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Aired January 9, 2004 - 14:32 ET

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KYRA PHILLIPS, CNN ANCHOR: Taking you live just outside Orange County, California, to the wilderness park. Authorities addressing reporters on the story we've been talking about, that wilderness area where a mountain lion dragged a woman by her head, dragging her away. Also, another body found. We're listening in. (JOINED IN PROGRESS)

CAPT. STEVE MILLER, ORANGE CO. FIRE: ... approximately 80 pounds. Department of Fish and Game has taken both of those animals to a lab in San Bernardino where we will do a full necropsy which is basically an autopsy. Doug (UNINTELLIGIBLE) can talk a little bit about that and what the process is for that.

Right now, I want to turn in over to Jim Armino who discuss about the involvement for the Orange County Sheriff's Department and his agency.

JIM ARMINO, ORANGE CO. SHERIFF'S DEPT.: Thank you. First of all, I'd like to thank all the agencies for a job well done. Everybody worked very well together.

Orange County Sheriff's Department responded to a radio call at approximately 4:15 last night of a mountain lion attack here where we're standing. Upon arrival, we did -- were informed that there was a female victim that was attacked by a mountain lion as she was riding a bicycle.

We conducted a search of the area and within a very short time, we did come upon the deceased body of a male 35 years of age. He has been identified as Mark Jeffrey Reynolds, 35 years of age from Foot Hill Ranch (ph). He is an account executive for a sporting marketing company in Anaheim.

We immediately launched both our helicopters, Duke 1 and 2. Both these helicopters are equipped are infrared devices that actually seek out the heat from the animal. We did observe the animal at approximately 8:00 p.m. The animal was stalking three deputies, about ready to possibly attack them.

Two deputies on duty fired from their service weapons killing the mountain lion. The mountain lion has been transported to our forensic science laboratory where currently tests are being conducted on the animal, some DNA testing on the contents of the animal, some fiber testing and things of that nature. Nothing conclusive at this point has been determined. As we speak, an autopsy is being performed on the victim and at this time, we do not have any conclusive cause of death.

Are there any questions? Yes.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

ARMINO: We don't have an exact time. Approximation is anywhere from two hours to 12 hours.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

ARMINO: Yes, the mountain lion that was shot is in the orange county sheriff forensic sciences building where tests are being performed on that animal.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

ARMINO: That is correct.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

ARMINO: Very close. And the animal actually returned to the same area. The deputies had information that -- from helicopters that the animal was in the general area would turn out to be about who or 50 feet from where the decessa the person was found. That's when they spotted the animal in some bushes and they fired their weapons, killing the animal.

QUESTION: Can you describe without getting too graphic how that victim looked? In other words, were the clothes ripped off him? How far from the bike was he? What position, he was laying in, that sort of thing?

ARMINO: The victim was partially covered up with some plant material. And without getting too graphic or tool specific, I will say that the victim was disfigured by the animal.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

ARMINO: We do have a couple reports from friends that he was about to ride a bike the next day. And we do have a couple calls coming in asking if this is in fact our victim because he failed to show up for a couple of bike rides.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

Actually today, this morning. Any other questions? I'll turn it over -- I'm sorry.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

ARMINO: Purely from our forensic and from our people at the coroner's office. And again, it's an approximation. We're not sure. It could be anywhere from a couple hours to several hours. We're not sure. After the autopsy, we'll have a better idea. QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE) is DNA testing done of the contents of the mountain lion's stomach?

ARMINO: That's correct, and for fibers or any other type of material.

QUESTION: How long will that take?

ARMINO: We should conclude it by this afternoon. I think the animal will be transferred to San Diego after that time.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: (OFF-MIKE)

ARMINO: Oh, I'm sorry, San Bernardino, not San Diego.

OK, I'll turn it over to Captain Steve Miller from the Orange County Fire Department.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Actually, unless you have questions it was actually to the biologist here.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

MILLER: That's an excellent question. That's one thing that we wish we had answers for as to try and be able to conclude why a mountain lion attacks human beings.

