

FLORIDA PANTHER GENETIC RESTORATION PROGRESS REPORT JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 1999

TX101

As is typical of TX 101, most of her activity was centered around the game pen on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation (BCSIR) with occasional forays beyond its borders. Following are accounts of her offspring:

Panther #65_{F1}

Panther #65_{F1} crossed CR846 east of Immokalee a minimum of six times this period. Much of August was spent south of CR 846. The bulk of locations occurred in his typical home range in the Okaloacoochee Slough, however, he made an unexpected move east of County Line Road in mid September. He was located about three miles north of the Hendry Correctional Institute but quickly returned to his usual haunts.

Panther #66_{F1}

Panther #66_{F1} spent the bulk of her time on private land north of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR). She was located with panther #59 on 14 July. She also ventured into "new" territory north of CR 858, crossing back and forth a minimum of six times during this period. In September she traveled southwest to the extreme western portion of FPNWR and areas around the Ford Test Track. She was located with panther #60 on 13 September west of Lucky Lake Strand. These two encounters with males appears to confirm the loss of her first litter.

Panther #73_{F1}

Panther #73_{F1} utilized the game pen on the BCSIR throughout July. However, during August and September she was located as frequently west of the pen as inside.

Panther #74

Panther #74 was struck and killed by a vehicle on US 27 in Highlands County approximately ½ mile north of CR 731 near Venus during the late night or early morning hours of 7-8 September. Massive injuries were sustained and death was almost certainly instantaneous. He had recently dispersed to the Fisheating Creek area near Palmdale and seemed to be setting up a regular home range which encompassed US 27. He had been using this area approximately 4 months prior to his early demise at 2 years of age.

Panther #74 was likely born the summer of 1997 on the BCSIR to panther #73_{F1}. Panther's #73_{F1} and #74 were found together and collared on 12 November 1998. It is suspected that male #74 is one of #73_{F1}'s three offspring. Shortly after his capture, #74 began exhibiting dispersal behavior and by February 1999 had left his natal range. Over the weekend of 8-9 May 1999 he swam across the Caloosahatchee River near the Ortona Lock and Dam near Goodno. He was the second male panther documented to disperse north of the Caloosahatchee River within the past year (panther #62 crossed in April 1998). He had been using the Fisheating Creek system and other areas north of the Creek but remained south of SR 70. He regularly crossed US 27 as he traveled in his new range.

Panther #79_{F1}

Panther #79_{F1} ranged through the Turner River and Corn Dance Units of BCNP, visiting the females with kittens on occasion. He crossed US Highway 41 into the Stairsteps Unit on one occasion since TX 103's death. He is the most likely sire of four litters, one with a female panther, one with an unrelated Texas cougar, and two with F1 females.

TX103

Texas cougar 103 was found dead after a mortality signal was detected during a routine telemetry flight on BCNP on 20 August 1999. No obvious cause of death could be determined from the field as no signs of trauma or foul-play were observed. TX 103's carcass was collected from the Lostman's Pines area of the Stairsteps Unit and transported to the University of Florida's Veterinary School where a necropsy was performed to identify the likely cause of death. The necropsy revealed that TX 103 was carrying four male fetuses that were approximately two weeks shy of full development. Preliminary analyses seemed to indicate that TX 103 died a natural death from complications associated with this pregnancy. Further samples are still being processed which may reveal more details. It was suspected that TX 103 might be pregnant because she had been located with male panther #79_{F1} approximately three months earlier.

TX 103 was released on 4 May 1995 in BCNP south of US 41 as part of the genetic restoration project. She is the third Texas cougar to die since the eight females were released in 1995. Previous Texas cougar deaths included TX 102 who was hit by a car on 22 September 1995. TX 102 was carrying 3 half-term fetuses at the time of her death. TX 104, who never successfully bred, was illegally shot on 18 April 1998. Although TX 103's death is disappointing, the remaining five cougars have made significant contributions to the endangered panther population (see TX Cougar Summary Table). To date, these cougars have produced 14 F1 and three back cross kittens.

TX105

TX 105 generally occupied the western portion of Long Pine Key (LPK) in Everglades National Park (ENP). She concentrated most of her movements in July and August in the "Hole-in-the-Donut" area, where she was thought to be denning. However, field personnel did not identify this location as a den site until approximately one month after denning activity began. We attempted to locate the den site on 9 and 10 August for the purpose of examining and marking any kittens with transponders. However, the approximately 1-month old kittens were able to evade detection, particularly in the structurally dense Brazilian pepper, preventing us from locating the den site.

TX106

Since giving birth in June to two female kittens, TX 106 has maintained small movements around the vicinity of the den site indicating she is still raising them. The area was searched on 7 and 8 September. Both days revealed the presence of at least one kitten. By mid September she had moved a couple miles southwest of the den site still within the Picayune Strand State Forest.

TX107

TX 107 has inhabited the eastern Turner River Unit between Mud Lake and the Little Deer area on BCNP. Her movements indicate she is raising her 7-month old kittens. Following are accounts of her previous offspring.

Panther #70_{F1}

Panther #70_{F1} inhabited the Turner River Unit north of Monument lake. Her small movements indicate she is raising her three-month old kittens.

Panther #71_{F1}

Panther #71_{F1} inhabited the Addition Lands of BCNP south of I-75 from Bamboo Strand to Doctor's Prairie. Her small movements also indicate that she is raising her three-month old kittens.

TX108

TX 108 utilized all areas of Long Pine Key in Everglades National Park. She also extended her movements to the west of LPK, almost reaching Sisal Pond. TX 108 spent some time in the "Hole-in-the-Donut" and went as far east as Palm Vista Hammock. She only traveled to the north side of the Main Park Road once. Her northern-most locations extended to near Pine Glades Lake. Following is an account of her offspring.

Panther #61_{F1}

Panther #61 was not monitored in ENP this quarter due to radio collar failure. An attempt to capture Panther #61 and her kitten will be made when her kitten is six to nine months old.

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