

BIG CAT CONVERSATIONS PODCAST

British Panther & Puma Poetry

PODCAST LISTENERS'
POEMS

2022-23





**The following poems and
limericks were submitted to the
Big Cat Conversations podcast
poetry competition in 2022-23.**

Judges' awards went to entries from
Chris Childs, Carole Shirriffs,
and for Limericks,
Paul Ramsden and Katy Jordan.

**Artwork kindly supplied
by Endymion Beer
www.naturama.co.uk**



What am I?

I could be Black, I could be Fawn,
Seen in the woods or on your lawn !
Often seen but never found, I leave my paw prints big and round,
For trackers to follow, to find my bed,
but I'm always just one jump ahead!
My senses are ten-fold more than yours,
so I avoid those cameras you put outdoors.
Stealthy and cautious but always around,
I'm Britain's Big Cat, that's gone in a bound !

Frank Tunbridge

Enigma

An exciting thing, to be interested in
These elusive, mysterious cats
From dodgy prints and eaten deer
To very hairy scats
Blurry photos, witness reports and different people's views,
I suppose one day we'll see them on the local evening news
But in a way, I wish they'd stay
The enigma that we chase
So long as just once, before I die
We may meet face to face...

Chris Childs



Keeping the secret

I can never resist, though I shouldn't look
At the new big cat footage put on Facebook
Yeah, it's black but two fields away!!
Deffo big cat the comments will say...
More often than not, no effort to scale
Wouldn't want the false perception to fail
Not getting into the 'prolific posters'
And pumawatch selling rainbow coasters!

Sometimes, it seems like 'Whacky Races'
The 'carousel' of new keen faces
All in a race to prove they are there
To be the first to post and share
But, fortunately, though seen on occasion
They've an uncanny knack of trail-cam evasion
"We'll blow the myth out the water, some say,
And quite possibly, they will, one day.

But, honestly, is this what we wish for??
Can't we just leave them in myth and folklore?
I'm sure that is where they'd rather be
NOT, in the papers for the world to see!!!

Chris Childs



Magnus Cattus ('Big Cat', Latin)

If you believe such stories, tales and hype,
There's a feline larger than the domestic type;
Who's made Great Britain her native home,
And here she belongs, free to roam.

You could catch a glimpse of darkest black,
Of powerful muscle across her back.
Or perhaps a proud beige, with tufts and stripes;
Taking the countryside in her great stride.
Some have seen grey, orange and spots;
Truth is, our feline's not one, but lots!

Released or escaped, it matters little to me;
It's interesting, yes, but more importantly,
These cats have established, and earned their place in the UK
I hope she remains elusive, so here, she will stay.

Claire Reid



The gaze and the glimpse

When light begins to fade
Or in a shady glade
Humans
sometimes
possibly
think they catch a glimpse of me.
A dog , a cat , a deer , a bat
What exactly was that ?
A dream , a fear , a sense , an idea ?
A myth ?
No I'm here !
Watching you watching me.

Dave Brown

In the woods

In the woods, within the glades, there dwells a hidden beast,
Alone, and sometimes lonely too, it searches for a feast,
And finding a small deer there, it creeps towards its prey,
Then dashes at a furious pace, to take its life away.

Not many know the forest holds a secret feline truth,
Though rumours through the years go by about a severed hoof.
The leopard lives its life in peace, away from human threat,
And tends its young, as seasons pass, for one more it has met!

