4041 G.M.T., R.A. 12 h., 43 m., 27.5 s., Dec. + 30°, 35', 38". It is of the twelfth magnitude.

New Planets.

A planet of the twelfth magnitude was discovered by Wolf on March 18. The following is the position: R.A. 11 h., 7 m., 20.6 s., Dec + 4°, 44', 49". A planet of the eleventh magnitude was discovered by Palisa on March 19. The following is the position: R.A. 13 h., 27 m., 0.0 s., Dec. + 9°, 55', 9".

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VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA.¹

M. CHAFFANJON, in a paper read before the Paris Society for Commercial Geography (*Bulletin*, Tome xiii., No. 4), has given a description of these countries and a narrative of the journeys he made there during the years 1889-91. Venezuela has about 750 miles of coast-line. From the mouth of the Essequibo to Guiria Point, known also as Cape Peñas, opposite Trinidad, the coast is low and sandy, whereas from this point westward to the Gulf of Maracaibo it is in general high and skirted by mountains rising in some places to a considerable elevation. The chief exports of the country are coffee, cocoa, and tobacco, cattle, copper and gold. Colombia is very favorably situated, possessing about 600 miles of coast on the Atlantic and nearly as much on the Pacific. Its harbors are certainly not very accessible, but Cartagena might be converted into a safe and important port. The coasts are low and dry, or else swampy. The Sierra Nevada produces excellent coffee and cocoa, and travellers speak very hopefully of its minerals. Gold, copper, nickel, mercury and coal have been found. In the neighborhood of Lake Maracaibo and the peninsula of Coro coal is abundant, and rich springs of petroleum exist. At a distance from the coast the country consists of immense savannahs, on which grow here and there, like oases in the desert, clumps of the palms known in this part of America as *moriches*, which send down their roots perpendicularly into the soil, and by capillary action draw up the water to the surface, making the ground around them muddy and even dangerous. If from any cause these trees disappear, the soil soon becomes extremely arid. Large fortunes are made by cattle grazing, and the cultivation of sugar is also an important industry, herdsmen eating as much as three or four pounds daily of a kind of loaf made of sugar. On the high plateaus wheat, oats, maize, and potatoes are grown. Caoutchouc and resins of various kinds may be collected in the forests.

¹ From the Scottish Geographical Magazine.