It's very common for all of us to be seen by mountain lions whether we know it or not. Whenever you're in an area that has deer in the area, you're undoubtedly also in mountain lion habitat in California. They inhabit half of the area of the state.

And oftentimes, in fact, most of the time, they're reclusive. They don't want to be seen or be around people. They move out of the area.

What actually causes a lion to suddenly decide that here's a food item where innately they are afraid of humans is an excellent question. And it hasn't occurred, thank God, frequently enough for us to be able to draw conclusions to say this is the kind of circumstances that can lead to a mountain lion attack.

We certainly know that will lions are be common in the state of California. We also know that people view lions all the

time. Most of the time this is taken as a special wildlife experience that's maybe perhaps a once in a lifetime opportunity.

And then very, very rarely only we're talking only five fatalities in the last 110 years in California in -- that's only, one, two, three, four -- five different incidents where people have actually been killed. And it's just -- it's very difficult to say. It's a very abnormal behavior by lions.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

MILLER: One thing that we have seen in most of these circumstances is that the victims are -- they're by themselves. They are usually not moving in pairs. And I don't know whether there's a change in behavior of the human, whether it be a stumble, whether it be a dip of the head, whether it be the way that a piece of clothing blows in the wind that all of a sudden triggers in the mind of the lion all of a sudden, this is prey, this is no longer a human. I don't need to be afraid. Let's eat this. It's not -- it's not well understood.

QUESTION: How rare is it, however, for a mountain lion to get what it's looking for and that is in this case this man and then not be satisfied with that and go after a second human within presumably a few hours?

MILLER: Two parts to that question. The question about -- I'm sorry. What was the first question? I had it.

QUESTION: How rare is it for this animal to have not been satisfied with this one kill and then pounce on another human being that supposedly it was afraid of?

MILLER: OK. The notion of multiple killings is something that we see between lions and prey. We've certainly seen that with sheep and goats where a lion will come into an area and on a hillside just subsequently take or sequentially take a dozen sheep and kill them, move to the next one, kill another one.

Now, that -- we've also known that when a lion has taken a deer or a prey item and caught it by dragging it into the brush or into a low area, pulling branches over it, that kind of thing, that during the period of time that that item is in the woods, they will sometimes defend it.

We know that bears, for example, or coyotes approaching the kill of a lion will cause a fight between the cat and whoever the intruder is. So as to whether or not it may be attacking another person for purposes of not being satisfied is as much speculation I think as concluding that it was defending one prey item in order to fend off what they may be perceiving as an intruder.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

MILLER: A 110-pound lion is very much an average size cat. The preliminary look at the dentition of the animal with bright white sharp canines implies that the lion is not particularly old.

So just from hearing the description, you know, somewhere probably in the two to four-year-old, maybe three-year-old range, as far as the age of this particular lion and the weight of 110 pounds is pretty average, especially given the conditions here.

The deer densities here are somewhat lower than they might be in other parts of the state. You could expect in this kind of an area to see anywhere from probably three to five lions per 100 square miles of habitat. So we're talking about a ten mile by ten mile area that might support three to five lions. PHILLIPS: Mountain bikers hadn't worried about the threat of mountain lions in a popular area to hit the trails there in Orange County, California, the Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park.

But now after one body, the body of a man was found dead it is confirmed that he was indeed killed by this mountain lion that was out in that area. Mark Jeffrey Reynolds.

Also, another woman attacked. As a matter of fact, the same mountain lion had grabbed this woman by her head and dragged her away. A pretty heroic story how other bikers came to her rescue and just made attempt after attempt to clutch this woman from the jaws of that cat.

Orange County Sheriff's deputies finally coming in and taking a shot on the 2-year-old, 110-pound mountain lion. It was killed. It is now being taken to a lab to be analyzed. We'll of course, continue to follow any developments that come from this story.

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