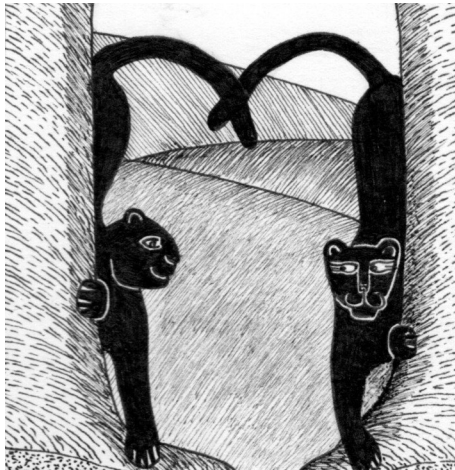
Alex Bowler



Wild & free

Now you see me
Sun high. Swaying bough.
Secret-keeper tree.
You walk beneath, kicking leaves.
I watch, but you do not see me.
Gentle dusk. Heath and hedge.
Rabbits graze, then flee.
Silent rush. Sudden crush.
Sprang before they could see me.
Shadow-wait. Midnight trees.
Hind picks through shyly.
Liquid eye. Struggle. Still.
Too late: she did not see me.
Blue dawn. Wet grass. Cobweb and dew.
Shoulder sharp. Tail swing. Train hissing through.
Fleeting glimpse. Racing heart. Could it really be?
Wild and free in my domain. Now you see me.

Donna Cordon Stacey



Night hunt

As dusk settles over the fields and woods,

She rises from her bouldered lair, sniffs the air and stretches.

The last rays of the setting sun dance off her gleaming black coat,
as she prepares for the nights hunt.

Skirting hedgerow and boundary she silently moves through the
landscape, keeping to the deep shadows cast across the fields
and lanes by a bright full moon, making her way to the woods, a
favourite hunting ground.

Even though there's a deep litter of autumn leaves on the ground
and a light frost, her large soft paws barely make a sound as she
pads gently along the forest path, her large eyes capturing every
detail and movement in the darkness

There, quietly grazing on the edge of the track and blissfully
unaware of the approaching danger, her prey, a Roe deer.

She drops to the ground.

Slowly she creeps ever closer..closer..closer.

Then, in one explosive leap, shes on her prize. Razor claws out and
teeth to the neck, death is swift and clean.

She will feed well tonight and this meal will keep her satisfied for a
few days to come.

It is said she is out of place here, but she was born to this land, to
these fields and woods, as were her parents. Her ancestors may
have been brought here by people and escaped or been released,
but not her. Occasionally another of her kind will pass this way as
happened a few months back when she crossed paths with a large
male, and now she carries with her the next generation to be born
wild to roam the fields and woods of this land.

Nick Wandmaker



I see you

I can see you.... Do you see me?

Sleek, shining... blending in.
Stealthy... soft pads treading gently
Silently moving through the undergrowth

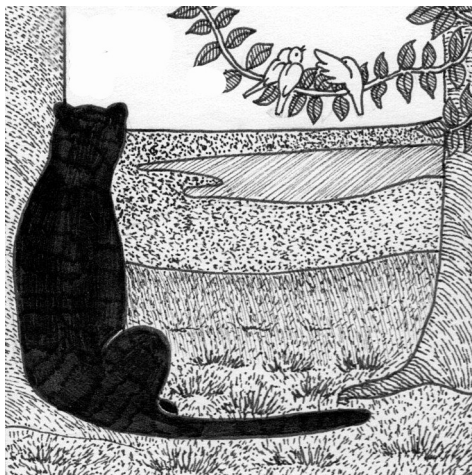
The sound is part of the air
The light breeze plays at the leaves
The fellowship of the expansive land
we share

Eyes gleaming
Ever watching
Elusive, an enigma

Walking under the heat of the day, or ravaged by the rain
Wandering the hills, lonely and thriving
Winters spent watching the peaks in the distance

The blue child of the moon
You my friend, where are you?
Do I watch you or are you watching me?

Annie Brazier



Chasing their tales

Tales of beast's non-native to the British Isles, have
many intrepid investigators searching for miles

Spotted in forests, on train tracks and in towns, most
are reported black, others various hues of browns

Through Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, listen to
eyewitnesses report their tales to Rick Minter

Many are privileged to have close encounters, but for
every one witness it seems that most remain doubters

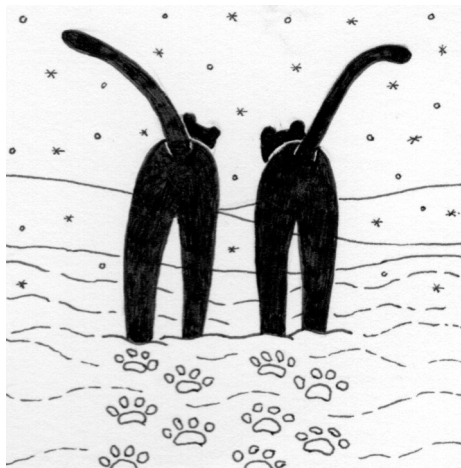
Leopard, Puma and Lynx, yes all are here, but there's
no need to panic, there's really nothing to fear

