This photo of a cougar was taken by Baraga County resident Fred Nault near Skanee on Saturday, May 5. The photo represents the 15th time the DNR has been able to verify the presence of a cougar in the Upper Peninsula since 2008.

BARAGA COUNTY—The DNR has confirmed the presence of a cougar in Baraga County in the Upper Peninsula.

A photo of the animal was taken by Baraga County resident Fred Nault near Skanee on Saturday, May 5.

DNR Wildlife Division staff were contacted by Nault and visited the property on Tuesday, May 15, to verify the location of the camera.

__PUBLIC__

"This is the 15th time we have verified the presence of a cougar in the Upper Peninsula since our first confirmation in 2008," said DNR Wildlife Biologist Adam Bump, who is a member of the Department's specially-trained cougar team.

"This is the first confirmation in 2012 and the first verified photo of a cougar taken in person and not by a remote camera."

The cougar was spotted crossing a road near Skanee by Nault, who had a camera on him and was able to take a photo before the animal fled into the woods.

A handful of cougar photos and tracks were also verified by the DNR in the fall and winter of 2011. Tracks and photos were confirmed in Ontonagon and Baraga counties, a photo was verified in Houghton County, and tracks were confirmed in Keweenaw County.

The cougar confirmed in Ontonagon, Houghton and Keweenaw counties had a radio-collar, while the cougar verified in Baraga County did not have a collar.

The timing and locations of the photos and tracks suggests there were at least two cougars in the western Upper Peninsula in December 2011.

The DNR has now verified eight separate sets of cougar tracks and seven separate photos in the Upper Peninsula since 2008. The last confirmed wild cougar in Michigan prior to 2008 was an animal killed near Newberry in 1906.

Reports of cougar tracks and other evidence should be made to a local DNR office or by submitting the sighting on the DNR's online reporting form at www.michigan.gov/cougars .

If an emergency situation exists, call the department's 24-hour Report All Poaching line at 800-292-7800. Preserving evidence such as tracks, scat and cached kills greatly improves the chances that a reported sighting may be verified by DNR wildlife staff.