

News Release

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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\$5,000 REWARD OFFERED FOR INFO ABOUT PANTHER SHOT IN SEMINOLE COUNTY

VERO BEACH, Fla. -- The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Humane Society of the United States are offering a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person/persons responsible for shooting a Florida panther.

The deceased panther was found on the side of Old Mims Road, west of South Jungle Road, in Geneva, Fla., on March 12, 2011. As a result of its investigation, the FWC is preparing to file charges with the state attorney for illegal possession of a Florida panther. That will conclude the FWC's investigation into this incident. The FWC will not provide more information about its portion of the investigation until charges are filed.

The USFWS's portion of the investigation is ongoing into who killed the animal. Contact the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline 1-888-404-3922 with any pertinent information.

There are only about 100-160 adult Florida panthers left in Florida. The Florida panther is protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), which currently lists the species as "endangered." This means the Florida panther is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The ESA makes it unlawful for a person to take a listed animal without a permit. Take is defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct."

If convicted criminally, the federal penalty is up to one year of imprisonment, \$100,000 fine per individual or \$200,000 per organization. In addition, State of Florida Statute 372.0725 makes it a third degree felony to kill or wound any species designated as endangered or threatened. The state penalty is up to five years in jail and/or up to a \$5,000 fine.

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