

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission 2005-2006 Panther Capture Season Summary

Prepared by Mark Lotz, FWC Panther Biologist

This report briefly summarizes the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) 2005-2006 panther capture season activities. It does not include data collected prior to 14 November 2005 or subsequent to 24 March 2006. These data along with a more detailed summary of the activities described hereafter will be provided in the FWC's Florida Panther Annual Report.

Capture Results

Our capture efforts began on 14 November 2005 and continued through 24 March 2006. 70 hunt days were divided between the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) (2 days), Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) Addition Lands Unit (26 days), Seminole Indian Reservation (16 days), Everglades National Park (12 days), and Picayune Strand Wildlife Management Area and State Forest (PSWMA/SF) (14 days). The primary objectives of our capture work this season were to 1) replace radiocollars reaching their warranted battery life, 2) capture panthers near the urban-wildlife interface along the western edge of their range (i.e. PSWMA/SF), 3) continue monitoring and vaccinating panthers for feline leukemia virus (FeLV), and 4) continue evaluation of 4 brands of GPS collars.

Thirteen Florida panthers (FP) were captured meeting our objectives (Table 1). Seven previously uncollared panthers (FP140, FP141, FP142, FP143, FP144, FP146, and FP148) were added to the study population. One panther was reacquired that had a failed radiocollar (FP121). Radiocollars were replaced on five panthers (FP94, FP95, FP100, FP131, and FP135) for routine anticipated battery failure



FP140 – On the first day of our capture season we not only collared FP140 but also treed 3 of her kittens (one of them pictured here). We did not collar any of the kittens since they were less than a year old.



FP131 – You might not think catching panthers was as much fun if you had to tote all this gear with you; and that’s just the veterinary supplies. Not pictured is the capture equipment; crash bag, safety net, and climbing gear.



FP100 – Here’s the view from my position as “tree climber” from 30 feet above the ground. After tying the safety rope to FP100 he’s safely lowered to the ground.



FP144 – Another perfect shot! A few moments later FP144 eased himself down the tree and we captured him on the ground.

Mortalities

Eleven mortalities were documented during the capture season (Table 2). Three panthers, two uncollared (UCFP77, UCFP83) and one radiocollared (FP129) died from intraspecific aggression (i.e. killed by other panthers). Documenting intraspecific aggression of uncollared panthers is a rare occurrence because panthers don't usually perish in areas where people are liable to find them. However, that's precisely what happened in these particular cases. UCFP77 was near a canal and discovered by a fisherman. UCFP83 was in a less obvious location but biologists and land managers conducting a prescribed burn discovered the carcass after investigating a wake of vultures several hundred feet from the fire line. A cause of death could not be determined on two panthers. UCFP82 was merely bones when discovered; yet another happenstance find of an uncollared panther near an orange grove. FP104's cause of death is currently listed as unknown pending further diagnostic tests, however, a viral infection is suspected. Six panthers (K49, FP70, UCFP78, UCFP79, UCFP80, and UCFP81) died on highways after collisions with vehicles.

Reproduction

Litters from two panthers were handled during the capture season. FP107 denned on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge in February. A female (K200) and male (K201) were marked with transponders on 17 February when the kittens were about 6 days old. They each weighed 1.5 pounds and their eyes were only half way open. The sire is FP131. FP121 denned on the Seminole Indian Reservation in late February. The kittens, a female (K202) and two males (K203, K204) were marked with transponders on 5 March when about 12 days old. Genetic samples were only obtained from one kitten because of FP121's hasty return to the den site. The sire is unknown.



FP107 den – At six days old FP107's kittens' eyes are about half way open. They'll be fully open in the next few days.

Table 1. Florida panther captures during the 2005-2006 Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's capture season (14 November 2005-24 March 2006).

Cat ID	Sex	Capture Date	Capture Location ^a	Age (yrs.)	Weight (lbs.)	Capture Comments
FP140	F	14 Nov 2005	FPNWR	3.5	80	Initial radio-collaring.
FP131	M	15 Nov 2005	FPNWR	7	130	Routine radio-collar replacement.
FP141	M	30 Nov 2005	SIR	3.5	130	Initial radio-collaring.
FP95	F	07 Dec 2005	ENP	7.75	83	Routine radio-collar replacement.
FP94	F	12 Dec 2005	ENP	6.5	79	Routine radio-collar replacement.
FP142	F	14 Dec 2005	ENP	2.5	70	Initial radio-collaring.
FP143	M	09 Jan 2006	SIR	1.5	101	Initial radio-collaring.
FP100	M	13 Jan 2006	BCNP	9	142	Routine radio-collar replacement.
FP121	F	02 Feb 2006	SIR	4	110	Recaptured after previous collar failed.
FP144	M	08 Feb 2006	BCNP	2	120	Initial radio-collaring.
FP135	M	13 Feb 2006	FPNWR	2 yr 10 mo	124	Routine radio-collar replacement.
FP146	M	27 Feb 2006	PSWMA/SF	3	144	Initial radio-collaring.
FP148	F	24 Mar 2006	PSWMA/SF	2.5	60	Initial radio-collaring.

^a FPNWR=Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge; SIR=Seminole Indian Reservation; ENP=Everglades National Park; BCNP=Big Cypress National Preserve (units north of I-75); PSWMA/SF=Picayune Strand Wildlife Management Area & State Forest

Table 2. Florida panther mortalities documented during the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission capture season (14 November 2005- 24 March 2006).

Cat ID^a	Sex	Age (yrs)	Date Collected	Location	County	Cause
K49	F	7 yr-10 mo	02 Dec 2005	SR29 near Copeland	Collier	Road kill
FP70	F	9	14 Jan 2006	US41 near Turner River	Collier	Road kill
UCFP77	F	2-3	15 Jan 2006	Seminole Indian Reservation	Hendry	Intraspecific aggression
UCFP78	M	9 mo	25 Jan 2006	CR846, 1 mi W of CR858	Collier	Road kill
UCFP79	F	2	26 Jan 2006	CR846, 2 mi N of CR858	Collier	Road kill
UCFP80	M	1.5	02 Feb 2006	Card Sound Road	Dade	Road kill
UCFP81	M	2-3	27 Feb 2006	I-75 near exit #138	Lee	Road kill
UCFP82	M	unknown	27 Feb 2006	Duda Ranch near Felda	Lee	Unknown
FP104	M	5.5	09 Mar 2006	Big Cypress National Preserve	Collier	Unknown
UCFP83	M	3	14 Mar 2006	Flint Pen Strand Wildlife Mgt. Area	Lee	Intraspecific aggression
FP129	F	5	22 Mar 2006	Big Cypress National Preserve	Collier	Intraspecific aggression

^aFP = radiocollared panther, UCFP = uncollared panthers never handled, K = panthers marked with transponders as neonates in the den