Escaped or abandoned, they are now living free, so
that might explain the deer carcass stashed in a tree

Although I've never chanced upon the cats I'm
searching for, I've found plenty of their calling cards
evidence of which I'm sure

So in blistering heat, cold rain and gales, I'll keeping on
tracking, yes chasing their tales

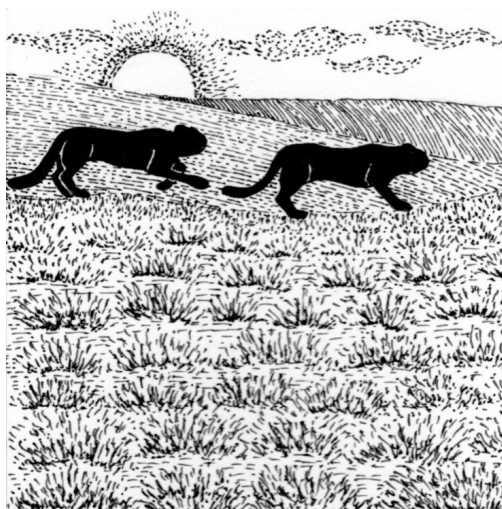
David French



We are here

We are the visions locked in your head
That doubting niggles you cannot shed.
We are the cats that lie in wait,
for the unwary victims we're about to create.
You, the fortunate, who saw through our veil,
A glimpse of our mystery or eerie wail.
Ours are the prints in the cold white snow,
the scratches on logs, which would test Poirot.
That moment of our eyes reflection,
did you really see it, as we evade your detection?
We have survived here for decades now,
an indigenous species or escapees? How?
You disagree, the debate goes on,
I am right, you are wrong.
To those of you who are the doubters,
we are the only apex predators.
So lock up your guns and leave us be,
to live and breed in harmony.

Carole Shirriffs



The Chiltern Puma

First ritual, yawning and stretching
pads down on the ground
I slink silently stalking
through the box hedge caves.
The colour of dust,
nothing sees me.
I am a ghost.

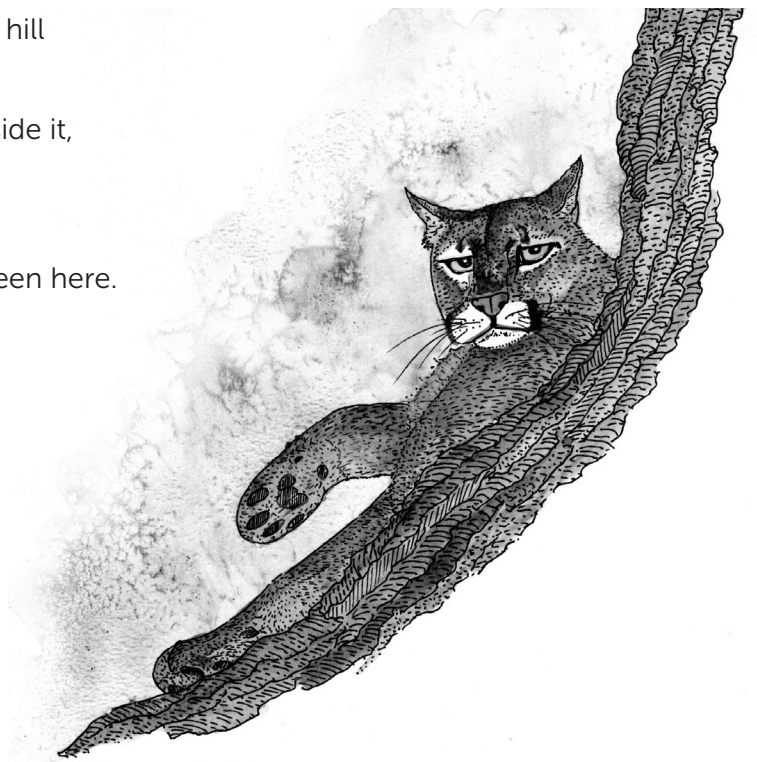
Ears pricked and alert
to a tiny stick splitting.
Smell and hear the blood of prey pumping,
I taste the air.
Yes, injured deer.
I'm off.

