

Warden kills aggressive mountain lion in Placer County

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

A popular Placer County hiking trail has reopened after authorities say a state Fish and Wildlife warden was forced to shoot and kill a mountain lion Sunday.

Authorities were first alerted to an aggressive mountain lion early Saturday evening, when a hiker on the Stevens Trail near Colfax, fearing for his safety, called 911.



“He noticed he was being followed by a mountain lion,” said Mark Michilizzi, a spokesman for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. “The behavior was consistent with a mountain lion that is stalking prey.”

Fish and Wildlife wardens, Placer County sheriff’s deputies and a California Highway Patrol helicopter responded to the call and apparently scared off the mountain lion, Michilizzi said.

Sunday morning, a warden returned to the area to post signs and warn hikers of the threat of an aggressive mountain lion when he noticed a mountain lion, apparently the same one, preparing to pounce on him, Michilizzi said.

While it is illegal to hunt mountain lions in California, at this point the animal wasn’t just a risk to public safety – it

was a risk to the warden, who shot and killed the cat.

“The officer acted appropriately,” Michilizzi said. “The mountain lion wasn’t cornered. The mountain lion was actively approaching him.”

Michilizzi said a necropsy will be performed to help officials learn more about the health of the animal and what might have triggered the behavior.

“Deer are the primary prey for mountain lion,” Michilizzi. “When they start looking to humans, we want to know why.”

He said hikers should not call 911 upon spotting of a mountain lion, but this instance was different.

“Mountain lion attacks are rare. This type of behavior is rare,” Michilizzi said.

He advised anyone who spots a mountain lion not to run. He said to turn and face the lion while making oneself as big as possible and to throw rocks, stick or leaves.