

PantherNet Field Notes
September – December 2006

Prepared by Mark Lotz, FWC Panther Team Biologist

Florida Panther #135 Euthanized

Male FP135 and male FP131 were located very close together in mid October during one of our routine monitoring flights. We suspected they had an altercation and guessed a female was the catalyst. Both of these males' territories overlap each other so they undoubtedly have met before. Both cats moved very little since their suspected encounter with each other however, after a couple of flights, FP131 resumed normal movements again whereas FP135 remained in the area. Due to his lack of normal movements we walked in on him to check on his condition. I was able to approach to within 12 feet and noticed healing scars on his head but nothing else seemed out of the ordinary. When I approached closer he promptly got up and quickly bounded off. I couldn't explain why he remained in such a small area but based on how quickly he was able to move I assumed he was OK. Several flights later FP135 continued to make very small movements which was not normal. So two weeks later we walked in on him again. This time we discovered him in poor condition and he could not elude us. Arrangements were made to capture and remove him to the University of Florida's Vet school for further examination and treatment. Once stabilized in the field we finally got a look at the severity of his injuries. He was thin and dehydrated and it was apparent he had not eaten since the fight. There were scratches and bite marks to his head and legs but most of these were healing and appeared somewhat superficial. However, the most gruesome injuries that caused his suffering and decline were to his toes. Several of the last digits and claws had been bitten off, mostly on the hind feet, exposing raw bone. After an initial improvement at the vet school, likely resulting from the fluid therapy, he continued to decline. The decision for euthanasia was based on his irreversible deteriorating condition. A comprehensive list of the year's mortalities can be found in the Panther Pulse near the end of this Field Note.

(continue to next page)



We needed to check on FP135 after he hadn't moved in several days. Can you find him in this picture? Here's a hint, he's right in the middle of the picture to the right of the Caesar weed (the plant with the pink flower).



Surprise! Here's a zoomed in view to help you out.

Capture Season Begins

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Panther Capture Season got underway on November 8th. This is the time of year when we capture panthers to replace radio collars whose batteries are about to expire and to add new study animals to the project. Typically the season begins in November and continues through March depending on weather conditions. We conduct our activities at this time of year because water levels from the summer rains have receded and the temperatures are better suited for safely capturing panthers. The anesthetizing drugs used on the panthers inhibit normal thermoregulation (maintenance of body temperature) and capturing them at cooler times of the year prevents hyperthermia (over-heating). We plan to recover several GPS collars that were used on panthers last season as well as set up a few more to continue our testing of different brands and systems. So far, in this reporting quarter, we've recollared six panthers.



FP110 briefly hangs on before finally relaxing and falling into the safety net held by the crew below.



FWC veterinarian Mark Cunningham prepares to draw blood from FP116.

First Panther Safety Town Hall Meeting Held

As an ever-increasing human population continues to encroach upon panther habitat placing more people amongst the urban/wildland interface in southern Florida, the potential for human-panther interactions is expected to increase. A handful of domestic livestock predations have occurred in recent years when, historically, there have been none. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the National Park Service (NPS) are the primary agencies responsible for protection and management of the Florida panther. These agencies are committed to educating residents and visitors about the Florida panther and providing safety tips for residents living in panther habitat and visitors pursuing recreational activities there. One of the ways this will be accomplished is through a series of Town Hall meetings promoting awareness along with practical knowledge and tips for living safely in and near panther habitat. The first meeting was held on November 16, 2006 near Golden Gate Estates in Naples. Recovery of the Florida panther is a multi-agency effort and so too was this meeting which was planned and organized by the FWS, FWC and NPS. Topics covered included panther biology by FWC panther biologist Darrell Land, safety tips and what one should do if they encounter a panther by FWC Captain Jayson Horadam, and the Interagency Florida Panther Response Plan by the FWS Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge manager Layne Hamilton.

Additionally, several informational displays by the aforementioned agencies and other non-governmental partners offered take-home materials to the 80 citizens that attended. The Naples meeting was hosted by District 5 Collier County Commissioner Jim Coletta and emceed by the FWC's South Regional Director Chuck Collins. A second town hall meeting was held for residents in the Copeland/Jerome/Everglades City area of rural Collier County on February 15, 2006 with approximately 60 people attending.

Births

Florida panther #140 gave birth to two kittens in November on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. The den was visited on November 15th and a male and female, approximately 10 days old, were found nestled in a fern bed in a small hardwood hammock surrounded by cypress. Each weighed just over 2.5 pounds. This was the last den documented in 2006 bringing the number of dens up to eight producing a total of 21 kittens. Check out the Panther Pulse for a complete rundown of the 2006 births.



