

## **SUMMARY OF THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S 2002-2003 PANTHER CAPTURE SEASON**

This report briefly summarizes the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) 2002-2003 panther capture season activities. This summary does not include data collected prior to October 2002 or subsequent to May 2003. These data along with a more detailed summary of the activities described hereafter, will be provided in the FWC's annual report on *Florida Panther Genetic Restoration and Management*.

### **Capture Results**

Our capture efforts began 23 October 2002 and continued through 06 May 2003. The primary objectives of our capture work this season were to pursue panthers for 1) routine radiocollar replacement, 2) recovery of GPS radiocollars, 3) replacement of radiocollars equipped with break-away devices, and 4) removal of remaining Texas cougars as per *Genetic Restoration and Management* protocol. We chose to maintain the status quo with respect to capture activities this season and did not make a concerted effort to expand the radiocollared sample.

Nineteen panthers and 3 Texas cougars were scheduled for capture prior to the start of the 2002-2003 capture season for the reasons explained above. We successfully captured 9 of the panthers scheduled and successfully removed the 3 Texas cougars (Table 1). The Big Cypress National Preserve capture team successfully captured 3 additional panthers (FP55, FP86, and FP91) scheduled for recollaring. Four panthers (FP99, FP108, FP111, and FP112) died prior to the start of the season. Two panthers were not captured due to premature radiocollar failure (FP81 and FP88) and 1 panther (FP61) was not captured due to the presence of dependent-aged kittens < 1 yr of age.

Three dependent-aged kittens were captured and placed in temporary captivity after their mothers were killed by adult male panthers (Table 1). Siblings FP113♀ and FP114♂ were captured on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge in October 2002 after FP78 was killed by an uncollared male. FP116 was captured on private land in Hendry County subsequent to the death of FP67 by FP65. We

opportunistically captured panthers FP115, FP117, and FP118 during activities associated with the recollarings of FP109 and FP73.

### **Reproduction**

During the capture season we handled the litter of FP101 who denned in early April 2003 on State of Florida property in Hendry County. We documented 3 kittens (2♀; 1♂) on 19 April 2003. Each kitten was marked with a subcutaneous transponder chip for identification and had skin biopsies collected for genetic analyses.

### **Mortalities**

Nine radiocollared panthers died and 5 uncollared panther mortalities were documented during the capture season (Table 2). Three panthers (FP78, FP67, and FP109) died from intraspecific aggression. Uncollared male panthers were the suspected culprits in the deaths of female FP78 and male FP109. Female panther FP67 was killed by male FP65. FP78 and FP67 had dependent-aged kittens that survived the encounters and were subsequently captured and temporarily placed in captivity (Table 1). FP115 died of interstitial pneumonia. The causes of death for FP108, FP118, and FP82 have yet to be determined. Male FP99 and female FP106 died from vehicular trauma. The 5 uncollared panthers also died from vehicular trauma, including panther UCFP49 (K98) who was marked as neonate kitten of FP67 in May 2001 and panther UCFP50 (K33) who was marked as a neonate kitten of FP48 in September 1996.

**Prepared by: David Shindle, 23 May 2003**

**Table 1. Summary of Florida panther captures during the 2002-2003 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's capture season (October 2002 - May 2003).**