Pads down on the ground,
I feel the speed as I bound,
across the chalk, drum, thud
and brittle cackling leaves.

Claws retracted until...

Feast my hunger
until I'm full.
Drag the left-over carcass up a hill
and cash it in a tree.
Rest sleepy, happy, up high beside it,
looking down,
triumphant.
I've left no signs to show I've been here.
I'm safe,
to live another day.

Julie Cuthbert



Black Body Beast

Oh thou, shiny Black Body Beast,
It is the Sun, shining from the East,
That shows the *con-sealed* dots not normally seen upon its Coat,
From tail's base to near underthroat,
Neatly spread on Body's flank.
Nature's pattern to disguise - covered over and darkly blank.
What trick has Mother nature used against her highest order Predator?
At first she neatly blends the camouflage but cruelly daubs this pattern out
No longer needed in this day, you say ?
To catch the easy prey ?
Stealth, be thy Day

So fickle is the light's reflection,
Only helps for an instant's brief detection.
Seen at first - ... but then... they're - NOT !

Amongst the fern,
... I can discern,
... patches, blotches, high spots, clefts and muscle creases,
Pent up energy before it releases.

Oh, so close, Black Body Beast deftly turned
Gone in a flash, o' bound away
No sound at all to betray
Stealth, be thy Day - even in retreat !

And now Me thinks: am I a Witness or just a Dreamer ?
Lo, but Prints be left upon the soil, small and rounded and very neat
Not like Fallow's mark of cloven hoof, sharp cut, deep with splayed out toes
Barking loudly to his brethren, whence 'er he goes.
Yes !
Stealth, be thy Day.

Chris Townsend



Exmoor Echoes

I heard the scream again last night, far off.
It was getting dimpsy as I crept along the combe
In silence. I watched and waited by the stream,
But saw nothing but flitting bats in the gathering gloom.

What was it that I'd heard? I thought I knew.
Johnny heard one years back, in Drewstone fields one night.
And Trevor - he said he'd actually seen one, a coat of pure
Black, gleaming in the sun as it took flight.

People scoff, of course. "Show me some proof", they say.
All I can offer is anecdotal; hairs caught in a barbed-wire fence,
Flummoxed farmers and suspicious footprints. Me, I've seen nothing,
Probably never will. I've got no real evidence.

Perhaps I'm foolish to believe. But...

I heard the whispers again last night, by the fire in the Blue Ball bar.
Dick has had another ewe taken, picked neatly clean,
Just like the others. The third this month.
And I know – I *know* – there's nothing else it could have been.

I know they creep silently down these deep lanes;
Lie patiently in wait for unsuspecting deer
In the shelter of moorland hedgebanks; haunt the river Barle
And spook the closewool sheep. They are here.

I heard the scream again last night, far off...

Andrew Robertson



Open minds?

Big cat conversations opened my mind to what's in the countryside and what you may find.

Across the country many sightings revealed, and with Dons recordings for me the deal's sealed

Fields & woods, rivers & lakes - these habitats are all that it takes

A few are rewarded with a glimpse of a sight, many are shocked and most get a fright

So we continue to listen and be intrigued and in awe, and hope that one day we see what they saw.

Frank Harrison



The Panther's Lane



It is a beautiful, sunny summer day. I am enjoying my long cycle ride through Suffolk's winding countryside lanes, through golden fields and lush woodlands, cycling past the occasional quaint cottage on my journey home

Suddenly, something catches my eye at the side of the lane

My bicycle has come to an abrupt stop before I even realise that I have used the brakes. I find myself standing astride my bike, frozen to the spot

A large black dog pads slowly across my path on the lane, just a few yards in front of me

His gait appears all wrong, as he stretches and flexes each muscle gracefully striding across the tarmac from one field to another

Can it be a dog?