Although FP140's kitten is hissing with displeasure of being disturbed from her den, this threatening behavior fails to deter the fearless biologists who must gather biomedical data to save this endangered species.

Panther Pulse

Are you curious to know how many panthers have been born and how many have died this year? Keep your finger on the *pulse* with these summary tables.

Here are some tips to help you decipher the following tables.

Panther identification: when a kitten is handled at the den a transponder is inserted under the skin which permanently identifies that individual and it receives a "K" number. When a panther is captured and wears a radio collar it gets an "FP" number. FP just stands for Florida panther; they are numbered sequentially as they're captured. A panther that has never been handled at the den or captured for

placement of a radio collar is identified as an uncollared Florida panther and has the designation "UCFP."

Mortality Causes: **IA** = intraspecific aggression (panthers killing panthers), **RK** = road kill.

Location: **BCNP** = Big Cypress National Preserve (specific units within BCNP include Add Lands, Bear Island), **FPNWR** = Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, **OSSF** = Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest, **SIR** = Seminole Indian Reservation, **ENP** = Everglades National Park

2006 Dens (January 1 – December 31)								
FP Mother	FP Father	Date Kittens Handled	Age When Handled	Litter Composition				Location
				Male	Female	Total	K#'s	
107	131	2/17/06	~6 days	1	1	2	F200, M201	FPNWR
121	unknown	3/5/06	~12 days	2	1	3	F202, M203, M204	SIR
94	unknown	6/22/06	2.5 wks	1	2	3	F205, M206, F207	ENP
145	138	6/23/06	12 days	0	3	3	F208, F209, F210	BCNP
93	133	7/1/06	18 days	0	3	3	F211, F212, F213	BCNP
95	unknown	7/3/06	10 days	1	2	3	F214, F215, M216	ENP
102	138	7/12/06	18 days	2	0	2	M217, M218	BCNP
140	119	11/15/06	9-11 days	1	1	2	F219, M220	FPNWR
Totals				8	13	21		

2006 Mortality (January 1 – December 31)						
Panther ID	Sex	Age (yrs)	Date Collected	Cause	County	Location
FP70	F	9	1/14/2006	RK	Collier	US41 @ Turner River
UCFP77	F	2-3	1/15/2006	IA	Hendry	BCSIR by West Boundry Canal
UCFP78	M	9 mo	1/25/2006	RK	Collier	CR846, 1 mi W of CR858
UCFP79	F	2	1/26/2006	RK	Collier	CR846, 2 mi N of CR858
UCFP80	M	1.5	2/2/2006	RK	Dade	Card Sound Rd, 8 mi S of Card Sound/US1 intersection
UCFP81	M	2-3	2/27/2006	RK	Lee	I-75 near Exit 138 (Ft Myers)
UCFP82 ^a	M	Unk	2/27/2006	Unknown	Lee	Duda Ranch N of Felda (bones only)
FP104	M	5.5	3/9/2006	viral?	Collier	BCNP
UCFP83	M	3	3/14/2006	IA	Lee	Flint Pen Strand
FP129	F	5	3/22/2006	IA	Collier	BCNP
K203 ^b	M	1 mo	4/6/2006	Unknown	Hendry	BCSIR
UCFP84	M	3-4	4/14/2006	RK	Osceola	I-4

UCFP85	M	4	6/5/06	RK	Hendry	CR832
UCFP86 ^c	Unk	Unk	7/7/06	RK	Collier	SR29, 0.6 mi. south of Sunniland
UCFP87	M	3	8/24/06	RK	Lee	Corkscrew Rd near Alico intersection
FP135 ^d	M	3.5	10/24/06	IA/euth	Collier	Barron Collier north of FPNWR
FP48	F	15	10/30/06	Unknown	Collier	Sunniland Mine
UCFP88	F	2	11/12/06	RK	Collier	US41 near Manatee Rd
UCFP89	M	4-5	12/11/06	RK	Collier	CR858 (County Line Rd)
Total documented mortality = 19 Roadkills = 11 IA = 4 Unknown/other = 4						

Notes

- a. Skeletal remains only but no skull, sex determined through long bone measurements.
- b. Confirmed through transponder found in remains at old den site
- c. No carcass recovered due to delayed reporting, evidence suggests scavenged by vultures then drug into canal by alligator, positive species identification made by combination of macroscopic and microscopic morphological characteristics of hair as well as genetic species identification techniques.
- d. Removed from wild 10/24/06 when unable to move after encounter with FP131, euthanized 10/27/06 due to deteriorating condition.

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