

## Florida Panther Field Note July 2004

### Mortalities

#### ***FP55***

Female FP55's radio collar was detected beating in the mortality mode during a routine telemetry flight by Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) biologists on July 12. When they arrived at the scene all they discovered were bones. FP55 had apparently been dead about a week. Scavengers may have been responsible for preventing the collar from going into the mortality mode, which occurs after 2 hours of inactivity. FP55 was first radio-collared in January 1994 when 2-years-old. She was 12 years old when she died. Apparent cause of death was due to intraspecific aggression based on telling characteristics of the skull.

#### ***FP132***

Male FP132 died on July 22 on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest from complications resulting from feline leukemia virus (FeLV). This is the 6<sup>th</sup> panther in this area to test positive for FeLV since February 2003. He was 3-years-old. The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) panther capture team first encountered FP132 on March 17 while retrieving the carcass of male FP123 who was killed by another panther. From a freshly killed deer nearby FP123's carcass, the dogs trailed and treed the panther that was to become FP132. Based on proximity it was surmised that FP132 killed FP123. Unfortunately for FP132, FP123 was FeLV positive and this is when FP132 became infected. Although FP132 tested negative for FeLV at capture and was subsequently vaccinated, it had been 2 days since his exposure to FP123. Due to the pathology of this virus in panthers it could not be detected at such an early stage of exposure and it was too late for the vaccine to be effective.

#### ***FP117***

Male FP117 died on private property just east of Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest on July 28. He was 2.5-years old. A cause of death was unable to be determined at necropsy and further tests are pending. There was no obvious cause of death, such as intraspecific aggression, and he was FeLV negative. FP117 was first captured as an 11-month old dependant kitten of an uncollared female on the Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) "Addition Lands" on February 25, 2003. Once independent, he dispersed and eventually settled in the area where he died.

### Removals

#### ***FP120***

On July 11 Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) officers were working a "panther zone" (these zones are posted with reduced night-time speed limits) on a portion of US 41 that bisects Big Cypress National Preserve when they witnessed a panther dart out and get struck by a motorist

traveling 50 mph (10 mph under the legal speed limit) approximately 2 hours before sunset. FWC panther biologists were called to the scene. In the interim the panther had swum a canal north of the highway and traveled approximately 30 yards into the woods. Upon the biologists arrival it was quickly ascertained through telemetry that the panther in question was female FP120. Based on her reported ability to move she was left alone. However, when she had not moved by the next morning (July 12), and lighting conditions were more favorable for exploration, her condition was reassessed. She was subsequently captured and found to have a compound fracture to the left rear leg. FP120 was then transported to the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital at the University of Florida where the bone was set with permanent internal fixators and then to White Oak Conservation Center for further care and convalescence. She had a rough first couple of days but has since improved and her prognosis for return to the wild looks favorable.

Adding to this drama is the fact that FP120 gave birth to 2 kittens in late January this year. Being just shy of 6-months old it's unlikely they would survive without their mother's care. A multi-agency effort between the FWC, BCNP, and Collier County Sheriffs officers controlled traffic at a greatly reduced speed while dogs searched along the highway for signs of kittens but none was found. Proximity to the roadway and standing water on the ground greatly inhibited chances to find evidence. However, sand was laid next to the highway to create a tracking surface (to see tracks) and deer meat was left nearby in an attempt to find evidence that the kittens were still around. No evidence was ever discovered.

### **FP60 Update**

When FP60 was brought into captivity last month on June 29 he weighed 92 pounds and had a packed cell volume (PCV) of 13% (in panthers 35% is normal, 10% is considered incompatible with life). Since then he has been on antibiotics and has been eating and drinking well and has gained 10 pounds. His PCV has improved to 19% and his behavior has become more normal. On July 12 FP60 was transported to the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital at the University of Florida for further tests (MRI, EMG, bronchoscopy). Results indicated nerve damage to the jaw muscle on the left side and pneumonia still persists. The cause of the pneumonia is unknown, however it may be secondary to nerve damage to the larynx, impairing his ability to swallow, resulting in aspiration of food. At this point his prognosis for return to the wild is guarded. He will be monitored for his ability to feed and to capture prey as well as for the resolution of the pneumonia.

### **Help Return FP60 and FP120 To The Wild**

Now that there are two injured panthers in captivity recovering from their ailments your donations can be put to immediate use. If you are interested in helping with FP60's and FP120's recovery you can make donations to the Panther Fund established by The Wildlife Foundation of Florida. This fund was created last year to aid in the recovery of injured and orphaned Florida panthers.

Anyone can donate to this fund. Checks should be made payable to Wildlife Foundation of Florida and mailed to P. O. Box 11010, Tallahassee, FL 32302. **Checks should be earmarked "Florida Panther Fund."** For more info on the Foundation visit their website at [www.wildlifefoundationofflorida.com](http://www.wildlifefoundationofflorida.com) and for more details on why this fund so important visit [www.panther.state.fl.us/fund.html](http://www.panther.state.fl.us/fund.html).