

Wild cats roaming areas of Britain

LONDON (Reuters) Dozens of escaped wild cats, including panthers and pumas, are roaming remote areas of Britain and responsible for a spate of attacks on sheep and, in one case, on a woman, wildlife experts said Saturday.

The experts, quoted in an article in the British Broadcasting Corp.'s Wildlife magazine, said there have been recent sightings of big cats in most parts of Britain, although some reports have not been verified.

The BBC magazine's report coincided with publication of a photograph on the front page of Saturday's tabloid Sun, which the newspaper said showed a panther perched on the wall of a field on the sparsely populated Bodmin Moor, in southwest England.

The Sun said it was the first photograph of the panther-like "beast of Bodmin Moor," which has been terrorizing farms.

Photographer Colin Shepherd said the animal appeared to be about 1.2 meters long, had a long tail and made a blood-curdling noise, which was a cross between that of a cat howling and a lion roaring.

The sighting follows a recent incident on the same moors when a 37-year-old woman said she was knocked out by a large cat-like beast with a long tail. It was thought to be the first reported attack on a human being by a supposed big cat.

Dead sheep, savaged by what vets said was a large carnivore, were found on Bodmin Moor a few months ago.