Cat ID	Sex	Capture Date	Capture Location	Age	Weight (lb.)	Kinked Tail	Cowlick	Descended Testicles	Capture Comments and Medical Notes
FP113	F	23 Oct 2002	FPNWR	6.5 mo	25	Y	Y	N/A	Orphaned due to FP78's death. Placed into temporary captivity.
FP114	M	23 Oct 2002	FPNWR	6.5 mo	27	Y	N	0	Orphaned due to FP78's death. Placed into temporary captivity.
TX108	F	18 Nov 2002	ENP		75	N	N	N/A	Removed and placed into permanent captivity.
FP110	F	25 Nov 2002	OKSSF	22 mo	90	N	Y	N/A	Replaced failed GPS radiocollar with VHF radiocollar.
FP115	F	26 Nov 2002	OKSSF	~4.5 yr	113	Y	N?	N/A	Initial radiocollaring. Opportunistic capture.
FP82	F	06 Dec 2002	OKSSF	~6 yr	129	Y	N	N/A	Replaced failed VHF radiocollar.
FP104	M	13 Dec 2002	BCNP	~2 yr	133	N	N	2	Replaced "break-away" collar with standard VHF radiocollar.
TX106	F	08 Jan 2003	PSSF		96	N	N	N/A	Removed and placed into permanent captivity.
FP116	F	20 Jan 2003	Private	7.5 mo	36	Y	Y	N/A	Orphaned due to FP67's death. Placed into temporary captivity.
FP109	M	24 Jan 2003	OKSSF	~11 yr	157	N/A	Y	1	Replaced failed GPS radiocollar with VHF radiocollar.
TX105	F	27 Jan 2003	ENP	~11 yr	87	N	N	N/A	Removed and placed into permanent captivity.
FP94	F	30 Jan 2003	ENP		85.5	N	N	N/A	Routine radiocollar replacement. Pregnant at capture.
FP85	M	18 Feb 2003	ENP	4 yr	97	N	N	2	Replaced radiocollar and electroejaculated.
FP117	M	25 Feb 2003	BCNP	~11 mo	67	N	N	2	Initial radiocollaring. Fitted with "break-away".
FP73	F	27 Feb 2003	BCNP	6 yr	112.5	N	Y	N/A	Routine radiocollar replacement.
FP118	F	05 Mar 2003	BCSIR	~11 mo	62.5	N	Y	N/A	Initial radiocollaring.
FP95	F	24 Mar 2003	ENP	5 yr	90	N	N	N/A	Routine radiocollar replacement. 2 dependent 1 yr-old kittens.
FP75	F	06 May 2003	BCNP					N/A	Routine radiocollar replacement. 2 dependent 11.5 mo-old kittens treed.

**Table 2. Florida panther mortalities documented during the 2002-2003 capture season (October 2002 – May 2003).**

Cat ID <sup>a</sup>	Sex	Age	Date	Location	Cause
FP78	F	~6 yr	18 Oct 2002	FPNWR	Intraspecific aggression
UCFP48	F	8-9 mo	11 Nov 2002	CR846, Collier Co.	Vehicular trauma
FP108	M	22 mo	18 Nov 2002	BCNP	Unknown
UCFP49 (K98)	F	19 mo	26 Nov 2002	CR846, Collier Co.	Vehicular trauma
FP99	M	~2.5-3 yr	28 Nov 2002	CR846, Collier Co.	Vehicular trauma
FP67	F	~5.5 yr	15 Jan 2003	Private, Hendry Co.	Intraspecific aggression
UCFP50 (K33)	M	~3-4 yr	26 Jan 2003	CR846, Collier Co.	Vehicular trauma
FP106	F	~3 yr	20 Feb 2003	SR29, Collier Co.	Vehicular trauma
FP109	M	~10-11 yr	26 Feb 2003	OKSSF, Hendry Co.	Suspected intraspecific aggr.
UCFP51	M	~2.5 yr	10 Mar 2003	I-4, Hillsborough Co.	Vehicular trauma
UCFP52	M	~3-5 yr	22 Mar 2003	CR833, Hendry Co.	Vehicular trauma
FP118	F	~1 yr	04 Apr 2003	BCSIR	Unknown
FP82	F	~6 yr	13 May 2003	OKSSF, Collier Co.	Unknown
FP115	F	~5 yr	17 May 2003	OKSSF, Hendry Co.	Pneumonia

<sup>a</sup>FP denotes panthers captured for radiocollaring; UCFP denotes uncollared Florida panthers, typically roadkills, and K denotes panthers handled and marked as neonate kittens.