

Florida Panther Field Note August 2008

FP107 Dies on Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge

Florida panther #107 died sometime between August 4th and 5th and her body was collected from the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge on August 6th, 2008. She was 8 years old. FP107 was first handled in the den of her mother, FP78, on April 26, 2000 when she was 10-14 days old. She also had one brother sibling that would later become FP96. Her father was FP59.



FP78's kittens...FP107 and her brother, FP96, in the den in April 2000.

FP107 was first radio collared on November 1, 2001 when she was 19 months old. She produced 16 kittens from 6 dens throughout her lifetime but, unfortunately, never successfully raised any of them to dispersal age. In some cases it was bad luck. For example, her first den was in July 2002 and it happened to coincide with a particularly bad mosquito infestation. The kittens had scabs on their noses because they continuously kept their faces to the ground between their front legs in an effort to keep the mosquitoes from biting the sensitive, exposed areas around their eyes and nose. When we handled the kittens they were severely anemic and had blood values that were "incompatible with life." In fact, two weeks later FP107 no longer returned to the den. The den site was later searched and no kittens were found.

During FP107's third den she apparently came back into estrous while her kittens were just a couple of weeks old. She was in the company of two different males and making scrapes. Females occasionally lead males away from den sites to protect the kittens but they do not make scrapes during these forays. Both sexes "scrape" by pushing up ground litter with their back feet and urinating on it. Males do it to mark territories and females do it to signal receptivity to breeding. She never returned to the den site after this and the kittens were subsequently removed and placed in permanent captivity at the Jacksonville Zoo.



FP107... moments before being darted to replace her radio collar in 2004.

It seems that FP107 lost most of her kittens while they were still in the den. However, photographic evidence from a trail camera confirmed that she raised one kitten from her fourth den to 6 months of age. However, we could never verify that this kitten survived to reach dispersal age. Part of the reason FP107 may have had difficulties raising kittens was the fact that she battled some type of dermatitis that may have been related to a compromised immune system. It's possible this, and other immune dysfunctions, contributed to her inability to successfully raise kittens. And while some lab results are still pending on a cause of death for FP107, some theorize that her compromised immune system contributed to her untimely demise. The normal lifespan for a female panther in the wild is 15 years. FP107 does have a younger sister, FP113, born from the same parents but from a different litter. Fortunately FP113 has had better luck and continues the family line.