

The Sun and a Cougar's Whiskers

By Dennis Payton Knight

How does a cougar grow its whiskers?

Well, it's a long story, kid, but it all starts with the sun, a huge, glowing sphere of hot gasses, mostly hydrogen, being converted to helium in a process of nuclear fusion. With that massive energy, the sun holds our planet in its gravity, in a meticulous synchrony of rotation that provides our cycles of day and night, in an orbit that provides seasons to match the cycles of birth and growth.

It is only a medium-sized one compared to others in the galaxy, but our star is the source of all the energy on earth. It provides the photosynthesis that grew the very forests and fern that formed underground coal beds that we burn for energy. But only after it provided shelter and forage for prehistoric mammals, fish and birds, the dinosaurs that once thrived and then returned to the soil to decompose into the deep stores of the petroleum that powers our machinery today.

It is energy from the sun that moves waters in streams and warms the surface to attract aquatic insects feeding the fat rainbow trout within. It is the sun that creates currents of air upon which the eagle soars in search of a succulent trout to round yet another energetic circle of life.

It is the sun that opens the blossom of aromatic nectar and pollen to attract a bee. It is the sun that moves the air on which the bee carries pollen to generate a single berry. It is the sun that grows the berry to feed the rabbit. It is the sun that gives energy to the mother rabbit to generate and raise her warren of offspring. It is the sun that provides energy for the cottontail to grow and become sustenance for the elusive predator of Colorado's high country, the patient, quiet, and agile cougar.

And it is the sun that lights the way for the cougar to carry tasty quarry home to her kittens, feeding them for the caloric energy it will take to grow their whiskers.

Any other questions?