His tail, long and strong, carried high and almost straight, like a rudder behind him

His body, sleek and powerful, his fur darkest black, almost glistening

His huge paws spread and splaying wide as they land

Can it be a dog?

Time has stood still for me whilst my eyes argue it out with my brain

He stops before reaching the other side of the lane, he turns towards me and sits down in the lane

He curls his long, strong tail around his massive front paws.

His powerful shoulder muscles rippling

He owns this road, I cannot pass

He contemplates me with strange amber eyes, his ears small

and round, too low on the silhouette of his head, are turned pricked towards me

I don't know how long I stood, transfixed like a statue. I don't know if I even took a breath. I don't know how long we watched each other in stillness and silence

Suddenly, I feel quite alone and realise that I should be afraid. I do not want to turn away, my eyes are fixed on his in awe as my eyes and my brain finally agree and I realise that I am in danger

He is not a dog

He is a black panther, the most beautiful, sleek and powerful creature I have ever met

He is on my road and route home and I cannot pass

I think of my camera in my panniers but cannot turn my eyes away to reach it

Eventually I back track away, very slowly, imperceptibly, silently astride my bicycle, somehow keeping eye contact

He stays motionless, appearing to regard me with the curiosity of a cat rather than the hunger of a predator

He was right, for that moment in time, he owned the road.

Sue Watson 2023 • Artwork by Endymion Beer

Limericks

Catnip

The British big panther - all black
Fooled stalkers who lacked the hard facts
He gave them the slip
With their lures of cat-nip
Friendly locals brushed over his tracks

Rick Minter

Mooch

I was out for a little mooch
With my lamp, flask and pooch
I flicked on the beam
Couldn't believe what I seen...
Staring back was the uncomfortable truth

Paul Ramsden



Black Ghost

There are no big cats in the UK,
Well, at least that's what most folk say,
But you might see at night,
When the full moon is bright,
A black ghost stalking his prey...

Steve Sanderson

Just a rumour?

If you meet with a panther or puma
You'll accept it's not folklore or rumour
But the people you tell
Will mock you like hell
So be armed with a strong sense of humour !

Dave Mallon

Thermal view

Over a meter in length, the cat was immense
Mousing at night with the dark so intense
The cat roaming free was so enchanting to see
Thermal cameras are a must, for these beasts to be sussed

Don Green



Quick on the draw

An unwary young woman named Kate
Saw a puma stroll past a farm gate -
Just three seconds - surprise!
"Though I trust my own eyes,
"Take a photo? In that time? TOO LATE!"

Katy Jordan

Trelawny puma

"It was big, it was long, it was tawny,
"It was muscular, not a bit scrawny,
"Not a fox, not a calf -
"Oh yeah, go on then, laugh -
" 'Twas a PUMA - or my name's Trelawny!"

Katy Jordan

Cat at the gate

Kate told Chris, and he ran down the lane,
But leaned over the gate all in vain.
No big cat could be seen,
In all that acre of green,
But the name 'Lyon's Gate' makes all plain.

Katy Jordan



Just a moggie?

Hey look! Was that a moggie, a leopard or lynx?

Over there, sunbathing, just like the Sphinx

It's tail seems quite thick

I'd better ask Rick!

Dammit! I just wish I had pics...

Gareth Burge (in USA)

Lonely beast

There once was a Beast of Bod-min

to see it was considered a win

It loved all the fame

and hunted big game

but sadly couldn't find any kin

Gareth Burge (in USA)

Wolf or panther?

A boy once cried "Wolf!" it is said,

Too bad, he ended up dead

If he'd only said "Cat!"

Then that would be that

"I'll be there!" shouted Rick, as he sped

Gareth Burge (in USA)



Podcast origins

Of big cats, our Rick had his fascinations,
And he wanted to share feline education
He fancied long chats
about elusive large cats
So he started his Big Cat Conversations

Gareth Burge (in USA)

The great escape

A puma got out of a zoo
And didn't know he should do
So he travelled the walls
Hunting for voles in the holes
And once in a while, a small shrew

Donna

On the prowl

Moving as quietly as an owl
It dares not utter the slightest yowl
Rather than flee
It lets witnesses see
An awesome big cat on the prowl.

Felix Flint





