



Panther Update

September 2009



Technology- Aided View of FP161 and Her Cub

Big Cat Field Stories

The Camera: A Biologist's Invaluable Tool

Article and Photos by Ralph Arwood, Photographer/ Volunteer

As a volunteer for Big Cypress National Preserve, one of my favorite activities, second only to photographing panthers, is aerial photography from the helicopter. Twice a year, in May and August, Deborah Jansen and her staff survey the deer population in seven predominantly prairie areas of the Preserve. They are determining the fawn-to-doe and buck-to-doe ratios as well as examining long-term trends in the population due to environmental conditions and land management actions. The survey is done by flying transects beginning at sunrise. The early morning flights are wonderful for landscape photography. The low sun angle and the bits of morning fog give mystery and depth to the photographs.



Doe and Fawn Put on Alert by their Observers

As we were surveying deer in the Deep Lake Unit on *August 3rd*, pilot Lee Jonas and biologist Annette Johnson were conducting the routine panther tracking flight from a Cessna 172 several miles to the south. As they followed the signal from FP161's radio collar, they saw her and two of her six-month-old kittens walking across an open, wet prairie. We had last seen three kittens, 2 males and 1 female, at their den in *February* when they were two weeks old. With the family just south of our deer survey area, we headed that way to observe and photograph them.

Data on the survival of panther kittens is very limited. While almost all kittens born to collared female panthers are marked at the den, we only know which ones survived to adulthood if they are examined at some future date and a transponder is found. A random sighting or photograph of a panther family may tell us how many, but not who, survived. This rare opportunity to see them out in the open along with the advances in photographic equipment let us know that one of the male kittens (K277 or K278) and the female kitten, K279, survived and appear to be healthy at six months. How do we know the female survived? She raised her tail as she ran from the helicopter and the camera lens.



**K279: Above - Splashing through Sawgrass
Below - Cozy at Her Den on *February 25***



Posse Camera Also Captures a Mom and Cub

The FGCU “Wings of Hope” Florida Panther Posse field cams (infrared motion cameras) are documenting the presence of a multitude of wildlife species including black bear, white-tailed deer, armadillo, bobcat, wild turkey, coyote, and of course Florida panthers traveling through underpasses.

Two of the “Possecams” are currently set up inside an underpass (north and south sides) near the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge on SR29. The Posse shares these photos with biologists in the area who monitor the numbers and locations of Florida panthers for their research and management of the population. In August, Program Director Ricky Pires got a pleasant surprise when reviewing two weeks’ worth of motion-triggered photos. “FP113 has a kitten! Thanks to the posse camera, we have documented a two to three-month old kitten following FP113 under the crossing in the Refuge.”



FP113 with Kitten at the Florida Panther NWR Underpass
Photo by Florida Panther Posse (Field Camera), August 2009

“Cougar” Shot in Georgia Last Year was Florida Panther.

He was a three to four-year-old male in good health, shot by a hunter in Troup County, Georgia. “The DNA test results are in and we now know his father: it is FP137”, stated FWC Biologist Mark Lotz in August. “Once that was confirmed, he was designated UCFP123. His sequential UCFP number is not consistent with his death date which will surely cause confusion for many.”

See <http://www.floridapanthernet.org/index.php/pulse/> for a mortality table which has been updated to include UCFP 123. The Georgia DNR issued a press release and a number of articles have been written on the subject. (See links below)

<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2009/aug/05/testing-confirms-panther-shot-hunter-georgia-was-f/>

<http://www.ajc.com/news/panther-shot-in-georgia-109810.html>

Panther Hit on Alligator Alley

The FWC reported that a panther was hit on the Alligator Alley portion of I-75, near mile marker 90, on August 5th about 1:30 in the morning by a semi tractor-trailer rig. It was discovered by Florida Highway Patrol and recovered by the FWC. The carcass condition precluded immediate positive sex identification but necropsy results later confirmed it to be a male. There was no radio collar and no transponder. This death was unique because it occurred in an area where there are few road kills because panthers are protected by fencing and an underpass. Thorough investigations failed to produce evidence of where the panther entered the fenced portion of I-75. For more details:

<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2009/aug/05/panther-killed-i-75/>

What Humans are Doing

New, Cheaper To Build, Underpass Design Could Get A Test Run In Collier County. Work is underway to identify a potential experimental site. For details see...

<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2009/aug/05/changes-panther-underpasses-would-make-them-much-c/>

AUGUST BRINGS CHANGES TO THE FWC

August 6, Florida Panther Net announced a new and improved look! FWC welcomes you to the new PantherNet website. They hope that you will “pardon their dust” as they put on the finishing touches: <http://www.floridapanthernet.org/index.php>

August 18, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Naples Field Office moved to a new location:
298 Sabal Palm Rd., Naples, FL 34114-2572 New Phone# 239-417-6352

What You Can Do This Month

Have fun viewing more Posse trail cam photos and then visit the other interesting pages on the “Wings of Hope” Website. <http://www.fgcu.edu/CAS/WingsofHope/gallery.html>

Special Thanks To.....

Layne Hamilton FPNWR, [Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge](#)
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