



Florida Panther Update March 2010

Field Stories

February marked the end of the 2010 capture season for both the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) panther teams. BCNP captured seven adult panthers and handled one kitten den (FP145's) containing three kittens. While BCNP conducts panther captures mostly in February, the FWC runs a longer season which starts in November. The FWC met their objectives by catching 10 uncollared panthers in total (six males and four females) officially ending their 2010 season on *February 10*. They handled a den of three male kittens, that of FP172, on *February 20* as well. Also reported this month was one panther death in the form of a "year-old" skeleton found by an exotic plant removal contractor off Shell Island Road in the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve on *February 4*. The cause of death has not been determined. With so many panthers having been handled this month, some of their stories will be covered next month in the April Panther Update.



FP172's kitten found in the "Addition Lands" of BCNP, north of I-75. FWC biologists lugged equipment a mile through the woods to monitor the den and then handle her three, two-week-old male kittens on February 20. Photo by Mark Lotz, FWC



In 2.5 years, K254 (above, weighing 2 pounds 11 ounces on July 20, 2007) grew into FP175, (below, weighing 84 pounds on February 7). Photos copyrighted by Ralph Arwood



Discovering Panther Ancestry with Microchips

By Deborah Jansen, BCNP Biologist

The Big Cypress panther capture team hunted for 29 days between *February 3* and *March 5*, handling seven big cats and three tiny cats. They recollared two adult male panthers: FP133 and FP171, and put the first collars on two new adult male panthers: FP179 and 181. They also collared three new adult female panthers: FP 175, 180, and 182. The "tiny" cats, each weighing about four pounds, were the three kittens marked at the den of FP145.

One of the thrills of handling a new panther is running the scanner down its back to see if it "reads" a microchip. FP145's litter brought the total number of panther kittens marked with microchips to 293. Who did the team find this year? Remember Lucy, the rescued panther kitten now living at Lowry Park Zoo? (see September 2007 Update http://www.floridapantherprotection.com/pdf/Panther_Update_0907.pdf) They found her sister, K254, now the healthy two-and-one-half-year-old FP175. Her brother, K253, was killed by a car on January 17, 2009. Remember the lightly-pelaged, female panther kitten, K264? (see May 2008 Update

http://www.floridapantherprotection.com/pdf/Panther_Update_0508.pdf) She is now a healthy two-year-old living in Big Cypress.

But the most surprising “chipped” panther had been marked by FWC on the Florida Panther NWR in 2001 as K93. He is the son of one of the eight female pumas brought from Texas in 1995 to add new genes to the panther population. After nine years of eluding capture, he is now FP181. His torn ears, missing incisor, and once-fractured shoulder attest that he has survived encounters with both other panthers and a vehicle.

Working with Florida Panthers: a Veterinarian’s Perspective

By John A. Bryan, II, DVM, MS

Photo by Ralph Arwood

It was a wonderful and exciting pleasure for me to participate for the first time in the Big Cypress Florida panther capture season this year by assisting with the captures of FP171 and FP179. The Florida panther is a unique, rare, and beautiful animal; one with which most people would relish the chance to work, or even see up close. After having captured a panther, there are many important things the team must do (and quickly). Some of these duties include monitoring the panther while it is under anesthesia, taking samples from the panther, fitting a radio-collar, testing for diseases, and giving vaccinations. First and foremost, it is important to monitor the panther’s temperature, heart rate, and respiration while it is unconscious in order to make sure that this large cat is stable under anesthesia and won’t wake up or get too deep under the drugs while the team is working. A few of the samples that are taken from the panther are skin biopsies (small pieces of skin from the ear) for genetic testing, and blood for

disease and health monitoring. The panther then receives a collar. The team either replaces the existing collar or fits it with a new one so the animal can be followed to find out where it goes and what it does. Additionally, the team tests the panther for disease, particularly Feline Leukemia (FeLV), which can make the panther very sick and even spread to other panthers. If you have a pet cat, your veterinarian tests and vaccinates your cat for FeLV too. Panthers also receive the rabies vaccine. After all these jobs are done, the panther recovers from its anesthesia sleep, and returns to its normal life in the wild.



FP171 on February 8. The grey rectangular box attached to the panther’s tongue is a pulse oximeter. It measures the pulse rate and indicates how much oxygen is in the blood, keeping the capture team informed that the panther is breathing enough and getting enough oxygen.

What People Are Doing

The “**2008-09 Interagency Florida Panther Response Team Report**” was posted by the FWC on-line February 26.

<http://www.floridapanther.net.org/index.php/reports/issue/1759>

The **first confirmed panther sighting in Sarasota County since 2005** occurred on February 5.

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20100218/ARTICLE/2181065/2416/NEWS?p=1&tc=pg>

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) issued a **press release on how conservation banking can help save panthers**. http://myfwc.com/NEWSROOM/10/statewide/News_10_X_ConservationBankingOpEd.htm

Naples Daily News added a section to their website called “**Florida Panthers**”. February’s news articles can be referenced there. http://www.naplesnews.com/news/florida_panthers/

Panther biologist Mark Lotz authored an article for the **Wild Felid Monitor (Winter 2010, Vol 3. Issue 1)**, entitled, “**Long Distance Dispersal of a Florida Panther**”. Information on Wild Felid Monitor can be found on

<http://www.wildfelid.com/WFA%20Newsletter.html>

Panther biologist Darryl Land posted a photo taken **March 1st** from a surveillance plane of FP170 and her kittens walking on a road in Picayune Strand State Park. <http://participate.naplesnews.com/MediaItemView.aspx?id=492040>

What You Can Do

Save the Florida Panther Month Runs March 6-20.

Celebrate the Florida Panther and its habitat by participating in events held in Southwest Florida’s conserved public lands!

<http://floridapanther.org/index-2.html>

Florida Panther Update Partners

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) <http://www.fws.gov/floridapanther/>

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) <http://www.floridapanther.net.org/>

Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) <http://www.nps.gov/bicy/index.htm>

FGCU “Wings of Hope” Florida Panther Posse <http://www.fgcu.edu/CAS/WingsofHope/index.html>

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Past Issues: <http://www.floridapantherprotection.com/PantherUpdates.aspx?n=4>