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With increasing numbers of wild animal pets has come an increase in the number of incidents in which wild animals escape custody, endangering public health and safety in the process. Some animals have remained at large for relatively short periods of time, while others have evaded capture for many months or years. There have also been numerous instances of privately owned wild animals attacking their keepers or bystanders causing serious injury or death.

Below are just a few of the hundreds of incidents that have occurred over the years in Canada and the United States.

**2005** – A "black panther" is spotted in the Ontario Township of Southwold. The sightings receive wide-spread publicity, but no cat escapes are reported.

**2005** – A 10 year old boy was critically injured after being attacked by a tiger and lion in Minneapolis, Minnesota. After the keeper opened the cage door, the tiger pushed its way out and attacked the boy. When the keeper pulled the tiger away, the lion attacked and bit the boy.

**2003** – A ten year old boy was fatally mauled by a pet tiger in North Carolina while shoveling snow near the animal's pen.

**2003** – A 16 kg (35 lb.) serval was stolen out the back seat of a car in a Vancouver, British Columbia suburb. The cat was eventually turned over to local police.

**2001** – A Port Colborne, Ontario snake keeper was bitten by a highly venomous viper. Despite severe swelling and pain, the man drove himself 130 km to a hospital in Toronto for treatment.

**2001** – A pet tiger in Texas killed a three year old boy who was posing for a photo with the animal. During the session the tiger attacked, dragging the boy away by his foot.

**2000** – A highly venomous saw-scale viper escaped causing the evacuation of adjoining apartments and businesses in a Toronto neighbourhood. Despite a prohibition on the private keeping of venomous snakes, several were found in the apartment.

**1996** – A 68 kg (150 lb.) cougar, purchased as a family pet, savagely attacks a St. Thomas, Ontario family's two-year-old daughter after she wandered into the pen where her father was working with the animal. The girl sustained serious chest and back injuries.



**1996** – A cougar, assumed to be an escaped or released pet, is sighted repeatedly in Toronto's Rouge Valley.

**1994** – Two African lions break free from their barn and roam through a Thorold, Ontario neighbourhood. The 18 month old animals, used by a local magician, were on the loose for more than five hours before being captured. "My neighbour across the road was standing on his porch and the female was on her belly, sneaking up on him through the grass," said a resident. "I yelled ... there's a lion sneaking up on you and he bolted into the house."

[ continued on reverse ]





## Incidents Involving Wild Animals Kept As Pets

**1994** – 16 year old Graydon Edwards was killed by his uncle's pet Siberian tiger. According to reports, he died instantly after the tiger jumped him from behind and bit him on the neck. A second tiger and a cougar were also housed in the cage. The investigating coroner said there were two previous incidents with the cats. A 12 year old Wroxeter boy required 18 stitches after being injured by one of the cats the previous year and the owner's son received a bite from the cougar about 1 ½ years ago.

**1994** – A stray four-month-old tiger is discovered on the front porch of a home in Caledon, Ontario. The 16 kg (35 lb.) hybrid animal was being kept in the local dog pound while local officials decided what to do with her.

**1992** – A 28 year old Brampton, Ontario man was killed by his pet Burmese python. Reportedly, the man was drunk while handling the animal and was unable to do anything when the snake wrapped itself around his neck asphyxiating him in the process.

**1992** – Larry Moor, founder of the British Columbia Association of Reptile Owners, died after being bitten by an Egyptian cobra he owned. Mr. Moor often took reptiles to schools.

**1988** – Six Japanese macaque monkeys escape from a private animal collector near St. Catharines, Ontario. Two of the macaques were quickly recaptured, but the other four remained on the loose for up to two years.

**1988** – A Waterloo, Ontario man was charged with criminal neglect causing bodily harm after his pet cougar attacked a four year old boy, scratching and biting him in the neck. The cougar was being walked on a leash through a public park.



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