

PantherNet Field Note
April – June 2007

Prepared by Mark Lotz

Notes of Interest

Close Up Visit

On April 16 our Panther Section Team Leader, Darrell Land, saw an uncollared male panther walking along side female FP110 while conducting the telemetry flight. This was especially curious because FP110 had four one-month-old kittens back at the den. We were interested in verifying (by tracks) that the other panther was indeed a male and so went out to investigate. We found where the cats had been walking together and concluded the uncollared panther was a male. Afterward, we followed the radio signal to where FP110, and presumably her new friend, were resting in a hardwood hammock right next to a trail. I walked down the trail with the intention of getting close to listen for any vocalizations that might clue me in as to what type of interaction was occurring. As I walked down the trail both panthers were walking out of the hammock toward the same trail. The uncollared panthers eyes and mine met at the same time and we both froze. FP110, meanwhile, remained out of site but continued walking toward a palmetto patch emitting several soft "reow" sounding calls. There was a wax myrtle bush obscuring both of our vision so as I moved to the other side of the trail for a better look the male moved closer to me to the other side of the bush so he could see me better too. We were both curious of each other. After a minute or two the panther laid down and we just watched each other from about 30 feet apart. This is the point in the story where I say, "don't try this at home! I am a trained professional." After a few minutes Darrell followed up behind me and spooked the panther. That was the end of my close encounter.



A moment of interspecies curiosity is shared. Which one is being studied?

Domestic Livestock Pens Built

On June 2nd and 3rd volunteers from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Big Cypress National Preserve, The Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge, Collier County 4-H, the Mountain Lion Foundation, and others, along with volunteers of and spearheaded by Defenders of Wildlife, constructed three hobby livestock pens in Naples. Two were at residences within Golden Gate Estates and one is for permanent display purposes at the Collier County Agriculture Extension Service office. Panthers and other wildlife occasionally take domestic animals, particularly goats, and the best way to guard against such losses is for one to pen their animals up at night. Creating a secure, roofed enclosure that panthers, bears, and other predatory animals cannot gain entry to not only protects the animals housed inside but also protects panthers and people by avoiding conflicts. The basic design for the style of pens we built is fairly simple. It essentially entails wrapping chain link fencing around a standard 10 ft X 20 ft shade canopy frame. For more details on building these pens check out the following Web sites.

- http://www.mountainlion.org/publications/Light_Load_Pen.pdf
- <http://www.nps.gov/bicy/naturescience/upload/BICY%20livestock%20enclosure.pdf>



Construction of a proper livestock enclosure is the only sure fire way to protect ones animals for those living in panther country.

Births

Three dens were recorded producing eight kittens; five males and three females. However, the den of FP107 was a complete failure. All three of her kittens died before they were three weeks old.

- **FP149** April 13. Picayune Strand State Forest. Two males. FP149 denned along the berm of one of the old roads in Picayune Strand State Forest. The den was in a bed of bracken ferns. Everglades restoration efforts are currently underway in Picayune. Roads are being removed and canals are being filled in to restore more natural hydroperiods to the area.



Although this kitten of FP149 looks happy to see us he's really upset that we disturbed his sleep.

- **FP107.** April 27. Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. One male, two females. FP107 has had a poor history of successfully raising young. This denning attempt proved no different. Upon the initial visit to the den site, one (a female) of the three kittens was found dead. The other two appeared in poor health. Due to their condition and the apparent lack of attentiveness to the kittens by FP107 (the den did not look like FP107 had been spending much time there) we continued to monitor her progress with the "biologist-in-a-box." By May 3rd it seemed apparent that FP107 was no longer returning to the den site so we revisited it. The other female was found dead about 20 feet outside of the original den site and remains of the male were found about 30 feet away in the opposite direction. A necropsy of the first kitten suggests it may not have received sufficient antibodies during its first feeding; it had various infections. It's likely the other kittens had the same problems.
- **FP128.** May 12. Private land between the Seminole Indian Reservation and the Addition Lands of Big Cypress National Preserve. Two males, one female. With the gracious permission of the landowners we handled three kittens of FP128 on their property.

Mortality

Nine panthers died this quarter, all the result of roadkills (however, three neonate (very young) kittens also died, see above). All were uncollared and only one was previously handled and was identified by the transponder chip inserted at the den site. Six of the road mortalities were male, three were female. So far there has been a record setting 14 roadkills this year.

- **UCFP94.** April 3. Roadkill. Male. Three years old. I-75 (Alligator Alley) at 98 mile marker, Collier County. This uncollared panther was killed just two miles east of the toll booth on I-75 near Naples. We speculate he was responsible for some recent depredations on domestic goats in a portion of Golden Gate Estates. Since his death there have been no more reported incidents in that area.
- **UCFP95.** April 18. Roadkill. Male. 2-3 yrs old. Lake Walk-In-The-Water Road, Polk County. Male panthers continue to disperse into central Florida. Unfortunately, death by vehicle collision seems to be an inevitable outcome.
- **UCFP96.** May 9. Roadkill. Female. Three years old. US1, Miami-Dade County. This female was hit ½ mile south of the intersection of northern Card Sound Road and US1.
- **UCFP97.** May 14. Roadkill. Female. Four to five years old. Corkscrew Rd., Lee County. Given the age of this female it's likely she was a resident of Flint Pen Strand, a portion of the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW), just south of where she was hit. There is an underpass nearby but she attempted to cross the road to the east of the associated fence. Planning is now under way to extend the fencing a few hundred yards to help guide animals to the crossing structure. It will terminate at an orange grove where wildlife is less likely to be traveling.
- **UCFP98.** June 11. Roadkill. Male. Two years old. State Road 29 near Jerome, Collier County. This panther wandered on to the roadway and walked "inside" the fence meant to guide animals to an underpass. This is the second panther to be struck and killed within the fencing on this particular structure. Discussions are currently under way to extend the fencing in hopes of providing better protection for panthers.
- **UCFP99.** June 14. Roadkill. Male. 12-15 months old. State Road 82, Lee County. A motorists witnessed this young panther get hit at about 3:45 pm just south of Lehigh Acres near Sunshine Blvd. Dispersing males can wind up in some peculiar places at times. This heavily developed area attests to that.
- **UCFP100.** June 23. Roadkill. Male. Two to three years old. State Road 29, Collier County. This panther was killed 2 miles south of the town of Immokalee.
- **K199.** June 23. Roadkill. Female. One year, eight months old. County Road 832 (Keri Rd), Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest, Hendry County. K199 was marked at the den of FP110 on November 1, 2005 when about three weeks old. Although never radiocollared, her transponder chip allowed a positive identification. Although every loss is important in an

endangered population, losing females can be especially hard. The necropsy revealed she had three near-term fetuses.

- **UCFP101.** June 27. Roadkill. Male. Four years old. US41, Miami-Dade County. This panther was hit on US41 1 mi east of Krome Ave.